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HIZBULLAH

A Contextual Study Focusing on Human Freedom

حزب الله - دراسة في السياق اللبناني تركز على حرية الإنسان

Oslo, May 2007 - Beirut, September 2007

اوسلو, ايار 2007 - وبيروت, ايلول 2007

Summary in Arabic

المخلص

تناقش هذه الرسالة أن التصور الكلاسيكي عن حزب الله بأنه منظمة إرهابية هو تقليل في تصوير هذا الحزب وجوانبه المعقدة, ومن الممكن أن يكون تعميم خطير لمثل هذا النوع من الأحزاب. وتجادل هذه الرسالة في أنه يجب فهم حزب الله كحركة اجتماعية تأتي من داخل الإطار اللبناني الفريد من نوعه, مع الأخذ بعين الاعتبار للتاريخ السياسي.

الهدف الرئيسي من هذه الرسالة هو التحليل فيما إذا, وكيف, يمثل حزب الله الحرية للشيعنة المهمشة في لبنان من خلال تطبيق فكرة البروفيسور امارتيا سن (Amartya Sen) "التطوير كحرية".

تركز هذه الرسالة بالأساس على النواحي الاجتماعية في حزب الله وعلى الناحية الإنسانية كعامل مساهم في نجاح المؤسسات الشاملة التي ينشئها الحزب.

بالإضافة تقدم الرسالة وجهات نظر في عودة اللاجئين التاريخي والتحليلي المهم بعد الحرب ما بين حزب الله واسرائيل في صيف 2006. أهمية الأرض في هذا الجزء قضية مركزية.

هذه الرسالة عبارة عن دراسة استكشافية في السياق اللبناني. الهدف منها ليس تقديم حقائق موضوعية على شكل استنتاجات نهائية, بل هو تقديم وجهات نظر أشخاص من البيئة الفعلية, وهي وجهات نظر غالباً ما يغض النظر عنها.

لقد ركزت على المصادر والمخبرين من البيئة المحلية أو على علاقة شخصية بها, لكنني بالطبع أتحمل كامل مسؤولية أي خطأ أو سوء فهم في هذه الرسالة سواء ارتكبته أنا أو وجد نتيجة لكوني باحث أجنبي.

- أقدم هذه الرسالة الصغيرة كإهداء إلى جميع أصدقائي.

إريك أبيد

Summary

This thesis argues that the classical perspective of Hizbullah as a terrorist organization is a reductionist portrayal of a complex movement, and a potentially dangerously generalising perspective. The thesis argues that Hizbullah should be understood as a social movement from within the unique Lebanese context, while still taking the international political history into consideration.

The main objective of the thesis is to analyse if, and if so, in what sense, Hizbullah represents *Freedom* for marginalised Shias in Lebanon, by applying Prof. Amartya Sen's notion of "Development as Freedom".

The thesis' main focus is the social aspects of Hizbullah, with a special attention to human aspects as a factor in the successful building of holistic institutions by Hizbullah.

Further, the thesis presents perspectives on the historical and analytically important return of refugees after the war between Hizbullah and Israel the summer 2006. In this section, the significance of land is a central issue.

The thesis is an exploratory, contextual study. The objective is not to present any objective "truths" in the form of firm conclusions, but rather to present the perspectives of people from the actual context, perspectives which are far too often overlooked.

I have focused on sources and informants from the local context or with personal connection to it, but all misinterpretations or faults in the thesis, either made by me or because of me as a researcher from the outside, are of course entirely my own responsibility.

- I dedicate this small thesis to my big friends,

E.A.

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* Hizbullah literally means *The Party of God*. The most common transcription in Lebanon, as well as by the organization itself, is Hizbullah. Many academic publications use Hizballah, while in the media the most commonly used is Hezbollah or Hizbollah.

1. Introduction

”... not like Robinson Crusoe, whose goal is to colonize his little island,
but more like Marco Polo, ... who is always a traveller.”

- E.W. Said (1994: 59)

This quote describes both the starting point and objective for this thesis. Edward Said, the author of *Orientalism* (1978), might be the intellectual who best has shown how academic work can contribute to the construction of "the other".¹ One example of such a construction is the labelling of Hizbullah as solely a terrorist organization. This perspective is misleading as it fails to analyse the many aspects of, and the broad support mustered by Hizbullah. It is thus a potentially dangerous generalization as it can lead to constructed ideas and discourses of "us against them". (Harik 2004, Harb & Leenders 2005).

This classical terrorist-perspective is a reductionist portrayal of a complex social movement deeply rooted in a local context (Norton 2007). This thesis offers a contribution to a better understanding of Hizbullah by making an analysis in a contextual perspective. The objective is to study a phenomenon where it unfolds, by investigating the historical and structural background, and by focusing on the local realities and opinions. This does not in any way mean that local perspectives are objective, but they are “true” in the sense that they are expressions of local viewpoints and opinions. Such local perspectives have a value in themselves, and are both important and necessary to study in order to understand larger questions within social sciences.

¹ Jensehaugen, Amman, 07.05.07

This study of what role Hizbullah plays in people's lives and their society will have as its basis Amartya Sen's concept of *Freedom* as made famous in his work "Development as Freedom" (1999). Sen argues that a focus on human freedoms can contribute to a more complex and integrated understanding of human aspects in conflicts, as opposed to simplifying and constructed theories such as the infamous "Clash of Civilizations."²

1.1. Research Question:

- Does Hizbullah represent *Freedom* for marginalized Shias in Lebanon?

If so, in what sense?

This research question needs several definitions:

Freedom is henceforth defined as the possibility, or opportunity, to live a life considered valuable by the individual or the society in question. This includes basic freedoms such as freedom from poverty, access to health and education, and security to live on one's land. Freedom can also include personal freedoms such as having the opportunity *to do* something one considers valuable, but the most important freedom might be the freedom *to be* something one considers valuable, the freedom to define one self, and live a life of dignity. These freedoms are interlinked and mutually strengthening (Sen 1999).

Marginalisation is henceforth defined as a situation or a process whereby the above-mentioned freedoms are being limited, denied or oppressed. Marginalisation defined as such is a form of *unfreedom*.

² Sen, Oslo, 21.05.07

Development is henceforth defined as a process which expands human freedoms (Sen 1999). In the same way, a process that counters *unfreedoms* also represents a form of development.

The thesis has a limited framework and there are many issues which are omitted or mentioned only briefly. The focus will at all times be on the perspective of marginalized Shias in Lebanon. This thesis is in no way meant to be of a generalizing or romanticizing nature, nor is it to be read as an objective, politically correct presentation of "what Hizbullah is". Rather it strives to understand what Hizbullah represents for the relevant people and their society. The only way of doing this is through a contextual perspective.

The thesis constitutes an exploratory study with the objective of creating an expanded understanding, not with the objective of reaching firm conclusions and presenting them as generalizing "truths". By focusing on Hizbullah and human freedoms, this thesis strives to expand the understanding of Hizbullah and its constituency, but also the understanding of human freedoms.

2. Methodology

The thesis is based on qualitative research methods, both as a pre-study in Norway, but mainly as a fieldwork spanning four weeks in Lebanon, and two weeks in neighbouring countries. The fieldwork is exploratory in the sense that it is based on different types of methods: structured and unstructured interviews; historical analysis; interpretation of texts; and observations. These combined methodologies have allowed me, as the author, to gain diverse insight into the social and political context, as well as an insight into human perspectives to a certain extent. At no point during the research period did the thesis have a set, pre-moulded research question. Rather an open-ended approach was pertained throughout, albeit with a narrowing of the focus as the study progressed. This represents an obvious weakness as far as structure and focus is concerned (Thagaard 2003), however this allowed for an unique opportunity to shape the study as it progressed, and according to the what the Lebanese people focused on in their understanding of Hizbullah.

My fieldwork took place in March-April 2007. It is important to mention this because the political climate in Lebanon changes quickly.³ At the time of research, Hizbullah was in its fourth month of political demonstrations after having withdrawn their ministers from the government. In general, the time of research must be taken into account when one relies on contextual perspectives.

The informants can be divided into four categories. The first group was composed of people in Norway with different professional or academic connections to the region and theme of the thesis. The second group represented a similar group in Lebanon, mainly researchers who had carried out primary research and published

³ Ludvigsen, Beirut, 16.07.07

works on Hizbullah. The third group represented people with direct links to Hizbullah, or one of the social institutions affiliated with Hizbullah. The fourth group included persons who, in one way or another, received support from Hizbullah's social institutions.

The two first groups represent secondary sources. The two last groups represent primary sources. The primary sources are limited in number and the information provided is methodologically insufficient to be regarded as "facts", but as mentioned earlier, they represent the contextual perspectives and are therefore especially important for this study.

In a contextual study based on qualitative method it is difficult to operate with precise and verifiable data. A technique used to compensate for this is similar to triangulation, different sources and methods were used to highlight a case from different angles which at the same time enabled a better basis for analysis (Schjøtz Worren 2007).⁴ One example of this is the questioning of different informants about their perspectives on a specific historical event - the return of the refugees after the war in 2006. Combined with the study of different written sources on the same event I was able to investigate many viewpoints: about 30 official and at least twice as many unofficial, thus providing me with a relatively good basis for presenting an analysis of the event.

Academic work has many ethical implications, but when you go out into the "field" and meet real people, encountering their stories and lives, all ethical implications becomes more serious. How do you prepare yourself? What do you give the most attention? Who do you give voice to? All these questions, and their answers,

⁴ Schjøtz Worren, Oslo, 22.05.07

have major consequences for the analysis and how the final material will be presented (Thagaard 2003). This is especially the case when it comes to objectivity. The goal of academic work must be to seek the “truth”, the roots of the matter, but every truth is to some extent dependent on the eye of the beholder. Objectivity is the ideal which one strives for, but it is always relative to the subject.⁵ When a researcher tries to describe “truth” as presented by an informant, he has to consider his own subjectivity – how he interprets what the informant is saying. Furthermore, he also has to consider the informant’s subjectivity – how he understands his world. A third point is how the informant views the researcher, sometimes through the voice of a translator, which adds yet another level of interpretation.

Being aware of such challenges in relation to contextual research is a precondition, not a limitation. Going back to the opening quote, the objective is to be a “traveller” with the intention of learning about other perspectives, but without the aim of reaching a firm conclusion with a claim to have concurred “the other’s” truth.

⁵ Jensehaugen, Amman, 22.04.07

3. Theory

The definition of development as a broad process of expanding people's freedoms to live a life they value is derived from the extensive academic and philosophic work by the Nobel laureate, professor Amartya Sen, as presented in his book "Development as Freedom" (1999). This approach, with its focus on human freedom, is relevant for this thesis because it opens for a broad understanding of development that includes human aspects such as hope, security and dignity, aspects which are crucial to this analysis of what Hizbullah represents for marginalised Shias in Lebanon.

Effectuated as most readers are by the reductionist view of Hizbullah as solely a terrorist organization, it can seem very untraditional to use Sen's perspective of "development as freedom". The most important reason to use "development as freedom" as a theoretical framework is the concept of freedom itself and the way the theory emphasizes the fact that what represents freedom for each individual is different, and hence up to every single human being to define (Banik 2007). This makes the theory especially suited to study something contextually. One of the aims of investigating and presenting what sort of freedoms Hizbullah might represent for people in a certain context, is to show that the most important human freedoms might not be as different as it might appear, at least if one only viewed Hizbullah through the constructed and reductionist concepts as purely a terrorist organization.⁶

The core of the "development as freedom" perspective is that freedom represents both the primary *end* and the principal *means* of development. Put differently, freedom represents both an *intrinsic* and *instrumental* value. It differs from more traditional and narrow ways of viewing development such as economic

⁶ Sen, Oslo, 21.05.07

growth, modernisation or technological advancements. According to Sen, such aspects should not be viewed as separate entities, but should be considered in terms of how they contribute to people's freedoms and how they affect their lives. In this way "development as freedom" represents a broader and deeper analysis of development where interconnections and the combined result of several aspects are considered, rather than focusing on narrow measurements separately (Sen 1999).

The foundation for "development as freedom" is called "the capabilities approach". There are two essential terms in this approach; *functionings* and *capabilities*. The central meaning of *functionings* is what a person considers valuable *doings* and *beings*, in other words, what a person values to *do* and *be*. This aspect has its roots in Aristotelian philosophy and underlines the importance of ethical individualism – no one but the individual can dictate what is important and valuable to be and do (Banik 2007). This is a point which is particularly important for this thesis and its objective of presenting contextual perspectives.

Capabilities are the actual possibilities a person has to live the *functionings* it values. In other words, the freedom it has to live the life it values. In this way, *capability* represents a substantive freedom *to be* and *to do*. While *functionings* represents what a person wishes to be able to do, *capabilities* are the actual real opportunities a person has to live these *functionings*.⁷

"Development as freedom" focuses on broad processes and how they affect society, but at the same time, it focuses on personal freedoms and human aspects such as hope and dignity. This approach emphasizes the interconnection between the collective and the individual. By giving humans the freedom and possibility to affect

⁷ Banik, Oslo, 07.05.07

their lives, they will actively participate in their own life and in their society's development. This underlines the point of considering freedom as both the primary end and the principal means to development (Sen 2001).

To demonstrate the relevance of viewing development as freedom one could use the example of a traditional development theoretician – measuring development in terms of economic growth. He or she might question the importance of a human aspect such as dignity and what effect it has on development as economic growth. By using the “development as freedom” approach one will claim that the question it self is based on the wrong premises. Human dignity and self-respect represent important freedoms in themselves, and a process which leads to a person achieving dignity is in itself development (Sen 1999).

A weakness with the use of such an approach is that when focusing on freedoms, one *only* sees freedoms.⁸ Freedoms and *unfreedoms* can exist side by side and at the same time have different meanings to different people. This is an argument to more clearly specify the research question, for example by focusing on specific freedoms or a chosen list of *capabilities*, but one of the strengths with “development as freedom” is its broad focus and the view that different freedoms mutually reinforces each other and should be considered as a whole. As Sen points out:

”If freedom is what development advances, then there is a major argument for concentrating on that overarching objective, rather than on some particular means, or some chosen list of instruments.”

(Sen 1999: 3)

⁸ Aase, Oslo, 07.05.07

The thesis' definitions of *Freedom*, *Marginalisation* and *Development* are all based on the theory of “development as freedom” and show concretely how the thesis will apply the theory to answer the research question.

4. History and Context

All of my informants who have studied Hizbullah emphasized the importance of history and context in attempting to understand *why* and *how* Hizbullah has evolved into what it is today. This was especially underlined by Professor Augustus R. Norton, who has 30 years experience in contextual research on Hizbullah and the Shias in Lebanon. The experienced Middle Eastern correspondent for the Norwegian National Broadcasting Corporation (NRK), Odd K. Tveit, also put great emphasis on this point. Furthermore, it is essential to have history and context as a background in order to be able to understand the different forms of *unfreedom*s which were and still are valid for marginalized Shias in Lebanon, and hence how Hizbullah might represent freedom for this group.

4.1 Structural Marginalisation of the Shia Population of Lebanon

During the collapse of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War, the area which is Lebanon today was given to France as a mandate (Norton 2007). The French administration wanted to create a Christian-dominated state in the Middle East. The area known as Mount Lebanon, mainly inhabited by Christian-Marionites, was chosen as the heartland of the new nation. This was a process that had started earlier in the 19th century. To make the Lebanese state viable, non-Christian areas west and south of the Mount Lebanon area, with connection to the Mediterranean, were included.⁹ The Sunni-Muslim dominated provincial capital of Beirut was made the

⁹ Gahre, Oslo, 07.02.07, Jensehaugen, Amman, 22.04.07, Norton, Beirut, 14.03.07, Schiøtz Worren, Oslo, 25.01.07, Wennesland, Oslo, 29.01

administrative and commercial centre of the state. This joining of the Mountain and the City is an important part of Lebanese history and identity (Gahre 2007). It is also interesting to note that already from the start the Shia dominated South got little attention.¹⁰

This was where the sectarian problems of Lebanon began. In classical colonial fashion, the French administration gave more power to certain ethnic groups, especially the Christian-Marionites, at the cost of others, especially the Shia-Muslims. This was the basis for the unrepresentative sectarian state system which is still dominant today. This was also the root of the marginalisation and hence the future conflicts that were to come.¹¹

When the Lebanese state gained independence in 1942, the political power was divided along sectarian lines. This division of power was based on a controversial census from 1932 where the Christians gained a small majority and the Sunni-Muslims were the second largest ethnic group. This led to Lebanon getting a political elite of Christian-Marionites and Sunni-Muslims who were interested in keeping the *status quo* and their positions. To be able to achieve this they actively worked against changes in the political system. The political sustenance of these elites was also based on family ties and the positions they had within their respective population groups. This encouraged patron-client relations and corruption. Important for the context of this thesis is the political marginalisation of the Shia population relative to both the Christian-Marionites and the Sunni-Muslims.¹²

¹⁰ Gahre, Oslo, 07.05.07

¹¹ Gahre, Oslo, 07.02.07, Göksel, Beirut, 26.03.07, Harb, Beirut, 02.04.0707, Jensehaugen, Amman, 22.04.07, Knudsen, Beirut, 14.03.07, Norton, Beirut, 14.03.07, Schiøtz Worren, Oslo, 25.01.07, Wennesland, Oslo, 29.01.07

¹² Knudsen, Beirut, 14.03.07

The new Lebanese state was based on a centre-oriented economy where most of the state investments and resources went to the main cities and the areas where the elites had their interest. As a consequence of this the Shia population, who mainly lived in the southern parts of Lebanon and the Beqaa-valley and traditionally worked in the agricultural sector, were economically marginalized.

The state also organized social services after sectarian divides (Norton 2007). The net result was a dependency relation between population groups and their political representatives for access to social services. For the Shia population this led to further marginalisation as a result of their relative lack of political representation.

Demographically Lebanon changed considerably after the census in 1932. The Shia population was the group who grew the most, but since the political elite wasn't interested in changing the system, the relative increase of the Shia part of the Lebanese population did not lead to them getting a larger representativity in the state. Rather it led to an increase in the political, economical and social marginalisation of the Shias.

It is important to mention the large amount of Palestinian refugees who came to Lebanon after the 1948 and 1967 wars.¹³ These refugees settled in all parts of the country, but predominantly in south Lebanon. One consequence of this was that many Shias moved to the southern suburbs of Beirut, also called Dahiyah, which with its low standard of living stood in contrast to other more modern parts of the city. The migration of Shias from south Lebanon to south Beirut continued for the years to come, and so did the divide between south Beirut and other parts of the city (Deeb 2006b).

¹³ Knudsen, Beirut, 14.03.07

Lebanon went through a bloody civil war from 1975 to 1990. Many things happened in these chaotic years, but one important consequence was the further strengthening of the sectarian divide. Most important for the context of this thesis was the Israeli invasion of 1982. This was the crucial and catalytic event for the founding of the Islamic resistance organization Hizbullah (Norton 2007). Israel occupied south Lebanon and all the way up to parts of Beirut. In these occupied areas the Lebanese state collapsed, which therefore seriously furthered the marginalisation and underdevelopment, but also the security situation, for areas where the majority of the population were Shia. In this power- and structural vacuum Hizbullah evolved beyond the scope of a mere military resistance group.¹⁴

4.2 Mobilization Against Marginalisation

Another external event that is important to mention in order to understand the development of Hizbullah and the mobilization of the Shia population of Lebanon, is the Iranian revolution of 1979. The Iranian revolution is a complex event that was significant in several ways, but especially for the Shias in the region. Historically the Shia Muslims in the Middle East have been oppressed by the Sunni Muslims. This oppression had become an integral part of the Shia identity which in a way considered it a historical plight to endure this injustice (Nasr 2006).

The Iranian revolution showed that Shias could stand up for their rights and claim power. This was a great inspiration and motivating factor for marginalized Shias in Lebanon. Instead of courageously accepting their oppressed position, a

¹⁴ Ezbidi, Ramallah, 16.04.07, Mjaugedal, Jerusalem, 15.04.07, Rabanni, Amman, 21.04.07, Tveit, Jerusalem, 15.04.07

possible change in identity occurred in which it was seen as possible to stand up and resist the injustices in society and fight for legitimate rights.

Many analysis overestimate Iran and the revolution's role in relation to Hizbullah.¹⁵ These analyses often lack an understanding of the local context and the human perspectives which are crucial for this study. For the *organization* Hizbullah, ideologically and financially, Iran is very important, but Hizbullah as a *movement* is a Lebanese phenomenon, based in a Lebanese context and is a movement of Lebanese people.¹⁶

The most important historical individual for the mobilization of the Shias in Lebanon was Imam Musa al-Sadr. Al-Sadr was the first figure to have organized the Shias as a political group and to have given them a collective voice to claim their rights (Norton 1978). In 1974 al-Sadr founded "The Movement for the Disinherited" which was organized and built around several charity initiatives concerned with social welfare. After al-Sadr mysteriously disappeared in 1978, the Shia movement gradually divided into two main groups: secular Amal and Islamic Hizbullah. There are both similarities and differences between Hizbullah and Amal. One difference which is important for this thesis is that both had and have social programmes, but since Amal chose to work within the Lebanese state system it was gradually perceived as part of the unjust and corrupt state. In contrast, Hizbullah specifically chose to remain outside the system, which in turn led to the possibility of building a complete and independent network of social institutions which could operate in the absence of the Lebanese state.¹⁷

¹⁵ Zandi, Tromsø, 15.01.07

¹⁶ Tveit, Jerusalem, 15.04.07

¹⁷ Ezbidi, Ramallah, 16.04.07, Norton, Beirut, 14.03.07, Rabbani, Amman, 21.04.07

Today Hizbullah is the biggest and most important representative of the Shias in Lebanon, but it is important to underline that although the majority of those supporting Hizbullah are Shia, and Shia identity is important for Hizbullah, not all Shias support Hizbullah. Neither are all supporters of Hizbullah Shia – or even muslims.

From this short and focused historical presentation, the two most important sources of *unfreedom* for Shias in Lebanon were the founding and (mal)functioning of the Lebanese state which led to the structural marginalisation of the Shia population, and the Israeli occupation of south Lebanon. These two factors were mutually strengthening in creating the opportunity, space and time for Hizbullah to develop. This is the historical background and contextual space in which Hizbullah has evolved into what it is today.¹⁸

¹⁸ Ezbidi, Ramallah, 16.04.07, Mjaugedal, Jerusalem, 15.04.07, Rabbani, Amman, 21.04.07, Tveit, Jerusalem, 15.04.07

5. Hizbullah's Resistance

There is no all-encompassing definition on "what Hizbullah is", but a description much used by both written and oral sources is that Hizbullah represents a *social movement*. A social movement can be defined as a collective actor consisting of individuals who, to a certain extent, have common interests and identities (Scott in Stokke 1999). A social movement is characterized by the fact that mass mobilization constitutes its greatest strength and that its goal is based on changing the society in which it works. These are characteristics which are very describing for Hizbullah (Alagha 2006).

Roughly Hizbullah can be divided into three parts which constitute different aspects of the movement: i) a military resistance group (*al-Moqawama al-Islamiah* – "The Islamic Resistance") which resists what they perceive as Israeli occupation of Lebanese land; ii) a political party which works for their understanding of social justice, especially marginalized Shias rights; and iii) a social aspect represented by the widespread social development work done by different Islamic organizations with affiliations to Hizbullah. This division is artificial and academic, in reality all three aspects are closely related, and the three aspects are often seen as one.

Hizbullah's concept of resistance contains a duality. The two aspects are important to distinguish, but at the same time they form a unified resistance ideology. Hizbullah uses the term *jihad* (holy struggle) as the common denominator for their work, yet they use the Quranic duality of this expression to explain the two focuses of their own ideology (Harb & Leenders 2005). *The lesser jihad* is the earthly, outer struggle, while *the greater jihad* is the moral and inner struggle. In Hizbullah's view, the lesser jihad takes form in the resistance against Israeli occupation, while the

greater jihad is manifested in the resistance against marginalisation, injustice and the struggle for a better society built on Islamic values. This greater struggle is fought through political representation and their social work with the goal of creating a *Resistance Society*¹⁹ (*mujtama' al-muqawama*) (also referred to as "the Islamic Sphere" (*hala islamiyya*)) (Harb 2007).

This Resistance Society represents a strong, independent and just society built on Islamic principles. It is meant to resist outside forces that wish to control or oppress militarily, politically or economically, but it is also meant to resist forces inside society such as bad cultural influences and corruption on both the economic and moral level (Fawaz 2000). In this way resistance and struggle in Hizbullah's view is not only of a military nature, but first and foremost political, social and cultural – not only collectively, but also individually (Harb 2007).

Hizbullah's concept of resistance and the Resistance Society has changed the Shias from being "disinherited" to being "disempowered" (Harb & Leenders 2005). The difference between these two perceptions is radical. While disinherited means being born into an unequal position which is difficult to change, disempowered means that somebody has taken the power from you. This last understanding opens up the possibility of taking power back. In this way disempowering symbolises the opportunity of struggling for one's own right of representation. It is the members of the Resistance Society themselves who create their society. This produces a feeling of participation and a sense of membership, something which is at the center of Hizbullah as a movement. Participation in the Resistance Society becomes liberation

¹⁹ Aleiqh, Beirut, 26.03.07

from oppression and humiliation. Resistance becomes an identity and a way of life. (Saad-Ghorayeb 2001, Harb 2007).

5.1 Hizbullah as a Political Party

Since 1992 Hizbullah has participated in local and parliamentary elections as a political party. They control the majority of the municipalities in southern Lebanon, the Beqaa-valley and the southern suburbs of Beirut (Hamzeh 2004). In 2005 they participated in the national government and held ministerial positions, but in 2006 Hizbullah withdrew their ministers as a protest to what they considered lacking influence relative to their constituency, demanding the establishment of a "National Unity Government" (ICG 2006b). The stated objective of Hizbullah as a political party is to work towards the fulfilment of the Shia population's rights and a more just society built on Islamic values (Alagha 2006). It is important to separate between an "Islamic state" and "a society built on Islamic values". A society built on Islamic values relates to moral aspects including corruption and social responsibility. It is also meant as a contrast to secular, corrupt and "immoral" systems which do not serve the society's best interests. In its youth, Hizbullah had a stated objective of establishing an Islamic state, but when it evolved into a broader national party they left this objective (Alagha 2006). In theory this Islamic state is still the goal, but in Hizbullah's stated view this has to happen democratically based on a majority of *both* Muslims and non-Muslims. Considering Lebanon's demographic build-up this is unimaginable, but it is an interesting point: Hizbullah emphasizes people's freedom to choose and their freedom is the means of reaching the objective.

There are also several reasons to be critical. Hizbullah uses other arenas to create trust for, and attention to their resistance ideology in order to strengthen their position as a political party. One example is the media outlets that are controlled by Hizbullah, which they consciously use to spread their message. This is especially the case with the TV-channel al-Manar, and the important role it has in shaping the image of Hizbullah as perceived by ordinary families in daily life.

Also major events such as religious festivities or political demonstrations are used to spread the message of Hizbullah and the resistance society (Harb & Leenders 2005). The numerous placards and graphic presentations of fallen Hizbullah soldiers is another example. The strong and important message of martyrdom is used to communicate Hizbullah's political message. These examples are methods used to spread a convincing message, and hence represent a form of *unfreedom* in the sense that Hizbullah tries to convince and control large parts of the public sphere.

This also illustrates one of the paradoxes with Hizbullah in relations to freedom. Hizbullah has a closed and undemocratic leadership which decides on clear guidelines and rules, but at the same time, they operate in a highly decentralized manner and base much of their work and support on voluntary participation and personal conviction and motivation. In this case, freedom and *unfreedom* exist side by side. How this is conceived by the individual and what each person emphasizes is a variable, but in this thesis it is the perspective of marginalized Shias which is the central point. Considering the popular support, it might seem that Hizbullah is conceived as a party that represents the marginalized Shias and who is fighting their struggle.

6. Social Aspects of Hizbullah

”... a human being receives his share by virtue of his humanity, the inalienable right of being human without any regard to the person’s political or religious beliefs.”

Hajj Imad Faqih²⁰

The generalizing perspective of Hizbullah as a terrorist organization has left its clear imprint on academic research and other analysis in relation to Hizbullah (Fawaz 2000). One example of this tendency is the representation of the social work done by Hizbullah. This work is often mentioned as an important reason as to why people support Hizbullah, but few studies go deeper and consider what the work actually consists of, how the work is organized and why people actually support Hizbullah because of it. This work is especially interesting to study within the framework of development studies. However, rather strangely, studies of Hizbullah or other Islamic movements within development literature are very rare. This is despite the fact that Islamic initiatives around the world are vital in people's lives, especially amongst poor or marginalised people, and an important part of their societies.

One of the major themes within development studies is the relation between development and institutions, or institution building as development, and the interconnected relationship between them. Earlier in the thesis the structural marginalisation and the underdevelopment of Shia-populated areas in Lebanon have been investigated. Under the leadership of Imam Mussa al-Sadr, different charity organizations were established to help "disinherited people". This was the situation

²⁰ Hajj Imad Faqih is a representative for Hizbullah's social work (Alagha 2006:167)

when Hizbullah emerged in 1982. Today, 25 years later, these charity organizations have evolved into a holistic network of large and well functioning institutions.²¹ This process from charity organizations to institutions is in it self an important symbol of development by Hizbullah. This chapter will briefly try to explore what these institutions do, how they are organized and point out some possible reasons as to why these institutions are so relatively successful.

6.1 Islamic Organizations Affiliated with Hizbullah

Hizbullah is lead by what is called the *Shura-council*, it has seven members and is lead by the general secretary Sayed Hassan Nasrallah (Hamzeh 2004, Harb 2007). This council oversees five other councils which all have responsibility for different aspects of the movement: military, political, parliamentary, religious and social. The council which is responsible for the social aspects is a sort of umbrella organization for eight different Islamic organizations which run the eight main social institutions. These Islamic organizations have different links to Hizbullah, some more direct than others, and some also to Iran.

This is especially the case when it comes to funding. Iranian funding is vital to many of the organizations affiliated with Hizbullah, and is a major theme in many studies of Hizbullah. As this thesis is a contextual study with a focus on what is important to marginalised Shias, where the money comes from is less important than what it actually does and how it affects the recipient's lives. Many of the Islamic organizations also different kinds of revenue and are not completely dependent on

²¹ Norton, Beirut, 14.03.07

donations. It is also important to point out that a considerable amount of the money used for social development work by Hizbullah is donated and distributed through *khums* and *zakat*, religious alms. Such money can come from both Sunni-Muslims and Shias living abroad who do not support Hizbullah politically, or their resistance ideology, but who still give their alms to Hizbullah. A simple explanation for this is that they trust that the money will be better used, and reach the people who need it in a better way, through Hizbullah than through other channels.²² In Lebanon, statements like "I hate Hizbullah, but I respect them for the social work they do" is often heard amongst people opposed to Hizbullah and is illustrating for the reputation Hizbullah's social work has in relation to its professionalism, its non-corrupt stance and in terms of delivering results.

All the Islamic organizations affiliated with Hizbullah are officially registered as NGO's by the Lebanese state. They also have a high level of cooperation with international organizations and aid donors. Nevertheless, they are all clearly stated supporters of Hizbullah and see themselves as a part of the Resistance Society and the greater struggle for social justice. The eight main organizations include:

Al-Shahid ("The organization for Martyrs") est. 1982. Runs hospitals, schools and many other kinds of services that strive to meet the needs of the families of the over 2500 fallen Hizbullah soldiers or members currently in jail (Harb 2007).

Al-Hay'a al-Suhiyya ("The Islamic Health Society") est. 1984. Works with health related issues. Runs 46 health centers and several hospitals (Harb 2007).

²² Norton, Beirut, 14.03.07

Al-Qard al-Hassan ("The Good Loan") est. 1984. A specialized micro-credit institution which provide small loans for self-sufficiency projects. Examples of these are bakeries, hairdressing salons or different types of training programs (Fawaz 2000). The amount of loans given is hard to say exactly, but there are roughly 10 000 loans per year.²³

Jihad al-Bina ("Struggle for Reconstruction / Reconstruction Campaign") est. 1985. Mainly works with reconstruction projects after Israeli destruction, in addition to construction projects such as building schools and hospitals.²⁴ The organization works with large-scale projects similar to "public services", such as roads, water, sewage and garbage collection. It also runs different kinds of agricultural projects and social security plans for farmers (Harik 2004, Qassem 2005).

Al-Imdad ("The Support") est. 1987. One of the biggest institutions which offers a range of social services and support in different forms to poor and underprivileged (Harb 2007).

The Consultation Centre for Studies and Documentation (CCSD) est. 1988. A research institution which conducts studies and produces reports for different purposes, many in relation to social aspects (Harb 2007).

Al-Jarih ("Organization for the Wounded") est. 1990. Operates in a similar manner to what al-Shahid does for martyrs and their families. Supports more than 3000 wounded and their families (Harb 2007).

²³ Harb, Beirut, 02.04.07

²⁴ Aleiqh, Beirut, 26.03.07

Al-Muassasa al-Tarbawiyya ("The Education Institution") est. 1991. Responsible for the educational part of different social programs affiliated with Hizbullah. Runs 9 schools with more than 5000 students. These schools teach the national curriculum in addition to extra subjects in religion (Harb 2007).

There are also Hizbullah affiliated organizations which work within sports, culture and youth related issues, and also several women organizations which focus on the mobilization of women and women's role in the resistance society. As mentioned earlier, Hizbullah has affiliated media institutions: the *al-Intiqad* magazine, the *al-Nour* radio station and the TV channel *al-Manar* which also broadcasts internationally (Harb & Leenders 2005).

Al-Manar might be the most influential institution of all in spreading Hizbullah's message and is highly influential on people's perceptions of Hizbullah.²⁵ It is on this TV-channel that people experience the wars and listen to Nasrallah speak. It is especially important not to underestimate *al-Manar*'s importance as a researcher from the outside.

It is also important to mention the most famous "Islamic organisation" affiliated to Hizbullah:²⁶ *Al-Moqawama al-Islamiah* ("The Islamic Resistance"), the military wing of Hizbullah. However, in the thesis' rough division of Hizbullah into three aspects, *al-Moqawama al-Islamiah* forms more or less an entire aspect itself and is not seen as a part of the social aspects of the movement. However all aspects are closely related and many of the social institutions work directly with *al-Moqawama*

²⁵ Ludvigsen, Beirut, 16.07.07

²⁶ Ludvigsen, Beirut, 16.07.07

al-Islamiah. This is especially the case with *Al-Shahid* (“The organization for Martyrs”) and *Al-Jarih* (“Organization for the Wounded”).

6.2 Characteristics of Hizbullah's Institutions

The connection of social services to a specific population group in Lebanon is *not* unique for Hizbullah's institutions. This is a structural result of the sectarian system in Lebanon. The social institutions affiliated with Hizbullah differ in that they are effective, non-corrupt and that the delivered services carry a high standard. This is in comparison to other social welfare initiatives affiliated with other groups in Lebanon which are renowned for being ineffective, corrupt and that their services are delivered according to clientilistic standards (Harb 2007);²⁷

Mona Harb, an Assistant Professor at the American University of Beirut, has written a doctorate and several articles on social aspects of Hizbullah. She points out three characteristics which are describing for Hizbullah's institutions and possible reasons to their relative success: 1) Effectiveness, leadership and professionalism; 2) Participation, embeddedness and local focus; 3) Cooperation and all-encompassing, holistic networks of services.²⁸

1) All the Islamic organizations affiliated with Hizbullah and the institutions they run are characterised by effectiveness. They have a hierarchal organization with a clear leadership in addition to the fact they operate outside the state-system, thus avoiding an ineffective bureaucratic system. The organizations are not led by religious clerics,

²⁷ Harb, Beirut, 02.04.07

²⁸ Harb, Beirut, 02.04.07

but typically by a highly educated man with professional experience who could easily have acquired a better paid position in a private enterprise. These leaders do not get their job because of their family background or connections, but mainly based on their skills and dedication to the overall objective of the movement. This is in stark contrast to what is standard practice in Lebanon where connections are of primary importance in securing important jobs. These leaders' professionalism and dedication provide an important example for the organization which they lead. All of the organizations emphasise knowledge and the value of studies to improve the professionalism of their work and quality of services (Harb 2007).²⁹

2) The second characteristic is that institutions affiliated with Hizbullah all have a clear focus on local needs and local participation. As mentioned, they are well organised with a clear leadership, but at the same time operate in a decentralized locally based fashion. One example of this is the mapping of needs and evaluation of already existing projects and support mechanisms in Dahiyah. This is done on two different levels, one geographical which focuses on specific areas, and one functional which focuses on specific services (Harb 2007). Both levels have extensive networks of local volunteers, most of them women who are referred to as volunteer-sisters (Deeb 2006). These volunteers identify potential persons or families within their own areas which might be in need of assistance. They also evaluate and gather feedback on already existing projects and supportive functions of different kinds. This dual method of mapping and evaluation give the organizations detailed information about local situations and the possibility of adapting their work to serve the recipients in the best

²⁹ Harb, Beirut, 02.04.07

way possible. The network of volunteers makes the social work of Hizbullah locally rooted and gives it local legitimacy.³⁰

3) The third characteristic is the cooperation and coordination between the institutions, and the all-encompassing holistic offering of services (Harb 2007). This can best be described through an example³¹: If a local volunteer-sister hears about a family where the man has left the house, she will first visit the family to find out what kind of assistance the family might be in need of. Then she will pass this on to the geographical coordinator for the area she lives in. This person will take the next step to decide what the organization can help with and what needs to be sent to other organizations which can help in a better way. If the family has a sick son, he can get treatment in a Hizbullah hospital. If the family has a daughter in school she can be transferred to a Hizbullah school or get her tuitions covered. If the woman now leading the household wishes, she can get training and financial support through a micro-credit loan with the aim of becoming self-sufficient and independent in relation to future assistance. If there are elders in the family there are also ways of supporting them within the system, reducing the workload of the family. This is only a constructed example to show how the different organizations coordinates, cooperates and compliment each other so as to offer a complex holistic system of support which includes all aspects and stages of life (Fawaz 2000).

³⁰ Harb, Beirut, 02.04.07

³¹ Aleiqh, Beirut, 26.03.07, Hejazi, Beirut, 02.04.07, Ludvigsen, Beirut, 22.03.07

6.3 Human Factors in Hizbullah's Institutions

Within development studies there exists a certain level of agreement that institutions cannot be built solely by money or aid. Institutions are built by people - many dedicated people and a determined effort over a long and continuous period of time. My informants and earlier studies have pointed out that human causes are among the most important factors in explaining Hizbullah's success in building institutions.³²

The perspective of "development as freedom" claims that by giving people opportunities they will use this to develop themselves and the society they live in. An obvious analysis in relation to the social aspects of Hizbullah is to investigate hospital access: This gives a person the important capability of being healthy, which again gives him the further capability to study or work, all aspects which can be considered important *to be* and *to do*. In relation to human aspects as a cause of Hizbullah's success in building institutions, the analysis is more complex: By giving a person the capability of contributing to something that person considers valuable, this person will more likely want to continue contributing to it and to do it even better. This is because the person considers contributing a valuable thing to do. Put differently, what she *does* make her value what she *is* – she feels she is living a valuable life.

One example given to me by the general secretary of *Jihad al-Bina*, Mr. Qassem Aleiqh, was the case of an engineer working for his organization. The engineer could have chosen a different job where he would have made more money, but he actively chooses to work for Hizbullah where he makes less money. (Many of the professionals such as doctors, lawyers and engineers actually have a second job and

³² Aleiqh, Beirut, 26.03.07, Backlund, Beirut, 15.03.07, Bjørklid, Beirut, 19.03.07, Harb, Beirut, 02.04.07, Hejazi, Beirut, 02.04.07, Norton, Beirut, 14.03.07

work on a voluntary level for Hizbullah³³). He does this because he considers working for Hizbullah as an important thing to do, both on the personal level, but also because his work contributes, strengthens and is a part of the Resistance Society which is a source of pride.³⁴

Two researchers who have done thorough case-studies on the so called volunteer-sisters, give similar examples (Fawaz 2000, Deeb 2006). This can be a woman who voluntarily works for Hizbullah's micro-credit institution *al-Qard al-Hassan*. In the same way as the engineer she contributes in helping others, and through her work she is a part of, and strengthens, the social work of Hizbullah. She "uses" her own time, but she considers this particular use of time valuable. At the same time, her work gives her the feeling of doing something valuable for others while strengthening her own self-esteem. The value of being an active part of the Resistance Society is deeply meaningful. It gives the perception that her life is a part of something with a greater meaning - her contribution is a part of the struggle.

A last personal factor behind the success of Hizbullah's institutions is in relation to religion and an overarching vision for the social development work by Hizbullah. This is something several of my informants mentioned, both researchers and people with connection to social aspects of Hizbullah. Both groups emphasized religious aspects as an important personal motivation. In most religions, helping others or "doing good", is considered important. In Islam it is one of the most important "columns" of the religion. One of the leaders of the *al-Rassoul al-Azzam* hospital, Mohammed Hejazi, tried to explain this relation and how it had played a role

³³ Hejazi, Beirut, 02.04.07

³⁴ Aleiqh, Beirut, 26.03.07

in building the hospital, which now is a very important Hizbullah institution. It is also considered one of the best hospitals in the country.

"It is important to do *something*, to help people to a better life. The Prophet is the example that we try to follow. Mohammed was no God, he was a man of the people, he tried to show how one could live as a good person, a person with dignity."

"Building this hospital is an example of doing good, here we help people. [...] The time and resources here are holy, if you in any way use of these resources to your own personal advantage it is very serious. It is stealing from the people who need it. The Gulf States is another example, an example of corruption. If the money in this world was spent in the right way, the world would have been a better place"

"Al-Rassoul has not always been a big hospital, before it was small, but we who worked here had a vision, we wanted to help others and build an institution for the poor. We still have the same vision. When you succeed in something you do and see that it brings good, you feel good. You have done something. This makes you want to continue, continue doing good. To do more and better." ³⁵

³⁵ Hejazi, Beirut, 02.04.07

6.4 Hizbullah's Institutions as a part of Hizbullah as a Movement

A common perception of Hizbullah's social work is that it is aimed at creating support for Hizbullah's resistance ideology (Harik 2004): By giving marginalised people services and help, Hizbullah is creating a dependency relation where people will support their military resistance and vote for them at elections, just to benefit from Hizbullah's social services. This thesis argues that this perception is a part of the generalising and reductionist perspective which exists of Hizbullah. While the social activities undoubtedly have a great effect on people's lives, and thereby naturally create support, this thesis has argued that the reasons for Hizbullah's involvement in social aspects are more complex, and that there is a greater objective with the work than simply creating followers.

The social aspect of the movement is a *part* of the resistance (Harb 2007), not only a way to justify it. Hizbullah as a movement does not simply need followers or voters, it needs active participants. Participation is at the core of the movement's strength. The Resistance Society is dependent on its members participation and their belief in the overall path (Saad-Ghorayeb 2001). Hizbullah is clear about the fact that one of the objectives of their social work is to show people the value of their path and strengthen the belief in it. This is logical for any party or movement and is not a hidden agenda.³⁶ Neither do they hide their Islamic values. How Hizbullah creates the image of itself, and how they use their social institutions to spread their message can be critically discussed, but claiming that their institutions solely are aimed at this purpose, is highly generalising in several ways. First it is generalising as to why people support Hizbullah and work for them. Furthermore it is also generalises by

³⁶ Aleiqh, Beirut, 26.03.07

overlooking what is actually being done and the effect this has on people's lives. Academically this generalisation creates a simplified and constructed image of "the other" and overlooks potential important knowledge about the building of institutions and its effect on development.

Hizbullah as a movement is lead by a clear, strong and undemocratic leadership, but the movement's strength is dependent on the people who support it. The institutions which have been built up during the last 25 years is not just a result of monetary investment – neither are the thousands of people who see themselves as a part of the movement "bought" by handouts. Hizbullah's institutions and Hizbullah as a movement are two sides of the same coin. Both are the result of many dedicated people, and to a certain extent, their common visions and beliefs.³⁷

³⁷ Norton, Beirut, 14.03.07

7. The Meaning of The Land

This chapter is somewhat different from the rest of the thesis, but during my study, I decided that to be able to understand what Hizbullah represents for marginalised Shias in Lebanon, it was important to try to understand what the land itself represents.

7.1 Year 2000 – The End of Occupation

In the year 2000, after 18 years of occupation and 18 years of continual resistance, Israel withdrew from south Lebanon. There exists different perspectives about this event, but internationally many consider this as the historical first large military defeat of Israel. Amongst Shias and other Lebanese there existed little doubt: the resistance of Hizbullah had defeated Israel and forced them to leave. This was the source of an indescribable pride and honour amongst the Shias and thus strengthened Hizbullah's resistance considerably. This legitimacy was won by the fact that Hizbullah had fought for the rights of Shias and for the liberation of their land, a very important and central part of the role Hizbullah has gained.³⁸

7.2 Year 2006 – The War and the Return of the Refugees

A historical event, which I tried to get as many perspectives on as possible, was the return of the refugees after the war between Hizbullah and Israel during the summer of 2006. 12. July Hizbullah kidnapped two Israeli soldiers. Hours later Israel bombed, invaded and occupied south Lebanon once again. During the 33 days of war 1.191

³⁸ Göksel, Beirut, 26.03.07

Lebanese died (ICG 2006a). Of this number most were civilians and 1/3 of them children (Harb 2007:13). 162 Israelis died, of which 119 were soldiers and 43 were civilians.³⁹

A stated objective for Israel was to destroy as much as possible of the basis for Hizbullah's support (Achcar & Warschwski 2007). One way of doing this was to bomb the physical infrastructure connected to the social institutions of Hizbullah. One example of this tactic was the bombing of the offices used by *al-Qard al-Hassan*, the micro-credit institution affiliated with Hizbullah: 9 out of their 10 offices were bombed (Higgins 2006).

Bombs were dropped on all areas of Lebanon, but the civilian villages in southern Lebanon were most severely bombed. During the whole war, especially the last 48 hours, Israel dropped several tonnes of cluster bombs.⁴⁰ This type of bombs has a high error-percentage, leaving large numbers of small unexploded ordinances (UXO's). The result of this is that it turns the areas of impact into minefields. In some ways these areas are even worse than classical minefields, as some of the UXO's get caught in the rubble of houses or trees, and then detonate when people try to clear the rubble, or pick their harvest. After the war as many as 1.000.000 UXO's covered Lebanon.⁴¹ The presented tactical meaning of this use of clusterbombs is to secure the Israeli withdrawal,⁴² but in practice, it represents a horrid form of *unfreedom* as the UXO's clearly restrict the return of people and the use of the land.⁴³

³⁹ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs:
www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/TerrorismObstacle+to+Peace/Terrorism+from+Lebanon-+Hizbullah/Israel-Hizbullah+conflict-+Victims+of+rocket+attacks+and+IDF+casualties+July-Aug+2006.htm

⁴⁰ The UN Mine Action Coordination Centre South Lebanon (MACC SL): www.maccsl.org

⁴¹ BBC News, citing the UN: news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/5382192.stm

⁴² Bjørklid, Beirut, 19.03.07

⁴³ Husum, Tromsø, 16.05.07

During the war approximately 970 000 people fled from their homes.⁴⁴ In a war with many refugees, one of the biggest challenges after any war is the return of the refugees.⁴⁵ Traditionally refugees are reluctant to return. Reasons for this can be lack of security or the fact that they do not have anything to return to. When the war between Hizbullah and Israel was nearing its end, with the controversially long discussions in the UN Security Council, many of the major international humanitarian organizations were preparing plans and projects to help the refugees who had fled from south Lebanon.⁴⁶ However, when Nasrallah, the leader of Hizbullah, on the morning of 14. August announced that the war was over and that people could return to their homes something happened which nobody had expected - people returned on a massive scale by themselves.⁴⁷ This happened after Israel had bombed roads and infrastructure for more than one month, destroying almost all the bridges south of Beirut. People were returning to literally flattened villages and agricultural lands made lethal by UXO's. Neither the Lebanese state, the UN, the various aid organizations, analysts nor journalists had predicted this occurrence, nor did they understand it when it took place.⁴⁸ This incident is also unique in international conflict history.⁴⁹

One of my informants, Jens Mjaugedal, the Director of International Operations at the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) with years of experience from refugee situations around the world, described this event as "the ultimate proof" of

⁴⁴ Lebanese state: www.lebanonundersiege.gov.lb

⁴⁵ Mjaugedal, Oslo, 07.03.07

⁴⁶ Göksel, Beirut, 26.03.07

⁴⁷ Mjaugedal, Oslo, 07.03.07

⁴⁸ Göksel, Beirut, 26.03.07

⁴⁹ Göksel, Beirut, 26.03.07

how wrong the misperceptions of Hizbullah are.⁵⁰ If Hizbullah, which controls and govern most of south Lebanon, were "an oppressing Taliban-style regime" people would never have returned the way they did. This is especially true for the Christian minorities which returned alongside their Muslim neighbours.⁵¹ The return of refugees showed that people, indifferent of their political stance, had a considerable level of trust in Hizbullah.

The large scale return of these refugees also meant something beyond the people's trust in Hizbullah. One should be cautious claiming that historical events *happened because*, reasons why people returned were complex and different, but that it *signifies something* is beyond doubt. This large and diverse group of people cannot be characterised as a group of terrorists or blind followers of Iran. This massive return of refugees can quite literally be seen as a popular movement. This movement cannot be generalised to be the same movement as the one this thesis has described Hizbullah to be. The group of people who made up the returning refugees was too diversely composed. Many were political followers of Amal or other parties. It is also important to mention that not all people did return. However, for all the people who did return to their land in the south, Hizbullah represented the protection of one specific freedom - the freedom to return to their land.

⁵⁰ Mjaugedal, Oslo, 07.03.07

⁵¹ Göksel, Beirut, 26.03.07

7.3 A Personal Perspective on The Land and The Olive Tree

The freedom to return to their land, and what the land it self represents, is complex and difficult to understand for an outsider. The story that follows cannot be claimed to be representative for all of those who returned, but in relation to many of the perspectives I was presented during my study, it is describing:

Ali Qassem⁵² is a representative for the local municipalities in the town of Yohmor, which lies close to the Litani River in south Lebanon. He described to me how he and his family had returned on 14. August. Early in the interview he told me that I probably could not understand why, and that I even already might have misunderstood. He claimed that the West, in the shape of the media and researchers, was very fascinated by the fact that the traditional, religious Shia farmers of south Lebanon had been able to resist one of the most modern armies in the world. In his view, western researchers learned Arabic and studied the Quran in order to be able to understand the religion which had made them so strong. He meant that this approach was wrong:

"You have misunderstood our religion. Religion is a personal matter between a person and God. The war was not a religious war, it was a human war, a war for our right to exist. The reason to why we fight is the land. Our land and our love for it. The land we have lived on for generations."⁵³

⁵² The name of the informant has been changed for security precautions since direct military resistance was discussed.

⁵³ Qassem, Yohmor, 27.03.07

When I asked if he could try to explain why he had returned after the war, part of his reply was in a very poetic language. I made him repeat it line by line so that the translation would be as precise as possible:

“No matter what happens
Brutality, war, destruction
They will not rip us from our land
This land
This olive tree
We have bled and worked this land
And “Blood has Defeated the Sword”⁵⁴
We are not afraid
We have the stronger belief in our moral right of the resistance to our land
We have Love for this land
If we loose everything else, we will still come back
If nothing else is left than one Olive tree
That Olive tree is us”

After the interview, he invited me for lunch. He wanted "to show me what he had been trying to explain". We drove through the bombed village on a road full of holes. Around us houses were being rebuilt. In the gardens of some of the building projects, red poles marked UXO's. When we arrived to his house, his four-year-old

⁵⁴ Famous quote by the Martyr Hussein (Qassem, Yohmor, 27.03.07). Hussein died in the battle at Karbala, year 680. Important historical event for Shias which is marked every year with *Ashura* (Norton 2007).

son came to greet us. The father pointed beyond his son towards the Olive trees that stretched down the valley from his house:

"That is the reason we came back. Some of those trees are over 400 years old."

Later, during lunch, I asked him what Hizbullah represented to him:

"Hizbullah makes it possible for me to invite you to my home. Hizbullah makes it possible for my son to grow up where I have grown up, and that he has a future on this land. That his children can play amongst those Olive trees."

8. Summing up

This thesis has argued, from the perspective of marginalised Shias, that the most significant forms of *unfreedom* have been: demographical and political underrepresentation; structural and economic underdevelopment; and Israeli occupation. In 2000, when the Israelis withdrew, Hizbullah had to a certain extent achieved one of the most important objectives of the movement, which was to free Lebanese land from Israeli occupation. At the same time, through different Islamic organizations, Hizbullah had managed to develop a well functioning holistic network of social institutions which delivered concrete improvements in people's lives and their capabilities. Hizbullah had also entered politics and has become a recognized legitimate political party which struggles especially for the rights of the Shias.

All these results represent important freedoms which are mutually complimenting and reinforcing. In this way, according to the definition of development as a process which expands human freedoms, Hizbullah clearly represents development as freedom for marginalised Shias in Lebanon.

The marginalised Shias themselves have taken part in, and contributed to this development. This creates important individual and collective meanings (Fawaz 2000, Deeb 2006, Harb 2007).⁵⁵ All those people who identify themselves as a part of the Resistance Society of Hizbullah, can be perceived as part of a social movement. The aim of this movement is to create a better and more just society. If one rejects this and claims that Hizbullah is purely a terrorist organization, one risks generalising several hundreds of thousands of people who identify themselves with or *as* Hizbullah: "we

⁵⁵ Aleiqh, Beirut, 26.03.07, Hejazi, Beirut, 02.04.07

are Hizbullah, the people"⁵⁶ These are people who build schools, work in hospitals, participate in demonstrations or work as volunteers for their local society. The generalization would reduce all of these people to terrorists.

The personal freedoms which Hizbullah represent are difficult to perceive and describe for someone who comes from the outside, but it might seem that Hizbullah represents freedoms such as security, dignity, political representativity and the freedoms *to be* and *to do* something one considers valuable.

What is even more difficult to understand is what the land itself represents. However one must attempt to do so as it was precisely the connection with the land that was given as one of the reasons as to why a historically large movement of people returned after the war in the summer of 2006. It might seem that to these people, most of them marginalised Shias, Hizbullah represents what might be the most important freedom: the freedom to live their lives on their land.

To Shias the fear of further marginalisation is in itself sufficient to resist and to claim their rights (Deeb 2006). In possibly an even more real way, Israel represents a threat to their freedom. Israeli forces have, since 1982, repeatedly threatened their security, forcing them to flee their land with the fear of not returning. To them the Palestinians, possibly the most marginalised population group in Lebanon, represents a living example of what might happen: Every day the Shias in south Beirut and south Lebanon see their Palestinian neighbours in their camps, living without neither rights nor land. On Hizbullah's TV-channel al-Manar, pictures from the West Bank and Gaza are shown, including pictures of Olive trees being uprooted.

⁵⁶ Hejazi, Beirut, 02.04.07, Qassem, Yohmor, 27.03.07

Many of my informants, sitting on their own land, some of them living in tents while they were rebuilding their houses - but still being able to offer me their own oranges - told me that the example of Palestine was the strongest possible reminder of the value of their land. A reminder of the importance of standing up and defending their rights.

9. Solidarity and Critique

”... the task, I believe, is explicitly to universalize the crisis, to give greater human scope to what a particular race or nation suffered, to associate that experience with the sufferings of others. ... This does not at all mean a loss in historical specificity, but rather it guards against the possibility that a lesson learned about oppression in one place will be forgotten or violated in another place or time.”

- E.W. Said (1994: 44)

In his book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Franz Fanon writes to the oppressed people of the world who have been forced into injustice. He writes that the objective must be to create a "new man". This man must be created with a basis in his place of origin and his cultural heritage - where he comes from and what he already is. For marginalised Shias in Lebanon, Hizbullah represents the foremost representative for their rights and protection of their land. Through the Resistance Society based on Islamic values, a fundament which is their own historical heritage, they wish to create new men and women who stand up for themselves and struggle against the existing injustice.

Edward Said argues that it is the intellectual's responsibility to see and speak the oppressed's perspective. At the same time, Said points out that solidarity never can take precedence over critique (Said 1994). This thesis has focused on the marginalised Shia's perspective and what Hizbullah represents for them. This does not mean that focusing on their perspective stands in the way of a critical study of what types of *unfreedoms* Hizbullah represents, both to Shias in Lebanon, but also to others.

Critical studies are essential, but not with the aim of separating "us" from "them". The aim of academic work must be to counteract the lure of simplifications. The academic must not present shallow conclusions, but must seek, through knowledge, to contribute to a better understanding of human similarities and differences – or as this thesis has tried to do: to a better understanding of human *Freedom*.

10. Sources

10.1 Persons Met

10.1.2 Pre-Study

Aase, Maren - 02.03.2007 - Oslo

Ph.D. candidate, Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM) , University of Oslo (UiO). Seminar teacher and lecturer, Programme for Development Studies, UiO

Gahre, Christian - 07.02.2007 - Oslo

MA in Middle Eastern Studies, American University of Beirut (AUB). Author of the thesis *Staging the Lebanese Nation: Urban Public Space and Political Mobilisation in the aftermath of Hariri's Assassination*. AUB 2007. Connected to Peace Research Institute in Oslo (PRIO).

Hovdenak, Are - 05.03.2007 - Oslo.

Researcher at PRIO, specialist on the Middle East. Several years' of experience in the Middle East.

Husum, Hans - 13.01.2007 - Tromsø

Director of Board, Trauma Care Foundation. 25 years of international experience as war surgeon, including Lebanon.

Mjaugedal, Jens - 07.02. & 07.03.2007 - Oslo

Director of International Operations, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). Several years' of diplomatic and professional experience in the Middle East.

Schiøtz Worren, Torstein - 25.01.2007 - Oslo

MA Political Geography, University of Oslo. Author of the thesis *Fear and Resistance: The Construction of Alawi Identity in Syria*. UiO, 2007

Wennesland, Vegard - 29.01.2007 - Oslo

BA in Middle Eastern Studies, University of Oslo, American University of Beirut, Birzeit University.

Zandi, Saeed - 14. & 15.01.2007 - Tromsø

Director, Tromsø Minevictim Centre. Written and published on various issues related to the Middle East

10.1.3 Fieldwork

Aleiqh, Qassem - 26.03.2007 - Beirut

General secretary for *Jihad al-Bina* (Struggle for Reconstruction / Reconstruction Campaign).

Alaick, Ismail Haidar - 28.03.2007 - Yohmor, south Lebanon.

Private person in Yohmor, received aid from *Jihad al-Bina* for the rebuilding of his house.
Translator used.

Backlund, Ulla - 15.03.2007 – Beirut

Country Director Lebanon, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)

Bjørklid, Dagfinn -19.03.2007 - Beirut

Country Coordinator Lebanon, Norwegian Aid Committee (NORWAC)

Ezbidi, Basem - 16.04.2007 – Birzeit, Ramallah, Occupied Palestinian Territories

Professor at Birzeit University. Specialist on Hamas and Islamic Movements.

Göksel, Timor - 26.03.2007 – Beirut

Former spokesperson UNIFIL for more than 20 years Currently teaching at American University of Beirut.

Harb, Mona - 02.04.2007 - Beirut

Assistant Professor at American University of Beirut, PhD on Hizbullah's social development work in Dahiyah, has written and published several articles on social aspects of Hizbullah.

Hejazi, Mohammed - 20.03 & 02.04.2007 - Dahiyah, Beirut

Public Relations Manager, Al Rassoul AL Aazzam Hospital, *al-Shahid* (The Martyrs Association).

Jensehaugen, Jørgen - 22.04.2007 - Amman, Jordan

MA student in modern Middle Eastern History, University of Oslo. Attached to "the Missing Peace Program" at PRIO. Intern at the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Amman, Jordan.

Knudsen, Are - 14.03.2007 - Beirut

Research Director, Christian Michelsens Institute, Bergen. Specialisation on South Asia and the Middle East

Ludvigsen, Børre - 22.03.2007 – Beirut

Professor at American University of Beirut and College of Østfold.

Mjaugedal, Jens - 15.04.2007 - Jerusalem, Occupied Palestinian Territories

Director of International Operations, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). Several years' of diplomatic and professional experience in the Middle East.

Norton, Augustus Richard - 14.03.2007 - Beirut

Professor in International Relations and Anthropology at Boston University, 30 years of research on Shia Population of Lebanon and Hizbullah.

Qassem⁵⁷, Ali - 27.03.2007 – Yohmor, south Lebanon

Representative for local municipality in Yohmor. (Translator used.)

Rabbani, Mouin - 21.04.2007 - Amman, Jordan

Senior Analyst for International Crisis Group (ICG), Middle East Program.

Tveit, Odd Karsten - 15.04.2007 - Jerusalem, Occupied Palestinian Territories

NRK (Norwegian National Broadcasting Corporation) Middle Eastern Correspondent for 30 years. Has published several books on the Middle East.

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Missing from the official list are countless unnamed persons, especially in Beirut and south Lebanon, who tried to help me understand what Hizbullah, Freedom and Dignity meant to them. -Shukran.

⁵⁷ The name of the informant has been changed for security precautions since a direct military activity was discussed.

10.1.4 Post-Fieldwork

Aase, Maren - 07.05.2007 - Oslo

Ph.D. candidate, Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM), University of Oslo (UiO). Seminar teacher and lecturer, Programme for Development Studies, UiO

Banik, Dan - 07.05.2007 – Oslo

Associate Professor, SUM, University of Oslo. Lecturer and course leader, Development studies programme, UiO. Specialist on A. Sen's work and theories.

Gahre, Christian - 07.05.2007 - Oslo.

MA in Middle Eastern Studies, American University of Beirut (AUB). Author of the thesis *Staging the Lebanese Nation: Urban Public Space and Political Mobilisation in the aftermath of Hariri's Assassination*. AUB 2007. Connected to Peace Research Institute in Oslo (PRIO).

Husum, Hans - 16.05.2007 – (Tromsø)

Director of Board, Trauma Care Foundation. 25 years of international experience as war surgeon, including Lebanon.
(Personal contact by e-mail and phone.)

Jensehaugen, Jørgen - 07.05.2007 – (Amman)

MA student in modern Middle Eastern History, University of Oslo. Attached to "the Missing Peace Program" at PRIO. Intern at the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Amman, Jordan.
(Personal contact by e-mail and phone.)

Ludvigsen, Børre - 16.07.2007 – (Beirut)

Professor at American University of Beirut and College of Østfold.
(Personal contact by e-mail.)

Schiøtz Worren, Torstein - 22.05.2007 – (London)

MA Political Geography, University of Oslo. Author of the thesis *Fear and Resistance: The Construction of Alawi Identity in Syria*. UiO, 2007
(Personal contact by e-mail and phone.)

Sen, Amartya - 21.05.2007 - Oslo.

Nobel Laureate in Economics 1998. Author of *Development as Freedom* (1999).
Lecture at the Nobel Institute: "Peace, War and Violence": *The author of this thesis asked mr. Sen about the possibility of focusing on human freedoms in studies of conflict, and if so, what added value this might have in understanding human aspects of conflict.*

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