

## Hezbollah: what place will have in a Middle East post Arab Spring

All talks about the Arab spring start with the episode symbol, when on December 10, 2010 in Tunis, Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire protesting the confiscation by police of his merchandise. That gesture triggered a series of popular revolts then, starting from Tunisia and eventually spread in Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, Morocco, Algeria, Jordan and Syria.

I would like to start my argument a step prior to this event, when one and a half million of Lebanese went in the "Martyrs of the People" square in Beirut on 14 March 2005, after the assassination of Rafiq Hariri, rebelling against terrorism and asking for the end of the Syrian occupation, a free and democratic society based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law. There was no party flag, only the Lebanese one was waving in the square. Hariri's death will unleash the first stirrings of an Arab Spring, but also perhaps the first signs of a deepening sectarian division between Sunnis and Shiites in the region. Hezbollah has always been an ally of Syria in Lebanon, it certainly was not part of that wave calling for these changes.

The spring of 2011 came unexpectedly and not as an Islamic or nationalist revolution, but as a struggle of citizens for democracy, freedom from dictatorships, for social rights and economic changes, such as a call for universal basic principles: highest levels of education, individual and minority rights, pluralism and peaceful alternation of power. There no longer were even the great slogans of the great mobilizations (anti-imperialism, support for the Palestinian cause, anti-Americanism). The people were tired of the ruling class: authoritarian, despotic, full of rhetoric.

The emergence of Islamist movements has caused fears and concerns among Western policymakers, probably still traumatized by the fall of the Shah and the consequences of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. But the reading today can not be simplistic. Given the crisis of all ideologies (from the pan-Arabism, Marxism, the pan-Islamism) populations had no other choice but to turn to religion. The more organized opposition actors were the Islamic movements. The masses have seen the re-Islamisation and Islamic movements as an instrument for a new order within their own society. Referring to them is not a rejection of modernism, but only a response to the governance's inability by the political class and to the deep crisis of the State.

Revolutions are not a moment, an episode, but a process that lasts for decades so you can't think it over - even with defined and permanent scenarios. Egypt and Tunisia have clearly demonstrated that situations can change quickly and nothing is immediate, automatic.

When the uprising began in Tunisia Hezbollah, (unlike in Lebanon from 2005, and the Wave Green 2009 in Iran), it took the side of the square: "Today we declare our solidarity. One of the forms of our solidarity is to defend this revolution, this intifada, this great historic popular movement"<sup>1</sup>. It would be back in the Tahrir Square in Egypt - indeed here with greater enthusiasm than the previous ones. Mubarak had pointed the finger at Hezbollah in the 2006 war, and Nasrallah accused Mubarak of colluding with Israel in 2009 during Israel 'intervention in Gaza'<sup>2</sup>. It was not over here, in 2009 in Egypt 49 people were arrested, linked to Hezbollah on charges of terrorism and an attempt to organize a coup d'état<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> NASRALLAH H., *On the Egyptian Revolution and the American Strategy*, in MR Zine, 7 February 2011, download the 10 October 2015, in <http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2011/nasrallah110211.html> .

<sup>2</sup> SALEM P., *Can Hezbollah weather the Arab Spring ?*, in Carnegie Middle east Center, 19 June 2012, downloaded 10 October 2015 in <http://carnegie-mec.org/publications/?fa=48600> .

<sup>3</sup> CROWLEY M., *The new old rivalry: Egypt versus Iran*, in CBS NEWS, 22 June 2009, downloaded th 10 October 2015 in <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/the-new-old-rivalry-egypt-versus-iran/> .

Nevertheless it would be pleased with the fall of Gaddafi, guilty of the disappearance of Musa Sadr<sup>4</sup>.

Despite the protests of the squares they had little to do with the strategy and the nature of Hezbollah. They were all directed against a national corrupt and incapable leadership and not against an external enemy, the protests were peaceful and unarmed, for the first time there were not slogans against the United States, and the Arab-Palestinian conflict was left out, all protests had the national flags.

The revolutions were actually a challenge for the two regional actors competing the flag of political Islam. Saudi Arabia on the one hand tried to isolate the wind of change by intervening both militarily, politically and economically in the defense of the monarchies to contain the effect of the riots in Bahrain, Yemen and Oman. Iran, that in 2009 had extinguished with repression the Green Wave, and Hezbollah turned to their defense:

“Why is the movement [in Bahrain] condemned and the injured accused? Just because they are Shias?... We've always been with the Palestinian people, but the sect of the Palestinian people was never an issue for us. Nobody asked about the confession and sect of the Tunisian and Egyptian peoples; we have an obligation to stand by the downtrodden. Iran stood by the people of Palestine, Tunis, Egypt, and Libya; was this based on secular considerations? I find it very weird to hear some people calling on Egyptians to take to the streets, Libyans to kill Gaddafi, but when Bahrain is involved, their ink dries out, and their voices dampen”.<sup>5</sup>

But the challenge and the real confrontation came with the Syrian revolution. Iran and Hezbollah rallied in defense of Bashar al Assad by participating militarily and economically to fight like parties in the war. A war that last for nearly five years and has caused the biggest humanitarian crisis since after the Second World War.

To be sure, Hezbollah is still grudgingly respected for its ability to stand up to Israel. But it has lost its halo as a voice for the oppressed and downtrodden, and has exposed itself as a partisan and sectarian party that will side with Iran and its allies even at the expense of human rights and human lives in neighboring Syria.<sup>6</sup>

## Who is Hezbollah

The Shia community began to organize itself with the arrival of Imam Musa Sadr in Lebanon, in 1959. Musa Sadr worked hard to give a social, political and religious conscience to the Shiites of Lebanon, to push them out of the state of passivity in which they were inside the Lebanese national context<sup>7</sup>.

The first political organization that gave body to the soul of the revolutionary doctrine of Sadr, was the "Movement of the Disinherited" (*Harakat al-mahrumīn*) which he founded in 1974. He had political and social objectives. The movement represented a revolution in the attitude of the

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<sup>4</sup>Nasrallah: 1000 salutes to the Libyan fighters that are standing and fighting across Libya, in Mondoweiss, 21 March 2011, downloaded 10 October 2015 in <http://mondoweiss.net/2011/03/nasrallah-1000-salutes-to-the-libyan-fighters-that-are-standing-and-fighting-across-libya> .

<sup>5</sup>DABASHI H., Arab Springs exposes Nasrallah 's hypocrisy , in Al Jazeera, 22 giugno 2011, downloaded 10 October 2015 in <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/06/2011618103354910596.html> .

<sup>6</sup>SALEM P., *op.cit.*

<sup>7</sup>EL-MAWLA S., *Moussa Sadr et Mohammad Mahdi Chamseddine. La tradition chiite de dialogue, vers un état civil*, Paper, download 4 february 2014 in [https://www.academia.edu/2953078/Moussa\\_Sadr\\_and\\_Mohammad\\_mahdi\\_Shamseddine\\_a\\_new\\_islamic\\_approach\\_fr ench\\_](https://www.academia.edu/2953078/Moussa_Sadr_and_Mohammad_mahdi_Shamseddine_a_new_islamic_approach_fr ench_) .

Shiite community, which thus began to have an organization, their political institutions and their representatives within the institutional system<sup>8</sup>, playing with the means and the methods that Lebanese political system required. Shortly before the outbreak of the civil war Musa Sadr created the first Shiite militia, the Lebanese Battalions of Resistance, which will be recognized later by the acronym *Amal*.

In parallel to the arrival of Sadr in Lebanon, in 1958 in Iraq, after the Iraqi Revolution, the Shia party the *Hizb al-Da'wa*<sup>9</sup> was created. The *al-Dawa* party in the years 1960-1970 played a vital role in the politicization of Shiite Islam in general. The core of this party were two: the Iraqi one properly, which aimed to overthrow the regime in Iraq and the establishment of an Islamic State where politics and religion had different spheres of influence and Musa Sadr was a member of it; and the other one committed to extend this form of Islam beyond the borders of Iraq, a member of which was also Ruhollah Khomeini. Meanwhile, several members of the Iraqi cell of al-Da'wa party belonging to the radical faction infiltrated the "Movement of the Disinherited" in Lebanon and in the ranks of *Amal*<sup>10</sup>. Many of these infiltrators joined Hezbollah after its creation in 1982.

Hezbollah was not involved in the internal dynamics of the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990), being born only in the last years of the war (in secret in 1982 and officially in 1985) and putting emphasis on the clash with the Israeli army and its Christian ally, the South Lebanon Army (SLA).

The Islamic Revolution in Iran and the interests of Syria and Iran in Lebanon intertwine its own dynamics in a kind of original magma that supports the creation and growth of the Shiite militia, Hezbollah. We should not overlook two other factors: the Lebanese confessional system that has produced injustice and left in the margins of the economy and of power for many years the Shiite community, and the Israel factor, with the continuous raids and bombings in the territory of South Lebanon, the occupation of the airport in 1968, the occupation of 1972 and 1978 and that which will be a catalyst for the affirmation of the Shiite movement: the occupation of Lebanon in June 1982 until the end of May 2000.

Musa al-Sadr mysteriously disappeared on 31 August 1978, in the end of a trip to Libya. The birth of Hezbollah is to be placed in the atmosphere of mystery and political vacuum caused by the disappearance of Sadr.

To better understand the ideological roots of Hezbollah, we must deepen the *velayat-e faqih*, the concept that divides the two souls of the Lebanese's Shiite. Starting from here, the deep links of Hezbollah with Iran, which permeate its ideology, program and strategy and probably also determine the future.

Khomeini developed his idea of *velayat-e faqih* and the perfect Islamic State. According to the Shiite doctrine this model of government would be established only after the return of the Twelfth *Imam* in occultation and meanwhile the everyday matters will be left to the State<sup>11</sup>. Khomeini changed the doctrine stating that God's desire for a right Islamic society and Islamic government does not disappear with the twelfth *Imam* and that was the intention of the Prophet and of *Imam* Ali. The political doctrine of *velayat-e faqih*, entrusts the Government and the leadership of the State to *marja'a*. The Sovereignty is "... the exclusive prerogative of God, as are the laws and decrees" <sup>12</sup>. God's laws so should be reinforced by religious scholars the more honest in interpreting them <sup>13</sup>. In this Islamic State the *ulema* would assume the constituent power, the responsibility of the executive, the legislative and the judicial affairs <sup>14</sup> by placing itself above anyone.

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<sup>8</sup> AZANI E., *Hezbollah. The story of the Party of God*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2009, p. 55. v. SORENSON D.S., *Global security watch-Lebanon: a reference handbook*, Praeger Publishers, Santa Barbara 2009, p. 104.

<sup>9</sup> MOCKAITIS TH.R. , *The Iraq war Encyclopedia*, ABC –CLIO, Santa Barbara 2013, p. 222.

<sup>10</sup> NORTON A.R., *Hezbollah a short history*, Princeton University Press, Princeton e Oxford 2007, p. 31.

<sup>11</sup> MOIN B., *Khomeini Life of the Ayatollah*, I.B.Tauris, New York 2009, p. 153.

<sup>12</sup> KHOMEINI R., *Il Governo islamico*, Il Cerchio Iniziative Editoriali, Rimini 2006, p. 42.

<sup>13</sup> MOIN B., *op.cit.*, p. 153.

<sup>14</sup> Ivi, p. 154.

Khomeini's theory breaks with the past, claiming the duty of the most knowledgeable clergy is to participate directly in political power in the government of the Islamic society. The *faqih*, given its quality, holds the same authority as the Prophet and the *Imams*<sup>15</sup>, so is the one who can establish an Islamic government. His authority is invested by God<sup>16</sup> and so the people must obey. Disobey the *vali-e faqih* by believers means disobeying God<sup>17</sup>. So the *velayat-e faqih* embodies the power, while the *faqih* is a dictator by absolute power, as is the witness of God until the return of the *Imam* Mahdi. Until then the *faqih* was not authorized to use force to command good and forbid evil, now has the incumbent decisions of war and peace.

And from this magma of 1982 at the Iranian Embassy in Damascus to direct the will of Ayatollah Khomeini and the hands of Ambassador Ali Akbar Mohtashemipour was founded the Party of God. The spread of the Islamic Revolution and its principles beyond the boundaries of Iran, but also the pursuit of concrete political and strategic projects in the region, were the main targets of Khomeini<sup>18</sup>, and Hezbollah in Lebanon was one of the main tools that he used to achieve them.

In the tactics of Hezbollah's strategy to achieve the political objective were first the suicide attacks, the kidnappings and the attacks out of Lebanon. All the violent actions had as strategic objectives the expansion of Iran's Islamic Revolution, the war against Western forces allied to Israel, the pursuit of the objectives of Iran's foreign policy and the interests of Tehran in general. The purpose of Hezbollah was not to integrate into the Lebanese State, but to act as an alternative actor directly controlled by Iran.

The movement took root in the territory, fighting against Israel, which occupied southern Lebanon and its allies, dismissing all other militias in the areas it had control over, and beginning to invest in the welfare, education, health protection and social assistance in favor of the Shiite population in southern Lebanon. Hezbollah knew that the war could not be won by military means alone. Hezbollah is an actor with a militia that ignores the authority of the Lebanese Army and the Police. The economic and the social sources are only part of the elements that determine the behavior and actions of Hezbollah's organization, using the welfare as an instrument of power, especially in a situation where the activities of the State are weak on this front<sup>19</sup>.

Between the two actors of the Shiite community, *Amal* presented itself as part of the national political system and used its position within the State to provide social services and aid to the Shiite community, while Hezbollah put in place its own independent system serving as an alternative. *Amal* was a political movement that used the Shiite religion as part of the cultural identity that inspired its action, while the Shi'ite Hezbollah placed it at the base of their ideology and the service of the politics: a real model that guided and structured its actions<sup>20</sup>. Hezbollah extended its services and financial, social, rural and urban benefits through a network of linked foundations and associations and distinguished itself for the effectiveness of their distribution, for their quality and longevity and the number of beneficiaries.

On 6 August 1988, Khomeini accepted the ceasefire with Iraq with reluctance and discomfort. The cease-fire marked the end of his dream of exporting the Islamic revolution beyond the borders of Iran<sup>21</sup>. Khomeini realized that the universalism of the Islamic Revolution was

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<sup>15</sup> Ivi, p. 48.

<sup>16</sup> Ivi, p. 49.

<sup>17</sup> ABRAHAMIAN E., *Khomeinism in the Islamic Republic*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1993, p. 25.

<sup>18</sup> JABER H., *Hezbollah born with a vengeance*, Columbia University Press, New York 1997, p. 109.

<sup>19</sup> WILLIAMS Ph., *Criminals, militias and insurgents. Organized crime in Iraq*, Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle 2009, ed. Kindle, position 3069.

<sup>20</sup> HARB M., *Le Hezbollah à Beyrouth*, Karthala, Paris 2010, pp.68-76.

<sup>21</sup> SALT J., *La disfatta del Medio Oriente*, Edizioni Elliot, Roma 2009, p. 263.

impossible<sup>22</sup>. Failure of the objective of the expansion of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, proved equally unthinkable to pursue it in Lebanon<sup>23</sup>.

1989, a crucial year in contemporary history, was marked not only by the fall of the Berlin Wall, but also by the end of the Iran-Iraq war, Khomeini's death and the arrival of the pragmatic leadership of the Islamic Republic, as well as the end of the civil war in Lebanon with the signing of the Ta'if Agreement. But in their pronouncements, the leaders of the shiite movement, after the Ta'if's agreement had been recognized in the role of the national resistance, fit among its slogan the concept of the Arab nation and that of the Lebanese State, suggesting that they have abandoned the plans to develop a new model of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Lebanon. It was a pragmatic and rational move shared by both allies within the long-term strategy for the control of the Lebanese politics.

The political strategy of Shiism in Lebanon was intended to become the dominant player in the political arena. Hezbollah acted to make it happen in two phases: the first phase will include attempts to build an Islamic Republic in Lebanon (1985-1992). In these years he also focused the armed conflict with *Amal* and consolidated a de facto mini-state in the Shiite community.

The second phase was the gradual entry of Hezbollah in the government, with the participation of political institutions (1992-2005) and also the executive after the 2005. The hegemony of the Shiite political strategy used two tools to achieve the objectives: the military force that Hezbollah had reached and the population growth of the Shiite community.

Khamenei authorized the participation of Hezbollah in the elections of 1992<sup>24</sup>. Entering in the system, Hezbollah could participate in the national political dialogue, trying to address the administrative decisions to their advantage. Parliament would become the platform<sup>25</sup> for the promotion of the political agenda and the move would impact the welfare policies, the allocation of the national budget and legislation. Also it would consolidated the cooperation with other social and religious communities.

The logistical and military aid from Iran and Syria, the strong discipline, the spirit of resistance in the war against Israel, the support of the population, the charisma of its leader Hassan Nasrallah, the secret structure decentralized, the pyramidal centralisation of the decisions led him to the maximum success in 2000, when Israeli troops withdrew from Lebanon. Hezbollah said, before the arrival of an official statement from the Lebanese Government, that the occupation could not be considered completed until the territory of the Sheba's Farms in the South (the area from which Israeli troops have never withdrawn) had not been freed. This heralded the continuation of the resistance<sup>26</sup>. Khamenei as *vali-e faqih* gave his approval for the continuation of the *Jihad*, but at the same time invited Hezbollah to persevere in its pragmatic line<sup>27</sup>.

The Shiite movement participated in all elections after the end of the civil war without going to the government, until the withdrawal from Lebanon of its strategic ally, Syria, which took place after the assassination of Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in 2005. Hezbollah at this point was absolutely the stronger Shiite party, well-armed, even more of the same Lebanese Army, with an almost exclusive control over most of southern Lebanon and the southern suburbs of Beirut, with a strong social network in the territories controlled by the Shiite majority; it also boasted a wide availability of funds, a defined strategy and a strong ideological link with their base.

Hezbollah was consolidated over the years, although almost exclusively within the Shiite population, using the funds received from Iran, those from widening its network of supporters, the

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<sup>22</sup> MOIN B., *op.cit.*, p. 269.

<sup>23</sup> CHEHABI H.E., *Distant relations. Iran and Lebanon in the last 500 years*, The Center for Lebanese Studies, Oxford 2006, p. 295.

<sup>24</sup> QASSEM N., *Hizbullah. The Story from Within*, SAQI, London 2005, p. 191.

<sup>25</sup> AZANI E., *op.cit.*, p. 95.

<sup>26</sup> NASRALLAH in NOE N. (edited by), *Voice of Hezbollah*, Verso, London 2007, p. 240.

<sup>27</sup> HAMZEH N.A. In the path of Hizbullah, Syracuse University Press 2004, p. 116.

proceeds of *Khums* from inside and outside Lebanon and its illegal traffic, so as to strengthen their social network, aid to families, schools, hospitals, the reconstruction, the media network. The economic and military aid from Iran made it capable of investing enormous sums in welfare, in education, in health care and social assistance, to benefit almost exclusively Shiite population in the south of the country, allowed it to become the more powerful army force, far more than the National Army, and also to establish itself as a leading actor in the regional scene.

Every time the government tried to impose a treaty on disarmament movement, Hezbollah responded with institutional crises and violent actions that have forced everyone to give up in front of the military power of its armed wing: the Resistance. The new war against Israel in 2006, which ended with the political and military victory of Hezbollah, attributed to its leader Hassan Nasrallah great strength and was echoed throughout the region. The armed conflict was for the movement a great success in the Arab world, but it caused great destruction in the country and growing questions in Lebanese society on the role of Hezbollah. Iran and Hezbollah, fearing a negative reaction from the majority of the population, placed at the disposal substantial funding for aid to the population and the rebuilding of the infrastructure. The war of 2006 had a strong impact in the Arab world, but politically divided the Lebanese society into two groups.

In May of 2008 in front of a new government's attempt to get control over the military structure of Hezbollah, acting on its telecommunications network, the movement responded with the most violent action implemented since the end of the civil war, blocking the activity of the Executive and the Parliament for eighteen months and invading the streets of the capital. The establishment of the International Tribunal for the murder of Rafiq Hariri and the rumors about the likely involvement of Hezbollah members in the attack, made the party even more aggressive. Hezbollah organized continuous events to inflict again the pressure of the weapons, the fall of the government of Saad Hariri in January of 2011 by getting what he wanted: the formation of a national unity government.

The parliament's decision to extend its mandate, postponing the elections of June 2013 until November 2014 (for the first time after the Civil War) was made due to the instability caused by the Syrian events. Although this decision is due to the pressure from Hezbollah which did not suit absolutely to find an agreement on a new electoral law and face consultation in an unfavorable domestic situation after the fall of Mikati's government, and in the wide public's disapproval for its military commitment in support of the regime of Bashar al-Assad. The Lebanese government had declared neutrality in the Syrian civil war, neutrality that Hezbollah has not absolutely respected<sup>28</sup>. The pressures by the political bloc "March 8" part of which Hezbollah is also in the choice of the new President of the Republic are likely to leave the country in the grip of a dangerous political vacuum.

The war in Syria has highlighted two important things: one is caused by the new division of the communities within Lebanon, with the Sunnis against the regime of Bashar al-Assad, the Shiites instead deployed in defense of the Syrian government and the Christian community divided in two. The Shiite community feels more protected from Hezbollah than the institutions of the Lebanese State.

The war in Syria has impacted all neighboring States due to the influx of refugees and that of the fighters going to war, both causing the ignition of sectarian tensions. Lebanon seems to be the most involved country. As always, the regional tensions may reshuffle the cards in the Lebanese politics at any moment and the balance of its internal asymmetries. All communities feel that the future of their destiny is tied strongly to the outcome of the war in the neighboring country.

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<sup>28</sup> *Le non de Nasrallah à la neutralité du Liban*, in "L'Orient le Jour", 16 February 2014, downloaded the same day in <http://www.lorientlejour.com/article/854895/le-non-de-nasrallah-a-la-neutralite-du-liban.html> .

Hezbollah began sending the first military and weapon support to the Assad regime since the outbreak of civil war. Already in 2012 many sources spoke of Hezbollah martyrs killed in Syria<sup>29</sup>, despite the fact that the resistance firmly denied any involvement in the fighting. Only after seventy militants died on the battlefield in Syria the 25 May 2013, the day of liberation from Israeli occupation, Nasrallah publicly admitted the active military support provided by Hezbollah to the regime of Bashar al-Assad.

Syria could not be left alone against the United States, Israel and the terrorism of takfiris. So the war in Syria and in particular the battle for the conquest of Qusair in Homs province and Yabroud in the mountains of Qalamoun in March of 2014 along the Syrian army, becomes symbolic in the defense of the city inhabited by Shiites against the radical Sunni terrorism and strategic for the importance on the links between Damascus, the Syrian ports and the cities of Homs seeing thousands of Hezbollah militants at the forefront<sup>30</sup>.

For the Shiite community in Lebanon, the importance of the defense of the Syrian regime goes even further than the defense of the axis of resistance (Iran-Syria-Hezbollah). The fear of the growth of a Sunni influence and return back in time to when the Shiite community was more subdued, is still alive. Hezbollah knows it very well and uses this fear. The official reasons of Hezbollah (the defense of the Resistance, the fight against terrorism and the defense from the takfiris of Shiite holy sites in Syria) and the fear of a community that sees their fate closely tied to that of Hezbollah, appear sufficient to keep joined the ranks of most Lebanese Shiites, at least for now. There certainly were divisions on the intervention in Syria within the community<sup>31</sup>, but not to the point of preventing Hezbollah to go ahead and collect the hearts of young Lebanese Shiites.

### *Conclusion*

Hezbollah in Lebanon uses its military power, the actions of welfare and the control of the territory with the "weapons", especially in a situation in which the activity of the State is weak<sup>32</sup>. It said to act in support of the State and as its substitute, but its work, in fact, de-legitimizes the constituted authority<sup>33</sup>. The weakness of the public sector and the resulting vacuum of power, push Hezbollah to usurp the power, taking advantage of the great freedom of action enjoyed in the country. It is true that in the early years there was a form of coexistence between the army and resistance: where could not get the one, came the other, but definitely from the 2000, after the withdrawal of Israeli troops, the Lebanese State has sought to impose its sovereignty.

Hezbollah was born as a result of shortcomings of the State, but by the years it becomes the cause of the weakness of the latter. The peculiarity of the Lebanese case is the existence within the State of a political group which not only can affect the internal sovereignty, but also the foreign policy and the international position of the country.

Hezbollah is continuing its strategy in the name of defending the nation, it preserves and enhances its weapons in the name of the resistance against the Zionist enemy, it retains control over the territory ensuring the support of a considerable part of the population. It is violent and offensive from inside. It is still the only actor in the Lebanese political scene invoking religion, or religious themes to justify their actions.

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<sup>29</sup> KHALIFEH P., *Liban: les militants du Hezbollah combattent aux côtés du régime syrien*, in «RFI», 9 October 2012, downloaded the same day in <http://www.rfi.fr/moyen-orient/20121009-liban-militants-hezbollah-combattaient-aux-cotes-regime-syrien-nasrallah>.

<sup>30</sup> ALAMI M., *Hezbollah takes lead in pounding syrian rebels*, in "USA Today", 27 february 2013, downloaded the same day in <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2014/02/26/hezbollah-syria/5818975/>.

<sup>31</sup> AL ZAYABI F., *Lebanon's shi'ites divided over Hezbollah's role in Syria*, in "Asharq al-Awsat", 15 June 2013, downloaded the 3 January 2014 in <http://www.aawsat.net/2013/06/article55305736>.

<sup>32</sup> WILLIAMS Ph., *op.cit.*, ed. Kindle, position 3069.

<sup>33</sup> Ivi, position 3212.

The birth of Hezbollah and its political path are determined by the political and national interests of Tehran and those of its allies, conditions that are sometimes convergent and sometimes divergent. Over the years it has gained strength and it acquires independence from the allies. Unwittingly, the Shiite party ends probably also to strengthen the national identity of the Lebanese Shiites. It does it, paradoxically for a sectarian party, acting in internationalist slogans as key against the occupation, the colonialism, the exploitation, the Western ideologies, proclaiming openly the nationalist cause as the defense of its territory till the end. Hezbollah, deeply sectarian and patronage within their confessional community has as its main objective to have the hegemony over the entire life of the country.

The movement undermines the national sovereignty of Lebanon, causing institutional crisis whenever required by its internal interests or the of Iran, and attacks the sovereignty acting to defend their own interests and as a proxy of Iran. Seen in this light, therefore, Hezbollah is an armed party with a strong national support of the Shiite community with whom the State will manage the dialogue and a strategic opposition force in the hands of the Tehran government, to undermine the sovereignty of the Lebanese State and promote Iranian policies throughout the Middle East region.

And from this point of view in general, Hezbollah can not be an actor in the participatory process of the revolutions as it doesn't share all the characteristics of the Arab Spring. Indeed, if the spirit of spring to the end of decades will take place, it will take place only by combating and winning the policies of these kind of actors. History tells us that Hezbollah has always been able to change and change in a pragmatic way. But the impression is that in this it will have a particular role at the end of the war in Syria and Iran's regional policies. In its 33 years of life, the constant of the party of God is its link to the Islamic Revolution as an instrument of Iran's foreign policy.



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