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Middle East Brief

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Is Hezbollah Confronting a Crisis of Popular Legitimacy?

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For a long time now, outside observers have assumed that the majority of Lebanese Shiites, not to mention many Arabs throughout the Middle East, supported Hezbollah unconditionally. Beginning in the mid-1980s, Hezbollah waged guerilla warfare against and resisted Israel's occupation of South Lebanon. In 2000, Hezbollah forced an Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon; in 2006, it stood its ground against a month-long Israeli assault. Since 1992, Hezbollah has participated in national elections and won parliamentary seats and received cabinet appointments.

In addition, Hezbollah distributed basic services to thousands of Lebanese Shiites, along with Lebanese of other sects, in the form of housing, water, electricity, education, health, vocational training, and agricultural extension; it also repaired infrastructure damaged by Israeli attacks and by warring domestic factions. In sum, Hezbollah filled the void of a Lebanese state mired in internal factionalism and external meddling, and helped to deliver Lebanese Shiites from disenfranchisement and destitution to military empowerment, political relevance, and economic prosperity.

And yet, regardless of all its achievements—or perhaps because of them—Hezbollah has recently faced growing discontent and mounting criticism, not only from other Lebanese factions but from its own Shiite constituents. What are the sources of this discontent and criticism? Some experts believe that Hezbollah's erosion of domestic support originated with its recent intervention in Syria.[1] This Brief argues, however, that Hezbollah's involvement in Syria only exacerbated a crisis of popular legitimacy that began

in the mid-2000s. In the years since, Hezbollah, in its dual status as both a militia and a political party, both engaged in military confrontation with Israel and entered the Lebanese cabinet.

The Brief's first two sections examine how Hezbollah's costly foreign adventures—its 2006 war against Israel as well as its recent intervention in Syria—weakened its legitimacy. The third section explores how Hezbollah's deficiencies related to governance further eroded its popularity. The final section addresses what lies in Hezbollah's foreseeable future in light of its weakened status inside both Shiite Lebanon and the broader region.

The 2006 War with Israel: From One Promise to Another

Beginning in the mid-1980s, Hezbollah waged guerilla warfare against Israel's occupation of South Lebanon—and Israel's withdrawal from South Lebanon on May 24, 2000, marked Hezbollah's military peak: The withdrawal was not precipitated by another nation's army, but by a resistance movement consisting of several thousand committed fighters. Yet, in spite of Hezbollah's impressive victory and its growing domestic and regional popularity, the organization underwent an existential crisis. Now that the occupier had withdrawn, what was the popular resistance movement's raison d'être? Deploying additional forces to South Lebanon, Hezbollah took up the cause of liberating a small swath of disputed territory along the Israeli-Lebanese border known as Shebaa Farms, where it engaged in a low-intensity sporadic conflict with Israel between 2000 and 2006. While many Lebanese Shiites felt removed from this conflict and some quietly questioned its utility, they were too intoxicated by the euphoria and pride of having vanquished their former occupier to publicly question the long-term benefits and costs of the conflict and whether it truly constituted an act of resistance.

After its 2006 war with Israel, Hezbollah declared a "divine victory" (*naṣrāllah*)—a name identical with the last name of its charismatic Secretary General, Hassan Nasrallah. Hezbollah displayed this slogan on billboards along the main road from Rafik Hariri International Airport, located in the Hezbollah stronghold of Southern Beirut, to the center of the city. But from the standpoint of geopolitics, and in terms of its own legitimacy, the war was costly for Hezbollah. After the war, Hezbollah relinquished de facto military control over the South Lebanon border region to fifteen thousand Lebanese soldiers and ten thousand UNIFIL troops.[2] Inside Shiite Lebanon, a crack in Hezbollah's edifice appeared as the organization encountered the first serious blow to its popular support. Many Lebanese Shiites felt that the deaths of their loved ones and injuries to them, the destruction of their homes and businesses, and their humiliating exile and temporary status as refugees had been a high price to pay for the slaying and abduction of ten Israeli soldiers. Many demanded compensation and began to question whether Operation True Promise had in fact constituted an act of resistance (*muq'wamah*)—Hezbollah's central mantra.

In his post-war statements, Nasrallah, after claiming divine victory, addressed the complaints, expectations, fears, and doubts of Lebanese Shiites. In his first televised interview after the war, he asserted that if Hezbollah's leadership had been able to predict even one percent of the extent of Israel's response, it would not have carried out the Operation.[3] Nasrallah also addressed the cavalier and provocative statements he had made during the conflict about unleashing

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surprises and declaring open-ended war against Israel: He claimed that he had made these statements exclusively for deterrence purposes, and reassured his constituents that Hezbollah did not want another war with Israel.[4]

In the same interview, Nasrallah also laid out precise details of the Lebanese post-war reconstruction, promising to make Beirut's southern suburbs nicer than they had been before the war.[5] For this reason, Hezbollah named the reconstruction, and the company that undertook it, the Promise (*wa'ad*). Considered an impressive feat of engineering, the project was a success on many levels.[6] But the reconstruction, which cost an estimated $400 million, did not fully assuage local discontent, because it created perceptions, both real and imagined, of favoritism and corruption.

While the aftermath of the 2006 war marked a sensitive period for Hezbollah, three factors prevented its popular legitimacy from suffering a complete collapse. First, the organization's regional popularity remained high,[7] and Nasrallah was one of the three most popular Arab leaders, along with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and former Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. To the dismay of Arab rulers, their own citizens preferred these three leaders when it came to forging an axis of resistance against Israel and the United States in Lebanon, Iraq, and Palestine. Second, although Lebanese Shiites were upset about the death and destruction inflicted by the war, they kept their overt criticism of Hezbollah to a minimum. A handful of Lebanese Shiite intellectuals, notably Lebanese University Professor Mona Fayyad in her seminal essay "To Be a Shiite Now," publicly lambasted Hezbollah for its costly operation.[8] Other potential critics and distraught locals within and outside the Lebanese Shiite community bit their tongues, however, owing to their strong antipathy toward Israel and their fear of being labeled traitors. Finally, despite Lebanese Shiites' anger over the war and dissatisfaction with it, the ensuing reconstruction reinforced Hezbollah's position as caretaker and provider. With funds initially tied up in the coffers of a dysfunctional Lebanese state and with generous financing from Iran, Hezbollah repaired infrastructure in its neighborhoods, delivered housing and other services to its constituents, and bolstered its patronage networks around the country.

Intervention in Syria: Death, Destruction, Division, and Dissent

On March 15, 2011, popular demonstrations spread from other parts of the Arab world to Syria. Several months later, after al-Assad deployed the army to suppress protesters, the uprising turned violent and transformed into a full-blown civil war. As early as the summer of 2012, if not before, Hezbollah was intervening in the Syrian conflict. A key turning point occurred on July 18, when a suicide bombing killed several of al-Assad's senior security advisers. Between that time and the spring of 2013, Hezbollah discreetly offered military assistance to al-Assad and participated in key battles—most notably in the city of Qusayr near the Syrian-Lebanese border—which helped turn the tide of the conflict in al-Assad's favor.

The Syrian conflict had existential implications for Hezbollah. If the al-Assad regime fell, Hezbollah would lose a major transit route through which it procured Iranian missiles, rockets, and other hardware. Al-Assad's demise would, as well, isolate Hezbollah and erode its political and military standing in Lebanon.[9]

On April 30, 2013, Nasrallah publicly acknowledged that Hezbollah had been providing military support to the al-Assad regime. Since then, Shiite Lebanon has been subjected to a spate of suicide and car bombings, as well as rocket and artillery attacks carried out by Syrian rebels and Sunni radicals.[10] These attacks, along with the involvement by Hezbollah that sparked them, set off a debate within the Lebanese Shiite community, and divided it. Many Lebanese Shiites presciently feared that Hezbollah's intervention would invite retaliation from Syrian rebels and Sunni radicals, and would exacerbate pre-existing sectarian tensions inside Lebanon as well. And although Lebanese Shiites recognized that al-Assad represented an important strategic ally for Hezbollah, they were galvanized by the wave of popular uprisings across the region and supported Syrian protesters and rebels in their fight against tyranny, oppression, and injustice. As a result, many Lebanese Shiites initially questioned, if not opposed, Hezbollah's involvement in Syria. Their ambivalence and misgivings with respect to the intervention grew as they witnessed the growing number of body bags and funerals of Hezbollah fighters, who were their own sons or those of their neighbors.[11]

As the scale of the Syrian conflict grew and Shiite Lebanon was exposed to more bombings and attacks, many Lebanese Shiites became increasingly upset that Hezbollah's foreign adventures were subjecting them to physical and material harm. Repeated bombings and attacks generated fear and anxiety, to the point that individuals did not leave their homes and questioned Hezbollah's ability to protect them. Particularly in Southern Beirut, the eroding security situation negatively impacted the business and investment climate, along with people's livelihoods. Restaurant and shop owners witnessed a marked decline in customers, while residents

attempted to sell or rent their apartments and relocate to other parts of the city, driving down property values.

In Hezbollah's media outlets and Nasrallah's speeches, Hezbollah spun its intervention in Syria as preemptive protection against jihadists and *takfiris*.[12] In his speeches, Nasrallah deliberately avoided using the term "Sunni" lest he further inflame sectarian tensions in Lebanon. The fact that the al-Qaeda-linked Abdullah Azzam Brigade, Jabhat al-Nusra, and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) claimed responsibility for most of these attacks lent credence to Hezbollah's claims. Nevertheless, many Lebanese Shiites were fully aware that these attacks only began and subsequently intensified after Nasrallah's open admission of Hezbollah's involvement in Syria.

The adverse reactions of Lebanese Shiites to Hezbollah's intervention in Syria to some extent resembled how they felt during and after the 2006 war with Israel. But more Lebanese Shiites than in 2006 rejected intervention in the Syrian conflict, which took place beyond their borders and which pitted fellow Arabs and Muslims against each other—and a repressive dictator against an oppressed people. And unlike in 2006, when Hezbollah's regional popularity soared, its support from the region's Arab Sunni majority now waned. In the midst of the so-called Arab Spring, many Arabs had difficulty reconciling the inherent contradictions and hypocrisy associated with a popular resistance movement's backing a ruthless dictator who used heavy artillery and chemical weapons against his own people.[13]

As a result, more Lebanese Shiites have openly criticized Hezbollah. Since 2012, prominent Lebanese Shiite politicians, clerics, intellectuals, and activists have issued public statements condemning Hezbollah's involvement in Syria. These detractors argued both that Hezbollah's intervention was illegitimate and that it worked against the interests of Lebanese Shiites and other citizens, for four reasons. First, it was argued, Hezbollah's involvement unfairly burdened the Lebanese with violence, instability, and uncertainty while Hezbollah and its Syrian and Iranian allies pursued their own interests. Second, the intervention increased sectarian tensions, both within Lebanon and in the wider region. Third, Hezbollah's involvement infringed upon the sovereignty of the Lebanese state with respect to its control over foreign policy and its neutrality vis-à-vis, or disassociation from, the conflict in Syria, as expressed in the Baabda Declaration.[14] And finally, the intervention violated the legal and human rights of Syrians who sought honor, freedom, justice, and democracy.[15] Of course, these highly vocal critics did not speak for all Lebanese Shiites. Some of them had political axes to grind, and/or received American support. But the increase in public criticism as compared with 2006 indicates that Hezbollah's standing in the Shiite community has weakened enough to allow for these voices to emerge, regardless of their ultimate political agenda.

Deficient Governance: Deadlock, Corruption, and Authoritarianism

Issues related to *governance* have also adversely affected Hezbollah's popular legitimacy, quite apart from its 2006 war against Israel and its recent involvement in Syria. Although Hezbollah began as a popular resistance movement and militia in opposition to the Israeli occupation, it eventually also became a political party. In the 1992 and 1996 parliamentary elections, the party won twelve and nine parliamentary seats, respectively. Hezbollah's parliamentary presence served as a means of channeling state resources away from Maronite and Sunni politicians and their more affluent neighborhoods in Beirut and Mount Lebanon and toward poorer communities in Shiite Lebanon as well as its own patronage networks. During the 1990s, Hezbollah deliberately relegated its political participation exclusively to the parliament so as to avoid getting entangled in the factional compromises and horse trading that regularly took place in the cabinet.

Hezbollah's political calculus changed when the interests of its military wing were challenged in 2005. That year marked the assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and Syria's subsequent withdrawal from Lebanon after having occupied the country for nearly three decades. These developments were problematic for Hezbollah's military branch, because they led to the loss of Syrian patronage and protection in Lebanon; to increased calls, both by the international community and by domestic parties, for Hezbollah's disarming; and to the establishment of an international tribunal, the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, that implicated first the Syrian regime and, later, Hezbollah itself in the Hariri assassination. As a consequence, between 2005 and 2006, a vulnerable Hezbollah became more assertive in Lebanese politics and, for the first time, entered the cabinet.

To expand its presence in the cabinet, Hezbollah forged pragmatic alliances with its former rivals, the secular Shiite party Amal and the Christian Free Patriotic Movement of former general Michel Aoun, who had been exiled to France for opposing the Syrian occupation. The alliance between Hezbollah, Amal, and the Free Patriotic Movement became known as March 8, the date of 2005

demonstrations that supported the Syrian presence in Lebanon. March 8 positioned itself against March 14 (the date of the 2005 Cedar Revolution against the Syrian occupation), a coalition led by the Sunni Future Movement of Hariri's son, Saad.

Although Hezbollah gradually strengthened its position in the Lebanese cabinet, subsequent political developments were detrimental to the party's popular support. Since 2005, Lebanese Shiites and other citizens have become increasingly aware, and exasperated, that Hezbollah was using its political influence to pursue the interests of its military wing and its regional allies at the expense of the Lebanese government and people. Thus, in the past, Hezbollah had criticized the government for its dysfunctionality; yet three times since 2005, ministers affiliated with Hezbollah and March 8 resigned from the cabinet, thereby paralyzing the government. Though March 8 blamed these decisions on constitutional technicalities and electoral laws, these impasses and deadlocks coincided with instances when the interests of Hezbollah and its Syrian and Iranian patrons were threatened. And each time, March 14 supported the international community's efforts to expedite the trial of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon and to pressure Hezbollah to disarm and withdraw from Syria.

When March 8 secured a cabinet majority under Prime Minister Najib Mikati in 2011, expectations rose among Lebanese Shiites and other citizens that domestic governance would improve, especially given that Hezbollah's own ministers, Hussein Hajj Hassan and Muhammad Fneish, were given the portfolios of administrative reform and agriculture, respectively. Disappointment followed, however, when basic services, such as sanitation, water, and electricity, did not significantly improve—nor did access to public space, such as parks, greenery, and parking. Following the latest pullout by March 8 from the government in March 2013, public services around Lebanon actually worsened.[16]

This situation was aggravated by the influx of approximately one million Syrian refugees, constituting approximately one-fourth of the total Lebanese population—an influx that was partially the result of Hezbollah's involvement in and prolongation of the Syrian conflict. Shiite Lebanese farmers in the Bekaa Valley, one of Hezbollah's main constituencies, complained about Hajj Hassan's inability to alleviate the agricultural export crisis caused by the ongoing conflict in Syria. And beyond the lack of improvements related to public services and agriculture, many Lebanese Shiites in Southern Beirut and other areas faulted Hezbollah for its inattention to social issues, including drugs and crime.

Whereas Hezbollah and March 8 previously blamed the March 14 coalition for the Lebanese government's incompetence, they had more difficulty doing so after they had gained control of the cabinet under Mikati. When it came to deficient governance, Hezbollah could no longer point the finger at the state, because it now *was* the state—or, at least, a major player within it. The fact that Lebanese Shiites and other citizens increasingly conflated Hezbollah with a state they regarded with profound distrust and perceived as being weak, ineffective, sectarian, and corrupt hurt the party's image. At the same time, the myriad criticisms and complaints emanating from Lebanese Shiites ironically reflected Hezbollah's *success*—in educating them and delivering them from disenfranchisement and destitution. For Hezbollah, this remarkable achievement constituted a double-edged sword—for with the greater political empowerment and socioeconomic mobility of its constituents came rising expectations and, therefore, increased levels of disappointment. As Lebanese Shiites acquired greater material comforts and came to harbor higher aspirations for their children, they had more to lose from Hezbollah's so-called resistance and foreign adventures.

In the realm of governance, two other factors that negatively impacted Hezbollah's popular legitimacy were corruption and authoritarianism. In the past, Hezbollah had criticized the government for its endless corruption: In 2003, a commentator for Hezbollah's official newspaper wrote, "It is not that the system in Lebanon is corrupt but rather that corruption has become the system."[17] But since then, a number of high-profile corruption scandals have broken out involving Hezbollah officials and their relatives and associates. On November 26, 2009, a businessman with close ties to Hezbollah—dubbed the Lebanese Bernie Madoff—was indicted for running a pyramid scheme reportedly worth over $200 million.[18] On February 15, 2013, the brother of Hezbollah's minister of administrative reform was arrested on charges of illegally importing medication.[19]

In recent years, more Lebanese Shiites noticed, and disapproved of, the ostentatious wealth of Hezbollah's second-generation party members and their families: their high-end apartments, luxury cars and SUVs, designer clothing, and top-of-the-line cellphones. These overt displays of wealth conflicted with Hezbollah's original ethos of humility, austerity, and selflessness, and contradicted Nasrallah's assertion that the organization's fighters did not "go to war in order to . . . achieve material advantages."[20] Nasrallah apparently recently intervened to discourage members from flaunting their wealth. Given that corruption was already rampant within the party, Nasrallah and other old-guard leaders supposedly sought to prevent its spreading to Hezbollah's military wing.[21]

Another issue that has alarmed Lebanese Shiites is Hezbollah's increasing authoritarianism. In 2013, Hezbollah's consultative council appointed Nasrallah – the face of the organization – to an eighth consecutive three-year term as Secretary General. Since the 2005 alliance between Hezbollah and Amal, Lebanese Shiite elites have publicly lamented their community's lack of political pluralism.[22] Privately, many ordinary Lebanese Shiites have felt trapped between the two Shiite parties, and concede that not being affiliated with one or the other has severely restricted their educational and employment opportunities as well as their access to basic services.

As Hezbollah's popular legitimacy declined, it resorted to harsher measures to suppress both internal and external dissent. In 2008, after March 14 threatened to shut down Hezbollah's communications network and to replace its airport security chief, Wafic Shkeir, Hezbollah deployed its forces around Lebanon and put the country under lockdown. This led to violent clashes between pro- and anti-Hezbollah forces that claimed the lives of approximately 160 people. During this period, Hezbollah used force and intimidation to target detractors within the Lebanese Shiite community as well.[23] Between 2010 and 2012, Hezbollah, in cooperation with Syria, detained two clerics who had defected from the organization and who subsequently awaited military trials.[24] Hezbollah and its regional allies also employed extrajudicial means to silence critics within the Lebanese Shiite community. On June 10, 2013, student activists connected to a March 14 Shiite politician, Ahmad al-Asaad were assaulted, and their leader, Hashem al-Salman, was fatally shot outside the Iranian embassy in Southern Beirut while protesting Hezbollah's involvement in Syria.[25]

Hezbollah's Popular Legitimacy Crisis: Mitigating Factors

Hezbollah's eroding popular legitimacy, stemming from both its foreign adventures and its complicity with deficiencies in domestic governance, leaves unanswered the question of what lies ahead for the organization in the foreseeable future.

Beyond the fact that Hezbollah has constituted Lebanon's most potent military force, while receiving substantial support and backing from both Syria and Iran, three other factors have enabled Hezbollah to remain a dominant actor in Lebanon. The first revolves around both patronage and ideology. Hezbollah has overseen a broad array of institutions independent of the state, including schools, hospitals, and charities, on which the livelihood and welfare of thousands have depended. And many Lebanese Shiites remain connected to Hezbollah ideologically and emotionally, with Israel's occupation of and withdrawal from Lebanon still fresh on their minds, as a result of Nasrallah's speeches as well as programming on Hezbollah's media outlets, including al-Manar television. Lebanese Shiites' increasing education, politicization, and intellectual sophistication, however, have rendered Hezbollah's propaganda messages a more difficult sell.

A second factor buttressing Hezbollah's continuing clout is the growing threat posed by Syrian rebels and Sunni radicals, who are in the process of committing a grave strategic error. As indicated above, many Lebanese Shiites initially sympathized with the Syrian uprising against al-Assad and remained ambivalent, at best, about Hezbollah's intervention in the conflict. Indiscriminate, unpredictable, and devastating bombings and other attacks by Syrian rebels and Sunni radicals, however, have reduced Lebanese Shiites' sympathy for the Syrian uprising, pushed them to support Hezbollah's involvement in Syria, and validated Hezbollah's claim that it was defending them from *takfiris*. Lebanese Shiites' support for the Syrian uprising was further compromised based on their perceptions that the uprising had evolved from an indigenous endeavor to an American- and Gulf-backed conspiracy, and that the Syrian opposition had become more and more radicalized and was increasingly composed of foreign jihadists. In addition, extremist Sunni groups like the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria aroused fear in Lebanese Shiites and other citizens when they broadcast videos of executions, beheadings, and other inhumane tactics and publicized their aspirations to establish a draconian state in the region and beyond.

The third factor that has allowed Hezbollah to preserve its dominance is the lack of viable alternatives in Lebanon. The image of Hezbollah's Sunni political rival, March 14, has been equally, if not more, tarnished by perceptions of ineptitude and corruption—and persistent government deadlocks and rising sectarian tensions exacerbated by the Syrian conflict have left it fragmented, and weakened by the emergence of more radical Sunni and Salafist splinter groups. Prominent Lebanese Shiite critics of Hezbollah, who had been harassed and threatened by the organization, were sharply critical of March 14 for abandoning them, compromising with Hezbollah, and promoting sectarian divisiveness.[26]

Meanwhile, Hezbollah's secular counterpart, Amal, remains under the centralized and autocratic leadership of Nabih Berri, who has served as Speaker of Parliament since 1992. Compared with Hezbollah, Amal is further entrenched in the state and plagued by corruption. Founded in 1974, Amal has been involved in Lebanese politics longer, holds more parliamentary seats, and is

equally, if not more, corrupt than Hezbollah. Although many of Amal's officials quietly resented Hezbollah, Amal's 2005 alliance with Hezbollah undermined its status as an alternative Shiite party.

In the final analysis, although Hezbollah is confronting a crisis of popular legitimacy, the organization's well-developed patronage network and propaganda arm, its declared resolve to counter the *takfiri* threat, and its comparative advantage over internal competitors should enable it to retain its dominance in Lebanon for the foreseeable future.

Endnotes

1 See Randa Slim, "Hezbollah's Plunge into the Syrian Abyss," *Foreign Policy*, May 28, 2013, [By subscription only].*
2 Nicholas Noe, ed., *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah* (New York: Verso, 2007), pp. 11–12.
3 Noe, *Voice of Hezbollah*, pp. 12, 394.
4 "Nasrallah's Speech Marking the End of the July War," *Conflicts Forum*, August 25, 2007.*
5 Ibid.
6 Scarlett Haddad, "Promesse tenue: 270 immeubles à Haret Hreik entièrement reconstruits à l'initiative de Waad" [Promise kept: 270 buildings in Haret Hreik completely rebuilt at the initiative of Waad], *Liban*, May 11, 2012.*
7 Noe, *Voice of Hezbollah*, p. 11.
8 Mona Fayyad, "To Be a Shiite Now," *Al-Nahar*, August 8, 2006.*
9 For Iran, the Syrian conflict had important geostrategic implications. Since the range of Iran's missiles was limited, the rockets Iran delivered to Hezbollah through Syria served as a strategic buffer and deterrent against Israel while Iran developed its nuclear program and pursued other interests in the region.
10 Crisis Watch Database: Lebanon, International Crisis Group.*
11 Slim, "Hezbollah's Plunge into the Syrian Abyss."
12 The term "*takfiri*" was invoked by Sunni extremists to declare Shiites or Muslims of other sects to be apostates.
13 Since 2006, the axis of resistance's regional support declined following Hezbollah's 2008 deployment of forces to Sunni neighborhoods in Lebanon, and Tehran's and Damascus's respective suppression of popular demonstrations in 2009 and 2011.
14 On the other hand, the Baabda Declaration did not prevent Lebanese Sunni officials affiliated with March 14 (see text below) from funding and arming Syrian rebels against the al-Assad regime. For details of the Baabda Declaration, see U.N. General Assembly, Agenda item 36: The situation in the Middle East (A/66/849–S/2012/477), June 21, 2012.*
15 See, for example: "The Call of the Two Sayyeds: A 413-Word Intellectual and Political Landmark," *ShiaWatch*, August 25, 2012*; Rakan al-Fakih; "Baalbek Figures Urge Hezbollah to Stop Fighting in Syria," *Daily Star*, February 25, 2013*; "Shiite Scholar Rejects Hezbollah Involvement in Syria," *Anadolu Agency*, June 3, 2013*; "Premises and Positions: Lebanese (Shia) Address the Lebanese," *ShiaWatch*, June 17, 2013*; and "Second Statement of the Shia Personalities," *ShiaWatch*, June 17, 2013.*
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20 Noe, *Voice of Hezbollah*, pp. 8, 201.
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22 "Premises and Positions"; "Second Statement of the Shia Personalities."
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24 Shane Farrell, "Clerics Critical of Hezbollah Face Conspiracy Charges," *Now*, January 6, 2012*; Lee Smith, "Hezbollah's Newest Threat: Lebanon's Party of God Is Feeling Heat from Certain Shiites, Who Aren't Eager to Serve as Human Shields Again," *Foundation for Defense of Democracies*, May 16, 2012*; and Lee Smith, "Hezbollah's Prisoner of Conscience: As the Trial of Sheikh Hassan Mchaymech Continues, His Support Grows," *The Weekly Standard*, May 18, 2012.*
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26 Smyth, "The 'Independent Shi'a' of Lebanon."

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