Since its inception in the early 1980s, Hizballah, the Party of God has positioned itself as a resistance group *par excellence* in the Middle East, establishing itself as the strongest non-state actor in the region. It is commonly defined in such ways yet very little work exists looking at the application of religious thought to ideas of resistance, particularly in the non-Western world. This paper does not seek to hold a Shi'a form of resistance up as against Western understandings of the term, nor indeed does it seek to establish a 'Shi'a experience'. Rather, it suggests that a new form of resistance must be considered that places a greater onus upon obligation and responsibility, achieved through engaging with the work of Giorgio Agamben, particularly the concept of *bare life*. In testing this, the paper explores the emergence of Hizballah and considers the group's response to the Syrian civil war, particularly the emergence of Da'ish. While many have argued that Da'ish poses a serious challenge to Hizballah, their military successes across Syria also provide an opportunity for the Party of God to regain legitimacy lost while supporting the regime of Bashar al Assad in Syria by protecting the Lebanese state and wider *umma*.

As such, the paper seeks to do three things: first, it explores the concept of *bare life* with regard to explaining the emergence of Hizballah; second, it considers how Shi'a thought provides scope for an alternative understanding of resistance as a form of obligation rather than solely as a response. It does not seek to hold this understanding up against understandings of resistance that are prominent within academic circles. Instead, it seeks to argue that an understanding of resistance can be found within Shi'a thought that places an obligation upon the actor to act. Third, it explores the impact of Hizballah's involvement in events in Syria, suggesting that this involvement undermines the Party of God's position as a resistance organisation while also being complicit in the construction of *bare life*.

I begin by offering an outline of Giorgio Agamben's ideas of bare life before tracing the roots of Shi'a thought, with a particular focus upon the Karbala Narrative, which features prominently in understandings of resistance. The paper then moves to consider the impact of Da'ish upon Hizballah and how this is shaping the Party of God's actions across the Middle East. It suggests that while Hizballah is rightly concerned about the growth of Da'ish, the group provides an opportunity to regain a position of leadership within the Middle East. Ultimately though, in Lebanon, the Party of God has been largely unable to change perceptions, largely as a consequence of action in Syria. To do this, I engage in an analysis of Hizballah official documents, particularly the Open Letter and the 2009 manifesto. I supplement this with an analysis of speeches given by prominent Hizballah members in the summer of 2014, shortly after the emergence of Da'ish in Iraq. Such an approach allows for greater awareness of events in Lebanon in Syria while also facilitating development of the concept of bare life.

Agamben's Bare Life

As Ibn Khaldun noted in *The Muqaddimah*, politics is inherently about people.[1] As such, political organisation is about the organisation of people. At the heart of our project then is a debate about the nature of political organisation and its relationship with sovereignty and how they impact on people. Such issues have long been contested within Political Philosophy and International Relations broadly, with a number of serious problems emerging within the conventional approaches to sovereignty. From this, frustration along with epistemological and ontological challenges, a number of scholars such as Carl Schmitt, Michel Foucault, and Giorgio Agamben have developed different theoretical approaches to the term.[2]

To understand Agamben's approach to sovereignty and political organisation is to acknowledge the influence of Schmitt, Foucault, Hannah Arendt and Walter Benjamin, whose ideas underpin *Homo Sacer*, which introduces the idea of bare life. In a broader sense, Agamben refers back to Aristotle, whose quest to identify 'the good life' maintains a central part of the initial stages of *Homo Sacer.* The influence of Foucault and Scmitt in particular, is seen in ideas of the state of exception and biopolitics, two concepts that seek to conceptualise political organisation and more broadly, how to live. The idea of biopolitics is the establishment of political structures that create power over life, or put another way, to ensure that life is controlled by state power. As Foucault states

> biological existence was reflected in political existence [...] For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with an additional capacity for a political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question.[3]

From this, the centrality of the state becomes evident and the structural factors that regulate life become increasingly important and ultimately, the very concept of the *homo sacer* is related back to the state and sovereign power.

Agamben begins his exploration of sovereignty – occurring across a number of independent volumes – with a discussion of Schmidt's state of exception and the logic of sovereignty, albeit rife with contradictions. The most important of these, indeed the paradox of sovereignty broadly, is the notion that the sovereign is simultaneously situated within the law and beyond the law and thus, the power of the sovereign is not found in the ability to create but the ability to suspend itself. Such a move - determining the *state of exception* – is explored in greater detail in other works and whilst this is important, it is the ontological foundation of society that is at the heart of *Homo Sacer.*

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[1] Ibn Khaldoun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005)

[2] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995)

[3] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon,1980) pp142-3.

Such a starting point plays a prominent role in the emergence of what Agamben calls the condition of *bare life*, the link between violence and the law.[4] Stripped from political significance and, as a consequence, at the mercy of extreme violence, bare life is simultaneously the consequence of the state of exception and also the target of sovereign violence. It is included in the exclusion and exposed to violence without recourse. As Agamben argues, "the rule, suspending itself, gives rise to the exception and, maintaining itself in relation to the exception, first constitutes itself as a rule"[5] (1995, p18). Biopolitical life, governed by the interaction of law with structural and normative factors leads to the establishment of bare life, as significance is stripped from *bios*.

Agamben argues that

> the realm of bare life – which is originally situated at the margins of the political order – gradually begins to coincide with the political realm, and exclusion and inclusion, outside and inside, *bios* and *zoe,* right and fact, enter into a zone of irreducible indistinction. At once excluding bare life from and capturing it within the political order, the state of exception actually constituted, in its very separateness, the hidden foundation on which the entire political system rested.[6]

The distinction between *bios* and *zoe* is made by the state, differentiating between an individual recognised as fully human through participation in political life and those who are of a lesser category, of biological existence. *Bios,* then, is the good life, the political life, evoking memories of Aristotle. It is worth stressing that bare life is not the same as a biological *zoe*, rather, it is what remains of the destroyed *bios*. It is the regulatory power of the state that leads to *zoe*, as a consequence of exclusion (inclusion) from the *polis* and, in this position, results in the exposure to violence and violation without legal recourse. Ultimately, for Agamben, politics is driven by this exclusion – and as a consequence, *inclusion* – of biological life, *zoe* from political life. Agamben's work on bare life occurs in *Homo Sacer*, named after the individual in ancient Rome whose life is worthless, who is banned and may be killed by anyone, just not for ritualistic purposes.[7] The power of life and death over people is ultimately retained by the state and it is this position that has come to define political life, with the camp as the exemplar.

As Agamben argues, the birth of the camp

> is produced at the point at which the political system of the modern nation-state, which was founded on the functional nexus between a determinate localization (land) and a determinate order (the State) and mediated by automatic rules for the inscription of life (birth or the nation), enters into a lasting crisis, and the State decides to assume directly the care of the nation's biological life as one of its proper

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[4] While Agamben is writing for a Western context, similar claims can be made in Lebanon as the rule of law is in operation as it is the suspension of the law that is integral to the emergence of bare life.

[5] Agamben, Op. Cit., p18.

[6] Ibid., p9.

[7] Ibid., p72.

tasks...the camp is the new, hidden regulator of the inscription of life in the order...[and] is the fourth, inseparable element that has now added itself – and so broken – the old trinity composed of the state, the nation (birth), and land.[8]

Such a position stresses the importance of the state within the biopolitical project. Supplementing this argument – and continuing the thought experiment – Agamben suggests that the Hobbesian state of nature is indeed a state of perpetual bare life, where everyone is "a *homo sacer* for everyone else".[9] Moreover, that this state of nature is a principle internal to the city, dwelling within the law of the city. As such, sovereign power, the right to exercise violence and control over anyone, is at the heart of the political project.

The contradictions inherent within sovereignty continue to shape political life, as even those parts of society excluded from politics have also been included by their very exclusion. This exclusion-inclusion is the fundamental manifestation of modern sovereign power. Moreover, sovereignty is underpinned by a zone of indistinction between norm and exception, culminating in the state of exception and bare life. Within this situation, as Patricia Owens notes, forms of resistance to sovereign power are purely the enactment of bare life.[10]

Foucault's notion that life is increasingly the focus of the state, the idea of biopolitics, then this is built upon the ban, the original political relation. This establishes the idea of a zone of indistinction, within which a 'transgressor' is in the zone between man and beast. Ultimately, it is the ban that holds together political life, *bare life* and the *homo sacer* and sovereign power. It is the force "of simultaneous attraction and repulsion that ties together the two poles of the sovereign exception: bare life and power, *homo saver* and the sovereign".[11]

Agamben's approach teases out a range of factors useful to our enquiry, including the nature of power relations, identity issues, inclusion and exclusion, yet perhaps most importantly, the conditions that facilitate the emergence of violent groups. There are, of course, a number of problems with this approach, notably its denial of agency and the inability to explain change from within these conditions. Moreover, Agamben's approach is static, where individuals should accept their conditions as "being thus". Increasingly, individuals retain their agency by continuing to engage in daily life encapsulated by the maxim resistance is existence, or by pushing back against the expected norms of society. Moreover, some reject the principle of "being thus" and find alternative ways of escaping their conditions. For many of the Lebanese Shi'a, this meant becoming involved in groups such as Amal and later, Hizballah.

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[8] Agamben, Op. Cit., pp175-6.

[9] Agamben, Op. Cit., p106

[10] Patricia Owens, 'Reclaiming 'Bare Life'?: Against Agamben on Refugees', *International Relations* 23:4 (2009) p573

[11] Agamben Op. Cit., p109

There are, of course, a number of problems with Agamben's approach, which may impact upon our project. That it is largely predicated upon a cannon of Western philosophy yet applied to the Middle East is important yet falls into broader debates about non-Western International Relations Theory. It is also driven by structural factors, largely leaving out the impact of agency from the analysis while also lacking methodological development to explain change. Despite these problems, the idea of bare life and the biopolitical project broadly is worthy of greater explanation. While rigid in its legal approach, I use the concept of bare life in a broader sense than Agamben initially conceived. Although potentially problematic, the informal conditions of bare life within the logic of sovereignty that Agamben elucidates so clearly is not as developed as he may require. These conditions are certainly important in feeding into the marginalisation of people and ultimately, the creation of bare life.

The Birth of the Party of God

Hizballah, the Party of God was formed in 1982, predominantly as a consequence of the conditions facing Shi'a Muslims in Lebanon across the 1970s and early 1980s. There is, unsurprisingly, a vast literature on the emergence of Hizballah,[12] which tells a convincing story of the emergence of the Party of God, suggesting that the group emerged as a consequence of long-standing socioeconomic grievances.[13] For the purposes of our project, it is worth re-telling this story.

After the 1943 National Pact, which acted as a declaration of independence, a confessional political system was established wherein Maronites and Sunnis were awarded the presidency and premiership respectively while the Shi'a community was awarded the speaker of the house.[14] At this time, the Shi'a occupied only 3.2% of the highest posts in the civil service[15] and the influx of Palestinian refugees after the 1948 war with Israel would impact on the labour market, increasing supply and reducing expectations in wages. At a time of serious socioeconomic and political change, Shi'a communities faced a number of challenges that would impact upon their position within the Lebanese state. The nascent government in Beirut had still

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[12] See in particular: Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004), Nicolas Blanford, *Warriors of God: Inside Hezbollah's Thirty-Year Struggle against Israel* (New York: Random House, 2011), James Worrall, Simon Mabon, and Gordon Clubb, *Hezbollah: From Islamic Resistance to Government* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2015), Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), Matthew Levitt, *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of Lebanon's Party of God* (London: Hurst, 2013) amongst others.

[13] This is supplemented by other literatures that look at the rise of terrorist groups, the emergence of violence, extremism and the debates around this. Engaging with such debates about the motivating factors of such other approaches is beyond the scope of this piece; rather, it seeks to offer a different approach, driven by a desire to escape bare life.

[14] Norton, Op. Cit.

[15] Hamzeh, Op. Cit.

to figure out the most positive way of allocating resources and welfare to those who needed it most, often, the Shi'a.[16]

The weakness of centralised government and the sectarian nature of politics resulted in each sect establishing its own institutions and welfare system. In the 1960s, Lebanon enjoyed a booming economy, yet since independence, the Shi'a were the most disadvantaged confessional group in the country. Augustus R. Norton notes how in 1974 Shi'a Muslims comprised around 30% of the population of Lebanon yet received less than 0.7% of the state budget.[17] Domestic conditions for the Shi'a of Lebanon were increasingly precarious, facing discrimination and marginalisation from a range of actors and struggling for their survival amidst pressure from Sunni and Maronite communities, Palestinian refugees and Israeli forces. Latent socioeconomic factors supplementing political structures, which, when taken together, would result in the emergence of bare life.

These latent factors are important, feeding into the structure and organisation of society. At this time, GDP per capita was around 2000 Lebanese lira lower than other confessional groups and although the Shi'a held 19 sets in parliament, if this was to accurately reflect population demographics, Shi'a parties would have been entitled to a further 10. Moreover, the influx of Palestinian refugees would also have a negative impact upon stability in Lebanon, resulting in the increased marginalization of Shi'a communities "conceptually, politically and economically".[18]

Such conditions – and indeed perceptions – have long afflicted the Shi'a of the region. Writing in the 19th century, David Urquhart, observed how

> They are all in rags, except some of the Sheiks, and are all mendicants. […] The filth is revolting. It would seem as if they took a particular pride in exhibiting their rebellion against the law, originally proclaimed from Horeb and afterwards from Mecca, both in regard to their persons and the cleanliness of their villages.[19]

Hasan Sharif's description of the conditions that befell Shi'a areas provides useful insight into the socioeconomic conditions shaping the south.

> The south has the fewest paved roads per person or per acre. Running water is still missing in all villages and towns although water pipes were extended to many areas in the early sixties. Electricity networks were erected at the same time, but they are inoperative most of the time. Sewage facilities are available only in large towns and cities. Outside the larger centres telephone service is completely absent except for a

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[16] Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (London: Faber & Faber, 2005) p429.

[17] Augustus R. Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon* (Austin TX: University of Texas Press, 1987) p18

[18] Hassan Charif, 'Regional Development and Integration', in Deirdre Collings (ed) *Peace for Lebanon?* (1993) pp151-2.

[19] David Urqhart, quoted in: Augustus R. Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon* (Austin TX: University of Texas Press, 1987)

single manual cabin which is usually out of order. Doctors visit the villages once a week and sometimes only once a month.[20]

In addition, socioeconomic changes within the Lebanese economy would have a detrimental and disproportionate impact upon the Shi'a. For instance, as the Lebanese economy was shaped by modernity, the agrarian sector, long the most common source of employment for the Shi'a, decreased as a share of total workforce, from 38% to 11%. This dramatic shift in the nature of employment would result in mass internal migration from the rural to the urban, where socioeconomic conditions were equally harsh.[21] Migration to the cities would result in widespread unemployment amongst Shi'a communities, many of whom were poorly educated and lacking the financial reserves to survive.

From this, it is no surprise that the Shi'a largely remained beyond patron-client networks and the village remained as the locus of political dynamics. At this time, local Shi'a leaders were unable to respond to changing security calculations, marginalising those absent[22] and, as a consequence, the urban Shi'a were caught within a double marginalization, from both city and village. This situation was complicated by electoral law, which required voters to return to their villages, which was, at the start of the 1970s, an inaccurate portrait of Lebanese politics as only 17% of the population lived in rural areas. As such, even though new urban dwellers sought to locate their political lives within the city, electoral laws meant that voters remained bound to their villages.[23]

As noted previously, Shi'a experiences across Lebanon were multifarious, yet within the Lebanese context, it became increasingly difficult to transcend one's sectarian identity, particularly amidst this socioeconomic change. Of course, the Israeli invasion and the civil war that engulfed Lebanon would exacerbate these issues, further exposing Shi'a groups to violence. As civil war broke out, Shi'a Muslims – along with other factions within the conflict – were increasingly viewed as disposable entities and while initially sympathetic to the Palestinian cause, concern at the loss of autonomy across the south of Beirut led a number of Shi'a groups to turn against the Palestinian cause. Increasing violence from the Palestinian Liberation Organisation based in Lebanon against Israel would prompt the latter's incursion into the south, where a large percentage of the Lebanese Shi'a lived.

The secularist 'rule by gun' approach of militant Palestinians would further marginalise the under-represented Shi'a. The incursion of Israeli forces into Southern Lebanon would add to the precarious nature of life for the Shi'a, caught in demographic struggles that were worsened by the presence of Israeli forces. As

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[20] Hasan Sharif, 'South Lebanon: Its History and Geopolitics', in Elaine Hagopian and Sami Farsoun, (eds) *South Lebanon* (Detroit: Association of Arab-American University Graduates, 1978) pp10-11

[21] Norton, Op. Cit., p22-3

[22] Ibid, p28.

[23] Fuad I. Khuri, 'The Social Dynamics of the 1975-1977 War in Lebanon', *Armed Forces and Society 7* (Spring 1981) p392

former Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Barak – who served in the Israeli special forces in Lebanon - stated, "when we entered Lebanon […] there was no Hezbollah. We were accepted with perfumed rice and flowers by the Shi'a in the south. It was our presence there that created Hezbollah".[24] While Barak is perhaps overstating the importance of the Israeli occupation, it certainly cannot be ignored.

Structural factors, including demographic, economic and discrimination, left large parts of the Shi'a population marginalised within their own state. While legal structures did not explicitly permit the killing of the Shi'a, the structural discrimination and the civil war implicitly allowed the Shi'a to be killed with impunity and, over the course of the war, large numbers of Shi'a were killed, forcing them to turn elsewhere to ensure their security. While seemingly existing within the conditions of *bare life*, it is clear that a large number of Lebanese Shi'a did not accept their condition as 'being thus'; instead, they found traction in the belief that Hizballah, the Party of God would be able to provide a way out of their conditions. A way out of the marginalization and oppression that had characterised the Shi'a experience and also a way out of the colonial legacy that had long-defined the region from the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of the first World War.

Of course, grievances and structural violence alone are not enough to mobilise people. As Gordon Clubb notes, in order for a group to succeed they need to produce a frame that "draws upon historical grievances, culture and ideas and provides a course of action".[25] Clubb is correct, yet in the case of Hizballah, such a frame also drew upon the legacy of Shi'a history and these narratives would provide traction. Social networks – driven by clerics but also mobilised around work – across the Shi'a would facilitate the emergence of the Party of God.

Understanding Muqawamah

Conventional understandings of resistance suggest that it is in response to some thing, a particular source of oppression, or counter-power. Increasingly, given the nature of power relations, by existing and by pushing the boundaries of accepted behaviour, people can be engaged in a form of resistance, for which one must consider the context within which agency is operating before considering the act of resistance. Within the Middle East, this importance of context is increasingly important, serving as a frame providing grievance, culture and ideas. Understandings of resistance, known in Arabic as *muqawamah*, are shaped by local context and Islam, emerging from the conditions of bare life.

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[24] Gilbert Achcar, *The 33-Day War: Israel's War on Hezbollah in Lebanon and Its Aftermath* (London: Saqi 2007).
[25] Worrall, Mabon and Clubb, Op. Cit., p33.

As Larbi Sadiki suggests, the concept of *muqawamah* is comprised of a broad range of norms and values, agency driven and is shaped by a communal and Islamic ethos, along with language and idioms. [26] Ultimately, it is

> a way of thinking, being, and acting, and an ever-widening site of holistic struggle in which the AK-47 is not, in the scheme of resistance, more important than piety, charity, schooling, propaganda or music. It simultaneously constitutes and embodies a normative imaginary for enacting emancipation at various levels, beginning with inner self-transformation through resistance against religious, moral, and intellectual laxity, and ending with creative protest of which, for the select few, martial defence is one form of proactive engagement. [27]

Muqawamah's literal translation is *to stand up to*, yet it is imbued with a range of factors that can determine the intensity of a concept that is spatially and temporally constructed. These factors are found within a particular time and a particular place, yet they are malleable and part of a much bigger anti-colonial, anti-oppressor and ultimately emancipatory project. It is clear that social and Islamic context has an important role to play within the construction of *muqawamah* amongst a particularl group and this concept has the capacity to draw people together, much like Ibn Khaldun's concept of *asabiyya* yet grounded in a shared religious morality rather than tribal kinship. [28] It becomes increasingly apparent that the importance of normative context stresses the local resonance of *muqawamah* and as Sadiki suggests, this involves a different form of political grammar to the global *jihad* as espoused by the likes of Sayid Qutb.

Muqawamah is increasingly seen in holistic terms and through the perception that it should be all encompassing, transcends counter-power and moves into the political realm. Resistance may also involve a range of other factors, namely the occupation of particular spaces and the rejection of displays of power within public space. [29] When put into the context of rapid change, which can dislocate social relations, the intermittent emergence of violent protests is hardly surprising. [30] Moreover, the sectarian imbalance adds 'sharpness'[31] to internal conflict and resistance efforts, which are particularly visible within Hizballah's actions.

From this, Hassan Nasrallah, Secretary General of Hizballah, suggested that resistance is 'not only a hand that bears the rifle and a finger that pulls the trigger. Resistance is a complete organism with a thinking brain, eyes, veins, ears that listen, a tongue that utters, and a heart filled with affection or full of anger. [32] The Deputy Secretary-General of Hizballah, Shaykh Na'im Qasim stressed its all-encompassing

[26] Larbi Sadiki, 'Reframing resistance and democracy: narratives from Hamas and Hizbullah', *Deomcratization* 17:2 (2010) p356.
[27] Ibid., p358.
[28] Khaldun, Op. Cit.
[29] Charles Tripp, *The Power and the People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
[30] Ibid., pp135-6.
[31] Ibid., p107
[32] Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah,. 'Keynote Speech. Ramadan 'Iftar' Ceremony held by the Society for the Support of the Islamic Resistance, 22 November 2001.

character, "it is military, cultural, political and informational resistance. It is resistance by the people as well as by the *mujahidin*; it is resistance by the ruler and by the *ummah*".[33] It becomes clear that *muqawamah* is not an immediate knee jerk reaction to something; it is not solely a 'counter-force' as many may initially assume and contains much more than a desire to respond. Resistance is typically held to be in response to a form of hegemonic power yet the "all encompassing" aspects of *muqawamah* seem to support a more holistic form of action, lending itself to the idea that Hizballah's actions have been referred to as a state within a state (appropriate given the role of contradiction and indistinction within Agamben's work). The holistic approach to resistance also involves a restructuring of political organisation, leading to the establishment of social and security infrastructure.

Such ideas resonate amongst large parts of the Lebanese Shi'a population, but the idea of *muqawamah* also transcends state borders. Nasrallah sought to demonstrate that Hizballah has a globalized responsibility to lead the resistance cause: 'We carry a responsibility towards them; we bear this responsibility towards their liberation in reciprocity to their wish for us to be free, and towards their dignity just as they wanted ours to be intact [...] This in earnest is part and parcel of the ethos of resistance – *thaqafat al-muqawamah*.'[34]

The ability of *muqawamah* to interact with the local dynamics widens its resonance across the region, particularly amidst the fragmentation of state sovereignty. As Sadiki suggests, the fragmenting sovereignty, provides scope for resistance and solace in the concept, for "in the absence of a homeland they are a homeland, an imaginary that defies spatialization".[35] Moreover, as people find themselves caught between the institutions of the state, this also serves as a site of protest.[36] Ideas travel across both time and space and the ability of such ideas to travel ensures their survival and longevity.

Building upon this, as John Agnew notes, to think of sovereignty within a fixed territorial space is infelicitous.[37] Similarly, to locate broad concepts of *muqawamah* within a fixed time and space is problematic as the notion of resistance is a prominent part of a much bigger emancipatory project. This transcends the local and moves to the global, despite the earlier impression that localized norms meant that it differed from the struggle that Qutb suggests. Context provides the coherence necessary to help people coalesce around the concept of *muqawamah* but ideas at the heart of *muqawamah* mean that audiences beyond the local can also be reached

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[33] Na'im Qasim, 'Kalimat Al-Iftitah' [Key Note or Opening Speech]. In Qiyam Al- Muqawamah: Khiyar Al-Shahadah wa Al-Hayat [The Values of Resistance: The Choice of Martyrdom and Life], ed. Shafiq Jaradi, et al., 5–12. Beirut: Dar Al-Hadi & Ma 'had Al-Ma 'arif Al-Hakimah, 2008. P6

[34] Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah, 'First Radwan [Pleasing of God] Anniversary Speech', 17 July 2009.

[35] Sadiki, Op. Cit.

[36] Tripp, Op. Cit., p117.

[37] John Agnew, 'The Territorial Trap: The Geographical Assumptions of International Relations Theory. *Review of International Political Economy*, 1:1 (1994), 53-80.

(intentionally and unintentionally). Yet to remove the local is also problematic, as the conditions shaping agency also shape perceptions and interactions with normative structures.

The notion of resistance as part of a bigger emancipatory project is seen in the formative stages of the Islamic republic. As Hamid Dabashi suggests,

> from the preparatory stages of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution forward, Shi'ism has been cognitively fused into a worldly cosmopolitanism that is no longer limited to any given country, clime, or culture. By breaking such false binaries into which Islam is habitually trapped, we see through the struggles of millions of Muslims across history who have opposed and are opposing the domestication of their worldly cultures.[38]

Such efforts demonstrate the unity that can be found within *muqawamah.* Additionally, as we shall see, the rhetoric used by Nasrallah seeks to speak to an audience of all Muslims, transcending sectarian divisions and, in doing so, migrates from the local to the global. Of course, with this migration, the narrative loses some of the traction that it finds within the Shi'a-Lebanese normative context. In accepting the premise that *muqawamah* possesses more than just a call to resistance, then conditions must exist that cultivate this responsibility. It is shaped by agency, which embeds the normative imaginary to provide coherence and endurance within ideas of *muqawamah.* To understand this concept of resistance it is important to interrogate the role of agency while also considering the construction of the normative environment that speaks to both local and global audiences and transcending the sectarian divisions that have begun to engulf the region. Such a position suggests that it is imperative to bring agency back into discussions of bare life.

Conditions of Muqawamah: The Karbala Narrative

The idea of resistance resonates clearly at this point, although *prima facia* considerations suggest that there must be something more to motivate individuals to coalesce and escape their socio-economic conditions. Although Agamben suggests that *bare life* emerges from legal structures, in the Lebanese case it also emerges from socioeconomic and normative structures impacting upon Shi'a communities. This is also shaped by Shi'a history, which shares a sense of marginalisation and persecution. While a sense of injustice can motivate many, a sense of moral duty must be combined with the ideas of bare life previously outlined as a means of mobilising individuals to reject the position of "being thus" and understanding Shi'a history can provide context to do this.

While Agamben's work is helpful when considering the structures that lead to bare life, it fails to adequately engage in questions about how groups of people can exercise their agency and escape bare life. Agamben argues for the need to accept conditions that people are in, *being thus*, yet in an increasing number of cases,

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[38] Hamid Dabashi, *Shi'ism* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2011), pp283-4.

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individuals forced into bare life reject their conditions and do not accept *being thus.* One of the reasons for this rejection in our case stems from the emergence of *muqawamah* yet the concept's ability to resonate across a community means that the structural conditions that create this resonance must be explored.

It quickly becomes apparent that there is a strong religious dimension at the heart of the Party of God's *raison d'etre*, driven by the narrative at the heart of Shi'a history. This narrative has created a set of normative responsibilities that have imbued the group with notions of resistance, whose enactment is a performative act of the rejection of being thus. To understand the structural context, as Hamid Dabashi suggests, we must locate the historical Shi'a experience within the broader Muslim context.

At the heart of the Sunni-Shi'a schism are questions of succession. The Shi'a narrative holds that Ali, the son in law and cousin of the prophet, was the true successor to Mohammad and was to be the first Imam, rather than the fourth. Before Ali was given this position, the caliphate had accrued vast territories and enormous wealth, bestowing great power on prominent figures, including many who had opposed the prophet in Mecca. Despite this, the Shi'a narrative suggests that Ali lived a pious life of austerity and prayer, becoming a focal point for dissent but also, becoming resented by others in the caliphate.[39] As a consequence, tensions began to emerge between the austere and those with wealth, a tension that would have serious repercussions notably the murder of Ali and Hossein, and an increase in tensions between Sunni and Shia.

These tensions within society are important when considering the work of Ruhollah Khomeini, the first Supreme Leader of Iran. For Khomeini, ideas of resistance were shaped by both the Shi'a experience and the penetration of the state by external powers.[40] Such experiences shaped Khomeini's understanding of prominent concepts within Shi'a Islam. For example, Khomeini stressed how Shi'a Islam had a history of rebellion embedded within it:

> The Shi'i School of thought, which is the prevalent one in Iran, has had certain distinguishing characteristics from the very beginning. While other schools have preached submission to rulers, even if they are corrupt and oppressive, Shi'ism has preached resistance against them and denounced them as illegitimate[41]

This understanding would also shape perceptions of society and political organisation, which, for Khomeini, was

> sharply divided into two warring classes—*tabaqat*: the *mostazafin*—oppressed— against the *mostakberin*—oppressors; the *foqara*—poor—against the

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[39] Michael Axworthy, *Iran, Empire of the Mind* (London: Penguin, 2008) p126.

[40] L.A. Reda, 'Khatt-e Imam: The Followers of Khomeini's Line', Arshid Abid-Moghaddam, *A Critical Introduction to Khomeini* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) p116

[41] Ruhollah Khomeini, "Interview with Hamid Algar," in Hamid Algar (ed., trans.), *Islam and Revolution: Imam Khomeini, Writings and Declarations* (London: Mizan Press, 1981), p. 327.

> *sarvatmandan*—rich; the *mellat-e mostazaf*—oppressed nation—against the *hokumat-e shaytan*—Satan's government … In the 1970s, however, he used [the term *mostazafin*] in almost every single speech and proclamation to depict the angry poor, the "exploited people," and the "downtrodden masses." After the revolution, he gradually broadened the term to bring in the propertied middle class, which actively supported the new order.[42]

The idea of *mostazafin* would become a driving force in understanding the Islamic Republic's Foreign policy, becoming enshrined in Article 3.16 of the Constitution, which provided support to the Shia groups across the world. Supporting the use of such terminology across the Shi'a *umma* were a number of parallels made with prominent events in Shi'a history, the most important of which was the Narrative of Karbala.

The Karbala Narrative tells the story of the martyrdom of Hussain bin Ali by the Umayyad army at Karbala in 680. As Rola El-Husseini argues, this narrative can be found at the heart of Shia thought, evoking ideas of "martyrdom, sacrifice, commitment to a cause and passion."[43] Although Hussain was the grandson of the prophet, he gained legitimacy by challenging the corruption and impropriety of the Yazid court, rebelling against it in an effort to 'purify' Islam. This rebellion ultimately led to his death, along with his infant son and his supporters. Many hold that Hussain sought martyrdom at Karbala, believing that the only way he could bring about a return to a more pious form of Islam was by sacrificing himself. When combined with the failure of his supporters in Kufa to aid him, ideas of guilt and martyrdom become defining factors of Shi'a thought. Moreover, the allegory of Karbala would demonstrate how ideas of rebellion took on increasing importance within Shi'a narratives.

Hussain's death is central to Shi'a thought, commemorated in the festival of Ashura, on the 10th day of Muharram. The Ashura festival celebrates the idea of resistance while commemorating ideas of martyrdom and guilt and during the festival, many Shi'a typically engage in forms of self-flagellation, notably *tatbir,* the cutting of the skin on the top of the head with a sword. They would also participate in mourning rituals, also including self-flagellation, in an attempt to "gain salvation in the afterlife as well as in this lifetime."[44] Despite its prominence, in the 1990s, this practice was banned by both Hizballah and Khomeini, who argued that Ashura should be marked by revolutionary action[45] and stressing the importance of resistance.

As it began to play a prominent role within Shi'a thought, the Karbala Narrative increasingly became an allegory for resistance and, from this, was extrapolated to

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[42] Ervand Abrahamian, *Khomeinism, Essays on the Islamic Republic* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1993), 26–7.

[43] Rola El-Husseini, "Hezbollah and the Axis of Refusal: Hamas, Iran and Syria," *Third World Quarterly* 31, no. 5 (2010):805.

[44] Edith Szanto, "Beyond the Karbala Paradigm: Rethinking Revolution and Redemption in Twelver Shi'a Mourning Rituals," *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies* 6, no.1 (2013): 78.

[45] Ibid.

allow for parallels to be drawn between Hussain and the *mostazafin,* and the Umayyads and the *mostakbarin.* Prior to the revolution in Iran, similar parallels were made, through the use of slogans such as "every day is Ashura and everywhere is Karbala," stressing the importance of resistance and the prominence of Karbala within these understandings of resistance.

Extrapolating from the allegory of Karbala can also locate the narrative in the global. Since the formation of the Party of God in 1982, Hizballah was seen to be supporting the *mostazafin* – helping others to reject conditions of being thus – while Israel, the United States, and Iraq were seen to be the *mostakberin* and thus parallels were drawn with the Yazid.[46] Once this parallel was made, for Hizballah and also Iran, resistance against the oppressor was a necessary condition and with it came a rejection of the status quo and being thus. The allegory also lends itself to the anti-colonial and anti-imperial aspects of resistance and as such, it becomes increasingly apparent how *muqawamah* begins to find traction to move beyond the local to the global, resulting in huge levels of popular support.

Such historical experiences feed into the structural and cultural factors shaping conditions amongst the Shi'a of Lebanon. The biopolitical project at the heart of Agamben's work seeks to regulate life and within this Shi'a context, it is clear that there are normative dimensions, not imposed by the state – yet regulatory all the same – that have shaped existence and the performative politics that Tripp discusses. The Shi'a narrative of sacrifice, persecution and marginalisation feeds into construction of a collective identity. Within this, the death of Hussain, persecution of the Shi'a and the marginalisation of Ashura all feeds into the idea of bare life, but also feed into a sense of obligation within *muqawamah*.

The language of Karbala featured prominently during the burgeoning radical Shi'a movements in Lebanon during the 1970s. In particular, Imam Mousa who, sought to evoke memories of Karbala in an attempt to galvanise the Shi'a community into a stronger response to their situation. In the Shi'a heartland of the Bekaa Valley, Imam Mousa gave a speech suggesting that there was "no alternative for us except revolution and weapons," and a month later in Baalbek, declared, "armaments are the adornment of men."[47] In the same speech to a crowd of 75,000 at the end of the Ashoura festival, Mousa channelled the legacy of Hossein and stressed the importance of resistance: "Starting from today … we will no longer complain nor cry. Our name is not Mitwali; our name is 'men of refusal,' 'men of vengeance,' 'men who revolt against tyranny' even though this costs us our blood and our lives."[48]

These comments became a prominent part of a narrative of *muqawamah*, a narrative that stressed an obligation and responsibility to challenge oppression, based upon Shi'a history. Ultimately though, Mousa's rhetoric resulted in the establishment of Amal, not Hizballah. Despite this, it was a necessary step to the

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[46] Kamran Scot Aghaie, *The Martyrs of Karbala: Shi'i Symbols and Rituals in Modern Iran* (Seattle, WA: Washington University Press, 2004), 132.
[47] Blanford, Op. Cit., 21.
[48] Ibid., p6.

formation of the Party of God. Clearly, the charismatic use of the language of resistance found resonance amongst the overlooked, occupied and marginalised of Lebanon's Shi'a community.

Karbala in Hizballah Manifestos

The prominence of the allegory of Karbala and its values are also found within Hizballah's two manifestos, the Open Letter of 1985 and the 2009 manifesto. The language within both documents is evocative, espousing ideas of resistance and unity. Despite being based in Lebanon and formed as a group to protect the Shi'a of the state, the Party of God also sought to appeal to the wider *umma*: "We declare openly and loudly that we are an *umma* which fears God only and is by no means ready to tolerate injustice, aggression and humiliation."[49] The argument is taken further by Joseph Alagha, who suggests that Hizballah's natural allies are "the oppressed of the entire world, irrespective of their colour, race, or religion."[50] In the Open Letter, Hizballah's responsibility to protect the *umma* is set out, by confronting "basic enemies: the US, France and Israel … is against Westoxification," although it is pertinent to stress that the letter makes clear distinction within the idea of Westoxification, as driven by a "hatred of the US administration, not the US people."[51]

For Hizballah, the Karbala Narrative is amended to become resistance against an oppressor and an occupier, rather than the more traditional narrative of resistance against a ruler and the symbolism of resistance still adorns the southern suburbs of Beirut. In this narrative, the occupying force was Israeli, along with its ally, the United States. Rola El-Husseini locates this in the 1985 Open Letter, wherein Hezbollah declared that its intention was to "expel the Americans … and their allies definitely from Lebanon, putting an end to any colonialist entity on our land."[52]

The notion of the *mostazafin* can also clearly be seen in the formative stages of the group, notably in the 1985 manifesto, articulated in "An Open Letter: The Hezbollah Programme."[53] Under the banner of "Our Identity," the document states:

> We are often asked: Who are we, the Hizballah, and what is our identity? We are the sons of the *umma* (Muslim community)—the party of God (Hizb Allah) the vanguard of which was made victorious by God in Iran. There the vanguard succeeded to lay down the bases of a Muslim state which plays a central role in the world. We obey the orders of one leader, wise and just, that of our tutor and *faqih* (jurist) who fulfills all the necessary conditions: Ruhollah Musawi Khomeini. God save him!

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[49] *An Open Letter: The Hizballah Programme*, Available from: http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/open-letter-hizballah-program/p30967 .

[50] Joseph Alagha, *Hizbullah's Documents: From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto* (Amsterdam: Pallas Publications, 2011), 16.

[51] Ibid., p20.

[52] El-Husseini, Op. Cit., p805.

[53] An Open Letter, Op. Cit.

The open letter continues:

> We are an *umma* linked to the Muslims of the whole world by the solid doctrinal and religious connection of Islam, whose message God wanted to be fulfilled by the Seal of the Prophets … Our behavior is dictated to us by legal principles laid down by the light of an overall political conception defined by the leading jurist (*wilayat al-faqih*).

The above passages demonstrate the admiration that Hizballah maintained for Khomeini and his ideas, particularly concerning those of resistance. Of course, a number of Lebanese clerics were trained in Qom under Khomeini who then played a prominent role in facilitating the emergence of the Party of God.

In response to the group's evolution, in 2009, a manifesto was written to reflect the transition from an explicitly resistance orientated organisation, to one that engaged in high (and indeed low – yet another nod to the simultaneous contradictions in Agamben) politics in Lebanon. While less of an ideologically driven vision than the Open Letter, Hizballah's view of the world did not change dramatically and the importance of the Karbala Narrative remains. The manifesto also seeks to draw upon the experiences of the Shi'a of Lebanon, with resistance and oppression key themes across it. The manifesto notes that its creation is "a result of the priority of deeds and responsibility of sacrifice that we have experienced."[54]

The third section of the manifesto discusses state-society relations in Lebanon, with an explicit focus upon the sectarian nature of Lebanese society and its political system.[55] The manifesto argues that sectarian divisions cemented within the consociational political system must be abrogated, in order to create a true democracy, "where an elected majority can rule and an elected minority can oppose, opening the door for a proper exchange of power between the loyalty and the opposition".[56] Yet these sectarian concerns are not limited to the domestic fabric of the Lebanese state. The sixth section of the manifesto discusses notions of Islamic resistance, again, with a focus upon the detrimental consequences of sectarian divisions. The manifesto suggests that sectarian divisions should be a source of "wealth and social vitality' but instead, are "exploited as factors of division and incitement as well as a means of social destruction".[57] While the section suggests the Western and Israeli manipulation of these divisions, along with extolling the virtues of Iran as a mode of resistance, it closes by stressing unity across the Muslim world, in a passage worth quoting in full:

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[54] *The New Hezbollah Manifesto* (2009), Available from: http://www.lebanonrenaissance.org/assets/Uploads/15-The-New-Hezbollah-Manifesto-Nov09.pdf.

[55] Section 3 State and Political System, *The New Hezbollah Manifesto* (November 2009) Available at: http://www.lebanonrenaissance.org/assets/Uploads/15-The-New-Hezbollah-Manifesto-Nov09.pdf

[56] Ibid.

[57] Section 6 Islam and Resistance, *The New Hezbollah Manifesto* (November 2009) Available at: http://www.lebanonrenaissance.org/assets/Uploads/15-The-New-Hezbollah-Manifesto-Nov09.pdf

> The Islamic world gains strength with his allies and the cooperation of his countries. We assure the importance of benefiting from the elements of the political, humanitarian, and economic power available in each and every country of the Islamic world, on the basis of integration and non-subjection to the invaders. We remind of the importance of unity among Muslims, as Allah the Almighty said in his holy book: "And hold fast, all together, by the rope which God (stretches out for you), and be not divided among yourselves" (Sourat Al Imran-verse 103).
>
> We also remind of the importance of cautiousness from sectarian sensitivities - especially between Sunnis and Shiites, as we wager on the conscience of the Muslims in facing the conspiracies and schemes on this level. [58]

From this, we can clearly see the extent to which Hizballah figures have sought to stress the global nature of their struggle and of *muqawamah* broadly. By framing this struggle as one that includes all Muslims – transcending sectarian divisions – Hizballah finds resonance in the holistic narrative. The prominence of Karbala within Hizballah's ideology only serves to support the Party of God's concept of *muqawamah*.

Evolution, Challenge and Fulfilling Obligations

Perhaps the most successful act of resistance across Hizballah's existence was the 34-day 2006 war,[59] which brought the nature of the Party of God's alliances into sharp focus.[60] While many saw Hizballah as a proxy of Iran and Syria, the launch of a strike against Israel without Tehran's approval highlighted the autonomy of the group within the so-called 'Axis of Resistance'. The anti-hegemonic, 'Axis of Resistance' comprised of Iran, Syria and Hizballah, has endured across the duration of Hizballa's existence, with the two states providing ideological, technical and financial support to the Party of God. In early 1980s, Iran provided 1500 members of the Revolutionary Guard Corps to help train the Party of God's fighters in the Bekaa Valley, while also supporting the group financially.[61] Syria served as a conduit for weapons to be transferred between the two and in doing so, ensured its importance for both Hizballah and Iran.

A year earlier, the Cedar Revolution resulted in the end of Syrian dominantion of Lebanon and the full withdrawal of Syrian forces from the state. The Syrian withdrawal prompted Hizballah to join the Lebanese government as a means of maintaining influence across the state yet the collapse of the unity government in 2011 would once more open the door to external influence. As people celebrated the New Year that January, ideas that would inflame the region had begun to resonate across the Middle East. In the previous month, a Tunisian street vendor had self-immolated, seemingly out of a frustration at the socio-economic conditions

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[58] Ibid.

[59] Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, *34 Days Israel, Hezbollah, and the War in Lebanon* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

[60] Rola El-Husseini, 'Hezbollah and the axis of refusal: Hamas, Iran and Syria', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 5 (2010), pp803–15.

[61] Worrall, Mabon and Clubb, Op. Cit., p123.

across Tunisia. Few would be aware at this time that the act would be the catalyst for the fragmentation of regimes from societies across the Middle East.

The Arab Uprisings would pose a number of challenges for Hizballah, tearing up the old order and with it, the alliances that had helped the Party of God maintain its position of strength within Lebanon and across the region. Despite Lebanon largely avoiding the uprisings, their onset in neighbouring Syria posed an existential threat to Hizballah. In Syria, it was expected that the London-trained former Opthamologist, Bashar Al Assad, would take heed of the protestors' demands and through reforms, reconcile the state. Instead, Assad and his forces sought to quickly frame events along sectarian lines and began to repress the population. The situation rapidly deteriorated to the point that at the 5th anniversary of the Syrian uprisings, around 400,000 had been killed and 11 million people had been displaced from their homes. The UN referred to the Syrian civil war it the worst humanitarian tragedy since the Second World War. At first glance, Hizballah, in fighting against the oppressors, should have supported opposition groups, however, the Assad regime was a key ally of the Party of God and as a number of opposition groups were vehemently anti-Shi'a, geopolitical interests trumped the legacy of Karbala.

The declaration of a caliphate by members of a group referred to as the Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham (henceforth Da'ish), was declared on 29th June 2014, borne out of the embers of Al Qa'ida in Iraq and the Islamic State of Iraq. A spokesperson for the group articulated the emergence of the caliphate as

> a dream that lives in the depths of every Muslim believer […] It is a hope that flutters in the heart of every *mujahid*, *muwahhid* […] It is the caliphate. It is the caliphate -- the abandoned obligation of the era...We clarify to the Muslims that with this declaration of the caliphate, it is incumbent upon all Muslims to pledge allegiance to the caliph [Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi].[62]

Da'ish gained prominence through using extreme violence as a strategy to provoke fear in local and global audiences. One of the key features of Da'ish is its ability to project a self-defined role as the protectors of (Sunni) Islam. In a well-documented YouTube video,[63] filmed at the border between Syria and Iraq, a Da'ish spokesperson articulated a desire to remove the boundaries imposed on the region by the Sykes-Picot agreement, yet failing to appreciate the nuance that this agreement was never put into action.[64] Da'ish emerged from the Syrian desert in 2014, capturing Mosul in summer that year. The group was able to draw support from marginalised, discriminated, fearful Sunnis, who sought refuge from the brutality of the Assad

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[62] Aaron Y. Zelin, *Daesh Dead, Long Live the Islamic State,* (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 30.06.14) Available at: http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/Daesh-is-dead-long-live-the-islamic-state

[63] *ISIS – The End of Sykes-Picot*, 29.06.14, Available at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YyM0_sv5h88

[64] For a greater discussion of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, see Barr, James, *A Line in the Sand: Britain, France and the Struggle that Shaped the Middle East* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2011). Although, it is important to note that this narrative is problematic, resulting in the rejection of political organisation and over stressing the role of religion.

regime's respone to opposition within the Arab Uprisings context. Such conditions evoke memories of the conditions that brought about the rise of Hizballah 30 years previously, although there are a number of serious points of departure.

The emergence of Da'ish provided an opportunity for the Party of God to both secure the regime of Bashar Al Assad in Syria, whilst circumventing accusations of using violence against the oppressed. With the Assad regime fighting against Da'ish and Jabhat al Nusra, whose anti-Shi'a messages were a cause of great consternation to many Muslims, this provided greater justification for Hizballah's involvement in Syria. Of course, conditions across the state were increasingly precarious, with individuals facing persecution from the regime and from militias operating with implicit support from the state. In such conditions, much like in Lebanon in the 1980s, individuals turned to a more powerful organisation for protection.[65]

Since its inception, the Party of God has positioned itself strategically, primarily as the protector of the Shi'a of the *umma* but also as a group acting on behalf of the downtrodden of the whole of the *umma*. As noted, the main aims of Hizballah are found in the Open Letter of 1982, which announced the group as a Shi'a political actor that uses violence as a tactic. The Open Letter immediately posited Hizballah as part of "an umma which fears God only and is by no means ready to tolerate injustice, aggression and humiliation", and each member is a fighter.[66] Although the letter highlights the US and Israel as sources of enmity it notes how the group's friends are the world's "oppressed peoples".[67] The history of imperialism that left a scar on the Lebanese psyche meant that the group was "more and more, in a state of permanent alert in order to repel aggression and defend our religion, our existence, our dignity".[68]

For Hizballah, the threat posed by Da'ish in the summer of 2014 was three-fold: first, to the stability of Lebanon; second, to the Shi'a and holy sites of Iraq and Syria; third, to the *umma*. By considering the interaction of these themes, it is possible to see the move from the local to the global, yet this also highlights the geopolitical considerations in operation, ultimately resulting in the creation of bare life in Syria. Within this rhetoric, it is also possible to see the securitization of Da'ish, where the Party of God seeks to frame the group as an existential threat and to suspend 'normal politics'.[69]

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[65] Simon Mabon and Stephen Royle, *The Origins of ISIS: The Collapse of Nations and Revolution in the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016).

[66] *An Open Letter: The Hizballah Program,* (01.01.88) Available at: http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/open-letter-hizballah-program/p30967

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Such a process differs from other securitization processes for a number of reasons. First, securitization is a Western concept that is largely lacking exploration in the non-Western world. Second, securitizing moves typically take place from a state actor and while Hizballah occupies a unique position within the Lebanese state, this is different to how the theory was

In post Cold War efforts to broaden the security agenda and engage with a rapidly changing security environment, Barry Buzan and Ole Waever broadened discussions of security to include processes of securitization, the framing of a particular group as an existential threat to a different group of people. This strategy seeks to suspend normal politics[70] and to facilitate a response to this particular threat. Such a process typically occurs over three stages: the first is the designation of the threat, the second are the facilitating conditions and the third is the audience.[71] From this, the decision must be made that X poses an existential threat to a particular group while the second is to locate that within the conditions that support such a framing. To successfully frame such a threat in existential terms requires a solid grounding within a context that would help the frame find traction. It is worth noting that the audience does not have to accept the process of securitization for such a process to have occurred.[72] While there are a range of problems with this process, sagaciously unpacked elsewhere,[73] one can see the process in which Hizballah sought to frame Da'ish as an existential threat in the summer of 2014. Looking at this time period allows us to consider the formative stages of such a narrative and perceptions of the group.

Speaking to Lebanese newspapers, Nasrallah stressed the importance of Hizballah's actions in Syria, using the threat of Da'ish as a justification for intervention. Following this claim, the argument runs thus: if the Party of God had not "intervened in Syria the right way and at the right time, Da'ish would be in Beirut now".[74] The threat posed by Da'ish to the stability of Lebanon featured heavily in speeches by prominent Hizballah figures at the time. Speaking at a ceremony to honour the death of a Hizballah martyr, Shiekh Nabil Kaouk, the deputy head of the Executive Council stated that the "terrorist threat on Lebanon is actual, real and continuous [...] ISIS's decision has been announced. Their pretended slogan is to create the Islamic State in Iraq and Greater Syria, which includes Lebanon".[75] The choice of audience is clear, with the speech framing the threat as one to Lebanon, not just the Shi'a.

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initially developed. As such, greater exploration into this area is paramount. For a greater discussion of this see: Claire Wilkinson, 'The Copenhagen School on Tour in Kyrgyzstan: Is Securitization Theory Useable Outside Europe?' *Security Dialogue* 38:1 (2007)

[70] See: Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998) and Thierry Balzacq, 'The Three Faces of Securitization: Political Agency, Audience and Context', *European Journal of International Relations* 11:2 (2005), p171.

[71] See: Paul Roe, 'Actor, Audience(s) and Emergency Measures: Securitization and the UK's Decision to Invade Iraq', *Security Dialogue* 39:6 (2008) and Matt McDonald, 'Securitization and the Construction of Security', *European Journal of International Relations* 14:4 (2008)

[72] Ibid.

[73] See, in particular, Wilkinson, Op. Cit.

[74] *Nasrallah: ISIS would be in Beirut if not for Hezbollah intervention in* Syria (Al Akhbar, 17.06.14) Available at: http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/20207

[75] *Hezbollah: ISIS wants Lebanon*, (The Daily Star 31.08.14) Available at: http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2014/Aug-31/269106-hezbollah-Daesh-wants-lebanon.ashx#axzz3CGYeUT5Y

While many of the skirmishes on the Lebanese-Syrian border in the summer of 2014 Jabat al-Nusra fighters,[76] the expansionist aspirations of Da'ish would cause great concern. The seizure of the Lebanese town of Arsal highlighted the intention and capability of the group while also exacerbating Hizballah's fears. The areas around Arsal are predominantly Sunni and, given the poor economic conditions at this time, were perceived to be ideal conditions for Da'ish to spread. Furthermore, gaining access to Tripoli, the Mediterranean port, was seen as a primary goal, aiding the smuggling of weapons and artefacts, which became an increasingly important source of finance. In response to growing concerns about Da'ish expansionism, Hizballah sped up the creation of its Lebanese Resistance Brigades, which sought to draw members from communities other than the Shi'a. Such efforts emerge from Hizballah's global *muqawamah* project, creating a unified, trans-sectarian form of resistance.

Many in the Shi'a community were also concerned as to Da'ish's intentions over sites of Shi'a importance within Iraq, which far outweigh those in Syria. Given the importance of Karbala and other prominent Shi'a sites in Iraq, it was proclaimed that "Hezbollah is willing to sacrifice for Iraq five times as much as we sacrificed in Syria for the significantly more important holy places."[77] Following this statement, Da'ish declared war on Hizballah.[78] While Hizballah was heralded as one of the strongest military organisations in the Middle East, opening up another theatre of operations would pose a serious challenge to the group's capabilities, reducing its ability to engage in other arenas.

At an event in Deir Al Zahrani, Mohammad Raad, the head of Hizballah's parliamentary bloc spoke of the need to confront Da'ish and their backers: "We know how to confront your plan in its own home, and how to topple all your delusions".[79] It is clear that this language is part of a securitization project by Nasrallah, seeking to frame Da'ish as an existential threat not only to the Shi'a of Lebanon but to the *umma* and wider Middle East generally, while also stressing the Party of God's capabilities.

Despite Hizballah's concerns as to the potential impact of Da'ish upon Shi'a Muslims, the threat transcends the sectarian, once again stressing the global nature of *muqawamah*. In a speech marking the eighth anniversary of the end of the 2006 war, Nasrallah warned of the dangers of the group

> We have to believe that there is a real existential danger threatening us all and it is
> not a joke […] This danger does not recognise Shias, Sunnis, Muslims, Christians,

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[76] Jabat al-Nusra is a Syrian opposition group that possessed close ties with Al Qa'ida until late July 2016. While operating with facets of the Free Syrian Army, al-Nusra is opposed to collaborating with Da'ish and is now identified as Jabat Fatah al Sham.

[77] Paula Asith, *Lebanon's Hezbollah ready to fight ISIS in Iraq* (Asharq Al-Awsat, 25.06.14) Available at: http://www.aawsat.net/2014/06/article55333611

[78] Matthew Levitt, M., *As Various Actors Circle Iraq, ISIS Faces Foreign Foes*, (Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 01.07.14)

[79] Asith, Op. Cit.

Druze, Yazidis, Arabs or Kurds. This monster is growing and getting bigger.[80]

This warning continued to highlight the danger to all Muslims

> I call on every Lebanese, Palestinian, Iraqi, Syrian and any Gulf national to leave sectarian intolerance behind and think that this phenomenon is not a threat against Shias only. No one should regard this battle as a sectarian one, it is a takfiri war against anyone who opposed it.[81]

Such quotes highlight both the concern that many in the region shared about the threat posed by Da'ish but also how Hizballah saw itself as the protector of the Muslim world, standing against the oppressors and the *takfiris*. Both John Agnew and Hamid Dabashi are correct, however, to stress the dangers of suggesting that these pressures can be reduced to the experiences one state and the extrapolation of such threats serves Hizballah's cause. Of course, by fighting in Syria against opposition groups, a number of whom were not Da'ish – and were indeed oppressed themselves – the Party of God is fighting against its *raison d'etre.* Despite this, the Party of God would hold public rallies condemning Da'ish attacks on Shi'a shrines across the region and such acts once again demonstrate the performative aspect of resistance.

Muqawamah and The Return of Bare Life

While the extent of Hizballah's concerns about the threat posed by Dai'sh are apparent, the emergence of Da'ish provided the Party of God with an opportunity to improve its image. The erosion of the Party of God's credibility following their involvement in the Syrian conflict, fighting alongside Bashar al-Assad, severely damaged Hizballah's standing within the region. Having developed a narrative of resistance, building upon the work of Ruhollah Khomeini, Hizballah vocalised a desire to protect the downtrodden of the Muslim world, which transcended sectarian divisions and framed the Party of God as the protector of the *umma*. Support for the Assad regime's oppression of the Syrian people would challenge this position and these concerns would be furthered by engagement in conflict in Syria. By supporting the oppressor rather than the oppressed amidst serious societal dislocations, Hizballah's narrative of resistance and position as the protector of the *umma* was eroded.

By vocally opposing Da'ish and using language that transcends sectarian divisions, Hizballah sought to capitalise an opportunity to regain lost legitimacy. Nasrallah's 'monster' required a trans-sectarian response, with the Party of God positioning itself at the vanguard. Yet continued involvement in Syria against a range of opposition groups, many of whom receive support from the wealthy Gulf states[82]

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[80] *Nasrallah: ISIS is a "real existential danger" to the whole region*, (Al Akhbar, 15.08.14) Available at: http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/21153
[81] Ibid.
[82] See: Roula Khalaf and Abigail Fielding Smith, *Qatar bankrolls Syrian revolt with cash and arms* (Financial Times, 16.05.13) Available from: http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/86e3f28e-

would have regional consequences. The civilian consequences of this conflict are catastrophic and Hizballah's involvement undeniably helped Assad retain sovereignty over Syria. While not necessarily directly involved in creating – or regulating – conditions of *bare life*, Hizballah has been complicit in the emergence of such conditions. The use of barrel bombs killed civilians indiscriminately and the strategic targeting of infrastructure essential to living life has only served to worsen these conditions. During the civil war, Sunnis struggled to secure their basic needs and to protect themselves and their families. The destruction of hospitals and schools makes the situation increasingly precarious.[83]

Parallels can easily be drawn between conditions in Lebanon in the 1980s and post uprisings Syria. Amidst the struggle to protect their families and meet basic needs, individuals increasingly turned to Da'ish and other groups as a means of protection against the serious changes impacting – and indeed restricting – the ability of people to live their lives state. Tripp's ideas of performative acts of resistance become increasingly important in these times and such socio-economic dislocations result in violent outbursts that result from periods of dramatic change.[84] The early issues of their magazine, *Dabiq*, stressed the group's involvement within the fabric of the region, including attempts to secure the support of prominent tribes. With the conflict in Syria continuing, the protection offered by Da'ish proved appealing to many, even if the ideology was repugnant. Elsewhere I have argued of the need to characterise different types of support within the group and it appears clear that for many in Syria fleeing Assad's barrel bombs, this is purely token support.[85]

The Circle of Bare Life

At the start of this paper I set out to document the rise of Hizballah from the conditions of chaos and *bare life* in 1970s and 1980s Lebanon. By positioning it as a resistance organisation and given the power of the Karbala narrative, the Party of God was able to draw support from large numbers of marginalised Shi'a residing in southern Lebanon. *Muqawamah* would also find traction at a global level, overcoming sectarian divisions, yet with the onset of the conflict in Syria, a number of challenges have arisen, leaving the Party of God facing existential challenges. Such an approach has also facilitated greater development of the concept of *bare life*, which involves softening the concept beyond the legal structures that Agamben establishes. By involving socioeconomic conditions and normative aspects, one is able to provide a much richer analysis of the conditions exclusion-inclusion the result in *bare life*.

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be3a-11e2-bb35-00144feab7de.html#axzz4FnduWfa7 and Mark Mazzetti and Matt Apuzzo, *U.S. Relies Heavily on Saudi Money to Support Syrian Rebels* (The New York Times, 23.01.16) Available from: http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/24/world/middleeast/us-relies-heavily-on-saudi-money-to-support-syrian-rebels.html?_r=0
[83] In Iraq, such precarious times led to the establishment of Da'ish. See: Mabon and Royle, Op. Cit.
[84] Tripp, Op. Cit.
[85] Simon Mabon, 'Nationalist Jahaliyya and the Flag of the Two Crusaders, or: ISIS, Sovereignty and the 'Owl of Minerva' *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism,* Forthcoming (2017).

Returning to the Party of God, actions in Syria in support of Assad have fed into the further marginalisation of Sunni communities and although the group may not be directly responsible, it is complicit in the creation of *bare life* in Sunni communities. Of course, there are geopolitical pressures that force Hizballah to act in support of Assad, keeping alive the axis of resistance. In doing so a contradiction emerges at the heart of Hizballah. While the group has long framed itself in terms of *muqawamah* and as being the protectors of the *mustazefin*, support for the Assad regime challenges both of these notions, striking at the heart of the Party of God's *raison d'etre.*

Moreover, the flow of close to 1.5 million refugees into Lebanon from Syria will only serve to exacerbate societal tensions. Much like the flow of Palestinian refugees, Syrian refugees are escaping a war zone and the precarious life that allows. Lebanese law is increasingly draconian with regard to what Syrian refugees are able to do, yet for anyone who walks the streets of Hamra in Beirut, the sight of children begging is unavoidable. The economic cost upon the Lebanese state is growing, placing a huge burden on the Lebanese economy and, ultimately, will lead to increased resentment and structural violence against Syrian refugees. In Lebanon, the consociational system of government has cemented sectarian division across the political system yet Hizballah has also sought to position itself as the protectors of the *umma*, transcending sectarian divisions. Of course, the group's action in Syria undermines its position. In playing such a prominent role in supporting Assad against Da'ish and Jabhat al-Nusra, it is possible that Hizballah also sought to demonstrate their importance within Lebanon, protecting the state rather than the sect.

With the transition of Hizballah from a resistance organisation into government, this blurring of borders between the internal and the external finds additional resonance and although a fluid interpretation of bare life has been employed, it appropriately describes conditions in Lebanon. Since its creation in 1982, the Party of God has transitioned from a resistance organisation in the south of Lebanon to one of the strongest military forces in the Middle East. In doing so, Hizballah has gone full circle, with its power helping to create the conditions of bare life. Of course, others also reject the conditions of 'being thus' as we saw with the emergence of Da'ish itself and the circle of bare life continues.

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