

THE CLASH OF ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS AFTER THE PROCESS OF POLITICAL CHANGE IN THE ARAB WORLD THE CASE OF ḤIZB ALLĀH

Abraham Valera Laborda

Ph.D. scholarship holder,

Department of Arabic, Islamic and Oriental Studies,

Faculty of Philosophy and Humanities, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM)

Campus de Cantoblanco, 28049 Madrid, Spain.

Email: abraham.valera@uam.es

ABSTRACT

Since the 1990s numerous academics predicted the end of Islamism and the emergence of a new stage, Post-Islamism. But this theory has not been exempt from criticism. The academic researcher on Mediterranean Politics, Thierry Desrués mentions the points of view of experts like François Burgat and Alain Rousillon, and notes that “other researchers question the validity of this thesis, since Islamism would keep its convening power and its potential social base”¹. In order to review this last stance, and given the social, political and religious diversity, Lebanon and its main Islamist movement, Ḥizb Allāh, constitute an excellent case of study. Its continuing rise in popularity since its foundation, the accession to power together with its 8 March coalition partners in 2011, and the present critical situation, challenge the idea of a post-Islamist phase of the resistance movement initiated since the early 1990s. At present, the military support to the regime of Bashār al-ʿAsad in Syria has meant a radical loss of popularity for the Islamist movement and the strong opposition of new radical Sunni groups of a Salafī nature as Hayʿat al-ʿUlamāʾ al-Muslimīn (League of Muslim Scholars). These groups question the hegemony of Ḥizb Allāh and of its armed wing, al-Muqāwamah al-Islāmīyah (The Islamic Resistance) against Israel, and oppose Iran's influence. This conclusion provides a different understanding of Arab revolts as a central historical event, which marks a before and after of Islamist movements in general.

Key words: Post-Islamism, Lebanon, Ḥizb Allāh, Arab revolts

I. Post-Islamism: Characteristics And Different Stances

1. Proponents And Advocates

Since the 1990s, numerous academics predicted the end of Islamism and the emergence of a new stage, *post-Islamism*. The term was used for the first time by professor Asef Bayat to designate first “a condition where, following a phase of experimentation, the appeal, energy, symbols and sources of legitimacy of Islamism get exhausted [...]” (1996: 45). Then he broadened its meaning to also include “a conscious attempt to conceptualize and strategize the rationale and modalities of transcending Islamism in social, political and intellectual domains [...] It represents an endeavor to fuse religiosity and rights, faith and freedom, Islam and liberty” (2007: 11).

However, this condition had been previously announced by others like Professor and Islam expert, Olivier Roy, in his book *L'échec de l'Islam politique*. There, he defended the idea of the decline of Islamism as a revolutionary political trend aiming to establish an Islamic State in the aftermath of the death of Āyat Allāh al-Khumaynī in 1989. By contrast, the rise of a new form of fundamentalism, more puritan and focus on Sharīʿah (Islamic Law) would take place and would erase the gap between Islamism and traditional fundamentalism (1992: 41).

Lastly, it is remarkable the analysis carried out by the French political expert Gilles Kepel, who, in his book *Jihad: Expansion et déclin de l'Islamisme*, stated that political Islam was developed along three main phases: a period of formation that began in the 1960s and concluded at the beginning of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, in 1979; a second stage, of expansion, which coincided with the advancement of the Iran Revolution itself and the influence of its achievements on the Arab world; and finally, a third phase that started at the beginning of the 1990s with the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq. At that moment, Political Islam began to experience a strong decline characterized by a process of fragmentation. After these stages, Gilles Kepel declares that since 1997, moderate Islamism has tried to reach a new agreement with the secular middle class. Its goal has been to go out from the political deadlock through a new form of Islamism compatible with democracy (2003: 23-34).

Therefore, all these scholars agree that, at the beginning of the 1990s, the political project of Islamism failed. Consequently, a radical form of Islamism, opposed to democracy, and desirous of violent global jihad rose. Finally, given this situation, the moderate mainstream Islamism trend began to evolve, according to them, towards a new democratic and liberal project. The

¹ Desrués Thierry. (2009). “El islamismo en el mundo árabe”, *Revista Internacional de Sociología (RIS)*, vol. 67, nº1, pp. 1-120.

scope of this one goes beyond the political sphere and focuses on issues related to rights and freedoms of women, religious and ethnic minorities.

2. Critics

That said, it is possible to also consider other stances that question this thesis in one way or another. On one hand, there is a group of scholars who are usually considered to be part of a viewpoint known as *Neo-Orientalism*. For them, Islam, as a religious and political expression, is incompatible with democracy, capitalism, citizenship and the respect of women's and minorities' rights. Hence, Islamism is an anti-modern and anti-secular phenomenon. Some of the most important representatives of this stance are Samuel Huntington, Bernard Lewis, Iyālī Kadūrī, Martin Kramer, Bassām Ṭībī and Daniel Pipes. The latter declares: "Islam does not offer an alternative way to modernize [...] Only when Muslims explicitly accept the Western Model will they be in a position to technicalize and then to develop" (1983: 198).

On the other hand, it is necessary to highlight the stance of other leading French experts in the Arab and Islamic world who show some reluctance to accept this notion. For example, expert François Burgat questioned the idea of a decline of Islamism declaring: "Whatever the name we assign them and the vitality we want or not to recognize on them, the "neo" or "post" Islamists continue to provide the big battalions of the contestation against Arabic political orders" (2001: 83). Along the same lines, Professor Alain Rousillon declared:

We may ask ourselves through which sleight of hand a phenomenon which emerged as a central issue to its own observers less than ten years ago, can be brought back to a "break period" when it lasted after all, less than a quarter century. (2001: 94)

It seems therefore clear that Islamist movements, far from having suffered a decline, have remained in opposition within an oppressive environment. However, during this period, Islamist movements have not only survived, but have also consolidated their role as the most important and the best organized political alternative. That is why most of the changes within these movements could be interpreted as tactical needs. In this sense, they have rather been waiting for the opportunity to reach the political power than have suffered a real decline.

However, from the end of 2010, a certain number of North African and Middle Eastern key states have experienced a great number of uprisings. These provoked the collapse of several authoritarian regimes settled in power since the time of colonization. Consequently, new attempts of democratic transitions started through electoral and constitutive processes. Since then, Islamist movements, particularly those linked to al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn (Muslim Brotherhood), seized most of the power, mainly in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya after decades of repression. This fact has enabled them to start the implementation, for the first time, of their political regime. Nevertheless, when governing, none of them was successful for different reasons and factors. Moreover, this failure came to join the unsuccessful revolts in Syria, Bahrain and Yemen among others.

So, in my opinion, this is the right moment to ask ourselves: to what extent has this experience in power impacted on Islamist movements? How did Arab revolts affect and continue to affect Islamist movements? Has a new phase of reform begun within this political trend? Has a real and definitive process of decline been initiated?

II. The Clash Of Islamist Trends

1. The Current Situation

Political Islam, far from being a homogeneous body, is made up of different movements that, among other issues, interpret the enforcement of Sharī'ah in a particular way, and defend diverse stances toward modernity and obtain support from different regional and international powers. Such divergences have created, on numerous occasions, mainly in the aftermath of the Arab revolts of 2011, a climate of dialectic confrontation which ends up further aggravating the process of fragmentation that this political trend is undergoing. In this regard, Lebanon Islamist reality constitutes an unbeatable case of study, because each movement and trend is associated with a particular regional hegemon. In general lines, Lebanese Islamism in Lebanon constitutes a microcosm of the world Islamist reality.

2. The Main Causes Of The Clashes

a. Ideological Causes

In general terms, it is well known that Sharī'ah is a compendium of principles, precepts and codes which guides all the aspects of Muslim life, and it is based principally on the Koran, the Sunna and the Hadiths, namely the word of God. In this respect, every movement or party which aspires to be recognized as Islamist, must support the establishment of a political order whose legal system and institutions stems from this compendium. However, it is also well known that Sharī'ah is not compiled in a single written body, but in an extensive group of literary works not ratified by all the Muslim scholars. In these works, it is possible to observe, in the words of Anthony Black, how "in revolt to étatiste Roman and Persian empires, Islam developed a stateless-praxis" (2011: 10). "The political pattern of Islam makes some sense if we identify it as a "post-tribal" society, one which has recently emerged from tribalism. This helps to explain why it never developed formal state structures or constitutions" (2011: 13). This is one of the reasons why, at the ideological level, Islamist parties and movements are often debating and discussing about which political system is in line with Sharī'ah. Concerning this issue, we can distinguish between two main groups: a reformist mainstream, those who accept the modern nation-state and the mechanisms of the democracy as a modern Islamic

consultation system or Shura; and a radical minority, those who consider democracy and the modern nation-state as a Western creation. The latter advocate a return to the Caliphate and they don't accept the idea of a majority rule legislation. Differences may also appear between pro-democracy figures within a single movement when determining the role that Sharī'ah should play in the institutions.

b. Geopolitical Causes

With regard to the regional situation, during the Arab revolts three main geopolitical projects were consolidated in broad strokes: The Turkish-Qatari project, the Saudi project and the Iranian project. In this respect, there is no doubt that most of the Islamist movements receive funding and support from some of these powers. In this way, they contribute to consolidate or expand the hegemony of those states in the region. Therefore, clashes between Islamic groups are often a miniature representation of the tensions between different hegemonic policies. In addition, if there is a religious affinity between the movement and the main fund provider, this could be used as a weapon against rivals referring to historical Islamic confrontations. But it is not a necessary requirement for support and funding in every case.

A more detailed analysis shows the following scenario: The Turkish-Qatari axis was mainly supporting the Islamist movement al-Ikhwān al-Muslimūn (Muslim Brotherhood) in Egypt and their offshoots in Libya, Syria, Palestine, Lebanon and Jordan among others. In the case of Turkey, apart from economic or strategic interest, there is a political and ideological common ground, but in the case of Qatar, political and strategic interests, particularly rivalry with Saudi Arabia, is the most important link given that:

Qatar officially subscribes to Wahhabism and adheres to the Hanbali school of law, which insists on the political obedience of subjects to their ruler (...) the Muslim Brotherhood is an activist and anti-Western political movement ultimately seeking to topple secular nationalist regimes, and it is not particularly in favour of monarchical systems of rule (Haykel 2013: 1).

For its part, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has patronized, from its foundation, a big network of Salafist movements and figures all over the Muslim world. The spread of al-Wahhābiyah (Wahhabi Islam trend) has not only guaranteed the unity of the state but also strengthened its religious and political primacy particularly in all the Sunni community in every country. In this respect, Laurent Bonnefoy describes how all the three forms of Salafism: Jihadi, Quietist and Activist, are particularly and historically linked to Saudi Arabia by a special relation. But he highlights the increasing fragmentation of this trend and how the Arab Revolts have contributed to the strengthening of other promoters (2013: 1-3).

Finally, the case of Iran is a special one given its Shia character. However, this feature has not been an obstacle for even funding and promoting allied Sunni Islamist movements since the triumph of the Islamic Revolution. During the last years, Iran has used the term: "Islamic Awakening" to refer to the Arab revolts. The main goal of this strategy was to reinforce its hegemony in the region. The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, stated in the I Islamic Awakening Conference in 2011:

After the victory of the Islamic Revolution and the establishment of the Islamic republic in Iran which caused an earthquake among the worldly materialistic rulers in East and West and brought unprecedented uproar and joy to Muslim nations, we expected that Egypt would be next in line to rise. The reason was the history of jihad, progressive thinking and presence of great mojahids and intellectuals in Egypt (Khamenei 2011).

In summary, the understanding of the struggle for hegemony in the region helps to understand some of the clashes between Islamist movements which, a priori, even share, a similar ideology and similar goals.

3. The Case Of Hizb Allāh: Post-Islamist Shift?

A. Ideological Origins

a. Shia Political Islam

First of all, the ideological origin of Hizb Allāh (Party of God) goes back to the emergence of Political Shi'ism in Iraq at the end of the 1950s. This fact constituted a response of a part of Najaf Shia Clerics, influenced by the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood, facing the triumph of secular ideologies in Iraq. These Clerics, skipping the traditional quietist stance, advocated greater social and political activism of the Shia religious figures.

The most important was Āyat Allāh Bāqir al-Šadr who nurtured the creation of Hizb al-Da'wah (Call Party). He also coined an important political notion in order to establish a hypothetic Islamic state: Wilāyat al-'Ummah (Guardianship of the People). It means:

Islamic rule embodied not only God's sovereignty on the basis of Islamic law, but also the principle that, while the clerics had religious authority, human beings in general represent God's vicegerents on earth and are entrusted with legislative and executive powers (Tejel et al., 2012: 337).

It is in this milieu that three prominent Shia Ayatollahs of Southern Lebanese origin (Jabal 'Āmil region), Mūsā al-Šadr, Muḥammad Mahdī Shams al-Dīn and Muḥammad Faḍl Allāh, developed their social and political ideology. Later they exported it to their country of origin seeking the revival of a marginalized Lebanese Shia community (Qassem 2010: 55-66).

b. The Foundation Of Ḥizb ALLĀH

As noted above, these three prominent Shia clerics were the key in the revival of the Lebanese Shia community. The first of them, Āyat Allāh Mūsā al-Ṣadr, created *Harakat al-Mahrūmīn* (Movement of Disinherited) in 1974 and the following year, its armed wing, *Afwāj al-Muqāwamah al-Lubnāniya* (Lebanese Resistance Regiments), known by its acronym ḤAMAL (Hope). Its main goals were “revolutionizing Shiite political consciousness as a communal group in Lebanon and [...] integrating the Shiites into the Lebanese state” (2011: 131). In 1978, Mūsā al-Ṣadr disappeared in Qadhdhāf’s Libya and his militia suffered split into two groups: ḤAMAL and ḤAMAL al-Islāmī (Islamic ḤAMAL).

The second and third clerics, Āyat Allāh Muḥammad Shams al-Dīn and Āyat Allāh Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍl Allāh, also undertook an important social and religious activism through their charitable foundations. In the political field, Āyat Allāh Shams al-Dīn advocated the notion of *Dawlah al-Madanīyah* (Civil State) as “an alternative to both the confessional state and to a secular state” (Tejel et al., 2012: 337), while Āyat Allāh Faḍl Allāh contributed to the foundation of a branch of the Islamic Da’wah Party in Lebanon.

At that point, the idea of Ḥizb Allāh began to take shape since 1978 among the members of the Lebanese Ḥizb al-Da’wah and the members of the new *ḥarakat ḤAMAL al-Islāmī* in addition to others. However, two principle events, the triumph of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 and Israel’s invasion of Lebanon in 1982, have finally lead to the official foundation of this movement. Certainly, a controversial political objective of this movement was the establishment of an Islamic State in Lebanon, not under the notion of *Wilāyat al-’Ummah*, but under the new Iranian *Khumaynī’s* model, *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (Guardianship of the Jurist). In the words of Ahmad Vaezi, this system “advocates a guardianship-based political system, which relies upon a just and capable jurist (*faqīh*) to assume the leadership of the government in the absence of an infallible imam.” (2004 after Bayram 2013: 31).

B. Accomodation

At the end of 1989, Tā’if Agreements were signed and the following year, the Syrian army invaded and controlled Lebanon. From this moment, started a period known as “Pax Syria” characterized by a “systematic Syrian control in Lebanon, leading to temporary stability but not to an actual reconciliation of the political tensions that led to civil war” (El-Husseini 2012: XXI). This situation lasted until the withdrawal of the Syrian army in 2005.

Within this context, some figures highlighted the beginning of a “Lebanonization” or “Inftāh” (openness) process indicating the “Hizbullah’s enrolment in Lebanese domestic political life starting the early 1990s” (Qassim 2002 after Alagha 2006: 15). Some of them associated it to the afore-mentioned Post-Islamist phase (see Alagha 2013).

However, in my opinion, a greater political involvement of Ḥizb Allāh into a pseudo-democratic system, overseen by his allied Baathist regime of Syria, shouldn’t be considered as a complete democratic openness. This step should rather be seen as a tactical agreement between the Syrian regime, Ḥizb Allāh and his main promoter, Iran, in order to consolidate their hegemony, reach their objectives and increase their popularity in Lebanon and the region. A major achievement for these three actors was the withdrawal of Israel’s troops from South Lebanon in 2000.

C. Cedar Revolution And July War

The 14th February 2005, the assassination of the Sunni Prime Minister, Rafīq al-Ḥarīrī, took place. This event triggered a social movement known as *Thawrat al-Arz* (Cedar Revolution) which concluded with the withdrawal of the Syrian army from Lebanon the 24th April of the same year. Of course, this fact does not entail neither a lack of other foreign projects behind some of the Cedar Revolution backers. James Worrall declares that: “Many in the international community believe that actors in close proximity to the Asad regime were behind the assassination of Hariri, who himself possessed close ties with Saudi Arabia” (2015: 115). It is worth to mention the fact that Ḥizb Allāh, ḤAMAL and its allies, were opposed to this movement and retained their allegiance to the regime of Syria until the last moment. Therefore, the above-mentioned Ḥizb Allāh’s process of shift toward a national movement should only be understood within the context of a Syrian-dominated and not a full independent and democratic Lebanon.

From that moment, the political scene in Lebanon were divided in two main coalitions: 14 March coalition which includes Saudi Arabia and Western allies, and 8 March coalition with all Syria-Iran axis allies, comprising Ḥizb Allāh, ḤAMAL, and, later, the most important Christian political movement, *al-Tayyār al-Waṭānī al-Ḥurr* (The Free Patriotic Movement, FPM).

Concerning the military intervention of Israel in Lebanon in July 2006, the popularity of Ḥizb Allāh increased in the Arab World after what it was known by its General Secretary, al-Sayyid Ḥasan Naṣrallāh, as *al-Intiṣār al-Ilāhī* (The Divine Victory). However, in Lebanon, the division between the two main coalitions widened. James Worrall affirms again: “In the aftermath of the conflict with Israel, Iran and Saudi Arabia both sought to aid the poswar reconstruction program [...] funding demonstrates the opportunity for geopolitical competition within Lebanon” (2015: 115).

D. Rise To Power

At the beginning of 2011, the biggest Lebanese Islamist foundation, *Ḥizb Allāh*, along with its partners within the 8 March Coalition, provoked the collapse of the 14 March Coalition government. Therefore, the Sunni Pro-Syrian regime politician Najib Mīqātī was appointed as Prime Minister. So, for the first time in history, *Ḥizb Allāh* succeeded to dominate, along with its allies, the Lebanese politics. In this respect, Joseph Alagha points out the following idea:

I argue that *Hizbullah's* "Arab Spring" began in the early 1990s by way of its policy of *infītah*. It gradually picked up momentum in the following years, and reached a peak, a climax, in 2011 when the Party [...] succeeded in securing the majority in the Lebanese legislature, thus obtaining the prerogative of naming the Prime Minister. (2011:188).

Through this paragraph, it is possible to observe the upward trend followed by *Ḥizb Allāh* since its foundation till 2011. At the same time, it is difficult to perceive any important failure which could encourage a significant reform process within the Islamist movement apart from a tactic accommodation to the political system. The Ayatollah Fadlallah explained it thus:

When I spoke of the Lebanonization of the Islamist movement in Lebanon, what I meant was that the Islamist movement should examine the prevailing circumstances in Lebanon and formulate its strategy within that framework, making allowances for Lebanon's particular circumstances. (1995 after Euben, Zaman 2009: 400).

However, *Ḥizb Allāh's* rise to power, together with its consequent military intervention to defend the regime of Bashār al-'Asad in the Syrian conflict, has increased tension between political and religious figures, especially between Islamist leaders in the country. Although the last Arab revolts did not have any direct influence on Lebanon, the Syrian conflict is having a great impact on the reality of Islamist parties.

E. *Ḥizb ALLĀH* Within The Clash Of Islamist Trends

Since the beginning of the Arab revolts, *Ḥizb Allāh* has followed the line taken by Iran. This is why they have supported the rebel movements where the regime was considered as an enemy of the country (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Bahrain) or defended it where it was considered as a key ally (Syria). This opportunism has led to an important loss of popularity of the movement; the former victories against Israel have been reinterpreted in a geopolitical point of view, reinforcing definitely the idea of *Ḥizb Allāh* as an Iranian branch in Lebanon deprived of autonomy.

In relation to the clashes, we can differentiate between ideological and geopolitical causes, which definitely, are deeply associated. In this respect, *Ḥizb Allāh* is religiously and ideologically supporter of the *Wilāyat al-Faḡh* concept. Of course, this notion entailed a geopolitical affiliation to Iran and its leader. But, as we have previously seen, the majority of the Arab Shia community, especially the Lebanese one, has been historically closer to the school of Najaf. Hence, the traditional notion of quietism, or the modern Islamist concepts of *Wilāyat al-'Ummah* and *Dawlat al-Madanīyah*, is still well-known and accepted.

Thus, the son of Ayatollah Faḡl Allāh, Ali Faḡl Allāh, and his supporters, has maintained a neutral position regarding Iran. Few years ago, he stated in an interview: "There are different Shiite groups in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon, and each of them have diverse ideas. It would be wrong to say that Iran represents all the Shiite groups [...] Our hope is that Syrians will ensure their rights and freedom as soon as possible" (Saḡlam, 2013). On the other hand, other religious Lebanese Shia leaders have advocated a more extreme position as al-Sayyid 'Alī al-'Amīn, former Mufti of the city of Tyr. In an interview I could conduct with him in Beirut last year (2015), he affirmed the following about *Ḥizb Allāh* and the religious legitimacy of Martyrdom in Syria:

This is not a vision in which all Shiites believe as I said. They do not believe neither that there is martyrdom in the internal conflicts and disputes occurring outside the borders of the Lebanese State because we must commit to the law of Lebanon that prohibits intervention in the affairs of other countries. (Al-'Amīn, 2015).

Concerning the Sunni movements, until this time the Shiite nature of *Ḥizb Allāh* wasn't an obstacle in receiving a backing from some of them all over the Arab World, particularly from those allied to Iran. However, the clearly Sunni nature of Syrian opposition has brought about an inter-confessional conflict, and both Sunni and Shiite Lebanese combatants have joined the armed forces of one of either side in the neighboring country.

With respect to al-Jamā'ah al-Islāmīyah (Islamic Group), the Muslim Brotherhood offshoot in Lebanon, in spite of its traditional good relations with *Ḥizb Allāh* and the common ideological ground, the war in Syria has widen the rift which began since the assassination of Rafīq al-Ḥarīrī and the siege of Beirut in 2008. According to the journalist Qāsim Qaṣīr in 2011, the General Secretary of *Ḥizb Allāh* had no contact with the leader of the al-Jamā'ah al-Islāmīyah, Ibrāhīm al-Mīṣri, since 5 years. All this, in spite of the mediation efforts made by the Palestinian *Ḥarakat al-Muqāwamah al-Islāmīyah* (Islamic Resistance Movement), known by its acronym *ḤAMAS*. (Qaṣīr, 2011)

Finally, regarding *Ḥizb Allāh-Salafist* trends, the situation is not very encouraging. The main event during these years was the irruption of a controversial religious figure, Aḡmad al-'Asīr. Since 2011, he succeeded in establishing a kind of radical Sunni militia in the village of 'Abrā, near Saida. The two main goals of this movement were to counteract the hegemony of *Ḥizb Allāh* in the country, and to channel the general malaise of the Sunni Lebanese community given the lack of a charismatic leader. In an interview with *Al-Akhbar* newspaper, he proclaimed: "The party's declared commitment to resistance and Islamic unity "are nothing but a mask for promoting its own plans." Its leader Hassan Nasrallah has never concealed his "pride at serving the case of *Velayet e-Faḡh* (Guardianship of the Jurist)," (Mortada, 2012).

Also outstanding is the foundation of a new radical legal body in Tripoli, *Hay'at al-'Ulamā' al-Muslimīn* (League of Muslim Scholars), trying to replace the highest religious authority of the governmental institution *Dar al-Fatwa*. His actual leader, Sālim al-Rifa'ī, organized a militia in order to fight in Syria with the rebels. In 2013 he said: "We also have our people who are

Lebanese Sunnis in Qusayr and Tal Kalakh [...] Our calls for jihad will stop once Hezbollah withdraws from Syria” (Al-Arabiya, 2013).

Conclusions

In conclusion, one of the main objectives of the research was to check how the post-Islamism theory could apply to the case of Hizb Allāh. To this end, an analysis of the movement’s evolution was performed by highlighting relevant historic moments. Following this analysis, based on relevant documentary evidence from secondary sources, it is important to declare that, far from a decline, Hizb Allāh has experienced a rise of popularity since its foundation. Although the post-Islamism theory proclaimed the failure of Islamism since the beginning of the 1990s, and the opening of a post-Islamist phase, this condition does not appear to be met by Hizb Allāh. In spite of its tactical accommodation to the Lebanese political system, it has always maintained its loyalty to Iran, lacking of a true national stance.

It is not until 2013, with the fall of Mīqāfī’s government and the military intervention in Syria, that this Islamist movement, that this Islamist movement suffer a serious loss of popularity. The reach of power in 2011 and the beginning of the conflict in Syria marked a before and after where Hizb Allāh has failed to offer a future non-sectarian project for a new Lebanon. The Lebanese Shia community maintains a loyal stance given the dangerous situation, but, according to ‘Alī al-’Amīn:

There is a huge proportion of the Shiite sect that does not approve their policy, however some or most of them, do not express their opinion because they are incapable of making a change [...] No Shiite person may get a job without the approval of Hizb Allāh and ’AMAL movement, as they are one entity now, and all services are controlled by them. So naturally people remain silent. (al-’Amīn, 2015).

These interview, along with some others with prominent Lebanese Islamist personalities, are part of a qualitative research study, carried between January and July 2015, in order to better understand the current situation of Hizb Allāh.

In addition, this Islamist movement found itself within this clash of Islamist trends. This new situation may mark the starting point for a true post-Islamist reform within this formation, or even it may suppose its definitive decline. Even if the project of Islamic Liberal democracy constitutes a serious and real alternative, we cannot rule out a new secular project either. As we said, Arab and Muslim societies are not essential religious and separate bodies.

Finally, this study requires an increased research effort in order to detail how current relations between Hizb Allāh and other Lebanese Islamist leaders and members are. During this research study, it has not been possible to arrange appointments with Hizb Allāh leaders, given the situation they are currently facing. However, it opens the door, not just to deepen the knowledge of Lebanon and its Islamist movements, but also to review all the post-Islamist theory, in other Arab and Islamic countries in the light of the recent Arab revolts.

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