

## Acknowledgments

My first encounter with the Shi'a of Lebanon came in the spring of 1980 in southern Lebanon. I was serving as an unarmed military observer with the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization and heading a small team charged with assisting the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Early on, Timur Goksel, who was then the Press Information Officer for UNIFIL, and I discussed the renewed activism within the Shi'i community. I also benefited from frequent discussions with the distinguished Chilean diplomat Jaime Holger, who was the political adviser to the commanding general of UNIFIL and who always offered an astute reading of Lebanese politics. It was then the sixth year of the Lebanese civil war—and only two years after Israel's 1978 invasion, the incident which had prompted the Security Council to create UNIFIL. The Palestine Liberation Organization, under Yasser Arafat's leadership, controlled much of Lebanon south of Beirut, but tensions between the PLO and the southern Shi'a were becoming violent, which was a natural concern for UNIFIL. Under UN instructions, I made contact with the local Shi'i leaders, along with two of my very talented colleagues—Desmond Travers of Ireland and Marc Vasco from France—also charter members of our little team. This was two years before Hezbollah would emerge in Lebanon, so I met frequently with members of the inchoate Amal movement, led nationally by Nabih Berri, and by the late Daoud Suleiman Daoud in the South. For more than a year I enjoyed an unusually

privileged, if fortuitous, entree to local Shi'ī politics. This was a protean moment in local Shi'ī politics. Within a couple of years, growing suspicion toward the United States and the radicalization of Shi'ī politics, would make access much more difficult, and even for a period foolhardy. Over the course of the past quarter century, however, I have been able to return Lebanon frequently, sometimes even to continue conversations with the children of the men and women with whom the conversations first began.

From the start, I was more interested in understanding political trends and perspectives than in gathering names, and I usually promised my interlocutors that I would not publish their names unless they agreed to speak on the public record. If I had not respected this ground rule in those early days, and ever since, my access to Shi'ī politics would have been much more limited. I would like to thank two old friends who were extremely generous teachers. One, a Christian of gentle spirit but firm integrity, comes from a Lebanese village on the Israeli border; he taught me a tremendous amount about the complex culture of the region. He is now one of the most respected generals in Lebanon. Another officer, I shall call him Abu Hamudi, became an especially dear friend. I could always trust him to give me straight answers, and during dangerous times he demonstrated his willingness to risk his life to protect mine. Abu Hamudi died far too young—from a relentless disease—in 2004. He was a man of moderate views who, while very proud of being Lebanese, was also openly frustrated by Lebanon's sometimes stultifying, and too often corrupt, political system. I don't expect that Abu Hamudi would have agreed with every word in this little book, but I would like to think that he would find this an honest account of the leading Shi'ī political party in Lebanon—Hezbollah.

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Over the course of many visits to Lebanon, I have benefited from hundreds of conversations with other Lebanese colleagues, friends, intellectuals, journalists, and business people. Here I wish simply to acknowledge a general debt, and to promise that I will find more private occasions to extent my gratitude.

I would like to note that substantial parts of chapter 3 were first published as “Ritual, Blood, and Shiite Identity,” *Drama Review* 49, no. 4 (Winter 2005), and are used here with permission. Also, some parts of chapters 1 and 2 have appeared, in rather different form, in *Hizballah of Lebanon: From Radical Idealism to Mundane Politics* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1999), and in “Hizballah: From Radicalism to Pragmatism,” *Middle East Policy* 5, no. 4 (January 1998); material from both sources are used here with permission. The Hezbollah “Open Letter,” discussed in chapter 2, was first published in English in my own *Amal and the Shi‘a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987).

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