

Beyond Secular Liberalism: Islamic Activism in Lebanon

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Abstract

While many scholars have focused on questions of non- or post-secularity vis-à-vis the “modern nation state,” fewer have asked what kind of decolonial redemption is possible under global neoliberal capitalism today. This is precisely the question I seek to address in this article by analyzing the contemporary ideas and practices of the charities affiliated with what is collectively known as the Islamic resistance movement in Lebanon. Based on almost two and a half years of ethnographic fieldwork in Lebanon on the charities affiliated with the three main Shi’i activist movements loosely comprising the Islamic resistance movement—Hizbullah, al-Mabarrat Association, and Imam al-Sadr Foundation—I describe how all three are selectively resisting some aspects of secular liberalism while accepting others. However, by employing a decentered approach to my analysis, I also highlight how their negotiation with secular liberalism is on their own terms, thus ultimately presenting a challenge to Western hegemony. These charities employ multiple conceptions of rationality, including religious rationality and a range of liberal and even neoliberal economic principles; but by centering their project on faith, Islam, and resistance, these charities reproduce what I call “resistance subjectivities,” allowing the Islamic resistance movement to present unique challenges to Western secular modernity.

Introduction

A place like al-Sāḥa Traditional Village in the southern suburbs of Beirut is an interesting example of a contemporary Islamic negotiation with secular

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liberalism. Al-Sāḥa, meaning “the square,” generates income for al-Mabar-rat Association, a network of Shi‘i Islamic charities in Lebanon. The complex consists of a restaurant, hotel, market, library, playground, prayer rooms and event conference hall,¹ and its structure recreates the rural landscape of nineteenth century Christian Mount Lebanon, albeit interwoven with contemporary Islamic ideas and communal practices. Throughout my field research in Lebanon, I attended numerous meetings, conferences and events at al-Sāḥa for an array of Islamic and social justice causes, marking it as a hub of solidarity. Mona Harb (2006, 10) argues that al-Sāḥa offers pious entertainment—a safe space providing an “environment complying with pious Muslim practices.” However, she also asks if this kind of pious entertainment will ultimately lose “its moral authority and legitimacy by accepting the market logic of consumption” (ibid., 11). Indeed, by 2012 a luxury spa and gym were being added to the complex²—but this consumption is still mediated by faith and supports essential social services. As such, al-Sāḥa challenges the hegemonic project of secular modernity by prioritizing faith and selectively incorporating liberal ideas and practices.

While this and other types of religious negotiations with the contemporary world may prove to have some secularizing and/or liberalizing effects—perhaps even taking on neoliberal hues—it would be a methodological mistake to allow such tendencies to obfuscate all the complexities and contradictions that make them distinct from the Western secular liberal project. Wael Hallaq (2013) argues that the “modern nation state” also has secularizing effects, but ‘the secular’ as a concept of state neutrality that is inclusive of religion (Taylor 2011) is not the same as the Western project of secularism, which forcefully exports a non-neutral framework in violent ways (Asad 2003).³ The same can be said of the ‘liberal’ and ‘neoliberal’—they do not necessarily equal their “isms” (liberalism, neoliberalism). In fact, when the starting point of analysis is de-centered from the West, liberal and neoliberal policies can still contribute to a decolonial project.

By liberalism, I mean the Western political and economic project envisioning abstract individuals who have rights and are guided primarily by what is identified as instrumental rationality (rather than religious or moral rationality) with intervention from the state to regulate this system and guarantee some form of redistributive justice (Rawls 2001, 2005). What is strictly ‘liberal’, however, refers only to certain characteristics of this conceptual framework and practice. Similarly, by neoliberalism I mean not only an economic and political system based on laissez-faire capitalism, but also an entire set of beliefs and practices—an ideology (Rupert 2015). Neo-

liberalism as a project is imagined to reproduce itself without state intervention, creating new hierarchies that are supposedly neutral of class, gender, race, and other differences, but which are not in fact neutral at all (Rose and Miller 1992). Nevertheless, neoliberal policies can still be integrated into alternative frameworks, such as an Islamic one. In this way, pointing out the neoliberal tendencies of religious movements does not necessarily mean that they are fully aligned with the hegemonic system of neoliberal capitalism, namely the economic expression of neoliberalism based on the Washington Consensus (Stiglitz 2008).⁴ Capitalism itself—meaning any system of social relations that is based on private ownership, where some own capital and others must sell their labor to earn capital—can take on many forms, including those that are Islamic (Taleqani 1983; Baqir al-Sadr 2000). Decolonizing these concepts means to de-center the West as the master referent that signifies their meanings (Sayyid 2003, 2014), creating a pluriversal epistemology of the future (Mignolo 2011).

Scholars are increasingly turning their attention to how contemporary religious movements are interacting with local and global economies (Bompani and Frahm-Arp 2010; Daher 2016; Dreher and Smith 2016). These studies show how deliberately incorporating faith into everyday social practices is a complex and contradictory political project that can be expressed in different ways. While hegemonic understandings of Western modernity privilege reason over faith as a preferred way of knowing, critical studies of Islamic movements in the Middle East have raised awareness of how a politics of piety is decidedly modern (Mahmood 2005; Deeb 2006). This article builds on recent studies of how Lebanese Muslims are negotiating (with) secular liberalism and neoliberal capitalism (Deeb and Harb 2013) by exploring the different ways that the Islamic resistance movement in Lebanon reproduces what I call a resistance subjectivity: a faith and commitment to the cause of revolutionary Islamic activism. This allows them to negotiate with secular liberalism from a de-centred (decolonial) position, creating new configurations.

In this article, I first explain the resistance underpinnings of three different yet overlapping Islamic activist movements in Lebanon. The first two are Hizbullah and al-Mabarrat Association, the well-known charitable foundations of the Islamic resistance movement. However, I also discuss the intellectual contributions of religious activist Imam Musa al-Sadr, as well as focus in detail on the divergent legacy of his Imam al-Sadr Foundation, the third (lesser known) movement. I expand upon previously published work on resistant rationalities (Marusek 2016) but take my analysis towards

decolonial horizons by exploring the ideas and practices that sustain the vast system of social services of all three movements, focusing at length on the Imam al-Sadr Foundation. Ultimately, I show the similarities and differences in their approaches which result in multiple resistance subjectivities. Based on interviews, participant observation, academic literature, media, and documents collected during almost two and a half years of fieldwork in Lebanon, I examine how faith and rationality seamlessly intermingle in their work. Thus, in a sense, I further “de-mystify” Islamic activism by exploring how these charities are actively negotiating with secular liberalism and neoliberal capitalism on their own terms, embracing some aspects of these two frameworks but not others.⁵ Building on the insights of Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci and his sophisticated concept of hegemony, this article aims to illustrate how Islamic negotiations with hegemonic ideas and practices in Lebanon can be diverse, contradictory, and unique, ultimately creating multiple and divergent counter-hegemonic forces.

Background on Shi‘i Activism in Lebanon

The charities affiliated with Hizbullah, al-Mabarrat Association, and the Imam al-Sadr Foundation mostly (but not exclusively) provide social services to Lebanese Shi‘a, similar to the sectarian character of the Lebanese state and a majority of the country’s social institutions (Hamzeh 2004; Cammet 2014). These charities comprise a vast network across the south and east of the country, operating schools, hospitals, orphanages, mosques, libraries, and other community institutions, as well as income generating programs. Two religious clerics were particularly key to the emergence of these vast charitable networks: Imam Musa al-Sadr (b. 1928) and Ayatollah Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah (1935-2010), the latter who established al-Mabarrat Association. Furthermore, both religious scholars were contributors to the revolutionary activism that also inspired Hizbullah.

Referring to these social institutions as ‘charities’ is somewhat misleading, as Western understandings of charity bely their important political and cultural roles. Benthall and Bellion-Jourdan (2009) illustrate that Islamic charities are ubiquitous around the world, and Clarke and Tittensor (2016) seek to make some of these Islamic charities “visible” to the global humanitarian sector positioned in the West. The latter authors explain, for example, that identifying Islamic aid organizations in the United Kingdom has proven difficult because they do not identify as such and employ a different discourse. By seeking to locate these charities within the Western imagination, even one dedicated to “development” and “humanitarian

aid,” my concern is that this ultimately misrepresents the Islamic resistance movement in Lebanon. Accordingly, my own engagement with these social institutions moves beyond the hegemonic paradigms of development and humanitarian assistance. Although sometimes the charities may employ similar discourses, they are starting from a decidedly non-Western position in the same way that they de-center liberal and neoliberal frameworks.

Despite spending only eighteen years in the country, the Iranian-born activist and cleric Imam al-Sadr (b. 1928) inspired the oppressed Shi'i communities of southern and eastern Lebanon to take control of their own lives by calling their situation what it was: destitute. Before his arrival in Lebanon, Shi'a were suffering on multiple fronts. In the decades following Lebanon's independence in 1943, Lebanese Shi'a experienced extreme political neglect under the country's sectarian system and feudal relations,⁶ which Traboulsi (2007, 115-119) notes also had negative economic consequences. Furthermore, as Hamzeh (2004, 13) points out, much of the country's wealth was located within the urban centers and most Shi'i populations were living in the rural areas in the south or to the east in the Bekaa Valley,⁷ regions that the Lebanese state had historically ignored (Harik 2005). One Lebanese explained to me how when he was growing up, being a Shi'i was almost comparable to being an untouchable under the caste system in India.⁸ He said that it was simply not an identity that he or any other Shi'a would dare to publicly embrace.⁹ Only after Imam al-Sadr arrived in Lebanon in 1960 and called attention to this collective poverty did Shi'a become more politicized. Ajami (1986) describes how Imam al-Sadr successfully adopted a religious discourse evolving from themes of disinheritance and deprivation, appealing to leftist and Marxist-oriented Lebanese.

Similar Islamic discourses were developing elsewhere in the region during this time, especially to counter the rise of communist parties, for example in Iraq (Baqir al-Sadr 2000; Sankari 2005) and Iran (Shariati 1980; Taleqani 1983). However, although many thinkers were inspired by the Islamic revolutionary current, these discourses were also in dialogue with other postcolonial activists, challenging a wider range of sectarian, political, economic, racial, colonial, and imperial hierarchies. Ali Shariati, known as the ideologue of the 1979 Islamic Revolution, supported the post-colonial movements in Algeria and Cuba while also philosophically engaging with the writing of contemporary radicals, including Jean-Paul Sartre, Che Guevara, and Frantz Fanon. Indeed, he translated many of these authors' texts into Persian, even exchanging letters with Fanon to argue that religion should play a role in postcolonial struggles where the societies were

traditionally pious (Abrahamian 1982, 25). Imam al-Sadr was a friend of Shariati (Norton 2005, 198), and he too believed that contemporary “politics, administration, markets and construction were not built on the basis of faith, they drifted from its path and turned into colonialism, looking for new markets, cold war periods... etc.”¹⁰ One Lebanese Shi‘i scholar who was active in the socialist movement during the 1970s told me, with some frustration, that while the communists had failed to reach these communities, al-Sadr succeeded by employing a religiously-inspired Marxism.¹¹

Imam al-Sadr would regularly travel throughout southern Lebanon in order to speak to people on the ground, listening to and connecting with them. He instilled courage and dignity among Shi‘a through sermons, grass-roots work, and an array of social and political institutions.¹² In 1974, Imam al-Sadr, together with Gregoire Haddad, a Greek Catholic archbishop, created the Party of the Deprived to provide services to the needy throughout southern Lebanon regardless of sect (Moussawi 2011, 201-211). However, during the outbreak of the civil/international war (1975-1990), this soon evolved into a Shi‘i militia and then ultimately into a political party known as the Amal movement. Imam al-Sadr made frequent and bold overtures to Christian leaders in Lebanon, establishing a body to represent Shi‘i Islamic interests known as the Shi‘i Islamic Supreme Council in Hazmieh, a Christian area southeast of Beirut, as a model of coexistence. Indeed, when war erupted in 1975, Imam al-Sadr delivered a remarkable speech against sectarian violence, telling Lebanese: “I declare that if a bullet is fired at a Christian neighborhood, it is as if it was fired at my house, at my bosom, at my own child. If any well wisher tries to stop this calamity, tries to extinguish this fire of war, it is as if he has extinguished the fire in my house, on my door, on my pulpit.”¹³

Imam al-Sadr also established the Technical Institute of Jabal Amil, a school to provide students with technical and vocational training; Imam al-Sadr Research Center, a think tank in Beirut; and Imam al-Sadr Foundation, a social service institution in Tyre. However, after Imam al-Sadr mysteriously disappeared during a visit to Libya in 1978, Lebanese Shi‘a split into several factions: many continued to follow his Amal movement under the lawyer Nabih Berri, whose “secular” leadership guided Amal away from its Islamic revolutionary roots (although the party is now politically aligned with the resistance); some liberalized Imam al-Sadr’s project through the center and foundation he had established; and when Israel invaded southern Lebanon for the second time in 1982, others launched a new armed movement called Hizbullah, or the Party of God. These followers also went

on to develop many more social institutions under the auspices of Hizbullah.

Similar to Imam al-Sadr, Hizbullah's official discourse employs a language of empowerment. The party publicly communicated its existence in 1985 with the ideologically powerful "Open Letter," written for the "Down-trodden in Lebanon and in the World," emphasizing the liberatory potential of Islam and citing the 1979 Iranian Revolution as an inspiration to action.¹⁴ This concept of revolutionary resistance is critical to any understanding of Hizbullah's ideology and aspirations. The Qur'an refers to two different types of resistance captured in the Arabic word *jihād*, the party's Second Pillar (Qassem 2005). Although it is often misunderstood, the word literally means "struggle," both inward and outward. As el-Hussein (2008, 402-403) explains, resistance is also a form of *jihād*, with key Lebanese clerics supporting both the military resistance against Israel's occupation as well as *sumūd*, or steadfastness, which is a more "passive resistance manifest in a refusal to leave the land". However, Hizbullah further expands upon this concept of *jihād* because the party believes oppression refers not only to those suffering from political or religious marginalization but also to economic exploitation. In this way, Hizbullah's resistance framework seeks to locate itself within the margins from the position of the poor and oppressed, much like Christian liberation theology's preferential option for the poor (Gutiérrez 2003). Fawaz (2000, 25-26) explains how, according to the party:

The victims of oppressive structures are not hopeless, desperate individuals but rather active subjects who are resisting oppression—they are only 'perceived as weak' (*mustaḍ'afin*). They therefore can enroll in organizations, and in doing so join a 'resistance society' which 'fights' the 'oppression' and misery heaped on them by unjust social structures. This new language is above all challenging people's perceptions and hopelessness consciously through rewording and redefining their position and role in the society.

Saad-Ghorayeb (2002, 17) similarly argues that the party has Islamized its understanding of oppression, whereby the suffering experienced from exploitation and poverty becomes an Islamic virtue, translating class struggle into religious terms. Indeed, according to Hilal and Moussawi (2007, 15), Hizbullah is a religious party with a total societal perspective and comprehensive doctrine.

The charities affiliated with Hizbullah offer a wide range of programs that deliver social and financial assistance, build infrastructure, and provide education and health care. Flanigan and Abdel-Samad (2009, 15) divide Hizbullah's social program into four main organizations: Jihad al-Bina, a service and construction agency founded in response to "repeated Israeli assaults on different parts of Lebanon;"¹⁵ Islamic Emdad Charitable Committee, a branch of the Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation in Iran primarily serving the remoter areas of southern Lebanon that have been subject to Israeli bombardments and regions where government services are scarce;¹⁶ Martyr's Foundation, supporting the families of those killed in military operations, including both civilians and fighters; and Foundation for the Wounded, helping those who have been injured in military operations.

As I have previously discussed (Marusek 2016), although Ayatollah Fadlallah was never officially connected to Hizbullah, he was an important spiritual leader for the wider resistance community; his network of charitable institutions, al-Mabarrat Association, continues to serve many supporters and members of Hizbullah.¹⁷ Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah, the current leader of Hizbullah, describes the relationship as follows:

there is no organizational link between the leadership and decision-making process of the party and [Ayatollah Fadlallah]. However, apart from the organizational aspect, Sayyid Mohammad Hussein has a very special position in what we call the 'Islamic scene' in Lebanon—a position he earned thanks to his high level of education, personality, broadmindedness, and his secular, social, and organizational activities throughout the years... Undoubtedly, there is a feeling of common fate between Hizbullah and Sayyid Mohammad Hussein, due to our common spiritual and intellectual way of thinking and the historical relationship that exists between us. (Cited in Noe 2007, 136)

Accordingly, Ayatollah Fadlallah and his network of charities must also be included in any discussion about the cultural production and reproduction of a resistance subjectivity.¹⁸

The resistance subjectivity positions the believer within the peripheries to struggle with the marginalized. Accordingly, Ayatollah Fadlallah (2011, 103) argued that Islam approved of rebelling against injustice in everyday lives, suggesting that those who adopted a position of neutrality "in the case of oppression in political systems where the weak are dominated or persecuted in the name of preserving an effective rule of law," or in systems

“founded on monopoly, manipulation, cheating, usury or corruption and built through stealing, bribing, depriving oppressed people of their rights” would be subject to God’s punishment when positive or conclusive actions could have been taken instead (*ibid.*). Ayatollah Fadlallah further emphasized that “salvation in this world and in the next is directly linked to the way society conducts its life and the relations within society;” therefore, any political system must be based on the three principles of love, justice, and mercy (*ibid.*, 40). He also explained how, “God’s relation with man is one of the sources of his strength that continues to charge him with the power to grow and develop, to renew life around him and move it forward” (*ibid.*, 23). Thus, one’s love of God is what saves humans from feeling weak in the face of tyranny (*ibid.*, 29).

Ayatollah Fadlallah founded al-Mabarrat Association in 1978 as a charity and social service organization to care for the orphans created by Lebanon’s long and bloody civil/international war. However, the association’s “efforts later widened to include the care of the disabled and people with special needs, in addition to the poor and needy. It also provides education (both academic and vocational) and healthcare for all people.”¹⁹ Today, its affiliated charities reach nearly all of the regions of Lebanon, and according to its press officer, it is the largest charitable institution in Lebanon.²⁰ Indeed, thousands of students have “graduated from the association’s schools, institutes, and orphanages, and the number of people who have benefitted from its humanitarian, social and education services” over last three decades has reached into the tens of thousands.²¹

Unfortunately, Israel’s 2006 war against Lebanon destroyed many of these charitable institutions.²² Furthermore, people affiliated with both Hizbullah and al-Mabarrat Association explained to me that they had negative experiences with Western journalists and scholars after the war, at the very same time that the US was listing additional charities affiliated with Hizbullah as terrorists.²³ As a result, outsider access to the resistance charities has become increasingly difficult in recent years and I studied them informally by attending events; interviewing affiliated scholars, politicians, and volunteers; and speaking to media workers and parents of children attending the schools. My in-depth research on the methods and standards of particular programs focused only on the Imam al-Sadr Foundation, which was completely welcome to outside researchers, despite also being targeted by Israel during the 2006 war. Imam al-Sadr established the foundation in 1962 and after his death it has remained in the hands of his family, unaffiliated to either the Amal movement or the resistance charities, despite their

historical connections. I interviewed managers and employees working on education, health, social care, finance, research, and the management of the foundation.

Faith, Rationality, Resistance

The charitable institutions of Hizbullah and al-Mabarrat Association both produce and reproduce faith in the resistance, ultimately creating a resistance subjectivity that decenters their starting position, allowing them to negotiate with secular liberalism on their own terms. During my fieldwork, I was told by several supporters of the resistance that faith in God connects humans to other people and faith in the cause unites all supporters of the resistance.²⁴ Indeed, these charities instill faith in many ways, even simply by delivering essential social services that would otherwise be unavailable. In an interview with Fawaz (2000, 63), Hajj Kassem Alleik, the general director of Jihad al-Bina, describes how: “The resistance society is our vision. It is the task to build a society that will refuse oppression and fight for its rights. All the rest—water provision, garbage collection, agricultural training—is only a working strategy.” As Dr. Ali Fayyad, a Lebanese Member of Parliament for Hizbullah, who previously served as the head of one of its think tanks, further explained to me:

The institutions of these charities—the hospitals, medical centers and schools, as well as the other institutions to help the wounded or poor people—if you want to study or analyze the construction of these religious institutions, you will find it completely modernized. They depend on administration, computer systems, and evaluating models like the ISO (International Organization for Standardization) and the other [international] sources of evaluating. You will never find aspects of religion in these things. And then you have to ask about where is the religion in these institutions or these organizations? You will find it in the values, which are leading the ways. The values are the cause, and where to aim. But about the rules, about the procedures, about the systems, these are rationalistic.²⁵

Fayyad went on to stress that religious rationality is key: being “controlled” by faith while “respecting” the mind. In this way, religious rationality is the space where two knowledges intertwine. Robinson (2012) turns to literature to explain these two ways of knowing: “When a writer knows about his character, he is writing for plot. When he knows his character, he

is writing to explore, to feel reality on a set of nerves somehow not quite his own.” For me, this begins to describe religious rationality. Research participants told me that this trait makes the work of the resistance charities effective and highly respected by both locals and international aid agencies.

The research of Flanigan and Abdel-Samad (2009, 56) also finds that supporters of the resistance charities want to work for the cause because they believe in it, making Hizbullah efficient because “of the motivations of its social-service employees. Many of them are volunteers with a strong belief in the morality of their work.” They are inspired to work to the best of their ability—not for the money, but rather for the cause. One journalist, who is a member of Hizbullah, suggested that this strong faith is why so many people volunteer for the various charities affiliated with the resistance—including his mother-in-law, who distributes money for al-Mabarrat Association. Or why his wife’s brother, who is currently studying journalism, decided that he wants to work with Hizbullah’s media department because he thinks that the \$1,000 monthly salary he would receive from the party would have more blessings for him than a \$5,000 salary from elsewhere.²⁶ However, the journalist also admitted that not all supporters of the resistance think this way; for example, many people who work at Hizbullah’s *al-Manār* television station complain about their low salaries. While he himself is critical of Lebanon’s overly materialistic society, including among many Shi’a, he and others I spoke with also saw the struggle for material wealth in today’s world as familiar and human.

Combining the forces of materialism and spirituality need not inevitably yield a gospel of wealth. Indeed, these forces may even coalesce into a decolonial project. For example, Deeb’s (2006) study of women’s involvement in the resistance charities emphasizes that both material and spiritual progress are part of being modern. Through charitable work, the women participate in the construction of and interpretation of religious discourses, a dynamic that is modern, cosmopolitan, and pious. In a later study, Deeb (2009) looks at the Islamic figures who inspire Lebanese Shi’a involved in the resistance charities, showing how faith is the guiding principle even when negotiating a materialist world. In its original Arabic form, *shī’at ‘alī* means the followers of Imam Ali, whose son Imam Hussein died heroically in the battle of Karbala, while the remaining women and children under the leadership of Hussein’s sister, Sayyida Zaynab, were taken captive and held as prisoners. Deeb examines (ibid., 246) how both Imam Hussein and “the reinterpreted version of Sayyeda Zeinab” as an activist community leader “are held up as examples of ideal piety and public service, as specifically

Shi'i models for living a moral lifestyle." In this way, participating in charitable work enables Shi'a to embody resistance in their everyday lives. Thus, charitable work itself is seen as an act of resistance—an idea that is reinforced when the US designates Hizbullah charities as terrorist and Israel targets the social institutions affiliated with the resistance.²⁷ A publication issued by al-Mabarrat Association after the 2006 war vows, "Our will of benevolence shall prevail!"²⁸ Ayatollah Fadlallah also insisted that successfully rebuilding the charitable institutions destroyed during the war would "represent a triumph of knowledge over the desire to destroy."²⁹

Flanigan and Abdel-Samad (2009, 63) further argue that the resistance culture is also evident in other charity and service publications. For example, they cite this quotation by the head of Hizbullah's Islamic Health Committee, Dr. Karam Karam:

The services provided by the Islamic Health Committee strengthen the heroic efforts of fighters and reduce their worries about who will take care of those who support them. This network is a shield that protects the resistance fighter and assures those in need and protects those fighting for dignity, for the country and for sovereignty.

Meanwhile, religious rationality also influences the mission of these charities, because their aim is to establish sustainable communities that will not abandon the land—resistance in the form of *ṣumūd*. The comprehensive package of services the charities offer is one illustration of this.³⁰ The goal is not economic empowerment for its own sake, but to empower the resistance, as Fayyad explained:

Here in Lebanon, the Shi'i charities are parts of our battery against the occupation and the external challenges. Because our society, or Hizbullah and the Amal Movement, and all of the Shi'i movements, they believe we need a strong society to win our war against the occupation. From this point of view, there is a revolutionary dimension to these charities. There is a resistant dimension to these charities. We don't mind for the poor people to be rich, but this is not the cause of these charities.³¹

A sustainable resistance thus requires a systemized approach to the individual and the community, both of which are always interlinked. This was apparent during an event I attended at al-Mabarrat Association's Lady Khadija Orphanage in the southern suburbs of Beirut to commemorate the

birth of the Prophet Muhammad.³² During the ceremony, prayers were recited, the young orphans performed several dance routines,³³ and Ayatollah Fadlallah's son Sayyid 'Ali read a sermon. After the ceremony, the audience was ushered through an exhibition of sculpted scenes of the Prophet Muhammad's life, featuring life-like papier-mâché figures. Upon exiting the exhibition, there was a giant wall of paper and guests were encouraged to write personal messages to the orphans in order to remind them that they belong to the resistance community. By rationalizing social services through the lens of faith and resistance, this decolonial move helps to continuously reinforce the importance of maintaining a resistance subjectivity in everyday lives.

A Liberalizing Resistance

Unlike the vast network of charities associated with Hizbullah and al-Mabar-rat Association, the Imam al-Sadr Foundation is quite distinct, both politically and geographically. Indeed, this was frequently pointed out to me by many employees, and yet the foundation has thus far not received much scholarly attention. According to my own analysis of the foundation's ideas and practices, it appears to embrace the ideals of economic and political liberalism though still mediated through a faith-based and communal lens.³⁴ The foundation works mainly in the south, with a research center in Beirut. Its main cultural compound in Tyre, a coastal city in southern Lebanon, contains several buildings within a small but beautifully enclosed space, with greenery and trees surrounded by an elegant and modest wall located right next to the Mediterranean Sea. The architecture was consciously designed to produce an environmentally friendly and open atmosphere. The foundation's academic program is run by the Rihab al-Zahra School and has three sections: kindergarten, elementary education, and special education. In addition, there are vocational programs available both in Tyre and Beirut. Also located in the compound is an orphanage run by the foundation, as well as a health clinic which has satellite branches across southern Lebanon. And finally, the foundation runs several rural development and income generating programs.

According to Mohammed Bassam, the head of research and development,³⁵ the Imam al-Sadr Foundation's three main goals are participation, empowerment, and ownership—all paradigmatic liberal concepts, but when applied by the foundation they also draw on faith, spirituality, and a remarkable commitment to all humans. In this way, the foundation is giving these concepts new values—embracing a universalism to aspire towards

rather than one to enforce. Bassam described the foundation's notion of empowerment as the freedom or power to question, and then to decide for oneself what kind of commitment to make. He said that this kind of outlook invites all participants into the political process by transforming the concept of ownership into being about one's own future as well as the future of the community. For example, some of the foundation's projects are designed to have an exit strategy, reaching a point where they can be handed over to the community to manage. Also, the foundation usually charges a nominal fee for its services, because if people are paying a small amount for something, then they feel more justified in making demands from these services (Hizbullah services are free for members while nonmembers pay a cost, and al-Mabarrat Association charges a more significant fee).

Many of the Imam al-Sadr Foundation's employees mentioned that it feels more like a family than a workplace. This is partly due to the fact that Rabab al-Sadr, Imam al-Sadr's sister, runs the foundation and her children are also involved, working either as employees or consultants. But as one of the curriculum developers also noted, even in the classroom, the atmosphere does not seem teacher-student oriented because everybody is so friendly: "I have three or four hundred students, so you have at least two hundred kisses and two hundred hugs every day. And it's all impacted by *ustadheh* Mrs. Rebab,³⁶ you know how she deals with them."³⁷ She further explained that Rebab al-Sadr is very friendly with both the children and all the employees, and so this naturally influences how the others behave as well. According to a manager of the education department, one result of this environment is that many of the orphans "keep coming back to ask about their social workers or supervisors or the other girls they studied and lived with. Also the workers, even after they leave they come back to communicate and check on things. There is like this family that builds up after time—not only between the children, but also between the children, social workers and teachers."³⁸

Although Imam al-Sadr founded the resistance movement for Shi'a Lebanese in the 1960s and 1970s, many employees of the foundation were eager to differentiate themselves from the resistance charities (Hizbullah and al-Mabarrat Association), which they said are stricter in their interpretations of Islamic ideas and practices. Many described the foundation as more open—Bassam even called it "avant-garde."³⁹ Nijad Charafeddine, the general manager, pointed out that he did not specify one religion (namely Islam) in his responses to my questions "because [he] really believes in the human aspect of any religion." He also later stated, "I, as a Muslim, I can-

not be a Muslim if I am not a Christian; and I cannot be a Muslim and a Christian if I am not a Jew.”⁴⁰ In another example of this openness, one of the education managers said, “We see [Lebanese] as human beings. We see them as proper names who have some work to do, who want to have some influence in their society and what is the output or outcome of this identity, not how do they believe or how do they act.”⁴¹

Another employee of the Health Program indirectly criticized the Lebanese system where political parties are affiliated with charities, saying that many people give to charity with an expectation of receiving something in return, “whether this giving back is something political, religious, or a social commitment.”⁴² As one of the curriculum developers also noted: “In some schools they try to put religion into everything. For example, they say there is something in the Qur’an that tells us how to share equally. We don’t do it in this way, by forcing things. Instead it comes naturally.”⁴³ She further explained how she herself comes from a strict religious family going back several generations, and in fact she even wears a conservative *chador*.⁴⁴ But while she was working on the religious curriculum, her father, who is a shaykh, told her to just concentrate on developing the children’s moral selves rather than making them memorize morality from the Qur’an. This helped her to rethink tools of assessment as well:

One of the most important things if you are working with a religious curriculum is the last part, the self-assessment or the motivation. At the end, what am I going to do? Okay, usually in the most religious, let’s say the Islamic schools, they make a paper and pencil test, they memorize the parts from the Qur’an. But at the end what kind of person do you have? Maybe at the other schools they memorize more of the Qur’an and they look more religious, but let’s say at the end the impact on students is just the paper and pencil test. Here we have more things for them.⁴⁵

This kind of philosophy—focusing on the internal motivations or intentions for performance—diverges somewhat from the resistance charities, which embrace the public performance of Shi’i Islamic rituals, ranging from prayer to fasting to participating in Ashura commemorations.⁴⁶ Shaery-Eisenlohr (2008) also notes in her own research, which includes the Amal movement, that what defines a good citizen among many Shi’a in Lebanon is often directly linked to religiosity. And although the standards vary between the different parties, she finds that the leaders of Hizbullah,

Amal, and the followers of Ayatollah Fadlallah all connect being a good citizen to pious behavior.

There was also a distancing by employees when it came to the Imam al-Sadr Foundation's vision. As one of the curriculum developers explained to me, the foundation is more concerned with professional development than are other charities.⁴⁷ The foundation also describes itself a quality-oriented organization; so even though it maintains a modest budget and a limited program, Charafeddine argued that what it offers is the best:

At many other foundations, such as Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah or Hizbullah or Amal, they have big budgets, they're huge but maybe they need this for politics, or political issues, or for whatever issues, they need to go wide. They need to have followers from Bekaa and south and east and whatever. Maybe, but here at the foundation, we seek perfection. And when you want to perfect something, you have to go in depth and not in width. You cannot diversify—we say in Arabic, *mneshr*, or scatter all of our work. No, you have to have roots and cultivate and always aggregate.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, there remain many convergences between the Imam al-Sadr Foundation and the resistance charities. Indeed, it is important to note that the foundation has an official referral system to send people to al-Mabarrat Association when it is unable to provide the necessary services itself. Islamic orthodoxy and religious holidays are also honored by the foundation, with the teachers organizing activities during Islamic holidays for the students to act out the formal ceremonies and make speeches.⁴⁹ Furthermore, I was told that the foundation was trying to refocus more attention on Islam in its teaching and daily activities. As two of the managers of the Education Department explained to me, they recently created a new program:

The elementary school [now] has two sessions a week: one session for the Qur'an and one for Islamic studies. But it (the ethos) is not limited to the two sessions that you teach them—the whole day, how the teachers work with the students and how much you are here with them. Yeah. It's a whole program.⁵⁰

While this piety is still a public behavior, it is not necessarily linked to particular Islamic rituals. As they further clarified:

The faith is an act, so it is not just to read the Qur'an or to read the prayers. It should be through our doing—it is a way of life. We say that Islam is a way of life, not just a religion, and most of the hadiths are about that, which is that Islam is a *dīn al-ʿām*, or a public religion: how to behave around people, how to act and interact, how to be honest, how to suppress when you face, maybe, some anxiety or something. How to do it, when to say it, and when not. And how to show the righteous things at the right place and at the right moment.⁵¹

Correct religious behavior is important, as it relates to all aspects of one's life.

Thus, similar to the charities of Hizbullah and al-Mabarrat Association, the Imam al-Sadr Foundation is a dynamic and modern social institution that incorporates faith as a value or guiding principle. Indeed, there is a complex system of teacher evaluation that requires an incredible amount of time and resources to manage. As one of the managers of the education department reasoned, the foundation cannot just rely on student test scores, because if you only count those then “here the teachers at the foundation would be all failures because our students come from the fringes and the underprivileged areas” of southern Lebanon.⁵² In turn, the foundation's teachers also comprehensively assess the students based on “the process, the progress, and the performance.” So, similar to Hizbullah, the Imam al-Sadr Foundation recognizes the importance of international standards in the management and evaluation of its institutions. However, in reality, the foundation's curriculum is a mix of various influences: the foundation starts with the Lebanese curriculum and then adds to it from different resources like the American, Belgian, and Moroccan curricula. Indeed, the foundation often adopts a highly pragmatic approach in creating programs that benefit the community.

Negotiating Neoliberalism and Faith

Some of the Imam al-Sadr Foundation's distancing itself from Hizbullah and al-Mabarrat Association is political, but as noted above, there are also many similarities between them. Indeed, the work of all these charities tends to converge in relation to economic policy, because to varying degrees they all promote liberal economic ideas and practices that are related to empowerment, capacity building, and sustainability, while their work is also mediated by faith, religious rationality, and communal commitments. That said, because they are starting from a de-centered position, the definitions

of these terms are not fixed: the goal of empowerment viewed through a resistance lens is not monetary gain but a stronger resistance. Thus, differing from Marei (2016) and Daher (2016), I do not believe that adopting neoliberal characteristics is in itself necessarily in alignment with neoliberalism as a political project, so long as a resistance subjectivity is still being reproduced, where a commitment to fighting oppression is multidimensional. Thus, in a sense, these charities have merely re-mystified today's supposedly demystified liberal economic norms,⁵³ where religious rationality and faith meet instrumental and formal (systemic) rationalities. Of course, the Western project of secular liberalism was never truly disenchanted, because this framework depends on myths of its own, especially its claim to universalism (Asad 2003).

However, despite its continued status as a counterhegemonic movement, potential supporters of the resistance have questioned whether it has now become too entrenched in the neoliberal capitalist system. Deeb and Harb (2013, 59) find that some Shi'a of the vanguard generation—those who chose to publicly embrace their religion when 'Shi'i' was an identity of inferiority—“find both the wealth in the newfound community and the consumption practices of youths disturbing”. This raises questions about the movement's level of commitment to the margins. As one unaffiliated young Shi'i Marxist explained to me, before the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri in 2005, the political alliance between the Sunnis and Shi'a meant that the former quietly permitted Hizbullah to keep its arms in exchange for agreeing to Sunni dominance over the economy. However, the situation has since changed and aspects of Hizbullah, or at least in the areas that are strongholds of the resistance, are now increasingly adopting neoliberal capitalist forms and practices.⁵⁴

Indeed in Beirut's southern suburbs and in southern Lebanon today, there are numerous Western fast-food restaurants and other means of corporate consumption and entertainment.⁵⁵ One supporter of the resistance recounted how when he was thinking about buying a car, one of his close relatives, who is very pious, told him to buy an American-made Jeep instead, because the trend then was to buy Jeeps.⁵⁶ Banners of Imam al-Sadr and other resistance figures now compete with advertisements for massive corporations like Kentucky Fried Chicken, with slogans like “Finger Lickin' Good!” printed in English, selling an Americanized version of what fast food is. Furthermore, funding for Hizbullah comes not only from charitable Muslim institutions like *zakāt* and *khums*, but also from Iran and diaspora Lebanese Shi'a who own capitalist businesses abroad. When I questioned

Fayyad why the resistance is not more focused on the possibility of new economic relations, he suggested that this was a weak point for all Islamic movements, because “they are not concerned enough about the economic issues.”⁵⁷ The decision not to directly confront neoliberal capitalism is partly because economic relations are subordinate to the political goals of the resistance charities. On the other hand, the Imam al-Sadr Foundation’s cause appears to be more focused towards liberalism, where the goal is economically and politically empowering the communities in southern Lebanon. In other words, the political project of the foundation diverges from that of the resistance charities, and hence the deliberate distancing noted earlier.

We can understand this better by thinking of Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci’s (2005) notion of hegemony. Gramsci argued that a bloc secures hegemony by articulating the ideas and beliefs of what he called “common sense” in ways that resonate with the populace, but mobilize them in new directions. Here the ideologies comprising “common sense” can be conservative or progressive and are open to multiple interpretations. These ideas are fragmentary, fluid, heterogeneous, and contradictory; they are the historical accretion or sedimentation of multiple and various beliefs from religion, folklore, science, art, language, and philosophy. In this way, hegemony is never a fixed and unified position, but instead an unstable product; hence the possibility for forces challenging the hegemony of Western secular liberalism to integrate liberal, or even neoliberal, principles.

Viewed through a Gramscian lens, liberalism becomes one set of ideas among many, both in Lebanon and elsewhere, that competing blocs can transform by articulating them in unique ways. Thus, while the Imam al-Sadr Foundation is employing the same liberal framework as the resistance charities, referencing the same ideas, it does so to realize a different political goal. The resistance charities see economic empowerment as a means to an end—to create a stronger society from which to resist—whereas for the Imam al-Sadr Foundation, empowerment is the only end. The foundation is promoting a liberalized version of the resistance subjectivity, empowering people as individuals in order to better their collective lives.⁵⁸ And combining these sometimes-contradictory goals—working within neoliberal capitalism while also resisting its social contradictions—ultimately creates certain tensions within the foundation’s work.⁵⁹

While the Imam al-Sadr Foundation’s vision is somewhat removed from corporate capitalism, these tensions are evident in its 2004 publication called *The Arabic Glossary of Development Terms*, sponsored by the World Bank and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for

Western Asia. The publication is divided into various sections, consisting of, but not limited to, community development, environment, gender, human development and empowerment, human rights, international conventions, microfinance, management, and public finance and economy. The glossary is quite comprehensive and many of the terms' definitions align with neoliberalism, placing the regulatory responsibility on the individual or private sector rather than the state. A small selection of these terms include: comparative risk analysis, deliverables, free trade zone, good governance, human capital, incentive, market failure, performance indicator, risk assessment, stakeholders analysis, strategic framework, and transparency. However, the publication also defines other important terms that challenge neoliberalism, such as: collective rights, commodification, fordism, gender studies, labor relations, Orientalism, participatory research, semiotics, sub-altern, and third way, as well as key Islamic economic concepts. Thus, while the neoliberal terminology does dominate this publication, the inclusion of these latter terms still leaves open the possibility for creating an altered interpretation of the dominant neoliberal framework, presenting a counter-hegemonic alternative. Indeed, many of the income-generating programs that the foundation supports do not even earn money. As Charafeddine explains, "we always try to make ourselves remember that we are not working to make money; we are working on faith, on commitment, on the appraisal of our community."⁶⁰ Therefore, many projects operate at a loss to provide necessary services and/or serve as vocational training.

Similar tensions are evident elsewhere. In 2011, the Imam al-Sadr Foundation was the recipient of pro-bono work by Booz & Company,⁶¹ a massive US-based firm that provides global management consulting.⁶² The company, working through Lebanon's Central Bank, provided recommendations for the foundation as a Corporate Social Responsibility service; however, it completely disregarded the role of religion or faith, ultimately secularizing the foundation by excluding any reference at all to its Islamic character, and instead directing it even closer towards neoliberalism. For example, the strategic objectives include focusing on an "innovative service portfolio targeted" to women by both expanding and reconfiguring the services currently offered; establishing visibility through "strong brand recognition;" and seeking peer recognition as "a pioneer, innovative, high-impact, and thought leader (awards, professional recognition, peer benchmarking, etc.)." Other recommendations include a formal rationalization of the foundation by creating a hierarchy of specialists under a chief executive officer and separating the income generating programs as a distinct commercial

organization; empowering the board of directors to oversee “cooperate governance” as well as planning and management; and focusing more attention on performance based outcomes, for example, the employment prospects of beneficiaries. The “execution roadmap” for achieving these recommendations includes a five-year strategic plan for the foundation and three-year plans for the various “business units” the consultancy had designated.

Although the Imam al-Sadr Foundation did not solicit these recommendations, a manager explained that it has indeed taken them seriously, implementing a new human resources department to better management practices at the foundation.⁶³ But as noted above, despite the disparate influences, the foundation does appear to have a pragmatic approach that somehow remains loyal to its particular vision (a more liberalized resistance subjectivity). I was specifically told that the foundation would not consider raising revenue through profitable ventures that contradict this vision, even when this would deliver more financial resources to expand its services. The head of its Income Generating Program told me that although others keep raising the prospect “to create or to build gas stations, actually I’m always against this, because it’s not in our culture.”⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the foundation does accept supplementary funding from neoliberal institutions like the World Bank and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).⁶⁵ At the same time, the foundation’s keen interest in sustainable development, which applies equally to people, planet, and profit, and its history of participatory practices also suggest that any proposed changes to its operations would probably need to be acceptable not only to its board of directors and investors, but also to the people on the ground, as well as the foundation’s employees (see Charafeddine 2008).

Conclusion

The resistance movement in Lebanon inspired a marginalized population into action, creating social institutions to empower Lebanese Shi’a in their struggle against various forms of oppression. Today this social force has evolved into overlapping movements that are dynamic, diverse, and contradictory, each presenting a decolonial challenge to Western secular liberalism in unique ways. However, while the discourse of these movements is highly critical of neoliberal capitalism, neoliberal ideas are still shaping their ideas and practices, with differing results. Although the Imam al-Sadr Foundation appears to more openly embrace many liberal and neoliberal policies, its commitment to creating a faith-based alternative to the Western project of secular liberalism helps to counter the latter system’s inequalities.

On the other hand, the resistance charities are embracing liberal principles to help finance military and cultural resistance. Although tolerating some of the neoliberal capitalist outcomes may serve a higher purpose, its effects on the population are still tangible, increasing economic inequalities. According to a journalist who supports the resistance, while Sayyid Hassan, the current leader of Hizbullah, sets the perfect example for living a non-materialistic life—asceticism long being valued in Shiism (Moin 2005)—he believes that Lebanese society, including the Shi'a, is still not ready for this way of being.⁶⁶ In order to get there, he thinks that they first need a “mental revolution” away from favouring materialism (their extreme attachment to clothes, mobile phones and cars—often Western and/or corporate) to prioritizing faith.⁶⁷

While contemporary Islamic ideas and practices are currently responding to this need for a “mental revolution,” by offering an alternative faith-based social project, one which develops more community oriented and critical thinkers, there remain many challenges that will undoubtedly impact the “total societal perspective and comprehensive doctrine” that Hizbullah, in particular, wants to offer. Today, the economy in Lebanon is largely sustained through remittances from lucrative capitalist businesses in Africa, North America, and Latin America. This helps the Shi'a to finance increased material consumption and the building of large houses, even mansions, throughout southern Lebanon, sending a powerful message to Israel that the resistance is thriving, not retreating. However, the exploitation that is needed to sustain this kind of lifestyle, and which is counter to the ideology of the resistance, is not fully visible from Lebanon and remains unchallenged. The absence of a wider counter-hegemonic economic program inside Lebanon, where local industries are based on faith and religious rationality and actively confront the negative social contradictions of neoliberal capitalism, is clearly apparent. But this should not deflect from the fact that these Shi'i movements are each critically engaging with secular liberalism and neoliberal capitalism on their own terms, in profoundly interesting, complex, and contradictory ways.

Endnotes

1. Throughout my fieldwork, I visited al-Sāḥa often to attend events and meetings, and over time I noticed that in the restaurant the managers visited each table to ensure that everything was okay and asked for a personal assessment of the dining experience, an extremely unusual practice in Lebanon

- and hardly necessary to gain a competitive edge in a market they already hold a monopoly over. The restaurant then communicates with customers who have provided written feedback through text messages, wishing them blessings during Islamic holidays.
2. Observations during fieldwork in Lebanon during 2012.
 3. This builds on the more sophisticated arguments developed in Jackson 2017.
 4. The Washington Consensus refers to the set of laissez-faire economic policies that Western institutions imposed on developing countries around the world as conditions for international aid.
 5. This refers to Weber's notion of disenchantment, or the conceptual separation of religious rationality and scientific rationality in Western thought. See Koshul 2005.
 6. The arrangement privileged Maronite Christians because the French-directed census in 1932 construed the Christian populations to be larger than the Sunni or Shi'i populations combined, and as a result the subsequent government was divided in a manner favoring the Maronites, who always hold the office of the president. The next position of power is the prime minister, always allocated to a Sunni. And finally, a Shi'i serves as speaker of the parliament. At the time of independence, parliamentary representation was allocated as a 6:5 proportion favoring Christians to Muslims. Over the years, this power sharing agreement became even more unequal as the Lebanese society experienced a demographic transformation. Although Lebanon has not conducted an official census since 1932, Norton (2007) and Deeb (2006) both suggest that the demographic changes since then have led to relative declines in the Christian populations and an increase in the Shi'i population. Stewart (1996, 491) argues that Shi'a had likely become the largest minority group in Lebanon by 1975.
 7. Hamzeh (2004, 14) also explains that this eventually changed only as a result of the insecurity during the civil/international war when many southern Shi'a emigrated to the cities in the 1960s and 1970s, with the majority residing in squatter settlements in the southern and eastern suburbs of Beirut, a destitute region, which came to be known as "the belt of misery".
 8. Observations during fieldwork in Lebanon in summer 2011.
 9. For a beautiful biographical recounting of being Shi'i during this time, see Al-Shaykh 2009.
 10. Imam al-Sadr, "Lebanon's Wealth Lies in Its Citizens." Lecture delivered at Kabbouchiyeh Church in Beirut, Lebanon, February 1975. Translation into English provided by Louay H. Charafeddine on June 17, 2010.
 11. Observations during fieldwork in Lebanon on September 20, 2011.
 12. Most institutions in Lebanon, both then and now, are sectarian due to the political pact agreed after the country gained independence from the French in 1943.

13. "The Hidden Imam," a 2005 documentary about the life of Imam Musa al-Sadr produced by Al-Manār.
14. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps even deployed forces to the Baalbek region of Lebanon to train Hizbullah's military forces (Wright 1990, 109).
15. Imad Atalla interview with Kassem Alleik, "Guilty by Association: Jihad al-Bina's Reconstruction Terrorism," *Publio: Culture at the Boiling Point* 3 (2008).
16. During a visit to Southern Lebanon, a young woman told me that although there are collections boxes for the Emdad Committee across Lebanon, its operations are organized from Iran. See <http://www.emdad.ir/>.
17. The United States designated Ayatollah Fadlallah as a terrorist because of his political support for the resistance.
18. Even many Lebanese Christians agree that Hizbullah and al-Mabarrat Association are the only true resistance charities in Lebanon. Observations during fieldwork in Lebanon on May 8, 2012.
19. From "In Defiance of the Israeli Aggression, Charity Will Persevere: A Report on the Institutions of al-Mabarrat Association Destroyed or Damaged in the Last War on Lebanon" (July 2006). I also received preparatory notes made for this publication containing more detailed information about the charitable programs and the destruction resulting from the war. Documents collected during fieldwork in Beirut in summer 2010.
20. Meeting with the press office of al-Mabarrat Association during fieldwork in Beirut on January 21, 2010.
21. Documents collected during fieldwork in Beirut in summer 2010.
22. Both Imam al-Sadr Foundation and al-Mabarrat Association published details of the extent of damage and destruction, aiming to raise funds to repair and rebuild; information here presented from documents collected during fieldwork in Beirut in summer 2010. See also Hani Bathish, "Orphans, Disabled Still Bear Brunt of Israeli Attacks on Al-Mabarrat Charity," *The Daily Star*, February 17, 2007, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2007/Feb-17/51035-orphans-disabled-still-bear-brunt-of-israeli-attacks-on-al-mabarrat-charity.ashx>; "Why They Died: Civilian Casualties in Lebanon during the 2006 War," *Human Rights Watch*, September 5, 2007, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2007/09/05/why-they-died/civilian-casualties-lebanon-during-2006-war>; Mirvat Ammouri, "Social Group Rejects Bias in Efforts to Assist Needy," *The Daily Star*, October 19, 2007, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2007/Oct-19/46351-social-group-rejects-bias-in-efforts-to-assist-needy.ashx>; and Ana Maria Luca, "Waiting for Another War," *NOW Media*, December 6, 2009, https://now.mmedia.me/lb/en/reportsfeatures/waiting_for_another_war.
23. The charities and organizations affiliated with Hizbullah that the US Treasury Department lists as "Specially Designated Nationals" or SDNs include:

- the Martyrs Foundation, assisting those wounded in wars as well as the families of martyrs; Emdad Committee, assisting children, mainly orphans and the poor; Jihad al-Bina, building social and humanitarian infrastructure; Waad Rebuild, managing the massive reconstruction efforts after the 2006 war against Israel; al-Nour Broadcasting, the party's radio station; and finally al-Manār, the party's television channel.
24. Most of these were informal exchanges with media workers in television studios or at my home, as I was often doing filmed interviews with media affiliated with the resistance movement.
 25. Interview with Dr. Ali Fayyad during fieldwork in Beirut in June 2012.
 26. Observations during fieldwork in Beirut on July 7, 2011.
 27. Israeli generals have called the targeting of civilian infrastructure the "Dahiyeh Doctrine". See Amos Harel, "Analysis: IDF Plans to Use Disproportionate Force in Next War," *Haaretz*, October 5, 2010, <https://www.haaretz.com/analysis-idf-plans-to-use-disproportionate-force-in-next-war-1.254954>.
 28. "In defiance of Israeli aggression, charity will persevere."
 29. Bathish, "Orphans, Disabled Still Bear Brunt," February 17, 2007.
 30. See, for example, the Martyr's Foundation: <http://www.shaheed.com.lb/>.
 31. Interview with Fayyad during fieldwork in Beirut in June 2012.
 32. Observations during fieldwork in Beirut on February 3, 2012.
 33. These kinds of performances help to link the children to the community and are common at many charitable events. For example, there was a similar performance at an iftār organized by al-Mabarrat Association in 2011 during Ramadan to raise funds for the charity. Observations during fieldwork in Lebanon on August 9, 2011.
 34. As one of the managers said, "I'm very, very, very, very liberal." Interview with a manager at the Imam al-Sadr Foundation in July 2010.
 35. The descriptive account was shared over several interviews with Mohammed Bassam, head of research and development for the Imam al-Sadr Foundation, in Sur between 2009 and 2017.
 36. In Arabic the word *ustādh* (m) or *ustādha* (f) means professor, but is also often used as a term of respect for others, especially strangers and elders.
 37. Interview with an employee of the Education Department at the Imam al-Sadr Foundation in July 2010.
 38. Interview with managers of the Education Department at Imam al-Sadr Foundation in Sur in July 2010.
 39. Interview with Mohammed Bassam at the Imam al-Sadr Foundation in Sur on June 24, 2010.
 40. Interview with Nijad Charafeddine, head of the Income Generating Program, at the Imam al-Sadr Foundation in Sur in July 2010.
 41. Interview with managers of the education department at Imam al-Sadr Foundation in Sur in July 2010.

42. Interview with the head of nursing at the Imam al-Sadr Foundation in Sur in July 2010.
43. Interview with an employee of the Education Department at the Imam al-Sadr Foundation in July 2010.
44. The *chador* is a full length Islamic covering for women, usually in black, that is held under the chin by hand or fastener and is worn by many women in the Islamic Republic of Iran and some Shi'a in southern Lebanon. Often, but not always, women are required to wear the chador to enter mosques and shrines.
45. Interview with an employee of the education department at the Imam al-Sadr Foundation in July 2010.
46. Observations during fieldwork in Lebanon 2009-2012.
47. Interview with an employee of the education department at the Imam al-Sadr Foundation in July 2010.
48. Interview with Charafeddine in July 2010.
49. Ibid.
50. Interview with managers and employees of the education department at Imam al-Sadr Foundation in Sur in July 2010.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. This is nothing new, and it is not only religious movements that have been "re-mystifying" liberalism. In the mid-twentieth century, artists crafted surrealism and abstract expressionism as an attempt to re-introduce myth into their everyday lives because the rational world had let them down. These artists were looking to shake up the formal rationality of the social systems under bureaucracy and capitalism. Art critic Robert Hughes even describes the German painter Max Ernst's work as "akin to an act of terrorism." See "The Threshold of Liberty" from *The Shock of the New* documentary television series by Robert Hughes produced by the BBC in association with Time-Life Films and RM Productions in 1980.
54. Observations during fieldwork in Beirut on August 8, 2009.
55. Some believe that the party has allowed for these restaurants and forms of entertainment to open in the areas aligned with the resistance so that Shi'a would not have to travel elsewhere to consume such products, thus keeping the community more tightly knit.
56. Observations during fieldwork in Beirut on July 7, 2011.
57. Interview with Fayyad during fieldwork in Beirut in June 2012.
58. Another useful framework to differentiate the capitalist aspects of the resistance charities and Imam al-Sadr Foundation's embrace of a more liberalized project is offered by Sayyid (2003, 41-46). Turning to semiotics, he explains how Islam is a master signifier (never without a signified) whose meaning is

- expressed by its articulations past and present. For the Foundation, Islam is competing with liberalism as a signifier, but with both mediating the other.
59. It is important to note that the Imam al-Sadr Foundation looks to international organizations for funding, further encouraging a neoliberal outlook for self-preservation.
 60. Interview with Charafeddine in July 2010.
 61. Ironically, R. James Woolsey is a Vice President of Booz & Company, while also the former director of the CIA and an advisor to a number of Islamophobic organizations, including MEMRI, Henry Jackson Society, Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, and NGO Monitor.
 62. This information is based on the Booz & Company power point presentation made for an Imam al-Sadr Foundation workshop on January 29, 2011, collected during fieldwork in Beirut in summer 2012.
 63. Observations during fieldwork in Sur in February 2017.
 64. Al-Mabarrat Association owns two gas stations that raise a considerable amount of money to support its vast charitable network. Interview with Charafeddine in July 2010.
 65. The “current projects” listed on the foundation’s website in February 2017 still included both organizations. See <http://www.imamsadrfoundation.org/projects/>.
 66. Observations during fieldwork in Beirut on July 7, 2011.
 67. Interestingly, the journalist believes that a social revolution will happen in Lebanon because of immigrants returning who are not subjected to Lebanese social pressures as children.

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