

knowingly cited weak, theologically invalid hadith in order to defend the religio-political authority of the caliph.

Moreover, the empirical analysis in the book does not evince the “dialectical understanding of the relationship between discourse and social reality” (35) underlined in the introduction. Ardiç does not offer any evidence that the political outcomes in question (e.g., the dissolution of the Ottoman parliament in December 1911, the abolition of the sultanate in November 1922, or the abolition of the caliphate in March 1924) in any way depended on the discursive efficacy of one side or another. The author admits as much when he writes, “The balance of power between the traditionalists, modernists, and secularists followed a trajectory parallel to changes in political and military power relations” (96).

Despite these drawbacks, however, the book’s detailed analysis of debates on the caliphate between 1908 and 1924 will make *Islam and the Politics of Secularism* a valuable reference point for future discussions on this important historical episode. ✦

DOI:[10.1017/rms.2015.6](https://doi.org/10.1017/rms.2015.6)

Ateş Altınordu  
Sabancı University

**DOMINIQUE AVON AND ANAÏS-TRISSA KHATCHADOURIAN.** *Hezbollah: A History of the “Party of God.”* Translated by Jane Marie Todd. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012. 256 pages, appendixes, bibliography, index. Hardcover US\$24.95 ISBN 978-0-6740-6651-9.

**A**lthough Hezbollah is probably the most over-studied group in Lebanon’s recent political history, this volume, translated from French, is a well-written contribution to this literature. The authors make a conscious effort at objectivity, stating that their “discipline recognizes no authority but science” (2) and that “as researchers, [they] refuse to be recruited by one camp against another” (3).

The book’s first three chapters provide a chronological history of the organization divided into three periods: the founding period (1982–1991), the “state within the state” period and consolidation of the resistance (1992–2000), and the period when Hezbollah became a “contested national party” (2000–2009). Chapter 3 (2000–2009) is disappointingly short. Nevertheless, it does a good job of analyzing the repercussions of Hezbollah’s attack on West Beirut in May 2008—a crucial event that lost the organization most remaining Sunni sympathy. Indeed, the authors note that “for the Sunnis,

the decision of the ‘Resistance’ to take up arms against Lebanese citizens . . . proves that it is impossible to trust the Shiites in general and the Hezbollah in particular” (98). This is, in part, why “the Sunni–Shiite conflict continues to widen” today (97).

The book’s second part provides English translations of Hezbollah’s founding documents (Open Letter of 1985, Political Charter of 2009). The first of its three appendixes offers a useful lexicon that defines and contextualizes important terms. The second appendix contains short portraits of Hezbollah’s leadership and the politicians who influenced the growth of the organization, including Yasir Arafat, Hafez al-Assad, and Ayatollah Khomeini. The biography of Imad Mughniyah is particularly interesting, as little was known about him for some time. The last appendix is an avowedly incomplete list of Hezbollah’s cadre, including its 2005 parliamentarians and the five Shi‘a ministers from the first Fouad Siniora government (2005–2008) whose resignations brought down the government.

The book does not introduce much new material for experts on Lebanon or Hezbollah. Indeed, as its authors admit, they “approached a number of leaders” in Lebanon and Iran but were not granted interviews (6). Hence the book is mainly based on the analysis of media material, textbooks published by an association close to Hezbollah, and Hezbollah training manuals, in addition to secondary sources. While the use of textbooks and training manuals is innovative, the absence of interviews with Hezbollah’s cadre (especially its parliamentarians) is surprising (considering how open these MPs are to the press and researchers) and a weakness of the book. Also, while the bibliography mentions some of the seminal books in English (e.g., those by Nizar Hamzeh, Judith Harik, and A.R. Norton), it omits others, such as Amal Saad-Ghorayeb’s, which analyzes extensively the first two periods addressed by the authors.

Another weakness of the book is that interesting facts are not adequately referenced. For example, the authors mention a fratricidal division within Hassan Nasrallah’s family and his brother’s continued loyalty to Amal (36), yet no source is provided. Additionally, reference is made to a fatwa of the late scholar Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-Din that is said to have forbidden Lebanese Shi‘a from joining Hezbollah (36). Neither the fatwa text nor any reference is provided. The authors also mention that 900 Israeli soldiers were lost in Lebanon between 1982 and 2000 (51) but do not provide a source.

However, the book does introduce issues rarely mentioned in English works on Hezbollah, such as its schools and their teaching of history (based on work by Catherine Le Thomas (in French) and Betty Sleiman). The analysis is especially fascinating, noting, for example, that relations with Jews and

Christians are “presented in terms of a conflict spanning many centuries, with the ‘Crusades’ serving as the frame of reference” (62), and that the “rivalry between the Persian and Ottoman Empires serves as an opportunity to extol the superiority of the Safavids” (63)—important today as Sunnis in the region accuse Hezbollah of being part of the Iranian Safavid hegemonic project because of its involvement in Syria.

Despite its issues, the book is to be recommended as a solid contribution on this complex organization. It is written in clear, jargon-free language and would be useful to graduate and undergraduate students interested in recent Lebanese history, the role of Hezbollah, and the role of the Shi'a community in this history. ✨

DOI:[10.1017/rms.2015.7](https://doi.org/10.1017/rms.2015.7)

Rola el-Husseini  
City University of New York

**ROKSANA BAHRAMITASH.** *Gender and Entrepreneurship in Iran: Microenterprise and the Informal Sector.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. x + 223 pages, acknowledgements, appendix, notes, references, index. Hardcover US\$115.00 ISBN 978-1-137-34286-7.

Despite much research on the subject of entrepreneurship in the West, our familiarity with it in the Middle East, specifically in the informal sector of women's entrepreneurship in Iran, is still minimal. Given this situation, Roksana Bahramitash's book, *Gender and Entrepreneurship in Iran*, is particularly welcome. As a continuation of her earlier research in *Veiled Employment: Islamism and the Political Economy of Women's Employment in Iran* (Syracuse University Press, 2011), the newer book focuses on the invisible economy generated in informal sectors such as microentrepreneurship among women of low-income households in southern Tehran. Her main goal is to examine whether women in the informal sector are exploited or empowered. She conducts fieldwork and interviews over ninety women, asking standardized and open-ended questions. In an attempt to develop a gender analysis and to shed light on the nature of female work in the informal sector in comparison with male work, she interviews men involved too.

Bahramitash examines some of the reasons why informal sectors have become an academic blind spot. She discusses important factors such as “the domination of mainstream economics and how development prescriptions are formulated and imposed by international development actors,” the