HIZBULLAH

A MISSION TO NOWHERE

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For my grandson Danny Khashan, who has never come across a toy he didn't destroy or a heart he didn't melt.

Contents

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Introduction

Since its shadowy beginnings in the early 1980s, Hizbullah has attracted the world's attention more than any other movement has. Its bloody suicide bombings in 1983 of the U.S. and French military headquarters in Beirut, as well as its subsequent kidnappings of American and European nationals in Lebanon, are indelibly inscribed in the Western collective consciousness. As it molded itself into an anti-Israeli Islamic resistance and liberation movement, Hizbullah appealed itself to the imagination of Arabs who had for decades been hammered by Israel's military juggernaut. Hizbullah's raison d'etre as a handy arm of Iran began to reveal itself after Israel ended its domestically unpopular IDF presence in south Lebanon. The full magnitude of Hizbullah's subservience to Iran became clear when it weighed in militarily to prevent the collapse of Syrian president Bashar Asad's regime. It struggled to convince its Lebanese Shi'ite base of support of the merits of its costly military intervention in Syria.

This book intends to show readers that the emergence of Hizbullah was unnecessary—detrimental even—for the political evolution of Lebanese Shi'ites. Israel would have pulled out from south Lebanon before the birth of Hizbullah had it not been for Syria's tampering with Shi'ite eagerness for integration in the country's politics of accommodation. Its decisive military intervention against anti-regime forces in Syria further advanced Russian influence and cast Hizbullah as an expendable auxiliary force. Domestically, the end of the Lebanese civil war in 1989 ushered in the political demise of feudal Shi'ite families who were superseded mainly by Amal Movement, and to a lesser extent by ideological parties. Hizbullah did not have to wait long to bring Amal under its wing and thoroughly marginalize the ideological parties. Mostly peasants, Shi'ites suffered indignity, poverty, and neglect under feudalism. Hizbullah provided them with essential welfare services and collective pride in exchange for conformity to its dictates and mission. Hizbullah behaved exactly like authoritarian Arab political systems that traded welfare services for public compliance.[1] When Arab regimes failed to strike a reasonable balance between coercion and provision, their impoverished publics turned against them. Hizbullah is going through the same cycle that Arab regimes went through with rapidly diminishing distributive capacity. Hizbullah relied heavily on the charismatic leadership of its secretary general Hasan Nasrallah. The end of hostilities in the south eroded his charisma, and the war in Syria killed what remained of it.

Tight financial sanctions weakened Hizbullah's ability to sway Shi'ites who grew restive over its Syrian policy.

The story of Hizbullah with Lebanese Shi'ites has evolved from marginalization and neglect to empowerment and a predominance in the country's national life. A leaflet distributed by Shi'ite activists in Ouzai—a Shi'ite ghetto south of Beirut—on February 16, 1985, announced the formal establishment of Hizbullah [the party of God]. In sharp contrast with mainstream Sunni Islam, the opening statement in the leaflet was clear about the sectarian identity of the new party: "We are Husaynis—in reference to Ali, the first Imam in Twelver Imami Shiism and the third Imam his son Hussein—we are Alawis." The leaflet's unambiguous commitment of Hizbullah to Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Khomeini and his wilayat al-faqih concept made clear its combative mission as the advocate of downtrodden people against the United States, whom it viewed as the Great Satan.

Hizbullah believes that the return of the Hidden Imam—Shi'ites believe that the Twelfth Imam went into occultation in 874—is not only inevitable but also contingent upon the existence of the interim office of Iranian supreme leader. Its visionary foundations explain Hizbullah's pursuit of an apocalyptic revolutionary creed dictated by religious dogma. Soon after Hizbullah's emergence, the Middle East began to destabilize: Sunni political systems weakened, and Shi'ite ascendancy began. Saddam Hussein's fateful decision to invade Kuwait in August 1990 invited a devastating response from the U.S.-led coalition that, in addition to reinstating Kuwait's independence, ushered in waves of radical Sunni terrorism that escalated after the invasion of Iraq in April 2003.

Developments in the region since the late 1970s served the mobilization of Lebanese Shi'ites and the rise of their distinct political identity. The Litani Operation in March 1978 drove the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) outside a stretch of land along south Lebanon's border that Israel declared a security belt. The tarnishing of the image of the PLO increased the incidence of Palestinian skirmishes with the Shi'ite Amal Movement. Israeli Operation Peace for Galilee in June 1982 forced the PLO from the south and most other parts of Lebanon. Ironically, Israel's triumph in 1982 paved the way for the rise of Hizbullah, and its subsequent attempts to halt its surge did not succeed as evidenced by its inconclusive Operation Accountability in July 1993 and Operation Grapes of Wrath in April 1996. The limits of Israeli military power in stopping a grassroots movement in its tracks became apparent when it unilaterally pulled out from south Lebanon in May 2000.

Israel's withdrawal from south Lebanon brought Hizbullah under pressure from Lebanese Sunnis and Christians to dismantle its military component. It responded by arguing that the Israeli withdrawal was incomplete without returning Shib'a Farms—which Israel seized from Syria during the Six Day War in 1967—to Lebanon. Unwilling to transform

itself into an exclusively political party, Hizbullah advanced several reasons why it needed to maintain its military vigilance vis-à-vis Israel. Those reasons included liberating Shib'a Farms, freeing Lebanese prisoners of war, protecting Lebanon's offshore gas wealth, and other threats to Lebanese sovereignty. As pressure mounted on Hizbullah to disarm, or at least place its arms under army command, it decided in July 2006 to show the worth of its independent military apparatus by staging a cross-border raid and capturing Israeli troops to swap them for Lebanese prisoners of war. The raid did not go as planned, leading instead to war between Israel and Hizbullah. Hizbullah dubbed the 34-day war's inconclusive end a Divine victory.

Suspecting that Prime Minister Fuad Seniora colluded with the United States during the war, Hizbullah insisted on restructuring the cabinet to give the Shi'ite opposition a veto power to prevent Seniora from adopting policies injurious to it.[2] It was particularly concerned about being implicated by the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) that was investigating the assassination of former prime minister Rafiq Hariri in February 2005. In November 2006, Shi'ite cabinet members quit Seniora's government, which Hizbullah followed up by organizing major antigovernment sit-ins in downtown Beirut. Political turmoil escalated into Hizbullah's invasion of West Beirut in May 2008. The invasion ended with a truce agreement in Doha that, in addition to giving the presidency to the commander of the army Michel Suleiman, enabled Seniora to stay in office to prepare Lebanon for the parliamentary elections in June 2009. After the elections, Suleiman designated Saad Hariri to form his first cabinet, a task that took five months. Hizbullah's suspicion that the STL aimed at implicating it in Rafiq Hariri's assassination resulted in the resignation of Shi'ite ministers from Seniora's cabinet in 2006, and subsequently precipitated the collapse of Saad Hariri's cabinet in January 2011. Hizbullah's success in securing veto power in Hariri's cabinet ensured the cabinet's demise when it could not resolve the divisive issue of Hizbullah's role in Hariri's assassination through a compromise arrangement.

The confessional nature of Lebanese society has always complicated the political decision-making process and frequently causes a pileup of unprocessed issues. The political ideology of Hizbullah and its organic nexus with the Islamic Republic of Iran precludes Lebanon's fragmented political elite from reaching long-term framework agreements. The assassination of Rafiq Hariri and the subsequent withdrawal of the Syrian army from Lebanon, in addition to the start of the Syrian uprising in March 2011 and its dramatic developments, have further complicated Lebanese politics, and nearly immobilized it.

Iran played its cards deftly from the beginning of the Syrian uprising. Arab governments' vacillation between the desire to topple Bashar Asad's regime and fear of the victory of the uprising eventually eliminated them from the equation for post-conflict Syria. The hopeless fragmen-

tation of the Syrian opposition and Western disinterest except to defeat ISIS, made Iran a major actor in shaping events in Syria, and Hizbullah its dependable battlefield fighting force. Hizbullah's success in wresting control of al-Qusayr road juncture in western Syria from the rebels in June 2013 allowed it to extend its control along the entire Syrian border with Lebanon. This success and others allowed Hizbullah to emerge as a pseudo-regional power, even as a proxy for Iran.

This book studies the spectacular ability of Hizbullah to mobilize the historically downtrodden and exploited Shi'ites and transform them into Lebanon's most powerful confessional group. It advances that the accomplishment of such an extraordinary feat rested on the interaction of three historical accidents: the mobilizational capabilities of Imam Musa al-Sadr who took residence in Lebanon in 1958, the establishment of armed PLO presence among Shi'ites in south Lebanon as of 1965, and the success of the outward-looking Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979—with the religiously ordained leadership role of Shi'ite clerics. The book argues that the rise of Lebanese Shi'ites under Hizbullah is as impressive as it is tenuous. Regional developments gave impetus and direction to Shi'ites at every step on the way to ascendancy. As a political party committed to the Islamic Republic's wilayat al-faqih and strictly observant of the temporal and spiritual powers of the supreme leader, Hizbullah's fate hinges on the outcome of Iran's political evolution, which remains unpredictable.

The book's nine chapters address the issues and course of events leading to the stellar rise of Hizbullah in Lebanon and its impact on domestic and regional politics. Chapter 1 provides a conceptual introduction to political leadership and its importance in Shi'ite mobilization. Chapter 2 reviews the issue of Shi'ism and the Imamate question and the development of an ingrained sense of historical persecution. Chapter 3 places the Shi'ites in the context of Lebanese confessional politics, assesses the eclipse of the grip of feudal leaders on them and accounts for their transition to pan-Arab and leftist parties. Chapter 4 traces the emergence of Shi'ite sectarian political consciousness and highlights the Charismatic Leadership of Musa al-Sadr and the role of Palestinian militarization in expediting Shi'ite awakening. Chapter 5 stresses the galvanic impact of the Islamic Revolution in Iran on the course of Shi'ite activism. Chapter 6 addresses the rise of Hizbullah, as a direct consequence of the Iranian Revolution, and tracks the consolidation of its powers. Chapter 7 makes a case for the militant charisma of Hasan Nasrallah and his paramount role in making Hizbullah not only a towering politico-military party but also in endearing it to Lebanese Shi'ites irrespective of their political orientation. Chapter 8 dwells on Hizbullah's shift of focus from an anti-Israeli resistance movement to foreign ventures, especially since the outbreak of the Arab uprisings. The decline of Hizbullah's regional role coincided with the tapering off of violence in Syria and drying out of much of its

funding sources.[3] Lack of funds and erosion of its popularity tempted its leadership to busy itself with the sensational issue of Lebanese government corruption.[4] Chapter 9 identifies the growth of a new Shi'ite psyche that combines pride in the elevation of their sectarian status and fear of the untoward implications on their collective identity and sectarian power as a result of Hizbullah's military involvement in the region's armed conflicts as an Iranian proxy actor.

NOTES

1. See Lahcen Achy, "The Breakdown of the Arab Authoritarian Bargain," *Carnegie*, January 9, 2012, https://carnegie-mec.org/2012/01/09/breakdown-of-arab-authoritarian-bargain-pub-46414.

2. *MSNBC*, "Lebanon Unity Government Deal Gives Hezbollah Veto Power," July 11, 2008, http://www.nbcnews.com/id/25637594/ns/world_news-mideast_n_africa/t/lebanon-unity-deal-gives-hezbollah-veto-power/.

3. For more on this, see Ben Hubbard, "Iran's Allies Feel the Pain of American Sanctions," *New York Times*, March 28, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/28/world/middleeast/iran-sanctions-arab-allies.html.

4. Sati' Nureddin, "Hizbullah Yuharib al-Fasad bil Sanyura: Tatwi' al-Balad Kullih" [Hizbullah fights corruption with Seniora: Taming the whole country], *Shafaqna*, February 26, 2019, https://lb.shafaqna.com/AR/AL/4594382.

ONE

A Conceptual Introduction to Shi'ite Leadership

Politics and leadership are interdependent. Irrespective of its stage of development, a political system cannot exist without the intertwinement of politics and leadership. The operational capability of a political system depends to a great measure on the presence of an effective leader who "can see opportunities when others cannot, and can capitalize on current trends in order to turn them into future advantage."[1] A competent leader is one who does not merely rely on the power that accrues to him, but "depends more on persuasion than on coercion."[2] By their nature political systems are action-oriented and, therefore, decision making is the essence of their existence and continuity. A successful leader is expected to possess exceptional capabilities and foresight that motivate society to extend to him or her "preponderant influence in determining an issue or event whose consequences would have been profoundly different if he had not acted as he did."[3]

ORIGINS OF MODERN LEADERSHIP

One perspective of leadership that has endured for decades posits that "[i]t arises whenever there are interactions of individuals or of groups, no matter what may be the purposes or aims of these interactions."[4] Leadership entails by necessity the elevation ". . . of one or a few individuals in a group in the process of control of societary phenomena."[5] The rise of European nationalism in the 19th century transformed the conception of political leadership from one predicated on a narrow worldview into a universally inclusive one. The French dictum of "one faith, one law, and king" that also applied elsewhere in Europe, which enabled European

monarchs to end Muslim control of Iberia, lost its luster to the unifying power of secular nationalism. The collapse of the European *ancien regime* and its confessional attributes brought in its stead an integrationist national character that cut across sectarian and provincial differences. The emergence of new national leaders succeeded in invoking a ". . . balance between principle and opportunism,"[6] and striking an equilibrium between the trait and behavioral aspects of commanding followers.

Soon after the end of the Crusades in 1291, far-reaching developments in Europe ushered in the modern age. The renaissance of the 14th century set the stage for the rise of the New Monarchs who concentrated political authority and rationalized state policies. This transition ended the role of the church as a political actor and facilitated the advent of the Age of Enlightenment and the Scientific Revolution. By the time of the arrival in the 18th century of the Age of Reason and the Industrial Revolution, the lure of religion as a political driver had ebbed to the point of nonexistence. The 16th-century religious reform in Europe and the mind-boggling changes that followed it opened the door for the gradual spread of democracy in the now reason-based societies.

In Europe, post-renaissance philosophers had undermined religious dogma and replaced it with reason. The impetus of critical thinking accompanied the continent's transition from medievalism to modernity. In the Middle East, "religious reason not only survived but accepted regression from the intellectual and scientific levels attained in its classical period."[7] The brief Arab intellectual renaissance of the 19th century succumbed to British and French vicious machination and eventual occupation, giving a new life to the certainty of religious dogma, ". . . which is anchored in revelation."[8]

RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP VENTURES INTO POLITICS

One form of leadership that cuts across different societal types, be they religious or secular, is a charismatic authority that ". . . rests on devotion to exceptional sanctity, heroism, or exemplary character of a person. . . ."[9] The ascendancy of Islamic movements in the Middle East hinged on the presence of a pious leader with extraordinary communication skills, as well as a strong sense of purpose. The spread of religious dogma and the state of righteousness is an important endeavor that requires the presence of an exceptional leader endowed with heroic qualities. The leader in question possesses ". . . a rare ability to see through appearance and the plethora of detail, to discount the false and trivial, and to highlight the great and the tragic."[10] The hero leader operates under daunting circumstances, but he succeeds in his mission against all odds because he ". . . is purpose-directed. For him power is the means to a great and noble

end."[11] There is no dearth of evidence to lend credence to the notion that since time immemorial heroic leadership shapes the world around us:

> History is shaped by the leadership of great men. Without Moses, the Jews would have remained in Egypt. Without Winston Churchill, the British would have given up in 1940. . . . The Russian Revolution would have taken a different course if Nikolai Lenin had been hanged by the Old Regime instead of exiled.[12]

During their territorial control of most of Iran during 1941–1945, the British encouraged the rise of plural political parties and the spread of mass media. The Anglo-British invasion of Iran in 1941further humiliated its people who were already traumatized by centuries of unpleasant encounters with the Ottomans, Tsarist Russians, and British colonialists. Their brief exposure to pluralism brought urban Iranians into contact with ideas such as secularism, revolutionism, communism, and 19th-century scientific positivism. However, the 1953 Anglo-American conspiracy, code-named Operation Ajax, to overthrow Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh and to annul his 1951 nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, shocked the Iranian people and disillusioned them with the West's liberal ideas.

Were it not for the emergence of Ayatollah Khomeini as a politico-religious leader with a powerful conviction, Iran would not be what it is today. "[T]he mutations of society were due to great men, who initiated movement and prevented others from leading society in another direction."[13] The anti-Shah protests that began in January 1978 included, in addition to Khomeini's recently urbanized rural migrants, the liberal leftist National Movement and the Communist Tudeh Party. Khomeini saw an opportunity in the 1980–1988 war with Iraq to eliminate all opposition to his concept of wilayat al-faqih. On May 4, 1983, Khomeini unleashed a campaign of terror against the Tudeh Party and ordered the execution of hundreds of its activists. The CIA reportedly provided Iran with information that led to the arrest of Tudeh members as well as KGB operatives in the country.[14] Shortly after the end of the war with Iraq, Khomeini issued an edict that legitimized the execution of more than 30,000 prisoners, and thus effectively silencing all opposition to the nascent Islamic Republic.[15]

Authority requires the ability of the leader to manage internal conflicts and demonstrate a ". . . capacity to adapt and persist in response to changing external conditions and the shifting interests and demands of members."[16] Khomeini combined the powers of charisma, religious authority, and foresight to use the war with Iraq as a means to rejuvenate Iranian nationalism and defeat his domestic competitors. The strong affinity between the founder of Iran's Fada'yin-e-Islam Navvab Safavi and the Egyptian Brotherhood, who posthumously inspired the Iranian Revolution, reportedly influenced the religious ideology and leadership style of Khomeini.[17] Khomeini's understanding of religion was not limited to

making it a cardinal constituent of state politics. Instead, his visionary teachings transformed the machinery of the state and the structure of the society of Iran into a living transition toward impending millennialism.

There is a strong argument that suggests that "[a]ll states combine religion and politics in some fashion. . . . When strong in organization the religious sphere always constitutes a potential threat to the political domain because it appeals to the moral sensibilities of the nation."[18] This is especially true of the United States where religion comprises a strong dimension of its political orientation despite its secular constitution. U.S presidents often include religion in their political discourse. Former president Jimmy Carter not only went to church but also introduced a Sunday school program in Plains, Georgia. Former president Barack Obama went to church regularly and publicly. Carrying religion to an extreme, however, as in the cases of Iran's wilayat al-faqih and Lebanese Hizbullah, often creates major political problems both domestically and internationally. This is because ". . . the object of religion is to 'ward off' . . . everything in the society that is likely to endanger it. . . . The essence of religion is to be against history and against that which it imposes on us as destiny."[19] In this sense, the Iranian Revolution appealed to the disadvantaged strata of Iranian society that felt marginalized by the Shah's economic policies. Ironically, however, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) managed to reserve for itself a big chunk of the country's economy again at the expense of the traditional bazaaris and rural masses:

> The revolution in Iran depended on the long-term relationship between clergy and the bazaaris . . . who suffered from the shah's efforts to encourage large-scale businesses. But Khomeini also pitched his appeal to the 'dispossessed'—to the urban masses left out of the economic boom and to a rural population unaroused by Marxist and nationalist ideology.[20]

Modern political systems take pride in their moral achievements, but in revolutionary Iran Islamic, Shi'ite morality becomes the cornerstone of the country's political system and the driver of its actions and behavior. Millennial Islamic movements seek ". . . to enforce norms in the public domain . . . by investing the public sphere with a particular mode of categorizing objects and actions; one in which the predominant categories are those of halal and haram (licit and illicit) and the Islamic and the un-Islamic."[21] Thus, Hizbullah adopted the human and moral values of the Iranian Revolution and introduced its own Jihad concept that ranges from building an ideal and utopian Islamic society to the provision of wide-ranging welfare services.[22]

Religion can be as a means of promoting national identity and also a legitimizer of political authority. It has played a notable mobilizational role both in monotheistic religions and Asia's non-revelational religions. In India, ". . . the nation always takes religion as one of the main aspects

of national identity. . . . [Mainstream] political discourse is not secular, but it imagines a common ethnic culture of India in terms of religious pluralism."[23] Mahatma Gandhi's unique inspirational leadership shined because he understood religion as a spiritual driving force and not as a set of dogmatic dictates: ". . . the religious spirit within me became a living force."[24]

Plagued by sectarian bias, official neglect, and feudal tyranny, Lebanese Shi'ites lacked the essential ability to enable the rise of powerful indigenous leadership. The persecution of Shi'ites spanned more than 12 centuries of the Sunni-dominated Caliphate state, and until after the formation of the Middle Eastern system of states in the 20th century. Some Sunnis consider Shi'ites infidels (kuffar) for contesting the caliphate of Abu Bakr, Umar, and Uthman. They also accuse them of promoting polytheism (shirk) and innovation (bid'a). Ensuing political quietism had further complicated their ability to take charge of their communal destiny. The Shi'ite historical legacy of reacting to injustice varied between quietism and retreat from society to the declaration of Jihad. In countries where Shi'ites constituted a demographic minority (Saudi Arabia and Lebanon), or evinced inarticulate mass society behavior (Iraq and Bahrain), they mostly resigned themselves to political marginalization. In Iran, where Shi'ites are an absolute majority, they began to exhibit evidence of political action in the fourth quarter of the 19th century mainly in response to the 1890 tobacco concession. In response to the Italian invasion of Cyrenaica and Russian intrusion into northern Iran, both in 1911, the clerical establishment in Najaf implored Muslims to declare Jihad on the Italians and Russians. The Jihad fatwa that was issued by Sayyid Kadhim al-Yazdi commanded "Arab and Persian Muslims to perform one of the most important Islamic obligations [Jihad] and rally to the defense of Ottoman and Persian territories from the European crusade."[25]

Left to their means, the inopportune reality of Shi'ite living in Jabal 'Amil did ". . . not produce a person who is equal to the occasion,"[26] until external conditions made it possible. The relentless weakening of the Ottoman Empire, mainly as a result of Tsarist Russian southward territorial expansion, encouraged the regional ruler of Egypt Ali Bey al-Kabir and the local ruler of northern Palestine Dahir al-'Umar to claim their independence and scramble to grab Ottoman territory in Syria and Hijaz. Shi'ites in Jabal 'Amil saw a window of opportunity in such a geopolitical development and decided not to miss it. Rural Shi'ite leader Nasif al-Nassar forwent his enmity with al-Umar and allied with him, as well as with Ali Bey. However, the subsequent defeat and death of 'Ali Bey in 1773 and al-'Umar in 1775 sealed the fate of al-Nassar who met a similar fate in 1781.

The devastation wreaked on Jabal 'Amil by the ruler of Acre Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar after Nassar's demise, the failure of Ottoman land re-

forms and the surge in the feudal leaders' abuse of hapless peasants had the effect of demoralizing Shi'ites and driving them into despair. In retrospect, this is hardly surprising because "severe stress or crisis can lead to psychic distress and political disillusionment and that these in turn can result in susceptibility to an individual leader."[27] This devastation can help us understand Shi'ite acquiescence to feudal leadership, to Musa al-Sadr from the early 1960s until his mysterious disappearance in Libya in 1978, and subsequently to Hasan Nasrallah after his rise to Hizbullah's secretary general in 1992. As historically marginalized people, Lebanese Shi'ites acquired some of the characteristics of frontier societies that "tend to be fluid, institutionally fragmented, and multiple in their loyalties and shared understandings."[28]

The Ottoman Empire presented itself as the true defender of Islam not only against European Christendom but also against Islamic heterodoxy. While Islam constituted an element of Ottoman identity from beginning to end, the role and significance of religion evolved to assume saliency after the beginning of the 16th century as the burgeoning empire fought Tsarist Russia in the north, continental Europeans in the west, and Shi'ite Safavids in the east. Apart from military conflict with Christian Europe, the Ottoman Empire waged protracted wars against Persia's Safavids and Qajars. The 1514 Battle of Chaldrian between the Ottomans and Safavids ended in a convincing Ottoman victory and resulted in an enduring enmity and mutual distrust between Sunnism and Shi'ism. It is against this backdrop that former Egyptian president Husni Mubarak issued a statement in 2006 in which he claimed that ". . . Arab Shi'ites place their loyalty to Iran before anything else."[29] Mubarak's statement points to the existence of a "centuries-old fault line governing the relationship between Sunnis and Shi'ites."[30]

The 1943 unwritten Gentleman's Agreement between Maronite leader Bishara al-Khury and his Sunni counterpart Riad al-Sulh institutionalized Lebanon's confessional divisions and, on their basis, established a political system predicated on intergroup hostility and polarization. The so-called Cedar Revolution in 2005 in the wake of Rafiq Hariri's assassination—mostly celebratory protests against Syrian military presence in Lebanon—was matched by pro-Syrian counter-protests spearheaded by Hizbullah's activists. The revolution and the counter-revolution ". . . did not make any appreciable move toward democratizing Lebanon, however, as [they] operated within rather than against the entrenched sectarian system.[31] The entrenchment of deeply held religious beliefs in Lebanon, not only among Sunnis and Shi'ites but also among Christian denominations, obstructed the development of a national civil society. The predicament of Lebanon in this regard is comparable to many Arab-Muslim countries where the ascendancy of rational politics has been compromised by "physical violence in the name of a so-called Islamic Revolution, in place of reformist discourse . . . to reactivate the 'authentic Islam' bequeathed

by the Pious sanctified Ancestors."[32] In Islam, especially in its Twelver Imami version ". . . the binary of the Beginning and End paradigms is particularly powerful since it generally functions as a strategy to resolve the tension engendered by the problem of theodicy."[33] The linkage between the Imamate doctrine and divine inspiration has permeated the "Shi'i psyche"[34] and lent legitimacy to religiously driven Shi'ite political movements of which Hizbullah has been a prime example.

THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION RESHAPES THE CONTEXT OF RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP

The wilayat al-faqih concept of the Iranian Revolution accounted for ". . . preparatory events preceding the resurrection including the advent of the Mahdi"[35] and inspired the apocalyptic religious creed of Hizbullah. The redemptionist and millenarian attributes of Twelver Imamism facilitated Lebanese Shi'ites' embrace of Hizbullah and their unquestioning support for its policies in the name of religious deference. This runs in sharp contrast to the role of religion in the formation of national identities in Sunni countries, such as in Indonesia and Egypt, wherein the case of the latter the precedence of Islam has not blinded Egyptians to the existence of ". . . monuments that testify to a long history together under the pharaohs.[36] The Middle East is witnessing a process of Shi'ite revival encompassing social, economic and political components. The triumph of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 has given a great impetus to Shi'ite efforts to reassert themselves after centuries of social neglect and political marginalization. Shi'ites in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait today dare to defy the authorities and participate in 'Ashura processions to remember Imam Hussein's legendary martyrdom in the Battle of Karbala.[37]

Arab regimes generally eschew the discussion of sectarian tensions for fear that they will harm their political interests. The unprecedented empowerment of Shi'ites in Lebanon and Iraq encouraged coreligionists in the Arab region to press with their demands for socioeconomic equality and political representation. When Iranian president Mohammad Khatami visited Lebanon in May 2003, both Hizbullah and Amal Movement competed to rally partisans and supporters to welcome him. Lebanese Shi'ites were demonstrating that ". . . Iran had become the regional patron that placed them on an equal footing with the other foreign-sponsored sects."[38]

The rise of religious fundamentalism in the Middle East cannot possibly be separated from "[d]ictatorship and cronyism [that] have caused havoc in Muslim societies."[39] In these societies, the systematic violation of basic human rights, foreign intervention, gross socioeconomic inequalities and the failure of political and economic development have adversely impacted the fabric of society and ". . . the most profound machinery of

social organization."[40] The CIA scheme with the Pahlavi dynasty to overthrow the democratically elected government of Mosaddeq and reinstate the rule of Muhammad Reza Shah disillusioned a broad cross-section of Iranians. For fiercely proud Iranian nationalists, the U.S. act of brazen and unwarranted involvement in the coup ". . . contributed to the rise of militant Islamic fundamentalism because it set the stage for subsequent changes in the structures and policies of the state, the economy, and class and group relations."[41] The appeal of Western democratic values and citizen empowerment lost their lure for many Iranians, and ". . . the idea of democracy and pluralism became discredited among intellectual leaders."[42]

Religious movements grow in open political systems, although they do not usually hegemonize their countries' political processes because, despite their autonomy, the dynamic internal mechanism of the political system, with its emphasis on the rule of law and due process, does not allow them to overwhelm "the political sphere."[43] It is in repressive political environments that organized and ambitious religious movements stand a chance of mobilizing broad public support toward achieving their vision of success. Therefore, the ". . . Islamists' ability to link up with societal forces, in particular the popular sector, depends on their success in appropriating existing practices and building on space contestation."[44]

The triumph of the Iranian Revolution has not prevented the emergence of a broad and ever-growing reform movement. The strength of the conservatives' grip on power does not mean they can crush the liberal reform movement, even though they have been able to arrest its universal spread. The ability of the conservatives to rein in the reformist movement is comparable to the success of the Shah in restraining Khomeini's Movement of 15 Khordad in June 1963 and expelling him to Turkey in November 1964. The Shah's heavy-handedness did not prevent the inception of the revolution in 1978 and the victorious return of Khomeini to Tehran in February 1979. Iran is amid its transformation from Islamism into post-Islamism where religion dissociates from the political and ". . . is marked by the . . . differentiation between citizen and believer."[45] The same process is occurring among Lebanese Shi'ites, many of whom resent Hizbullah's overbearing hold on the sect. Hizbullah spent many years consolidating its powers and took advantage of Israel's occupation of south Lebanon to build an impressive military machine that kept the weak Lebanese state at bay and put the country's Shi'ites under its wing. The state of affairs of Lebanese politics is a function of the overall regional developments in the Middle East. If events during the 20th century are any guide, Hizbullah—despite capturing much of the political and military limelight in Lebanon and beyond—will eventually be judged as an ephemeral phenomenon in the big scheme of events in Lebanon and the rest of the Middle East.

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TWO

Shi'ism and the Imamate Question

Ingrained Sense of Historical Persecution

The death of Prophet Muhammad in 632 created a permanent faultline in Islam. The controversy surrounding the appointment of Abu Bakr to succeed the Prophet—and the exclusion of his cousin and son-in-law Imam 'Ali from consideration—has persisted for 14 centuries and will continue indefinitely. Al-Mujazaba fi al-Imama [imamate controversy] during the Day of Saqifa (about succession to Prophet Muhammad immediately following his death) excluded Imam 'Ali and split the Muslim community.[1] The hastily convened Saqifat Bani Sa'ida (a roofed structure built by Jewish tribe Bani Sa'ida in Yathrib) by al-Ansar [the helpers], who hosted the Prophet in Yathrib [that he renamed Medina] in 622 after he fled persecution by his tribe Quraysh in Mecca and enabled him to establish the first Islamic state, sought to designate one of their own chiefs (Sa'd bin Ubadah) to become the new leader of the Muslim community. The ability of al-Muhajirun [the emigrants], who sought refuge with the Prophet in Medina, to impose the caliphate of Abu Bakr alienated al-Ansar and angered a faction of al-Muhajirun who believed the successor of the Prophet ought to have come from his household.

The Muslim community at Medina included diverse groups whose Islamic fraternity remained superficial despite the efforts of the Prophet to establish a cohesive community of believers. The capital of the nascent Islamic state was culturally, socially, and politically heterogeneous. "The inclination of some of the Arabs among the Companions of the Prophet to support 'Ali was thus a natural corollary of the existing ideas prevalent among the various Arab tribes who together constituted Muhammad's Umma at Medina."[2] The Prophet's Constitution of Medina in 622 confirmed and institutionalized the salience of tribal identity under Islam.

This explains why al-Muhajirun insisted that the caliphate must remain in Quraysh because of its privileged role in Arabia and its centuries-old custodianship of Mecca's Ka'ba Shrine. As a corollary to the ubiquitous religious role of Quraysh, the Prophet's next of kin argued emphatically in favor of endowing the caliphate on Imam 'Ali. Their position arose from the conception that noble blood was not only hereditary but also ". . . inherent in certain stocks."[3]

THE GREAT SPLIT IN ISLAM

Shi'ites believe Prophet Muhammad had designated Imam 'Ali as his successor. They ground their case on sayings in which the Prophet alluded to 'Ali's competence, such as "I am the City of Knowledge and 'Ali is its Gate."[4] They also refer to a statement made by the Prophet in Ghadir Khumm, on his way to Medina from the Farewell Pilgrimage as an unambiguous proclamation of Imam 'Ali as his successor: "Of whomsoever I am Lord, then 'Ali is also his Lord."[5] According to the concept of the Imamate, 'Ali's entitlement to it does not derive from bequeathment, but rather the existence of a clear nass (unambiguous hadith). Shi'ites usually present a statement by Prophet Muhammad at Ghadir Khumm as evidence of 'Ali's entitlement: "Whoever I am his leader (Mawla), Ali is his leader (Mawla). O. God, love those who love him, and be hostile to those who are hostile to him."[6]

In Twelver Imami Shi'ism, whose doctrine was formulated by Imam al-Sadiq in the 8th century, the link between Prophethood and Imamate is inseparable, and the former is incomplete without the latter. Al-Sadiq's doctrine that celebrated the 'Ismah [infallibility of the Imam] and justified the practice of taqiyya [dissimulation] paved the way toward ". . . a millennium-long tale of martyrdom, persecution, and suffering."[7] Shi'ite scholars insist that Shi'ism took shape during the life of Prophet Muhammad, who planted its seed by calling upon the community of believers to "love Ali and be loyal to him."[8] Shi'ites often refer to Hadith al-Muhabala (the verse of malediction) as clear evidence about Imam 'Ali's entitlement to succeed Prophet Muhammad in leading the Islamic community. In reference to meeting with a Christian delegation from Najran, who asked the Prophet to explain to them the true nature of Christ, this Quranic verse answers the question of succession: "Come! Let us gather together, our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves: then let us earnestly pray, and invoke the curse of Allah on those who lie."[9] The only four people in the Prophet's company were his cousin 'Ali and his wife Fatima and sons Hasan and Hussein.

The intense feud over succession did not immediately generate the Sunni-Shi'ite dichotomy, even though the adherents of the two points of view ". . . were nevertheless drifting steadily, and finally irreconcilably,

further apart."[10] Apart from disagreement on succession, a myriad of contentious and divisive issues that plagued pre-Islamic Arabia resurfaced as the unifying power of the new faith began to wane. A combination of tribal, personal and opportunistic factors coalesced, leading to the assassination of the third caliph Uthman in 656. When the caliphate eventually went to 'Ali, he chose to delay exacting justice from the assassins of 'Uthman until he consolidated his rule and pacified the renegade province of Syria. The burgeoning and multifaceted split within the Muslim community lay beyond the capacity of the fledgling caliphate to resolve. Civil war broke out, but 'Ali won convincingly in the Battle of the Camel in 656 against a coalition that included companions of the Prophet, his widow 'Aisha, and Mu'awiya, the recently assassinated resourceful governor of Syria and relative of 'Uthman. Mu'awiya accused 'Ali of complicity in the conspiracy for allegedly not doing enough to apprehend 'Uthman's assassins and exact justice from them. Mu'awiya's army marched on 'Ali's new headquarters in Kufa a year later and fought him in the indecisive Battle of Siffin thanks to a trick by 'Amr bin al-'As. In the face of defeat, bin al-'As called for hoisting the Quran to halt the fighting. The bizarre ending of the battle further fragmented Muslims and gave rise to a new group named al-Kharijites. They vowed to kill the leaders of the two camps to the battle, but they only managed to assassinate 'Ali who was fatally wounded in 661 by one of his former followers. Averse to the continuation of bloodshed Imam Hasan chose—despite his endorsement by the people of Iraq to succeed his fallen father—to step back and acquiesce to Mu'awiya's formation of the Umayyad Caliphate.

FROM DISSENSION TO A NEW CREED

The origins of Shi'ism as a religious sect, later organized into a separate creed by al-Sadiq, is traceable to the outcome of the Battle of Karbala in 680 during which Imam Husayn, who held the weaker position in the lopsided confrontation, lost his life at the hands of the Umayyad caliph Yazid's army. Heinz Halm recognizes that "the notables of the Arab tribes of Kufa who wanted to atone for their complicity in al-Husayn's downfall . . . united [under the name of the Penitents at-Tawwabun] with the slogan 'revenge for al-Husayn' . . ."[11] The question of usurped Imamate and its centrality in Shi'ism became a subject of heated contestation among Muslims that proved too stubborn to resolve. The Imamate is the principle of religion that sets Shi'ites apart from Sunnis. Whereas the two sects give different interpretations of the meaning on ma'ad (resurrection at the Judgment), the question of the Imamate has created an enduring wedge between Sunni and Shi'ite Islam.[12] Shi'ites accord the Imam ". . . a status identical to that of the Prophet."[13] They go to the extent of attributing to the Imams superhuman qualities such as fluency in all tongues ". . .

including those of animals and plants . . . [as well as seeing] . . . not only what is before their eyes but also what is behind their backs . . ."[14]

Sunnis argue emphatically against the Imamate doctrine and point out that Prophet Muhammad did not designate a successor to him and ". . . because of this absence of explicit statement . . . that Imam 'Ali never . . . put forward his candidacy as the only rightful successor of the Prophet."[15] Some Sunnis have even gone to the extreme extent of labeling Shi'ism as a "'heretical sect' that began with the purpose of subverting Islam from within. This idea is sometimes expressed by saying that Shi'ism began as a political movement and later on acquired religious emphasis."[16] Shi'ite scholar Abdulaziz Sachedina accepts the "absence of explicit statement [on succession] . . . [and] that Imam 'Ali never . . . put forward his candidacy as the only rightful successor of the prophet."[17] His remarks had no impact on the raging polemical debate on the question of the legitimate successor to the Prophet. Shi'ites passionately complain that the enemies of Ahl al-Bayt have deliberately mythicized their doctrinal beliefs. They reject outright the claim that "Persians entering into Islam had mingled parts of the established Persian religion of Zoroastrianism in Shi'ism."[18] They emphatically deny that Shi'ism had evolved from "a mosaic combination of Zoroastrian, Christian, Jewish and Hindu religious tenets."[19]

Religious traditions in pre-Islamic Mecca might have influenced the shaping of the Imamate question. The tribes of Mecca for centuries had recognized the prominent Quraysh tribe as the keepers of the Ka'ba. Even though a system of religious hierarchy did not exist, Arabia's tribes recognized without contest or reservation the role of ". . . certain clans as guardians of the sanctuaries."[20] It is in this traditional spirit that the Prophet's ahl al-bayt [the people of the Prophet's household] felt entitled to succeeding him.[21] To add to the conception of entitlement Shi'ites advance that there is mental evidence for the existence of the Imam and the continuation of the Imamate.[22] They further propose that the ". . . Imamate is a historical and religious fact, and not a Shi'ite hypothesis."[23] The omniscient presence of the Imam is central to the Shi'ite doctrine since he is the Sign of God, the Possessor of Authority and His Proof. The Imam guides the faithful to God and his worship, and they would be lost without him because he is the sole authority on interpreting the Qur'an: "The Qur'an is mute [samit] without the Imam [natiq] to explain it."[24]

As the God-mandated keeper of justice, law and order on earth, the succession of the Imams on earth has been continuous since Adam. His continuous existence, be it visible or hidden, is so crucial that according to the Sixth Imam Jafar al-Sadiq: "Were there to remain on the earth but two men, one of them would be the proof of God."[25] The doctrine of the Imamate, which is an anathema to Sunnis, is crucial for understanding the concept of wilayat al-faqih. The beginning of the greater occultation cut off the community of believers from the Imam's guidance and had the

potential of compromising the faith. Wilayat al-faqih rests on the assumption that with the occultation ". . . the divine light or walayat was passed on to the mujtahid or more specifically to the ayatollahs, who 'act as the interpreter of religion for the religious community.'"[26]

Twelver Imami Shi'ism (or Ja'fari doctrine), to which Lebanese Shi'ites subscribe, believes in a line of twelve Imams beginning with 'Ali bin Abi Talib and ending with Muhammad bin Hasan al-Mahdi, who is also known as Imam al-Zaman who would redeem humanity into salvation. They form ". . . a glittering chain of holy Imams that link the Prophet through 'Ali and Fatima . . . this linking through space and time in turn enables believers to attain access to the divine."[27] To some observers, Imamism is a mysterious creed that demands unquestioning loyalty and unfettered observance by the laity of sacred rites whose esoteric foundations are exclusively vested in the household of the Prophet. Shi'ism is predicated on the firm belief that the Prophet ". . . had imparted a secret knowledge to his cousin and son-in-law 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and that this 'ilm had been passed down the line of designated Imams, who were his direct descendants."[28]

Even though Shi'ites highly venerate Imam Ali, Imam Hussein's martyrdom and motivation to end centuries of injustice and rectify the path of Islam drive modern-day Shi'ite activism and revolutionism. The climax of the revolutionary drive awaits the return of the hidden Mahdi from his occultation. "Immediately after his immaculate birth . . . al-Mahdi knelt to the ground . . . and recited the names of the twelve Imams."[29] Shi'ites say he also recited the following Quranic verse: "And We wished to be gracious to those who were being depressed in the land, make them leaders (in faith) and make them heirs."[30] It would have been impossible for Hizbullah to come into existence without the connection between Imam Hussein and Imam al-Mahdi. Without linking them together, Shi'ism would have remained quietist and traditionalist. The indisputable righteousness of Imam 'Ali made him a timeless icon and an indelible role model. Muslims, irrespective of the denominational differences remember him as an ". . . uncompromising in matters of right and wrong . . . A true revolutionary leader, his dealings were never duplicitous."[31]

PERMANENT RELIGIOUS RIFT

The occultation of the Twelfth Imam ushered in a period of religious vacuum for Shi'ites. In his capacity as the source of legislation on religious matters, the absence of the infallible Imam necessitated, from a religious jurisprudence perspective, filling in the legislative void.[32] The occultation proceeded in two stages. The lesser occultation began in 874, though its consequences were mitigated by ". . . the leadership provided

by the 'ulama'. . . . Their own authority, which rested on their knowledge of the transmitted commands and statements of the Imams as well as on their role as jurisprudents was legal-traditional rather than charismatic."[33] The clerics of that period subscribed to the Akhbari school of religious thought, according to which they followed the example of the Imams in deciding on spiritual matters that affected the civic status of the believers of the Imamate. They frowned at the use of reasoning in religious matters since they lacked the foresight and infallibility of the Imams. The inception of the greater occultation that is still ongoing coincided with the death of the fourth representative in 941.[34] Facing new situations for which Shi'ite clerics could not find legal precedent eventually gave rise to the Usuliyya school of thought that elevated the role of reasoning in religious rulings. The ascendancy of Usulism and its emphasis on Ijtihad (religious research) came ". . . in response to the changing needs of the Shii community, while also reflecting the need to assert and justify the 'ulama's general deputyship [niyaba 'Amma] of the Imam in his absence."[35]

Unlike Sunnis who discouraged research in natural and cosmic sciences for fear that they would deflect from faith, Shi'ites encouraged them and felt they would reinforce belief in God's presence.[36] Ijtihad remained a tightly controlled intellectual exercise reserved for a privileged few sources of imitation (maraji' al-taqlid) who distinguished themselves in religious academies (hawza 'ilmiyya). These erudite clerics assumed the responsibility of guiding the community into proper religious worship. The end product of this process resulted in the creation of an elaborate religious hierarchy unknown in Sunni Islam, and somewhat akin to Catholicism:

> Shii Islam and Roman Catholicism have several striking structural similarities. Some of the most significant concern the holy personalities at the origin and center of the two religions. . . . [They] have at the core of their faith systems a transcendent martyr who is part of a holy family that includes a powerful mother figure.[37]

Shi'ism combines the doctrine of repentance with soul-cleansing revolution, which is the gateway to repentance for abandoning Imam Hussein to face his grim death in the battle for Karbala.[38] Shi'ite jurisprudents leaned on Mu'tazilite thought to give rational justification to the occultation [ghayba] of the twelfth Imam. Halm provides a concise account of their reasoning: "Since man is fallible and consequently in need of guidance, divine grace [lutf] cannot but grant mankind the benefit of rightful guidance at all times by an Imam who is immune [ma'sum] from sin and error."[39] Twelver Imamis condemn the Companions of the Prophet ". . . as sinners and even as unbelievers who adopted Islam outwardly only, as a means to advance their selfish ambitions in this world."[40] Unlike Sun-

nis who hold them in high esteem, they do not mention them in their prayers and focus only on the household of the Prophet.

The Penitents, just like subsequent Shi'ite rebellions, attracted many mawalis (non-Arab Muslims), who aspired to achieve social acceptance and societal integration in an Arab-dominated state that treated them as inferior subjects. The defeat of all such rebellions at the hands of superior state machinery of coercion dampened all hopes of social advancement and seems to have promoted among Shi'ites an enduring sense of disinheritance. Since the beginning of formalizing a distinct religious creed "[d]istrust between the Shia and the state is a perennial problem . . . from the very start the Shia have regarded the state as usurped by power and realpolitik . . ."[41] Repression emanating from the uneven confrontation with the powerful state justified the invocation of the policy of dissimulation and waiting. The sixth Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (702 A.D.–765 A.D.) warned the followers of the misguided banners and instructed them to wait until the return of the Mahdi and follow his banner.[42] Even though the Buyid dynasty had prevailed in West Asia during the period of 945 A.D.–1055 A.D., ambassadors of the Imam warned community members engaging in political activity.[43]

CELEBRATING MARTYRDOM

Martyrdom is a critical component of Shi'ism, and it is impossible to understand Shi'ite activism in isolation of Imam Hussein's martyrdom in Karbala. 'Ashura is the tenth day of Muharram when Imam Hussein fell in battle against the army of Yazid, the second Umayyad caliph. Shi'ites observe it as ". . . an occasion for collective atonement through lamentation and self-flagellation . . . [It] underscores Shia distinctiveness and often draws Sunni opprobrium."[44] Shi'ites have been vigilant in observing Karbala and 'Ashura because their leaders see in them a unique opportunity to keep their revolutionary spirit alive and undo injustice to the household of the Prophet. The annual observance of 'Ashura has been going on for centuries and "the active participation of the faithful in the grief of Husayn and his family is considered a religious obligation."[45] Also, the doomsday nature of Shi'ism ". . . . is essentially reconstructed on the narrative of Karbala."[46] Shi'ites perceive Imam Hussein's martyrdom as critical for the return of Imam Mahdi from his occultation to avenge ". . . all that went wrong in Shi'i sacred history . . ."[47]

Visitations of the holy shrines and graves, especially the Imams, play a central role in indoctrinating Shi'ites and mobilizing them into action against tyranny and a constant reminder of the plot to deny the household of the Prophet from their entitlement to succeed him in presiding over the Muslim community. The political dimension of such visitations, especially to Imam Hussein's shrine in Karbala, is too apparent to hide.

These visitations formed a symbol for Shi'ite suffering and defiance against state authority. Eventually, they provided a means of ascertaining religious loyalty and a cardinal marker of Shi'ite religious distinction.[48]

Shi'ite sectarian rituals such as the observance of 'Ashura and shrine visitation are more related to group consciousness and identity than religiosity.[49] Esoteric in origin and utopian in its outlook, the return of the hidden Imam will pave the way for his installation of a kingdom of justice. The never-abating intensity of graphic description of the sequence of events that led to Imam Hussein's martyrdom has been used as an effective tactic ". . . for political mobilization."[50] Islam's combination of the spiritual and temporal aspects of life enabled Shi'ite clerics to draw as needed on "these co-existing aspects [that] are found side by side"[51] in preparation for the showdown with the forces of evil, exploitation, and arrogance.

SETTLING OF HISTORICAL SCORES WITH SUNNIS

The Shi'ite movement went underground for at least three centuries as it evolved from the Kaysaniyya, which recognized four Imams ('Ali, and his three sons Hasan, Husayn and Muhammad; hence its label as 'Fourer' Shi'ite), into Twelver Imami Shi'ism. The rise of the Twelver Imami thought as the mainstream Shi'ite sect occurred during the Buyid period in the 10th and 11th centuries. Twelver Imamis accepted Mu'tazilite kalam (dialectics), "in particular regarding human free-will and the temporal creation of the Quranic world."[52] The weakening of the 'Abbasid Empire after al-Mutawakkil, not only paved the way for the rise of Shi'ite dynasties such as the Buyids, the Fatimids, and the Hamdanids, but also eased the pressure on Shi'ites to openly practice their faith. Nevertheless, the fall of these dynasties and the emergence of Sunni Seljuqs reversed Shi'ite good fortune and revived their travails. Shi'ite lot worsened during the Ayubid period, namely that of Salah al-Din al-Ayubi, who was "one of the most brutal rulers whose excesses against Shi'ites make an infant's head full of grey hair."[53]

The staunchly anti-Sunni Fatimids negotiated but failed to reach a deal with the Crusaders on eliminating the Sunni Seljuq Turks and sharing Syria and Egypt. The Crusaders wrested control of Antioch from the Seljuqs in 1098 and Jerusalem from the Fatimids in 1099.[54] The Crusaders were not interested in proselytizing local Muslims into Christianity and recognized the various religious sects' freedom of worship. This encouraged Shi'ites to establish rapport with them during their stay in the Levant. Imami Shi'ites suffered immense persecution during the period of the Seljuqids [1037–1194] after the destruction of the Buyids in 1055.[55] As a result, they eschewed political involvement and chose to retrench in the

face of uncertainty.[56] The commencement of the Crusades invasion in 1095 gave Shi'ites a respite from Sunni Turkic persecution.

Accused of collaboration with the Crusades, Zanki, Ayyubid and Mamluk rulers clamped down on Shi'ite sects (Ismaili's, Ja'faris and Nusayris) and promoted Sunni Islam.[57] The end of the Crusades in 1291 amounted to a catastrophic setback for heterodox Muslim sects. The Mamluks in Syria organized punitive campaigns against the Nusayri, Maronite and Shi'ite populations and altered the demography of the land in favor of Sunnis. In one of their attacks in 1305 to punish Shi'ites for siding with the Crusaders, the Mamluks ". . . emptied Kisrawan of its Shi'a inhabitants who took refuge in Ba'lbak, Jizzin, Jabal 'Amil, and in some localities around Beirut and Sidon. They resorted to taqiyya, which allowed them to declare Shafi'i Sunnism as their doctrinal identity to escape annihilation."[58] The Sunni Ottoman Empire did not allow Shi'ite clerics to assume an important role in public life. In independent Lebanon, the marginalization of the role of the clerics benefited the sect's feudal leadership whose legitimacy did not originate from the Shi'ite religious doctrine.[59] The Ottoman Empire viewed Shi'ites maliciously and with great discontent because they refused to extend legitimacy to its religious and political authority. "The Empire's history is one of instigating its subjects against Shi'ites, confiscation of their lands and arrest of their clerics."[60]

LEBANESE SHI'ITES AND THEIR LEGACY OF PERSECUTION

Exiled to Jabal Amil by the first Umayyad caliph Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan (reigned 661–680), Abu Dharr al-Ghifari is widely believed to have introduced Shi'ism into Jabal Amil.[61] The spread of Shi'ism in Greater Syria goes back to the 8th century due to the conversion of many Sunnis in protest against the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad that rose on the ruins of the Umayyad Caliphate in Damascus.[62] The resurgence of Sunni dynasties by non-Arab converts wreaked havoc on Shi'ites in Egypt and the Levant, and Shi'ites in what became modern-day Lebanon did not win a reprieve from persecution. They suffered from malicious accusations that doubted the authenticity of their faith, such as "the founder of Shi'ism is a Jew named Abdullah bin Saba', a phony entrant into Islam whose exaggeration in deferring Imam 'Ali aimed at splitting the community and corrupting its religion . . ."[63] Extreme Sunnis even went to the extent of interpreting some Quranic verse as to warn them against trusting Shi'ites. This verse is often used to incriminate Shi'ites without substantive verification: "Surely, they who divided their religion into parts and became sects, you have no concern with them . . ."[64]

The weakening of the Ottoman Empire, especially during the 18th and 19th centuries, imposed additional burdens on Shi'ites who became part of modern-day Lebanon that was declared by French general Henri Gouraud on September 1, 1920. Facing political unrest and irredentist tendencies in Syria, the Ottoman Empire appointed Ahmad Pasha al-Jazzar as the governor of the important city of Acre to restore law and order at any cost. Al-Jazzar's military campaigns against the Shi'ites of Jabal 'Amil between 1776–1804 settled into their collective consciousness because they ended their autonomy from the state.[65] The death in 1775 of the governor of north Palestine, Dahir al'Umar, who allied with the Shi'ites of Jabal 'Amil, paved the way for al-Jazzar to reassert direct Ottoman control over Syrian provinces that had become de facto autonomous and self-managing.[66] Al-Jazzar's heavy-handedness ". . . meant that many villages and crops were destroyed, which increased the economic pressure on those who were left to produce taxable goods . . ."[67] The mismanaged implementation of the Ottoman land code of 1858 caused most Shi'ite farmers to lose their lands due to abusive taxation that transformed them into peasants or urban laborers.

Shi'ite infelicitous historical experience at the hands of Sunni caliphates, insensitive foreign governors, greedy tax collectors, despotic local feudal leaders and finally a negligent post-independence state coalesced to breed a rural culture predicated on bitterness, anger, dissension and a worldview of conspiracy theories. For example, Hizbullah officials often issue blunt and direct statements. Hizbullah's Shura Council Muhammad Yazbik said: "The visit of United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon to Beirut is not welcome, neither is the phony [U.N. Special Envoy Terje Roed] Larsen or the messenger of evil [Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs] Jeffrey Feltman."[68] This statement captures the frame of mind of at least a significant segment of Shi'ites in Lebanon.

NOTES

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THREE

Lebanese Confessional Politics and Transition to Pan-Arab and Leftist Parties

Lebanese Shi'ites are the product of a historical trauma that permeated their collective consciousness and visibly compromised their identification with the values of the country that was established by the French Mandatory to accommodate Christian exclusiveness in Mount Lebanon. Apart from the narrow personal interests of their feudal leaders, the creation of the Lebanese state added a new source of discrimination against mostly rural Shi'ites. In addition to Sunni doubts about the authenticity of their faith that on occasion reached the point of charging them with apostasy, Shi'ites found themselves suffering from systemic negligence and their callous political elite. This probably explains why the centuries-old traumatizing social and political travails of Shi'ites ". . . bonded them with Hizbullah and made their attachment to it unbreakable."[1] Even before Hizbullah became a dominant force in Lebanese politics, the Ta'if Agreement enabled a new Shi'ite elite led by the Amal Movement to become a real partner in shaping Lebanese politics, thus ending the role of traditional Shi'ite leaders.[2] Musa al-Sadr is the soul of Lebanese Shi'ites who, were it not for his singular efforts, neither the Amal Movement nor Hizbullah would have come into existence. Amal and Hizbullah completed the mission of al-Sadr of ridding Lebanese Shi'ites of the legacy of persecution, political disorganization, feudal tyranny and the mirage of leftist revolutionary change.

UNHEALED PERSECUTION TRAUMA

Even though "Shi'i restiveness in the Jabal 'Amil between 1918 and 1936 was given an Arab nationalist interpretation by the Sunnis"[3] many Shi'ites disagree. By then, Shi'ites had not yet developed a distinct political identity. While tracing their roots to the Arabian Peninsula, their Shi'ite identity, as strong as it was, did not go beyond religious distinctiveness. Ever since they settled Jabal 'Amil [south Lebanon], during the caliphate of 'Uthman (644–656) Lebanese Shi'ites have maintained strong connections with the centers of Twelver Imami jurisprudence in Iraq and Iran, without compromising their Arab ethnic identity.[4] This probably explains why Shi'ites in the aftermath of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire supported, albeit briefly, the inclusion of Lebanon in Prince Faysal's Greater Syria project. As Lebanon moved toward independence under French guidance, the Maronites increasingly needed the goodwill of Sunni leaders because of their links with the greater Arab world. As soon as they shared power with Sunni leaders, the Maronites lost the incentive to form alliances with Shi'ite notable leaders and invest resources in the Shi'ite areas.[5] The establishment of the modern state of Lebanon did not redeem Shi'ites. The high level of Sunni urban elite mobilization dwarfed its Shi'ite rural elite counterpart. Because of this and before ". . . the revival of Shi'ism in the second half of the twentieth century, Sunnis often took the Shi'is for granted."[6] Between 1943 and 1989 the Sunnis grabbed 133 cabinet portfolios, as compared with 78 seats for the Shi'ites.[7]

The strong religious and personal ties between Jabal 'Amil and the Safavids and Qajars of Persia, against whom the Sunni Ottomans fought bloody and relentless wars, triggered systematic reprisals on local Shi'ites. The Ottomans persecuted the Shi'ites of Lebanon, especially during their wars with the Safavids. Jabal 'Amil's Shi'ites maintained, however, their close ties with Persia even after the ascendancy of Reza Shah Pahlavi in 1925.[8] As the Ottoman Empire continued to weaken, secessionist and irredentist movements spread to its Syrian provinces. The punitive wrath of the wounded empire did not spare north Palestine and south Lebanon that officially formed one administrative unit. Al-Jazzar devastated Jabal 'Amil after the killing of Dahir al-Umar in Acre in 1775. Many Shi'ite clerics emigrated to far-away Muslim countries such as Iraq, Persia, India, and Afghanistan where Shi'ite communities had been prominent in society.[9]

The period between al-Jazzar's repression and the introduction of the French mandate was a time when the Shi'ite masses had no recourse for deliverance from injustice. They ". . . languished under the control of feudal families whose political power stemmed from the land they had acquired as tax agents for the Ottomans during the nineteenth century."[10] Discrimination against Shi'ites accelerated during the presidency

of Fuad Shihab (1958–1964). Even though he was committed to improving the standard of living of impoverished Shi'ites, he could not contain the proliferation of anti-Shi'ite stereotypes, especially after they inundated Beirut's suburbs to work as industrial laborers or, at a later point, to flee Israeli retaliatory strikes against the PLO. Sandra Mackey graphically captured the extent of anti-Shi'ite discrimination: "If a Christian, Sunni and Shi'ite applied for the same job, the Sunni would be hired, the Christian would be given an even better position, and the Shi'ite would become the janitor."[11]

MODERN LEBANON CATCHES SHI'ITE UNREADY FOR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

During the Mount Lebanon Mutasarrifate (1861–1915) Shi'ite Jabal 'Amil was politically and administratively attached to the predominantly Maronite and Druze Mount Lebanon. Imposed by the European powers, this arrangement further exacerbated Shi'ite perception of persecution and lack of self-determination. Jabal 'Amil was treated as a marginal and alien extension of the Mount Lebanon center.[12] Deprivation prompted unprivileged Shi'ites to demand justice. "They held conferences, namely Jabal 'Amil Youth Conference in Damascus in 1933, and dispatched telegrams to the League of Nations in Geneva to redress them."[13] On several occasions, Shi'ite deputies angrily withdrew from parliamentary sessions to protest against the government's lack of responsiveness to their demands. Shi'ites in the new state of Lebanon realized that they had become one of the country's major sects, which caused their sense of minority of themselves to give way to active political involvement. They gradually departed from their collective consciousness of Ottoman persecution and tyranny and aspired to attain their rights within the framework of conventional political mechanics.[14]

French mandatory officials did not take seriously Shi'ite demands for constructing the infrastructure required for their areas' social and economic development because their feudal zu'ama did not push for action on them.[15] The lack of a collective communal vision and the preoccupation of feudal leaders with the attainment of personal political interests hurt the vast majority of Shi'ites. Thus, the "French and their Maronite friends were easily able to co-opt the handful of landowning families from Jabal 'Amil and the key clan leaders from the Bekaa."[16] In a bid to keep Shi'ite leaders weak and dependent on the French mandatory, it implemented the policy of ". . . creating new centers of power within the community."[17]

The first post-independence Lebanese Republic (1943–1989) gave the Maronite president almost absolute monarchical powers as per the unwritten covenant between Maronite president Bishara al-Khury and Sun-

ni prime minister Riad al-Sulh. Maronite politicians, be they in the members of the government or of the opposition, coopted Shi'ite feudal authority figures, who in turn kept their people poor and oppressed. President Shihab, who aspired to modernize the state and its administration, strove to integrate the Shi'ites who languished at the bottom of the country's socioeconomic scale and rid them of the tyranny of their avaricious feudal leaders. Shihab's modernization policies had a consequential impact on the Shi'ite community because they set it on a pace for a compelling entry into organized politics. The Shihabist administration that spanned the presidencies of Fu'ad Shihab and Charles Helou (1958–1970) sought to weaken the prevalence of its opponents who monopolized political leadership within their communities and aimed at derailing the construction of a modern Lebanese state. Before Shihab's presidency ". . . enterprising Shi'i youths had usually found their ambition stifled by the conservatism of their traditional leaders. One means of escape had been emigration, to West Africa and elsewhere."[18] Even when the protracted civil war started in 1975, and despite the efforts of al-Sadr at mobilizing them as a sectarian socio-military force, Shi'ites were still unprepared to play a political role commensurate with the size of the community. As new arrivals to Metropolitan Beirut, most Shi'ites busied themselves attending to the bare necessities of life in the country's flagging economy. Disorganized and lacking in political competence, they squandered their political potential across the broad spectrum of divisive Lebanese politics.

THE TYRANNY OF SHI'ITE FEUDALISM

The Ottomans did not persecute the Shi'ites because of their sectarian affiliation, even though they did not recognize them as a separate sect. They were primarily concerned, especially during the 19th century, about holding on to power in the shrinking empire and preferred to assign the task of levying taxes to regional chiefs who, in turn, relied on local feudal leaders to extract revenues. The Ottoman Land Code of 1858 sought to transform peasants into farmers. In south Lebanon, however, tax collectors abused the Code and imposed excessive taxes on emancipated peasants that coerced them to sell their lands.[19] These measures came on the heels of Shi'ites' already restless life and great distress as a result of religious alienation and recurring raids from Galilee by Palestinian Bedouins.[20] Their existential apprehensions did not give Shi'ites ample time to reflect on the tyranny of their feudal leaders, let alone attempt to free themselves of their shackles.

The geographical location of Jabal 'Amil made it an indispensable route to trade caravans that linked Syria's hinterland to the coast. The rise of Beirut, especially after it became the port of Damascus, contributed to

the decline of its economy and forced much of its agrarian workforce to emigrate to Ottoman cities, including Beirut and Haifa, as well as Africa and the Americas.[21] Those who remained in south Lebanon came under the full weight of feudal law. The economy of the Ottoman Empire underwent a major change at the turn of the 20th century as it adopted an intensive international market orientation. While it aimed to reform the empire and arrest its demise, the new economic order created misery for south Lebanese small farm owners as a result of abuse by local tax collectors. Capitalist economic mal-integration altered ". . . the structure of agricultural production in Lebanon, and allowed the exploitation of the small peasantry at every stage of the production cycle."[22] As bad as their life was in the south, the situation of Shi'ites in the north Biqa' was dire and reprehensible. Rampant poverty was compounded by barren and uncultivable land due to dry weather conditions. To make things even worse, the survival of the clans and their tribal code made the north Biqa' seem impervious to development. The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and the ensuing state of belligerency between it and surrounding Arab countries cut off Shi'ites from north Palestine with which it had economic ties. The economic reverse of the south was not compensated for by developing new productive sectors because of the ". . . concentration of the infrastructure needed for the other sectors of the Lebanese economy in non-Shi'a areas."[23]

Feudalism in south Lebanon began to take shape as early as 1864 when the Ottoman Empire promulgated the basic law as an extension of Tanzimat. The law introduced title deeds and registry (tapu sanads) to show who owns the land. In a bid to evade taxation, small owners titled their land under the names of major local leaders. This led to the emergence of large estates owned by families such as al-Asa'ad, al-Zain, al-Khalil, Osseiran and Bazzi. The Ottomans relied heavily on these families, especially al-Asa'ads, in resource extraction and the maintenance of order.[24] They carried out the job using ". . . extreme social and economic subjugation and repression against small landowners and peasants."[25] The peasants in south Lebanon fell under the supreme authority of onerous feudal lords and succumbed to the whims of clerics who embraced an attitude of superiority toward them. In this atmosphere of massive injustice, the local population in the south became conditioned to behaving obediently and submissively.[26] The clerical establishment originated from traditional families in south Lebanon. To a large degree, they relied on the feudal Shi'ite leadership that granted them their religious title.

Shi'ite feudal leaders welcomed becoming part of French-mandated Greater Lebanon; they participated perfunctorily in al-Hujair's conference "to oppose the separation of Jabal 'Amil [today's southern Lebanon] in order to create a Lebanese political entity."[27] Maronite good offices with the French mandatory led in 1926 to granting Shi'ites—who until then were coerced to follow the Sunni jurisprudence—the right to apply

their jurisprudence in matters of civic status. The extension of this religious right that was denied for centuries ushered in a long-term alliance between the Maronites and Shi'ites. The extension of this long-sought-after ". . . recognition, coupled with official Maronite courtship of the Shi'a produced [its] intended results. By 1936. . . the Shi'a Zu'ama seemed to have opted for la raison du plus fort."[28] Nevertheless, during the period between the creation of Greater Lebanon in 1920 and the inception of the 1975 civil war, Shi'ite traditional leaders functioned as peripheral elite depending heavily on the largesse of the powerful Maronite establishment.[29] Feudal families (such as al-Zein, al-As'ad, al-Fadl, Haydar, Hamade, Osseiran) monopolized the Shi'ite representation in the parliament until the 1960s.[30] The overall lot of poor Shi'ites did not change after the independence of Lebanon in 1943 because, in addition to state neglect, the ". . . large landowners continued to dominate the life of Jabal 'Amil, and the clan leaders, the life of the northern Bekaa."[31]

Shi'ite cultural sectarian imperative seemed isolated from its disharmonious and antagonistic social pair. Binding religious necessity stipulated that Shi'ites submit their unconditional loyalty to the clerics, especially the sources of imitation. Cultural sectarianism fostered among Shi'ites of all social classes a sense of empathic solidarity that fell short of promoting group cohesion. Al-As'ad feudal family in south Lebanon and Hamadi feudal clan in the northern Biqa' co-opted the traditional religious leaders who, in turn, kept Shi'ite laymen at bay. Kamil al-As'ad responded to the emerging threat to his leadership by Shihabism and al-Sadr, among other political forces ". . . by establishing cross-communal alliances with other traditional zu'ama. In 1969 he formed a triumvirate with a leading Maronite, Sulayman Frangiyyah, and a leading Sunni, Sa'ib Salam."[32] Named the Center Bloc, this traditional alliance failed to arrest the decline of political aristocracy, especially after the 1967 Six Day War whose dramatic consequences ended Shi'ite reluctance to immerse themselves in political activism fully.

Historical persecution of mutinous Shi'ites and the Mahdi concept that disfavored rebellions against the caliphate state because they were futile given that the balance of power tilted heavily against the followers of the Imamate contributed to quietism. Political hibernation started to give way in the 1950s with the revival of secular pan-Arabism and the emergence of powerful leftist movements and the beginning of the slow process of the disintegration of Shi'ite rural society in the south and the Biqa'. This process accelerated during the 1960s since a myriad of competing factors—such as the towering rise of al-Sadr, the rise of Palestinian guerrilla movements, the spread of Nasserism and leftism—further disoriented Shi'ite society and, in the process ". . . struck a hard blow at the cohesiveness of the za'im-peasant dyad."[33]

HOLLOW HOPES OF REVOLUTIONARY CHANGE

French mandatory officials encouraged the emergence of political and welfare institutions along sectarian lines to fit the confessional political system, which they had just created. The Maronites and Sunnis had already been establishing their private schools and philanthropic organizations. French missionaries in the 19th century aided the Maronites in their endeavor to give themselves a cultural and educational edge vis-à-vis members of other sects, whereas Ottoman officials prodded the Sunnis, especially in Beirut, to establish their educational institutions in order to answer the efforts of French and American missionaries of proselytizing Muslims into Christianity. Politically, however, the Maronites proved more successful than Sunnis in establishing their political dominance because they focused on Lebanese politics and disengaging it from the issues of the Arab region. The Sunnis had still rejected the idea of an independent Lebanese entity and aspired to merge in an all-encompassing pan-Arab state. Sunni comparative disadvantage vis-à-vis Maronites was partially compensated for by affinity with their coreligionists throughout the Arab World. However the Shi'ite masses had no recourse whatsoever against injustice.

The modest beginnings of Shi'ite mobilization and explicit manifestation of group identity go back to the 1920s. In 1923, a Shi'ite politician in Beirut Rashid Baydoun established al-'Amiliya school, which he later expanded to include a German-administered vocational school. In 1938 he embarked on a successful fundraising mission among Shi'ite expatriate communities in West Africa, and in 1960 he founded Jam'iyat al'Amal al-Ijtima'i [social action association]. His political endeavors were not as successful as his philanthropic pursuits. He founded Munazzamat al-Tala'ii [vanguards organization] as a parallel political force to the Maronite al-Kata'ib [the Phalangists] and Sunni an-Najjada [the helpers], but it ended up clashing with south Lebanon feudal leader Ahmad al-As'ad's Munazzamat an-Nahda [renaissance organization. This led the French mandatory power to dissolve both of them.[34] Stuck between predatory feudal leaders and inept clerics, Shi'ites that could not resolve their dismal living conditions had to choose between emigration from Lebanon or seeking membership in secular political parties.[35]

Failure to establish sustainable political parties that conveyed the demands of this marginalized sect swayed young Shi'ites eager to appear on the political map of Lebanon to join parties articulating ideologies ranging from fascism to pan-Arabism and leftist radicalism. Political change both in Lebanon and the region accelerated the decline and eventual demise of Shi'ite aristocratic leadership. Internal migration into Beirut and Sidon mounted the pressure on the government to redress Shi'ites, especially those who fled Israeli retaliatory strikes against the PLO. A decisive factor in setting the stage for the emergence of a new

elite subset emanated from ". . .the return of numerous economic emigres from West Africa to their traditional homes in Jabal 'Amil. . ."[36]

Some Shi'ites in south Lebanon joined the Syrian Social Nationalist Party upon its establishment by Antun Sa'ade in 1932. Others joined the Maronite Kata'ib Party and Sunni Najjadeh Party that also appeared during the mid-1930s.[37] The 1940s–1950s witnessed a surge in new political parties such as the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party, the Nasserites and the Arab Nationalist Movement that lured many Shi'ites to join them. This coincided with changes in the socioeconomic fabric of Shi'ites due to the spread of education among the financially better-off segments of the sect. The emergence of an educated class initiated the deconstruction of Shi'ite traditional leadership and its gradual replacement first by pan-Arabists and later by leftists. The spread of communism among Shi'ites went hand in hand with the spectacular rise of Musa al-Sadr. Whereas the ascendancy of the communist party emanated from the collapse of the Arab unity project and the split within the Ba'th party, al-Sadr's fortunes benefited from his charisma and ability to communicate with ordinary Shi'ites, as well as the appeal of his political program to Lebanese Christians.[38] Shi'ites in the Biqa' did not join political movements out of ideological conviction, but because they promised to improve their socioeconomic conditions. Shi'ite migration to Beirut did not improve their material living conditions because they moved away from rural subjugation to urban deprivation.[39]

Support for Pan-Arabism and leftist ideologies served as an interlude between living under the tyranny of feudalism and the promise of millennial redemption. Before the politicization of Shi'ism, most Lebanese Shi'ites rallied behind Egyptian president Gamal Abd al-Nasser's advocacy of Arab nationalism and aligned themselves with him in opposing the formation of the Baghdad Pact that was sponsored by Iran's Mohammad Reza Shah and Lebanese president Camille Sham'un. They boycotted his visit to Lebanon in 1956, despite their strong ties of religious affinity with Iran.[40]

During the 1960s many disgruntled and poor Shi'ites relocated from south Lebanon to Beirut, where they hoped to build a better life. President Shihab's aim of creating a modern state that realized social justice for everyone gave hope to Shi'ites who wanted to enter Lebanon's growing economy. For the majority of Shi'ites who relocated to Greater Beirut on a supposedly temporary basis, their residence turned out to be permanent. The lure of Beirut ". . . whose glittering business complex still dominated the country's economy."[41] The promise of economic integration proved elusive due to a myriad of regional and international developments. Instead, ". . . internal migration proved a key element in Shi'a politicization for it gave rise to a large, discontented and marginalized minority ripe for political leadership. . . these migrant Shi'a were politically adrift and open to influence."[42]

The student movement of the 1960s in Western Europe had a tremendous impact on Lebanese political life, especially radical leftist and pan-Arab parties. Demands for undoing confessionalism and introducing secularism became the order of the day. Arab massive defeat in the Six Day War dashed hopes for the success of the Arab nationalist project and shifted Shi'ite attention to other political endeavors. It was during Shihab's presidency that Shi'ite migrants to Beirut found an opportunity for first-hand access to leftist political thought, primarily as a result of the emergence of an educated generation of young people. The awful deprivation of Shi'ite areas in the south and Biqa' encouraged young Shi'ites to adopt left-wing libertarianism. In 1970, the Lubnan al-Ishtiraki [socialist Lebanon] of Waddah Sharara and Adnan Bazzi merged with Muhsin Ibrahim's Munazzamat al-Ishtirakiyyin al-Lubnaniyyin [Lebanese socialist organization] to found Munazzamat al-'Amal al-Shuyu'e [communist action organization].[43]

The beginning of civil war in 1975 caught Shi'ites amid their transformation while they were still scattered across the fragmented political spectrum in Lebanon. Fighting for rival political factions, Shi'ite young men became the expendable foot soldiers of the protracted armed conflict. During the first two years of the civil war they, in addition to Palestinian refugees, bore the brunt of Maronite militias' ridding of Christian areas of Muslim presence. They were massacred in large numbers during their eviction from the slums and shantytowns in east Beirut. In August 1976, the Maronite militias of the National Liberal Party (NLP) and the Lebanese Forces (LF) stormed Tall al-Za'tar Palestinian refugee camp that housed about 50,000 poor Palestinian and Shi'ite residents after eight months of relentless siege and massacred several thousands of them. The heavy toll of Shi'ite losses prompted al-Sadr to blame it on the leader of the Lebanese National Movement (LNM) Kamal Jumblatt who, against the will of Syrian president Hafiz al-Asad, wanted to deconstruct the Lebanese confessional system and present himself as the founder of a new secular order. Al-Sadr viewed Jumblatt as ". . . irresponsible and exploitative of the Shi'is."[44]

The Sabra and Shatila massacre in September 1982 in which the LF slew thousands of Palestinians and Shi'ites ushered in a watershed period in the Shi'ite psyche. It initiated a progressive process of driving Shi'ites away from leftist parties and Palestinian organizations into exclusively pan-Shi'ite groups such as Amal Movement and Hizbullah. Leftist, pan-Syrian and pan-Arab parties took advantage of the inaction of traditional Shi'ite political families (such as As'ad, Osseiran, Bazzi, Hamade) toward official government neglect of their coreligionists in the south, Biqa' and southern suburbs of Beirut. This largely explains the surge in these parties' popularity among Shi'ites between the 1950s and 1970s. Leftist and nationalist revolutionaries failed to address Shi'ite grievances even before the outbreak of the civil war in 1975. Their fragmentation,

preoccupation with divisive ideological orientations and subordination to regional powers caused many Shi'ites to turn away from them.[45] The Communist Action Organization discharged its members and apologized to the Lebanese people for taking part in the civil war. In the wake of the Six Day War, the Lebanese communist party abandoned its recognition of the right of the State of Israel to exist and adopted a political line that supported the Palestinian armed struggle. In response to the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the occupation of much of the south, the communist party sought to shift its focus from ideological polemics to resisting Israeli occupation only to realize that Syria and Iran had commissioned the task to Hizbullah.[46]

NOTES

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FOUR

The Charismatic Leadership of Musa al-Sadr and Palestinian Militarization

Historically, the Shi'ite clerical establishment took advantage of gullible sect members' fondness for the household of the Prophet to retain the supremacy over the aristocracy in return for gaining small personal favors. In that regard, the clerics—despite the existence of only a few pinnacles of religious erudition—". . . were the bearers of a stilted religious and educational tradition."[1] The majority of Shi'ites had little respect for their impoverished clerics who "told fantastic tales about the twelve Imams, about their valor and their eloquence—tales that . . . even the believing mind, had trouble taking in."[2] Little public respect for clerics emanated from ". . . doubt whether the clerics really knew their trade."[3] The negative perception of clerics drove inquisitive-minded Shi'ites away from religious esotericism to political parties that gave them a glimpse of hope for a better future.

Lebanese Shi'ites' disinterest in religious parties mirrored that of their coreligionists in Iraq who opted for secular parties and constituted their backbone and strength, namely the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP). The rising Islamic Shi'ite movement in Iraq challenged the secular political parties, especially the ICP, and aspired to present itself as a political alternative. The disappearance of the role of the Shi'ite aristocracy in leading the community after the collapse of the monarchy created a leadership vacuum that the communists did not fill.[4] The formation of the Islamic Da'wa Party in 1957, which began to make waves after the 1958 military coup, was an essential development in the evolution of the political Islamic Shi'ite movement in Iraq. Low-keyed Ayatollah Muhsin al-Hakim doubted the legitimacy of al-Da'wa Party because its ideologue and theologian Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr was an unknown, but he tolerated membership in it since the public knew about its objectives.[5]

The spectacular emergence of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr in Iraq coincided with the arrival of his cousin Musa al-Sadr to Lebanon from Iran in December 1958. Unlike Iraq's al-Sadr who fought an uphill battle with the political establishment that ended with his execution in 1980, Musa al-Sadr had the blessing of newly elected Lebanese president Fu'ad Shihab. Assuming office on the heels of a bizarre civil war (May–Sept. 1958), Shihab envisioned the creation of intra- and inter-sectarian balances of power in order to deconstruct the strong feudal and parochial bases of Lebanese politics.[6] Deemed useful in changing the political contours of Shi'ites, Shihab granted al-Sadr Lebanese nationality by a special presidential decree.

THE METEORIC RISE OF MUSA AL-SADR

Iranian Ayatollah Hossein Borujerdi, who had an excellent working relationship with Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi convinced al-Sadr to relocate to Lebanon in order to lead its fragmented Shi'ites who came under the strong influence of the Lebanese Communist Party (LCP).[7] The Shah had been waging a campaign to eradicate the Tudeh Party of Iran, especially after the overthrow of Mosaddegh in 1953. The popularity of communism among Shi'ites in the Middle East motivated the Shah to confront it regionally. In Iraq, Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr had just begun his drive to lure Shi'ites away from the powerful ICP. Musa al-Sadr's effort to arrest the appeal of the LCP to Shi'ites was more difficult than that of his cousin in Iraq because the emancipatory appeal of communism to them embodied aspiration to eliminate injustice and extreme poverty imposed on them by their feudal leaders. Musa al-Sadr could not take a stand against the powerful Lebanese leftist movement before discrediting Shi'ite feudalism.

The arrival of Musa al-Sadr to Lebanon from Iran and his instant rise to preeminence remains shrouded in mystery. The conventional account that the late Lebanese Shi'ite Imam of Tyre Sayyid 'Abd al-Hussein Sharafeddine first met al-Sadr during a visit to Iran, admired his personality and wanted him to succeed him after his death, is too simplistic to take for granted.[8] Irrespective of the factors that brought al-Sadr to Lebanon, his impact on Shi'ites has been staggering. Soon after landing in south Lebanon al-Sadr won the enmity of the Shi'ite feudal and clerical establishments for working directly with the state apparatus to attend to the needs of poor coreligionists, instead of succumbing to the will of the feudal zu'ama' and ". . . deferring to [their] influence."[9]

Al-Sadr looked with disdain at the Shi'ite traditional political establishment, whom he categorically dismissed as onerous. For him, Kamel al-As'ad represented everything terrible, evil, and vicious.[10] He saw eye to eye with Shihab on the need to distance al-As'ad from his power base

and make him politically irrelevant. Shihab's path converged with al-Sadr's on the need to broaden the base of the Lebanese political system without necessarily undermining its accommodative nature. Deeply committed to comprehensive social transformation, al-Sadr believed that the clerics were centrally positioned to resume their historical role and guide the dispirited Shi'ites. His plan of action sought ". . . to combine piety with knowledge and work. He was convinced that the 'ulama needed to resume their leading role in educating mankind."[11] It did not take al-Sadr long to realize that his coreligionists' political weakness lay in the lack of awareness of the unique religious attributes of Shi'ite society. He resolved himself to utilizing Shi'ite religious symbols to mobilize the sect into political action. He transformed the observance of 'Ashura from an innocuous religious function into an ostentatious oppositional parade.[12]

Neglected by the state and languishing under the whim of onerous feudal leaders, al-Sadr found out that Shi'ites in the south and the Biqaa were ". . . downtrodden, miserable and that the freedom they ostensibly enjoyed was profoundly superficial"[13] Their poor living conditions and restlessness placed them at the bottom of Lebanon's social and economic hierarchy. Even though he dressed in religious garb, Shi'ites primarily saw al-Sadr as a pragmatic political reform activist. Al-Sadr used Shi'ite religious symbols (such as 'Ashura, Karbala and Imam Hussein's martyrdom) carefully and solely for mass mobilization. Mindful of the influence of secular and atheist ideologies on Shi'ites, he carefully stayed clear of controversial issues pertaining to the infallibility of the Imams and the eventual return of the Twelfth Imam from occultation. Open-minded al-Sadr did not encumber himself with eschatological matters and millennial redemption because he ". . . knew that men doubted the faith, that it was no longer enough for the custodians of the religious institutions to declare some points of the faith sacred and beyond questioning."[14] Thus, when al-Sadr based the claim for the 'Husseiniya Renaissance'—in an effort that aimed at reviving Shi'ite religious thought for mobilization in battling despots—he took it out of its religious content and employed it for the sake of political emancipation and enshrining religious freedom.[15]

Musa al-Sadr did not categorize people as friends and enemies. He engaged everybody as "brothers in the human family."[16] He understood politics in terms of "social medicine."[17] He was "broad-minded and gracious toward everybody regardless of their sectarian or ideological affiliation."[18] As a prelude to political activity, he charmed the residents of Tyre, where he settled, with his welfare programs that encompassed the provision of food, medicine and heating fuel to the needy. He also aimed at combating the widespread phenomenon of child street beggars.[19] He understood what it took to transform Shi'ites into a group solely mobilized to transform the sect from marginalization into the center stage of national politics. Al-Sadr revamped the low-performing Jam'iat al-Bir wa

al-Ihasan [the benevolent society] of Tyre into an active group that aimed at eliminating panhandling and vagrancy. He did not forget about impoverished Shi'ite rural women and sought to empower them and integrate them into society. He established Bayt al-Fatat [the girl's house] to teach them handcraft and sewing. He demanded redress of Shi'ite grievances and increasing their recruitment in public sector jobs.[20]

By the mid-1960s, al-Sadr's popularity had soared. He became the uncontested Shi'ite leader and, probably, the most respected politician in Lebanon. In response to charges of pedophilia against him in August 1966, scores of Shi'ites from all over Lebanon converged on Tyre in south Lebanon to condemn the accusations and express unconditional support for al-Sadr. He emerged to address his loyal supporters saying: "I died yesterday and came back to life today. I owe my new life to you. My life no longer belongs to me. It is for you and your cause."[21]

Al-Sadr chose to work with the Lebanese state during the period of his ascendancy in the 1960s and had excellent working relationships with Presidents Fuad Shihab (1958–64) and Charles Helou (1964–70). For him, to have done otherwise "would have been a quixotic undertaking."[22] His eagerness to collaborate with the Shihabism that dominated Lebanese politics throughout the 1960s did not go unrewarded. The government issued a law on December 19, 1967, regulating the affairs of the Shi'ite sect, thus ending the hegemony of Sunnis in speaking on behalf of all Muslims in Lebanon. On June 2, 1970, the government founded the Council for South Lebanon to provide for the essential needs of its residents who got caught in the crossfire between Israel and the PLO. Al-Sadr wanted to integrate the Shi'ites in the workings of the Lebanese confessional system. He was averse to leftist ideologies, including pan-Arabism and pan-Syrianism. He neither approved of the leftists' intention to install a secular political system, nor the PLO's use of south Lebanon to stage raids against Israel. To express his disgust for its burgeoning lawlessness, al-Sadr announced May 26, 1970, a day of "solidarity with the South."

Once in Lebanon, al-Sadr immediately set about the task of organizing Shi'ite participation in Lebanese politics to make it commensurate with its size, and competitive with the Sunnis and Maronites. He focused his attention on affluent Shi'ite expatriates in West Africa and visited them frequently to solicit contributions for his growing activities back home. He encouraged them to return to Lebanon and contribute to his mission of putting the Shi'ites at the center stage of the country's politics. Al-Sadr ". . . grasped the dilemma of the monied Shia, particularly of the majority of them who had prospered out of the country and returned . . . [and] he was to emerge as their spokesman."[23] He eschewed revolutionary tactics and opted to tackle the issue of Shi'ite political and socioeconomic marginalization through the conventional conduits of the public sphere.

Despite his disdain for Shi'ite feudal leaders, al-Sadr shared with them the need for alliances with the Maronites against their common historical enemy, the Sunnis. The Maronites, who did not have another Christian rival, felt that they could maintain their preeminence in Lebanese politics if they strengthened Shi'ite representation at the expense of pan-Arab Sunnis. Al-Sadr reasoned that the Shi'ites ". . . were men of Lebanon . . . given their decent share of the spoils . . . they would be 'faithful sons' of that land."[24] He treated Shi'ite alliance with the Maronites as one of necessity, and not of affinity. He was not blind to Maronite chauvinism as, for example, expressed by the fascist-type Phalange party. Maronite politicians, though often condescending in their tone, shared his apprehensions about the threat of Arab nationalism, communism and armed Palestinian presence in Lebanon. Al-Sadr was daring enough to voice his alarm ". . . that the PLO was a military machine that terrorized the Arab world, extorting money, support, and sympathy of world opinion."[25] Al-Sadr quickly and effectively curtailed the hold of feudal leaders on Shi'ite masses. Getting rid of the PLO proved to be a much tougher task to accomplish, and it entirely depended on action by the Israeli war machine, but he disappeared before seeing it happen.

THE ADVENT OF THE PLO INTO SOUTH LEBANON

South Lebanon had been historically linked economically and politically to north Palestine. The former was administered from Acre during the second half of the 18th century. South Lebanese laborers found work in Haifa's vibrant economy until the creation of the state of Israel in 1948. The relationship between Jabal 'Amil and Palestine was much stronger than with Sidon and Beirut. Use of the Palestinian pound was more prevalent among south Lebanon Shi'ites than any other currency. The anti-colonial movement in both countries looked more like two components of one national movement.[26] Lebanese southerners played a key role in providing munitions, sanctuary and medical assistance for rebels during the 1936–1939 Arab Revolt in Palestine. In addition to Damascus, the revolt was co-administered from Bint Jbeil in south Lebanon.[27] When, in response to the U.N. Partition Plan for Palestine of November 29, 1947, the military committee of the Arab League formed the Salvation Army to obstruct the creation of a Jewish state, it based its operations in south Lebanon. In April 1948, prominent Shi'ite cleric Sayyid 'Abd al-Hussein Sharaf al-Din implored Jordanian king Abdullah to rescue Palestine from the Zionists because its loss ". . . would dishonor Arabs and tarnish Islam."[28] Sharaf al-Din had no clue that the commander of Jordanian Arab Legion lieutenant general John Bagot Glubb had explicit instructions from Britain's foreign secretary Ernest Bevin to refrain from entering Jewish areas.

The creation of Israel amounted to a great personal loss for the people of south Lebanon because it restricted their social space and cut them off from their economic lifeline. Many hundreds of Shi'ites from south Lebanon participated in the 1948 Palestine War. The rise of Palestinian armed resistance in the wake of the Six Day War accentuated Shi'ite hostility to Israel who, in 1967, captured the Golan Heights, the West Bank, Gaza, and Sinai. They considered themselves committed to the fate of Palestine and the preservation of its Arab identity. Just before the Fateh Movement made its debut in Lebanon in 1965, leftist parties led the protests against social injustice and official negligence of Shi'ite areas. They sided with Fateh guerrillas as they began to raid Israeli territory from their hideouts in south Lebanon, and they prevented the government from ordering the army to clamp down on them.

Shi'ites welcomed guerrilla fighters from Fateh and other Palestinian movements and sheltered them from Lebanese army raids even before the Six Day War. When the Fateh Movement dominated the PLO in 1968, it announced its intention to establish a democratic state in Palestine in which Muslims, Christians, and Jews coexisted peacefully. An unrealistic objective, Shi'ites still hoped its fruition would boost the economy of the south. They not only embraced Palestinian guerrillas, but many of them joined their rank-and-file. Fateh guerrillas trickled into Lebanon from Syria—with the full knowledge and support of the government in Damascus—as early as 1965 and started carrying out low-impact infrastructure attacks (such as power-relay stations, electrical posts, and irrigation pumps) in north Israel. Syria had always desired to control Lebanon and, after losing the Golan Heights in the Six Day War, it wanted to use it as a bargaining chip in possible peace talks with Israel. Its support for Palestinian guerrillas ignored vehement opposition to them by al-Sadr who maintained close ties with Syrian president Hafiz al-Asad.

Guerrilla raids grew apace after the al-Karamah Battle in the Jordan River Valley on March 21, 1968. Fateh declared the battle a big victory. Militarily ineffective, these raids nevertheless drew ruthless Israeli retaliations that interfered with al-Sadr's political program and alarmed the Maronite-controlled Lebanese army. Skirmishes between the Lebanese armed forces and Palestinian guerrilla movements accelerated during the April-October 1969 period. The fighting spread from Nahr al-Barid refugee camp in north Lebanon to the Biqa' Valley and the south. Even though the Lebanese military had the upper hand in the fighting despite substantial Syrian assistance to the guerrillas, President Charles Helou had to order the army to cease fire because of massive Sunni support for the Palestinians. Prime Minister-designate Rashid Karami forcefully demonstrated this support by refusing to form his cabinet until after the army agreed to coordinate military activity with the PLO. In October 1969, the army command sought to disband Palestinian guerrillas once and for all, before it realized that Syria would not allow their defeat.

"Syria indirectly intervened in the fighting. . . . On October 25, 1969, the Lebanese government formally requested the mediation of President Nasser. . . ."[29]

On November 3, 1969, Lebanese army commander Emile Bustani and PLO leader Yasser Arafat signed the Cairo Agreement under the auspices of Egyptian minister of defense Muhammad Fawzi. The Cairo Agreement allowed the PLO to control the strategically located Iqlim al-'Arkub, which straddles the tri-border area of Lebanon-Syria-Israel, that came to be known by the sobriquet Fateh Land. Israeli reprisals continued to inflict a heavy toll on the local population in south Lebanon, and before long clashes resumed between the Lebanese army and Palestinian guerrilla movements and became a regular occurrence. Following a spate of fierce fighting in Beirut between the Lebanese army and the Palestinians, the two sides agreed to sign the Melkart Protocol on May 18, 1973, which gave the Palestinians the right to set up their own militias and training facilities in refugee camps, with the understanding that they refrain from the public display of weapons.

Dramatic regional and local developments put Lebanon on an irreversible march to civil war. Lebanese Maronites rejected outright the existence of armed Palestinian guerrillas in Lebanon because it upset the balance of the country's political balance of power that heavily favored them. In 1968, the leaders of the three major Maronite parties (the Phalange, NLP, and the Constitutional Bloc) founded the Tripartite Alliance mainly to deal with the pouring of armed Palestinians into Lebanon specifically after the Six Day War. The expulsion of PLO fighters from Jordan after King Hussein's army unleashed an all-out war on them in September 1970 had further antagonized the Maronites and their unofficial ally Musa al-Sadr, about the Palestinians and their leftist allies. The Maronites started the civil war on April 13, 1975, hoping to internationalize the conflict and drag Europe into it. On December 6, 1975, Phalangist militiamen killed hundreds of Muslims in downtown Beirut and the city's harbor. During the first few months of the war, Maronite military effort sought to inflict as many Muslim civilian casualties as possible, anticipating Muslim retaliation to encourage Europeans to repeat their intervention in 1860 to end the anti-Christian reprisals and free Lebanon of armed Palestinian presence. Al-Sadr avoided direct criticism of Maronite battlefield excesses and, instead, directed it at the Palestinians.

When the PLO and Lebanese leftists reacted to the formation of the Tripartite Alliance by setting up the Lebanese National Movement (LNM), al-Sadr chose to stay out of it ostensibly because he wanted to maintain a middle-of-the-road approach. He stood accused, however, of allowing Shi'ite an-Nab'a slum in east Beirut to fall to the Phalange forces without a fight. In 1976, he leaned toward the newly-formed Maronite-led Lebanese Front and, when the Syrian army invaded Lebanon in April 1976, he took its side and completely alienated himself from the LNM.

When the Syrian regime created the National Front that included its Ba'thist allies in the wake of the invasion, al-Sadr quickly joined it.

The Lebanese civil war taxed the PLO's financial resources to the limit and dragged it into unwanted battles. Intoxicated by their military prowess vis-à-vis locals, Palestinian guerrillas abused the Shi'ites. The excesses of Palestinian movements in south Lebanon turned away many southerners from them. However, the PLO and leftist parties played an important role in awakening the Shi'ites to their societal plight and readied them for mobilization into action.[30] Lebanese leftists operated on the assumption of the unity of the destiny of the Lebanese and Palestinian peoples. They took it for granted that their alliance with Fateh Movement and other emerging Palestinian movements would realize their secular Lebanese nationalist project that would, in turn, give a boost to the Palestinian armed struggle. This scenario did not happen because, among other things, PLO chief Yasser Arafat had his own agenda. He had little interest in reforming the Lebanese political system or secularizing it. His future outlook focused on using the country as a platform to achieve what turned out to be an elusive objective of establishing a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza.

Frequent and excessive Israeli strikes kept the PLO at bay and revealed its vulnerability and inability to defend itself. Previously regarded with high esteem by Lebanese southerners, it rapidly lost territory and popularity. On March 14, 1978, Israel launched Operation Litani and drove the PLO to the north bank of the Litani River. Five days later the United Nations Security Council passed resolution 425 that, among other things, created the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to restore peace and stability to the area vacated by the PLO. In June 1981, the Israeli air force raided many PLO sites including, for the first time, several targets in Beirut. The ferocity of the air raids coerced the PLO to reach a tenuous ceasefire with Israel. On June 6, 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon and drove the PLO out of the south and Beirut, thus ending a key chapter of Shi'ite interaction with the Palestinians.

THE FORMATION OF THE AMAL MOVEMENT

Al-Sadr wanted the Shi'ites to become conscious of their Lebanese identity and demand fairness from the state to which they belonged. He sought to assert them and end their quietism and marginalization. He worked with urgency to mobilize them politically and militarily to put them on the political map of Lebanon, and to provide for their defense against impending threats.[31] He did not share the widely-held view that Lebanon's security lay in its military weakness, inaction, and neutrality. Al-Sadr intended to chart for his mission a third way not only between traditional Shi'ite leaders and secular leftist parties but also between the

LNM and Maronite Christians.[32] He set the stage for founding an all-Shi'ite political movement by organizing massive rallies in Ba'albek and Tyre. He promised ". . . [a] relentless fight against despotism, feudalism, domination and categorization of people into distinct arbitrary social and economic groups."[33]

Al-Sadr accepted the challenge of undoing the Shi'ite legacy of quietism and passivity and prodded his followers into action. He activated powerful religious predispositions to argue that ". . . persons who do not undergo military training stray from the paths of Imams 'Ali and Hussein.[34] He employed the ". . . slogan 'Arms are an ornament to men' . . . [and] set up training camps so that the Shi'ites could learn to defend themselves."[35] In March 1974, al-Sadr cofounded with Hussein al-Husseini Harakat al-Mahrumin [movement of the dispossessed] to facilitate his objective of fully integrating Shi'ites into the Lebanese political system. Al-Sadr repeatedly proclaimed his desire to put an end to the raging civil war by making appeals to the combatants, convening spiritual summits, organizing sit-ins, resorting to temporary withdrawals from public life and visiting key Arab countries to voice his protest against the strife. A few months following the inception of the civil war and after he gave up hope for ending it, he announced the creation of a military wing for his movement, which he named Afwaj al-Muqawama al-Lubnaniyya (AMAL) [the Lebanese resistance detachments].[36] Al-Sadr understood that his political legitimacy—irrespective of how he viewed the PLO—rested to a large degree on articulating a strong anti-Israeli position, even as lip service, because of the centrality of the Palestine question at that time for Arab publics. His speeches did not lack generic shouting such as "dealing with Israel is forbidden," or "Israel is an absolute evil." His speeches galvanized Lebanese Shi'ites against Israel due to the historical relationship between Jabal 'Amil and Palestine. Iranian-backed Hizbullah followed in al-Sadr's footsteps and even surpassed him in lashing out at Israel, fighting its occupation of south Lebanon, and pledging to reinstate Palestine.

The establishment of Amal was kept secret, and al-Sadr had to acknowledge its existence only after a fatal accident that occurred in a training camp in the north Biqa'. A day after an anti-armor land mine exploded during a training session killing 35 recruits, al-Sadr had to admit the existence of his militia purportedly to resist Israeli attacks on Lebanese territory.[37] It is more plausible to argue that al-Sadr intended to shift attention to the south and give a Lebanese dimension to the conflict between Israel and the PLO. Interestingly, he raised the slogan of pointing all guns toward the south, except that he did not say against whom. Al-Sadr saw eye to eye with Lebanese Maronites over the question of armed Palestinian presence in Lebanon. He wanted to get rid of PLO presence in the south and the rest of Lebanon. As soon as Israel launched its invasion of Lebanon in 1982, it became evident that the Amal Move-

ment had no intention of confronting the Israeli army. Coming under pressure from Syria and Lebanese leftist political parties it found itself compelled, nevertheless, to issue strong statements condemning the Israeli invasion.[38] If anything, Amal leaders found the invasion opportune to press the PLO to pull out from Lebanon.

Al-Sadr's move received broad public support from Lebanese Shi'ites who were fed up with Palestinian preponderance in their areas because the suffering they endured as a result of getting caught in the crossfire seemed like it would not end. The failure of the Leftist/secularist and Palestinian organizations to put up a forcible resistance against the Israelis, as well as their excesses against local southerners, caused many Shi'ites to turn away from them and join Amal Movement. Al-Sadr's ". . . Amal was uniquely placed to spearhead the Lebanese Shi'i gathering renaissance,"[39] given his charisma and the hitherto absence of a political movement that Shi'ites could claim as theirs and theirs alone.

THE CONVENIENT DISAPPEARANCE OF AL-SADR

Al-Sadr mysteriously disappeared in Libya on August 31, 1978. Enigma continues to surround this high-profile mystery that is unlikely to be resolved ever. His political influence grew exponentially and beyond the geographic boundaries of Lebanon. He commanded the admiration and loyalty of Shi'ites and the respect of Lebanese Christians but, as a consequence of his bright personality, he made many enemies in Lebanon and the Middle East. Al-Sadr strived to end the Lebanese civil war and rebuild the country's confessional system under a troika arrangement that added the Shi'ites to the existing Maronite-Sunni partnership. Many Arab regimes preoccupied with consolidating their domestic grip on power preferred to settle their differences in Lebanon that became an arena of regional contestation. Jordan who evicted the PLO from the country in 1970–1971 wanted to keep it bogged down in the Lebanese civil war. Hafiz al-Asad of Syria and Saddam Hussein of Iraq preferred to take their ideological and personal battles outside their national borders, whereas Saudi Arabia wanted to keep all potential adversaries busy fighting one another. Iranian revolutionary mullahs who were about to seize power in Tehran felt threatened by al-Sadr, because of his public appeal and Iranian background, and because he maintained close ties with the Shah. The creation of a stable and well-running Lebanese political system, as he sought to achieve, would have hindered their intention of exporting the Islamic Revolution.

Al-Sadr welcomed the entry of the Syrian army to Lebanon in June 1976, and the Riyadh Summit's announcement of the formation of the Arab Deterrent Forces (ADF) in October 1976. He understood Arab military deployment in Lebanon, which was wholeheartedly received by the

Maronites, as directed at ending its civil war and restarting its political system. Regional developments soon put a damper on his ardor in that direction. President Anwar al-Sadat's stunning visit to Jerusalem in November 1977 resulted in exiting Egypt from the Arab-Israeli conflict. Sadat's move that was more strategic tinkering than a diplomatic breakthrough left Syria in an unenviable position vis-à-vis Israel and doomed its chances of recovering the Golan Heights. Arguing that they had achieved their military objective in Lebanon by preventing the LNM from defeating them in the battlefield, the Lebanese Front expected the Syrian army to withdraw from Christian areas. They concluded that the Syrians had overstayed their welcome. Starting February 1978, the Lebanese Front resorted to ambushes and sniper fire to convince the Syrians to quit their areas. Sadat's diplomatic coup and Maronite bloody hostility forced the Syrians to rethink their Lebanese policy, and along with it came the collapse of al-Sadr's project for Lebanon. He became irrelevant and disappeared as inexplicably as he arrived.

Al-Sadr's departure from the political scene ". . . caused the tide of Shi'i opinion to swing against the pan-Arab leftism . . ."[40] The Shi'ite revulsion toward Palestinians and the parties of the National Movement escalated after the disappearance of al-Sadr and led to frequent armed clashes. By the late 1970s areas controlled by leftist-Palestinian forces became an arena of violence and absence of security. Leftist parties made a hundred-eighty degree turn from secularism into sectarianism, and their ideologies lost credibility. The spirit of resistance of their followers gave way to frustration. Following the short-lived 1979 Syrian-Iraqi Charter of Joint National Action to deal with the implications of Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, the regime in Damascus ordered Amal Movement to initiate a campaign to eradicate the pro-Iraqi Ba'th Party in the south and southern suburbs of Beirut. It abandoned its program for post-conflict Lebanon as envisioned by al-Sadr and, under the leadership of Nabih Berri, sufficed itself with the role of Syrian proxy.

NOTES

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FIVE

The Galvanic Impact of the Islamic Revolution in Iran

Arab Shi'ites have not had an easy life, and their empowerment in Lebanon and Iraq in recent years has not necessarily changed their fortunes for the better. They continue to ". . . feel discriminated against socially, disenfranchised politically, and they are always made aware of their [religious] distinctiveness."[1] Sunni Arab historical prejudice against Shi'ism and non-Arab entrants into Islam bred resentment of injustice and revolt. As a protest movement Shi'ism became appealing to poorly integrated ". . . Persians and some Turks early on in Islamic history when Arab conquerors . . . tended to view non-Arabs as second-class Muslims."[2] In keeping with centuries of quietism, Shi'ites stayed on the fringes of the post-World War I Middle East state system that solidified in the 1940s. Shi'ite clerics who—before the rise of organized Shi'ite political parties—wielded great influence over ordinary community members could not identify with ". . . the single cultural identity the state claim[ed] to embody and defend. . . ."[3] Committed to the Imamate state, they had difficulty identifying with monarchism, secularism, and Pan-Arabism. Instead, their ". . . ideological commitment . . . found expression in a cosmopolitan political project . . . circumventing the authority of the existing nation-states and linking together the different geographical poles of the Shia world."[4] The ruling class and society at large typically viewed Shi'ites as ". . . intrinsically disloyal, and that the state must be protected from them."[5]

Irrespective of their status and socioeconomic conditions, Shi'ites lack group cohesion and a unifying political vision. The evolution of "Shi'ism has not been a uniform phenomenon unified by a historical essence."[6] Even in Lebanon and Iraq where they emerged as the dominant actors, Shi'ite political leverage accrued mainly from direct foreign intervention

rather than collective rallying. Shi'ites in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia have not been fortunate enough to attract foreign intervention to ameliorate their plight. Foreign policy makers in Washington view Saudi security and its Bahraini protectorate—that also houses the headquarters of the U.S. Fifth Fleet—as territories of vital interest to the United States. They maintained the policy of British High Commissioners in Bahrain who, in the name of preserving the status quo, turned down Shi'ite appeals ". . . for redress from mistreatment by the ruling al-Khalifa family, itself protected by the British."[7] The British experience with Shi'ite armed resistance to their occupation of Iraq made them unreceptive to social justice issues. In Iraq, Shi'ite clerics led the Najaf rebellion in 1920, which was brutally suppressed by the British. Abhorrence of foreign occupation of Muslim lands is an unwavering principle that guides the actions of Shi'ite clerics.[8] Unlike Shi'ites in Bahrain who during the period of the 1950s-1960s viewed Arab nationalism as a liberating social force, their coreligionists in Iraq were, despite their strong Arab ethnic credentials, unmoved by it.[9]

There is no evidence to suggest that the majority of Arab Shi'ites aspire to establish their own state. The evidence is to the contrary. In April 1970, the majority of Shi'ites in Bahrain voted against merging with Iran and opted for independence under the rulership of Emir Isa bin Salman al-Khalifa. Even though "Some Shia may aspire to a Shi'ite Islamic state, but that is not the dominant aspiration, any more than a Sunni Islamic state is the dominant goal among Sunnis."[10] The rise in the 20th century of the Middle Eastern nation-states, as arbitrary as many of them might be, brought ethnic and religious minorities closer to the political center in their country than to compatriots in neighboring countries. This was true for Shi'ites and Kurds in Iraq, and Arabs in southwest Iran. It is equally true that ". . . the rise of the modern state reinforced the differences between Shii Islam in Iran and Iraq in the 20th century."[11]

Shi'ite Islam is native to Arab lands, especially in West Asia, and its adherents remain tenaciously faithful to its teachings despite official persecution. In Iran, the Safavid Dynasty (1501–1722) aggressively converted its Sunni majority population to Shi'ism with the assistance of Arab clerics from Najaf and Jabal 'Amil. In Iraq, for example, Shi'ism "was encapsulated by Shii religion, not permeated by it . . . [as in] the state-sponsored conversion of the Iranian population to Shiism."[12] The same is true for Lebanese Shi'ites whose renowned centers of religious learning played an important role for a millennium in contributing to Twelver Imami thought and disseminating it. It is in this spirit that Musa al-Sadr "believed Lebanon provided a unique example to the world, and that it could prove the unity of God despite its plurality of religions."[13] His mysterious disappearance in Libya dampened Shi'ite hopes of entering Lebanese politics on a power-sharing basis with Maronites and Sunnis. The triumph of Khomeini's bid for power in Iran not only boosted their

sagging morale but also presented him with an ideally rare territorial terrain for exporting his fledgling revolution.

THE MAKING OF THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION

A significant turn in Shi'ite religious thought and political action was a result of the triumph of the Iranian revolution that highlighted the imposition of Khamenei's plan to temporarily vest the authority of Imam al-Mahdi in the jurists ('ulama), pending his return from occultation. It elevated the concept of the state and divine sovereignty from the realm of theory into the domain of practical action. The development of the relationship between religion, authority, and state in Shi'ite jurisprudence and politics since the Greater Occultation had moved from passivity into modern activity.[14] According to Khomeini's elucidation, the concept of the jurist's wilaya 'amma [the right to hold office and exercise absolute authority over the community] lends itself to dalil 'aqli [intellectual reasoning], becomes an expedient extension of the Imamate during the Occultation period. Advocates of wilayat al-faqih emphasize that the ". . . installation of the Islamic state is not only a necessity, but is a religious requirement."[15] This issue was the topic of heated debate in 17th-century Persia between the Usuli and Akhbari schools of thought that ended with the ascendancy of the former, and its eventual institutionalization in 19th-century Qajar Persia.

The empowerment of the clerics and the consolidation of their religious authority enabled them—in alliance with the bazaaris—to coerce Muzaffar al-Dine Shah to rescind the humiliating 1872 Reuter Concession and the 1890 Tobacco Concession. In collaboration with the bazaaris, Iranian clerics played a leading role in resisting the authoritarian policies of Muzaffar al-Dine Shah, who succeeded his assassinated father Nasir al-Dine in 1896. Their speeches in mosques galvanized the new Persian nationalism—before its transformation into Iranian nationalism in 1927—to take their anger to the streets, and coercing him to sign the Persian Constitution of 1906 that included the establishment of the first Majlis.[16] Ironically, the fifth Majlis announced in 1925 the country's transition from Qajar rule to the Pahlavi dynasty. The regime of Reza Shah (1925–1941) was a setback for Iran's clerical establishment because he despised them and disapproved of their political influence. The Pahlavi dynasty (1925–1979) deflected the progression of the mullah's influence on Iranian society, especially in the growing urban areas. Iran's Islamic revolutionaries have not just "simply re-established the link between Shi'ism and Iranian identity,"[17] but have also taken their involvement in society and politics to new heights.

The flourishing of politics in Iran during the British occupation of southwest Iran during the period of 1941–1945 had no discernible impact

on two prominent factors that for centuries shaped its domestic and foreign policy; i.e., Iranian imperial history and the salience of religious identity. In this regard, the so-called 1941–53 interregnum did little more than disseminate the "myth of political emancipation."[18] The advocates of Khomeini's Iranian Revolution simply resurrected this notion in their dealings with their regional neighbors and world hegemons, ostensibly to give the impression that Iran had come of age politically, behaviorally and aspirationally.[19] By deviating from the general pattern of other revolutions, ". . . what happened in Iran was a comprehensively reactionary revolution . . . "[20] Since the success of the Iranian revolution ". . . the issue of 'Islam' and its supposed challenge to the 'West' has become a matter of enduring international preoccupation . . ."[21] The success of the Islamic Revolution provides living testimony to the tenacity of the Iranian political culture and the thin veneer of its "fragile secular-democratic institutions . . . [that] could hardly withstand any serious challenge because they were routinely undermined by an autocratic state."[22] The medieval outlook of the Iranian Revolution renders it anachronistic as a model for national emulation, let alone for export, especially to Sunni-majority countries. The most striking aspect about the revolution emerged from the installation of Khomeini's wilayat al-faqih concept as its cornerstone, and also because it was ". . . the first time in modern history . . . [that] a revolution took place in which the dominant ideology, forms of organization, leading personnel and proclaimed goal were all religious in appearance and aspiration."[23]

The archaic construction of Khomeini's religious doctrine did not stop it from resonating outside Iran. According to Hasan Nasrallah:

> The guardian jurist is the custodian during the period of occultation. The bounds of his responsibilities are greater and more consequential than all people. . . . We are obligated to follow him, and it is not permissible to violate his rulings. The guardianship of the jurist is the same as that of the Prophet and the infallible Imam.[24]

Such a statement by a Lebanese Shi'ite leader—religious or otherwise—would have been inconceivable in the 1960s or even 1970s, but Lebanon and the rest of the region were rapidly changing and not toward political rationality.

SHIFTING POLITICAL OUTLOOK OF SHI'ITE ARABS

Historical relations between Arabs and Persians have been generally unfriendly, especially since the rise of Islam. Proud of Islam and its Arabian origins, Arabs viewed its advent as their most important contribution to humanity. They labeled non-Arab Muslims as mawalis [client allies] and accorded them an inferior status. Since the culture-rich Persians were the

first non-Arab people to enter into Islam, they resented losing status vis-à-vis Arab Bedouins. Arab chauvinism unleashed a strident and acerbic Persian counter-chauvinism that took the name of shu'ubiyya [extolling Persian culture and denigrating Arabs]. Mutual antipathy continued ". . . up until the Safavid period. . . . Iran did not figure significantly in Arab Shi'ite thinking. It was essentially a foreign culture, albeit Shi'ite."[25] The decisive victory of the Sunni Ottomans at the Battle of Chaldrian in 1514 prompted Shah Ismail I to launch the process of converting the population of the Safavid Empire into Shi'ism, which necessitated the assistance of Shi'ite Arab 'ulama. Unlike Arab Shi'ism where Imam 'Ali is its dominant figure, Safavid Shi'ism introduced Imam Hussein as its guiding character. The Safavids transformed Shi'ism into a militant faith predicated on revenge by making the Battle of Karbala, and Hussein's martyrdom in it, the central point of religious reference.

Since the days of the Safavids, Shi'ism, in what became Iran, has been permanently intertwined with Iranian nationalism, and it would belie reason to perceive the Islamic Revolution outside this dyad. Shi'ite Arab political activism evinced a national integrationist and progressive demeanor from its first debut in Bahrain in the "mid-1930s when pro-democracy organizations, including the National Youth [shabab al-umma] emerged."[26] The dominance of pan-Arab and leftist ideologies gave Shi'ite activism a universalist orientation. Political turmoil struck Iraq after the overthrow of the monarchy in 1958 when intellectually unsophisticated military officers took charge of politics. With this development came a shift in Shi'ite Arab activism from universalism to particularism.[27] In Iraq, for example, the severe blows to communism and the acceleration of the Kurdish insurgency during the regimes of Abdulsalam and Abdulrahman Arif (1963–1968), delivered a severe blow to the embryonic national identity and created a political vacuum. This untoward development caused a shift in the direction of Iraq's al-Da'wa Party from Islamic universalism to domestic Shi'ite particularism. In Lebanon, a similar trend occurred belatedly, mainly due to the presence of the PLO in the country, which attracted many Shi'ites to its ranks. There, the dramatic shift to sectarian particularism had to wait until the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the expulsion of the PLO from much of the country.

In Iraq, Saddam Hussein's order in 1974 to execute eight ranking Shi'ite clerics, including the well-respected co-founder of al-Da'wa PartyArif al-Basri ". . . revealed the extent to which Shi'ite Islamism was in action and capable of defying a formidable regime long before the rise of Khomeini."[28] The Ba'thist regime executed more than 50 Shi'ite clerics between 1974–1985 because they insisted on maintaining their autonomy even if it meant pursuing an anti-regime course of action and losing their lives over it. To celebrate the triumph of Ayatollah Khomeini, Mohammad Baqir al-Sadr declared a three-day holiday from February 11, 1979 at

the Najaf hawza and, in the Shi'ite religious tradition, recognized Ayatollah Khomeini as the supreme source for emulation.[29]

Given its secular orientation, the Ba'thist regime sought to foster a sense of Iraqi nationalism that cut across the Sunni-Shi'ite and Arab-Kurdish divides. The successful Ba'thist coup in Baghdad in July 1968 put Iraq and Iran on an inevitable collision course. The imperial ambitions of Mohammad Reza Shah and the desire of Saddam Hussein to build a modern Iraqi state made unavoidable the breakout of the war that the Iraqis preferred to avoid. Not surprisingly, the war that broke out in September 1980 was pushed for by Khomeini who exhorted the Iraqi people to topple the Ba'thist regime and install an Islamic republic in Iraq. The war concluded in August 1988 with a costly Iraqi victory that soon exposed the depth of the divide between Iraq's ruling Sunni Arab minority and Shi'ite underdog majority. The liquidation of al-Sadr ended the autonomy of most Iraqi Shi'ite clerics, but not in favor of the central government in Baghdad. Saddam Hussein's brutal persecution of Shi'ite clerics failed to silence them. Those who survived his purges fled the country, and the most active of them sought shelter in Iran, who tried to no avail to bring together Iraqi Shi'ite opposition factions in a grand coalition. During 1980–1982 ". . . several Iranian-sponsored attempts to unify Iraqi groups were not only unsuccessful but also more divisive."[30] Politically sidelined for centuries Shi'ites, they were left with no role to play in Iraq's bureaucratic administration under Ottoman rule. Lack of political experience, relative unfamiliarity with collective action, and poor negotiation skills made it easy for Iran to dominate Shi'ites and use their leaders as malleable proxies. It is in this state of Iraqi Shi'ite disarray that Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim founded in Tehran on November 17, 1982, the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), after he announced his acceptance of Khomeini's wilayat al-faqih concept.[31]

In Lebanon, the disappearance of al-Sadr awakened the Shi'ite sense of historical persecution and prodded them to mobilize politically and militarily in order to elevate the status of their sect in domestic politics.[32] His untimely exit from the political scene immediately paved the way for the emergence of a new Shi'ite political elite. The Amal Movement now became the custodian of Shi'ite aspirations. Its ranks swelled with recruits and large-scale defectors from movements and parties across the Lebanese political spectrum. The disappearance of al-Sadr gave the movement he founded an aura of sanctity because it reminded Shi'ites of the doctrine of the Hidden Imam. Even though al-Sadr maintained close ties with the Syrian regime, he never lost sight of what he wanted to accomplish for Lebanese Shi'ites. After he disappeared in Libya, the movement he created to empower Shi'ites reduced itself to a Syrian surrogate militia.

The more religious members in Amal deemed un-Islamic its leader Nabih Berri's participation in the salvation committee created by resident

Elias Sarkis to deal with the consequences of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982. They resented the inclusion in the committee of the leader of the Lebanese Forces Bashir Gemayyil and took issue with Berri's acceptance of U.S. presidential envoy Philip Habib's plan for the eviction of the PLO from Beirut. They chose to defect from the movement. They established themselves in the north Biqa' Valley and made the city of Ba'albek their base. There, the small Shi'ite Islamic groups that appeared in the late 1970s coalesced to form the prototype of Hizbullah.[33] On the eve of the Israeli invasion, these pro-Iranian groups that affiliated themselves with Amal clashed in the southern suburbs with the pro-Iraqi faction of the Ba'th Party and succeeded in eliminating it with the blessing of both the Syrian regime and Iran's Islamic Republic.

Shi'ism is a collectivist and hierarchical sect. Unlike Sunnism, the role of the clergy is of paramount importance to the community. Sunnis practice religion without an intermediary, but Shi'ites need a source of emulation for guidance. Faith in Shi'ism is predicated on wilaya [a mandate to administer the world and control all aspects of people's lives]. It is of high importance for the rank and file, and majesty and grandeur for the holder of the religious position of influence.[34] Unquestioning loyalty and compliance with his dictates are central to the relationship between the holder of power and his followers. Iran only needed to have Shi'ite religio-political leaders under its wing to wield power over their constituencies.

EXPORTING THE REVOLUTION AND OUTSOURCING NON-CONVENTIONAL ACTIVITIES

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 heartened marginalized Shi'ites who were denied fundamental citizenship rights and privileges in Arab lands, be they in countries where they constituted numerical minorities (as in Lebanon and Saudi Arabia), or functional minorities (as in Iraq and Bahrain).[35] In a country beset by primordial ethnic and religious divisions, where Shi'ites accounted for at least 60 percent of the total population, the success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran presented an immediate existential threat for Iraq's Sunni Arab-centered ruling minority. The Ba'thist regime in Baghdad saw in Khomeini's Iran a greater threat than the Jewish state in Palestine ". . . since unlike Israel, Iran possessed an ideological weapon capable of destroying Iraq both as a political system and nation-state."[36] Iraq tried in earnest to convince the new Iranian leadership to deescalate the border tension and curtail its anti-Ba'thist propaganda. In its determination to incite the country's Shi'ite majority to rebel against the regime in Baghdad "Iranian intransigence limited the Iraqi leadership's options in dealing with the militant Islamic threat coming from the east."[37] Iranian sabotage activities against Iraq included

detonating explosives and shelling oil installations and border villages. Eventually, war broke out and lasted eight years.

During the Iraq-Iran War (1980–1988) a pseudo-organization named al-Jihad al-Islami [Islamic Jihad] claimed responsibility, evidently on behalf of Iran, for a spate of terrorist attacks that targeted Western interests and individuals. Its most publicized activities included hijacking a Kuwaiti airliner in 1984, which it forced to land at Tehran's Mehrabad International Airport. In 1988 it hijacked a second Kuwaiti airliner to Algiers, as well as a TWA passenger plane en route from Athens to Rome, forcing it to land at Beirut airport. The so-called Islamic Jihad specifically targeted countries that supported the Iraqi war effort during its war with Iran. Between December 1985 and September 1986 it claimed responsibility for 11 bomb explosions in Paris. The explosions were in retaliation for the French government's decision to expatriate two ad-Da'wa members to Iraq, and to register displeasure over its reluctance to repay a one-billion-dollar loan from Iran that dated back to the reign of the Shah. The same shadowy organization went on a hostage-taking spree of Western nationals in Lebanon during the 1980s. Some hostages died during captivity. The last survivors were set free shortly after the end of Operation Desert Storm in February 1991.

Even though Hizbullah has consistently rejected claims that it stood behind kidnapping Western hostages in Lebanon, it never condemned the hijackings—it deemed them justifiable. In 1981 pro-Iranian Shi'ite militants, who joined Hizbullah upon its formal establishment in 1985, destroyed the Iraqi embassy in Beirut, killing at least 60 people. The deadliest attacks occurred on October 23, 1983, when two suicide bombers targeted the U.S. and French contingents of the Multinational Force in Lebanon killing 241 U.S. service personnel and 58 French troops. These attacks shrewdly served Iranian interests in the region, in addition to presenting the Iranian Revolution as a powerful countervailing force to U.S. world hegemony. Subsequent developments in the Arab region and Hizbullah's unabashed involvement in many of them leave little doubt that the shadowy organizations that engaged in terrorist activities during the 1980s were precursors to its official appearance, or autonomous subunits operating under its umbrella.

The convening of the Islamic Liberation Movements in Tehran included Lebanese Shi'ite clerics (such as Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah, Raghib Harb, and Subhi at-Tufaili) and coincided with Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Despite Iran's determined effort to win the war against Iraq—viewed critical for penetrating the Arab region—Iran sent a delegation to Damascus to discuss what the Islamic Republic could do to help redress the impact of the Israeli invasion. Even though the Iranian suggestion of sending troops to Lebanon did not sit well with Syrian president Hafiz al-Asad, it was difficult for him to decline their help given the staggering losses sustained by the Syrian army and air force in

the battle for Lebanon. In his bid to restore a semblance of military balance with Israel after the Camp David Agreement removed Egypt from the Arab-Israeli conflict and rendered Syria vulnerable to Israeli supremacy, Asad had no option except to acquiesce to Iran and grant it direct access to Lebanon.[38]

The mullahs' desire to export the Iranian Islamic Revolution mandated the introduction of a new Arab policy to supersede the defunct Shah's focus on supremacy in the Gulf and containment of communism. Their ambitious goals led them to adopt an aggressive Arab policy that developed into the most important component of Iran's foreign policy. The Arab region presented itself as an ideal terrain to assert revolutionary Iran's foreign influence and eventual dominance. Shi'ite restiveness and Arab regimes' incompetence and disarray enticed Iran to intrude into Arab affairs in the name of liberating Palestine from Zionism and combating US imperialism, which Khomeini dubbed the "Great Satan." There is one unspoken goal of Iran's exportation of the revolution: Shi'ite clerics believe a gross historical injustice occurred in the early years of Islam when close companions of the deceased Prophet ignored Imam 'Ali's legitimate entitlement to succeed him in leading the Muslim community. Iranian clerics tend to believe ". . . that the Sunnis are fundamentally in error, that God himself means ill for them and has condemned them to the fires of hell. . . ."[39] Therefore, and in order to rectify this historical error, they believe it is ". . . their duty to convert Sunnis to Shiism in order to create an umma united under the Shii banner."[40] This claim is compatible with one prerequisite of wilayat al-faqih that envisions ". . . the journey of the soul in the realm of Islam through tashayyu' [conversion to Shi'ism]."[41]

The strategic objectives of Iran are not necessarily contingent upon the well-being of its Arab Shi'ite clients. For example, apart from its steady barrage of rhetoric Iran has done nothing to support the cause of Shi'ites in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province. One argument that lends support to this claim states that "Iran is ready to use, or ignore, the interests of the Arab Shia depending on the immediate needs of Tehran's foreign policy."[42] The set of rules that govern the formulation and execution of Iran's domestic policy does not apply to the pursuit of its Arab policy. Iran's diverse society is pluralistic, and the law is intrinsic to its social construction and self-identity. Iranian society does not compare to fragmented Arab societies where the law is often violated with impunity. Wali al-faqih [the supreme leader], who is appointed by Ahl al-Hal wal Aqd [literally the group of clerics that loosens and binds; i.e., resolvers of community problems] ". . . and not the majority of the people"[43] knows how to differentiate between domestic and foreign policy.

The appointment of 'Ali Khamenei as wali al-faqih after Khomeini's death in June 1989 caused discord and disharmony within the Iranian clerical establishment because his title of marji' mujtahid [qualified inter-

preter of shari'a law] did not qualify him for the position of supreme leader. The Guardian Council averted the escalating tensions by separating marji'iya diniyya [religious reference] and wilayat al-faqih [guardianship of the jurist]. Thus, the 95-year-old grand ayatollah Mohammad 'Ali Araki became the religious reference in order to legitimate Khamenei's guardianship (after Araki's death in 1994, his religious reference title accrued to Khamenei). This separation, however, did not apply to the world of Shi'ism outside Iran. Khamenei commented, saying: "In Iran, I defer to my mentors; outside Iran, it is another matter. There, I accept the burden on my shoulders, otherwise it will be lost."[44] In concurrence with his political master, Iran's top foreign diplomat boasted that:

> . . . Arab affairs are Iran's business. . . . How can they not be? We share borders, waters, and resources; we fly through each other's airspace. We can't not be interested in how our neighbors affect the part of the globe where we make our homes.[45]

The importance of maintaining balance in Iranian domestic political transactions has not been an issue in carrying out the country's Arab policy. Seizing opportunities as they arise, taking advantage of regional chaos, mood swings in Washington, and the lack of European determination enabled Iran to push its way in the turbulent political waters of the Middle East.

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SIX

The Rise of Hizbullah and the Consolidation of Its Powers

The appearance of Hizbullah and its growth cannot be separated from the broader phenomenon of Shi'ite evolution from quietism to militancy. Shi'ism has built-in revolutionary incentives that enabled it to survive historical persecution. The voice of justice—pertaining to the sanctity of the Imamate—has a time-defying life of its own.[1] Shi'ite militant activism since the late 1970s can best be understood when analyzed with the awareness that "[t]he objective of celebrating 'Ashura and commemorating Karbala' is the mobilization of emotions against tyrants to bear fruit in due time."[2] Hussein's beheading at Karbala while defending his claim to the imamate sowed the seeds of dissension, vengeance, and the ultimate desire to correct the course of history. The strong showing of Shi'ite activism in recent decades has hinged on detailing Hussein's suffering that ". . . obviously exercises a powerful attraction for all Shi'i movements challenging the established order."[3] The dissemination of a religious culture predicated on grief, bereavement, and collective lamentation facilitated the emergence of an extra-territorial Shi'ite religious structure that does not recognize state boundaries. It had been customary for local clerics to follow superior sources of emulation in Najaf before the intrusion of Qom after the Islamic revolution in Iran. This has weakened Arab Shi'ite clerics and made them inextricably subordinate to Iran where religion, unlike in Arab countries, coincided with state ideology.[4] Contrary to Qom's politically-oriented clerics, "Najaf has maintained a conservative attitude to the role of the Imam. They believe that religion has a moral function, an ethical function but not a political one."[5]

In contrast to the complex case of Shi'ite religious activism in Iraq, which is confessional and displays a ". . . cultural-essentialist"[6] pattern, Shi'ite religious activism in Lebanon before the rise of Hizbullah emanat-

ed from a sense of communal disenfranchisement and a desire for recognition and political integration.[7] Thus, al-Sadr's powerful appearance in Lebanon weakened the traditional Shi'ite political leadership in favor of pragmatism and acceptance of adhering to the rules of accommodationist politics. Al-Sadr's bizarre disappearance in Libya accelerated the demise of the traditional Shi'ite Leaders and prompted an outpouring of sympathy for the Amal Movement. Amal, under the leadership of Berri, began to lose its momentum after the beginning of the Israeli invasion in 1982, when it became apparent that it had no intention of confronting the Israeli army. Under pressure from Syria and Lebanese leftist political parties, Berri found himself compelled, nevertheless, to issue strong statements condemning the Israeli invasion.[8] If anything, the leaders of Amal found the invasion opportune to press the PLO to pull out from Lebanon. Israel's subsequent occupation of South Lebanon and its army's frequent rough handling of locals soon loosened Amal's grip on its constituency there.

PRECURSORS TO THE RISE OF HIZBULLAH

Ayatollah Khomeini found it possible to export his version of Islamic revolution to Lebanon because of the existence of a sizable Shi'ite community there. His efforts would not have been successful without the Israeli invasion of the country in June 1982. Shortly after the beginning of the invasion—codenamed Operation Peace for Galilee—". . . then-president, Ilyas Sarkis, set up a six-man National Salvation Committee, ostensibly to deal with the effects of the Israeli invasion and work towards national reconciliation."[9] When Berri accepted to sit on the committee next to right-wing president-elect Bashir Gemayyil, many members of Amal chose to defect. They included

> . . . graduates of the Najaf religious schools in Iraq . . . These represented a broad trend that had emerged in the 1970s, maintaining its separateness from the activities of Sayyid Musa al-Sadr, the founder of Amal. Those who found their place outside al-Sadr's movement for the most part rejected the 'finality' of the Lebanese nation-state to which he had vowed allegiance.[10]

Even though al-Sadr's personality inspired future Hizbullah leaders, especially Nasrallah, the party's genesis is attributable to young Shi'ite clerical students expelled from Najaf after the secular pan-Arab Ba'th Party staged a successful coup in Iraq in 1968. In Lebanon, some of them founded a clandestine branch of ad-Da'wa Party that masqueraded as Ittihad at-Talaba al-Muslimin fi Lubnan [union of Lebanese Muslim students in Lebanon]. The idea of sending IRGC troops to Lebanon came during a pan-Islamic conference in Tehran in June 1982, on the occasion of the Oppressed Day [yawm al-Mustad'afin], when word came about

the beginning of the Israeli invasion. An Iranian official traveled to Damascus and won Syria's agreement to allow IRGC troops to cross into Lebanon from Syria. The commander of the IRGC Ali Shamkhani called for the formation of a new political party in Lebanon to resist Israeli occupation. His wish materialized when several nascent Shi'ite groups joined ranks with the IRGC. They came from different backgrounds: some hailed from informal neighborhood- and mosque-centered groups, some were disaffected with the Amal Movement, while others were either influenced by the political discourse of Musa al-Sadr or impressed with the triumph of the Islamic revolution in Iran.

Shamkhani implored pro-Iranian Lebanese Shi'ite groups to dissolve and regroup as a single cohesive unit. He succeeded in bringing together ad-Da'wa Party, al-Lijan al-Islamiyya (Islamic committees), Tajammu' 'Ulama' al-Muslimin fi Lubnan (association of Muslim clerics in Lebanon), and Harakat Amal al-Islamiyya (Amal Islamic movement). They formed a nine-member committee and traveled to Iran to meet with Ayatollah Khomeini.[11] Its prominent founding cadre included Subhi at-Tufaili, Abbas Musawi, Hasan Nasrallah, Muhammad Yazbik, and Ibrahim Amin al-Sayyid. The nine-member group gave way in 1983 to a five-member Shura Lubnan [Lebanon consultative council] that provided spiritual and political guidance to Lebanese Shi'ite Islamists. In May 1984 Shura Lubnan gave way to Hizbullah, a name that originated from the Koranic verse "As to those who turn to Allah, His Messenger, and the Believers, it is the party of Allah that must certainly triumph."[12] The Israelis inadvertently gave Hizbullah a reason to exist and attract a following among Shi'ites. Ignorant of the great religious symbolism of the 'Ashura's ceremony, Israeli military vehicles stormed Shi'ite crowds in Nabatiye to disperse them. This incident on October 16, 1983, sparked the first Shi'ite uprising against Israeli occupation. Sheikh Mehdi Shamseddine, head of the Higher Shi'ite Council in Beirut, issued a fatwa immediately after the incident calling for "civil resistance."[13] The Shi'ite mood toward Israel changed from celebratory to condemnatory. Fed up with PLO excesses, some Shi'ites in 1982 welcomed the IDF with rice and flowers.[14] After the Nabatiye incident, they started to view them as occupiers deserving resistance.

In response to the resistance inspired by Iranian-backed clerics, the Israelis in 1984 sealed off the south and banned all forms of vehicular movement with other parts of the country in what amounted to collective punishment for all south Lebanon residents. These draconian, punitive measures

> . . . had a grave impact on the economy of South Lebanon. The inhabitants' livelihood depended on the sale of their fruit and vegetable produce to the capital and northern areas of Lebanon. Most could only watch resentfully as their harvest rotted. . . . It became common to see

> truckloads of prisoners, as hundreds of people were rounded up from their homes and detained without charge in Ansar prison.[15]

In February of 1984, an Israeli agent assassinated Sheikh Raghib Harb who had enlisted in Amal movement at its formation. Unlike Berri, he committed himself to resist the Israelis and personally linked ". . . between the South and Hezbollah's base in the Bekaa, spreading Islamic doctrines and recruiting the southerners for military training and membership."[16] In response, Bilal Fahs, a member of Amal and one of Nabih Berri's bodyguards, attacked an Israeli convoy on the Zahrani-Tyre road. This incident revealed the extent of disaffection within the ranks of Amal to Berri's disinterest in confronting Israeli excesses in South Lebanon. Berri seemed intent on controlling west Beirut and securing for Amal a prominent role in post-civil war Lebanese politics, while the architects of Hizbullah busied themselves with a much bigger scheme.

Nobody expected that the arrival of a few hundred members of the IRGC to the remote Biqa' Valley would have an impact on Israel's military operations in south and central Lebanon. It did not take long, however, for their mission of ideological indoctrination to usher in a cultural revolution within the Shi'ite community.[17] The focal role of the IRGC cadre aimed at bringing about the organizational and ideological construction of Hizbullah. They embarked on a comprehensive program of revolutionary religious education and resocialization in order to alter the contours of traditional religious and societal values to lay the foundations for an Islamic society believing in the supremacy of wilayat al-faqih. The IRGC task focused on building a Muslim individual equipped with revolutionary concepts before effecting total societal transformation. They also familiarized their new local followers with the notion of al-Taklif al-Shari' (legitimate and religious responsibility toward society) that requires unquestioning obedience to their superiors. They were generous, giving and sharing unconditionally with local rural Shi'ites in one of Lebanon's most depressed regions. The true goal of the IRGC cadre's benevolent leadership style was to set the stage for the reappearance of the long-awaited Hidden Imam through the intermediary office of wilayat al-faqih, in the context of the universality of the Islamic faith and the inevitability of its virtuous state: "Say: O men! I am sent unto you all, as the Messenger of Allah, to Whom belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth . . ."[18]

Amal made a formidable comeback after the February 6, 1984, uprising that resulted in the split of the Lebanese army into two factions: one remaining loyal to president Amin Gemayyil, and another rallying behind Nabih Berri's movement. Among other things, the uprising delivered the coup de grace to the authority of Kamil al-As'ad. Amal Movement's monopoly of Shi'ite representation did not last long. The formal appearance of Hizbullah one year after the uprising presented a formid-

able challenge to Amal's supremacy among Shi'ites; it soon took Amal under its wing in a delicate formula for power sharing. Unlike the towering al-Sadr, his successor Berri could not live up to the aspirations of the conservative clerics and security/military leaders in Amal such as the pro-Iranian Mustafa al-Dirani and Zakaria Hamza.[19]

THE OFFICIAL RISE OF HIZBULLAH

The departure of the multinational force from Lebanon by March 1984, and President Amin Gemayyil's simultaneous abrogation of the May 17, 1983, peace agreement with Israel, amounted to a victory for Hizbullah and set the stage for its formal establishment less than a year later.[20] Its fortunes soared despite notoriety for alleged terrorist attacks, notably the destruction of the U.S. and French military headquarters in Beirut, and the subsequent wave of hostage-taking. Three weeks after Hizbullah's official appearance became known to the public, a powerful explosion in Bir al-Abed in the southern suburbs killed 80 people and wounded 260 others, but failed to kill then Hizbullah's mentor Sheikh Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah. Hizbullah blamed the bloody explosion on Saudi intelligence and local CIA agents.[21] Israeli troops completed their pullout from the port city of Sidon on February 16, 1985, and redeployed in the south Litani River.[22] On the same day, young Shi'ite activists distributed one-page open letter leaflets announcing the rise of Hizbullah and its adherence to the principles of the Iranian Revolution and its loyalty to the supreme leader, Ayatollah Khomeini.

The timing of announcing the formation of Hizbullah was notable for two reasons: 1) to launch guerrilla attacks against the IDF and its South Lebanon Army (SLA) surrogates to win credit for future territorial withdrawals; 2) to prevent the Amal Movement from reasserting its dominance of Shi'ites after the February 6 uprising that enabled it, along with the militia of the PSP, to seize west Beirut and evict army troops loyal to President Amin Gemayyil to the Christian enclave east and north of Beirut. Unable to forcibly recover the Golan Heights, which Israel occupied during the 1967 Six Day War, Asad hoped that diplomacy could end his territorial conflict with Israel. This explains why he was so keen to control the Lebanese and PLO cards as his bargaining chips in future peace negotiations, especially after Egypt had charted a separate course of peace with Israel in response to U.S. president Jimmy Carter's peace initiative.

During the 1980s, Hizbullah sought to obstruct the Syrian strategy in Lebanon. Following President Gemayyil's annulment of the May 17 peace agreement with Israel only a month after the February 6 uprising that caused the splintering of the Lebanese army along sectarian lines,[23] Syria's primary objective in Lebanon shifted to bringing an end to hostil-

ities there and winning over Gemayyil toward its policy line. The formal establishment of Hizbullah had thoroughly altered Syrian policy in Lebanon from accommodation to escalation. Hafiz al-Asad liked neither Hizbullah nor Yassir Arafat because they stood in his way of controlling Lebanon and the PLO. Asad was also keen to disallow Lebanon's sectarian strife from spilling into Syria's similarly fragmented society. Furthermore, and in his bid to preserve Syria's newly won regional power status, he acted ruthlessly and with determination to sabotage Fateh's intention to chart for itself an independent approach to negotiating peace with Israel.

Asad assumed that the intifada of Amal and, to a lesser extent, the PSP, would soon allow him to reassert his hegemony over Lebanon. With this in mind, he instructed the leader of the Amal Movement Nabih Berri to launch the War of the Camps in Beirut to subdue Arafat and prevent him from rushing into a peace deal with Israel. Asad failed in accomplishing the two goals he set for himself. Arafat went ahead with the Oslo Peace Talks in 1993, while Iran's war with Iraq (1980–1988) did not deflect its attention from developing Hizbullah into a grassroots organization. This was largely due to pursuing a flawed policy in the mid-1980s that focused on weakening all political groups in Lebanon, irrespective of their sectarian orientation or position on Syrian military and political influence in the country. Thus, for example, even though Asad ordered Berri to shell Palestinian refugee camps in Beirut and starve its residents to death, he gave the go-ahead to Abu Musa's Fateh al-Intifada to shell Amal's militiamen from its positions in Druze-controlled mountain areas.

During its formative years, Hizbullah followed in the footsteps of Musal al-Sadr in spreading its mission. It focused on addressing basic community grievances born of neglect of Shi'ite needs, either by the state or the sect's feudal leaders. This effort combined religious preaching with the provision of essential services such as drinking water, fertilizers for farmers, and transportation for rural areas in the Biqaa Valley's outlying areas.[24] The impact of the Iranian revolution on Hizbullah was pervasive during its formative years in the 1980s. The terminology used in statements by its leaders and activists were taken verbatim from their Iranian revolutionary counterparts.[25] Hizbullah made frequent rhetorical utterances such as the "U.S. is the Great Satan, Oh Jerusalem, we are Coming, and Death to Israel."[26] Its leaders have remained faithful to the fact that Hizbullah was born as the party of the Islamic revolution in Lebanon, i.e., as a branch of the IRGC. Ideologically, intellectually, and organizationally, Hizbullah committed itself to the wilayat al-faqih. Chief of Hizbullah's politburo Ibrahim Amin Sayyid confirmed when he served as the party's official spokesman, that: "We derive our political decision making from the faqih, whose mandate is not determined by place, but by Islamic religious doctrine."[27] He added that: "We do not consider ourselves in Lebanon detached from the revolution in Iran . . . we consider ourselves a

part of the army that the supreme leader wants to form in order to liberate Jerusalem. We obey his orders and we do not believe in geography, but in change."[28] Given its organic relationship with Hizbullah, Iran applied its expertise to bond it with Lebanese Shi'ites by establishing social foundations to serve them. It would have been impossible for Hizbullah to found its various social welfare foundations without Iranian largesse and planning. Thus, Mu'assasat ash-Shaheed (martyrs' foundation), Mu'assasat Imdad Imam Khomeini al-Khayriyya (Imam Khomeini's relief foundation), Mu'assasat Jihad al-Bina' (construction jihad foundation), and Madaris al-Mahdi (al-Mahdi schools) constituted not only a direct link with impoverished Shi'ites but also a source of inextricable linkage to them.[29]

Hizbullah's organizational structure expanded quickly to include cultural, military, media, and preparatory departments.[30] In February 1985, Shura Lubnan appointed Ibrahim Amin al-Sayyid Hizbullah's spokesman, and four years later, it appointed Subhi at-Tufaili as its first secretary-general. In 1991, Hizbullah's first general congress elected 'Abbas Musawi to succeed at-Tufaili. Israel assassinated him on February 16, 1992. Hasan Nasrallah was asked by Hizbullah to complete Musawi's term, which would have expired in 1993. Hizbullah adopted Iranian tactics of mass mobilization, crowd management, the organization of mosque sermons, administration of mourning ceremonies, and propaganda filming of military operations. Hizbullah sought and achieved total ideological compatibility with Iran's wilayat al-faqih. Impressed by the revolution that unseated Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi and dismantled his powerful machinery of coercion, Hizbullah enthusiastically spread the distinctively Persian characteristics of Iran's Islamic culture. The public display of religion in Shi'ite quarters in Lebanon soon became indistinguishable from Iran's. It was imperative for Hizbullah to reverse the image of Shi'ite political passivity, and subordination to movements run by leaders from other faiths or atheist ideologies. It worked hard to rid Shi'ites of the stereotype that their capacity for military organization is weak, and invested heavily in efforts to mobilize them politically and militarily in order to serve the sect best. Because of these entrenched notions about Lebanese Shi'ites, the founders of Hizbullah immersed themselves in building ". . . a mature, dynamic, broad and multifaceted political organization, displaying outstanding political acumen, astute organizational and mobilizational competence, shrewd coalition-building and, most importantly, incisive strategic and tactical skills."[31] The painstaking efforts of IRGC cadre and Hizbullah enthusiasts produced remarkable results in record time.

Hizbullah ". . . successfully traded services for loyalty and proceeded to its next objective of becoming the sole Shi'ite hegemon,"[32] that involved targeting senior Shi'ite cadre in the LCP. Shi'ites comprised the backbone of the LCP and winning them over to Hizbullah featured prom-

inently in its efforts to dominate the Shi'ite sect. Hizbullah achieved this objective during the fighting in May 1988 to wrest control of the southern suburbs from Amal Movement. Disaffected with Amal's corruption and subservience to Syria, LCP fighters took the side of Hizbullah forces in the fighting, which proved decisive in winning the battle. Hizbullah followed up on its success by taking the battle against Amal to parts of the south that had been vacated by the IDF/SLA. Ill-feelings between Amal and Hizbullah had already reached a high point as a result of the latter's kidnapping in January 1987 of British hostage negotiator Terry Waite, and U.S. lieutenant colonel William Higgins (commander of the Lebanon unit of the UNTSO) in February 1988. Both Waite and Higgins took it for granted that they were safe from kidnapping because of their good relations with Amal. Berri felt betrayed and personally dishonored by Hizbullah's breach of oath to avoid embarrassing him.

Simultaneous with the battle for the southern suburbs, another confrontation raged between Amal and Hizbullah in what became known as the War for Supremacy of South Lebanon. During 1988–1990 Hizbullah sought to dislodge Amal from Iqlim at-Tuffah east of Sidon in a major battle that was dubbed the War of the Brothers. Hizbullah gained the upper hand in the initial stages of the war, but intervention by Fateh and Syria's allies in Lebanon on the side of Amal prevented its defeat and enabled their combined forces to besiege Hizbullah fighters in the summer of 1990. Hizbullah's heavy casualties totaled 110 dead and more than 200 wounded. Dismayed by the turn of events in the battle, Iran used its full diplomatic weight with Syria to reach a final agreement between Hizbullah and Amal. Immediately afterward, the foreign ministers of the two countries met in Damascus in November 1990 and agreed to a power-sharing deal between the two Shi'ite groups that proved to be lasting.[33] Generous Iranian financial support made it possible for Hizbullah to buy loyalty through financial largesse in accordance with the precepts of Lebanese political patronage. Since the first post-civil war parliamentary elections in August-October 1992, the two groups have formed joint electoral tickets on the basis of equal representation, but in effect switching Amal from a competitor into an agency endorsing Hizbullah's recommendations and actions.

HIZBULLAH ADOPTS ISLAMIC RESISTANCE

For at least three important reasons, Hizbullah could not realistically have avoided resisting Israeli occupation of south Lebanon. First, it deemed resistance essential for transforming Shi'ites from ideological lackeys spread thinly along the myriad spectrum of Lebanese politics into a cohesive force capable of launching a war of liberation through instilling the attributes of jihad culture. Geographic contiguity with Palestine

and shared cultural and economic ties with its Arab population generated hostility for the state of Israel from its creation in 1948. By leading the fight against Israeli occupation, Hizbullah correctly calculated that it would enhance its military recruitment efforts. Second, Hizbullah understood that given the highly centralized nature of Lebanese wartime politics—which became standard after the end of the civil war in 1989—it needed to not only to create a dominant military component, but also one that ensures a dominant presence in Beirut. This presence would enable it to influence political decision making. Third, the IRGC, in its bid to export the revolution, wanted to use Hizbullah as an exemplary force dedicated to fighting occupation and injustice and, above all, spreading the vision of the supreme leader. The IRGC viewed the strategic mission of Hizbullah going beyond Lebanon, which had ". . . little significance in itself but served only as a platform from which it could launch its struggle against the 'evil' represented by the West."[34]

Hizbullah first entertained the idea of inaugurating an aggressive anti-Israeli resistance campaign in August 2005, when on the occasion of the seventh anniversary of the disappearance of al-Sadr 250,000 Shi'ites converged on Nabatiyye to express their opposition to Israeli occupation. Shi'ite clerics, such as Raghib Harb and Muhammad Hasan al-Amin, led the massive public resistance to the presence of Israeli troops and members of the SLA.[35] Given Amal's reluctance to commit itself to lead the resistance, Hizbullah weighed in its military options.

In December 1985 and under Syrian auspices, Nabih Berri of the Amal Movement, Walid Jumblat of the PSP, and Elie Hubeika of the LF, signed in Damascus the Tripartite Agreement that would have ended the civil war, curtailed Iran's role in Lebanon and compromised Hizbullah's nascent role. Hafiz al-Asad's difficulties in Lebanon relieved Hizbullah who, four months later, took advantage of Berri's ill-advised decision to go to war against the PLO in Beirut's overcrowded and poverty-stricken Palestinian refugee camps. The War of the Camps (May 1985–February 1987) weakened the Amal Movement militarily and prevented it from reining in Hizbullah's guerrilla fighters. Even though Hizbullah chose to maintain neutrality in that war, its personnel allowed humanitarian aid to trickle into the besieged camps. At the same time that Amal waged a murderous campaign against the Palestinians, Hizbullah seized the opportunity and ventured ill-prepared into armed resistance against the IDF and SLA. Its fighters performed poorly in the initial stages of their encounters in south Lebanon. This is probably the primary reason they relied heavily on suicide missions, which they discontinued after honing their battlefield skills.[36] In 1986, Hizbullah "took a respite"[37] from war to take stock of its unenviable situation that included heavy battle losses and alienating southerners by banning the sale of alcohol. In a bid to reduce intra-Shi'ite tension in the south after Hizbullah wrested control of the southern suburbs from Amal, Iran pushed for the formation of the

quartet committee (Iran, Syria, Amal, Hizbullah) that implied Syria's grudging recognition of Hizbullah.

The feud between Hizbullah and Amal had not yet abated when Michel Aoun, the prime minister of the military cabinet and commander of the army, declared on March 14, 1989, the War of Liberation to evict the Syrian army from Lebanon. Aoun's military adventure backfired and ended with the conclusion of the Saudi-brokered Ta'if Agreement to reconstruct Lebanese politics. Aoun escaped to the French Embassy after the Syrian army flushed him out from his hideout at the presidential palace in October 1990. Hizbullah opposed the constitutional amendments of the Ta'if Agreement because it remanufactured the confessional system in new garb, and did not establish a time frame for abolishing political communalism. However, Hizbullah supported the success of Ta'if in ending the civil war. In this connection, it facilitated the return of the machinery of the state to the southern suburbs and handed over its military barracks in Ba'albek to the Lebanese army. Hizbullah's first congress coincided with the launch of the Ta'if Conference that ended the civil war. Hizbullah underwent a major organizational restructuring that included the introduction of the positions of secretary general and deputy secretary general, as well as a politburo, executive, judicial, and jihadist councils. As a result, Hizbullah became less secretive and a more public-oriented movement.

Syria's Lebanese policy after Ta'if sought to calibrate the extent of Iranian influence in Lebanon in order to prevent it from disturbing the balance of power within the Shi'ite community by empowering Hizbullah at the expense of the pro-Damascus Amal Movement. In order to avoid Syria's obstruction of its military activity in south Lebanon, Hizbullah acquiesced to Hafiz al-Asad's pressure to ally itself with the rival Amal Movement. This issue concluded in the November 1990 Damascus agreement with Iran after Syria had consolidated its grip on Lebanon and the election of Elias Hrawi, al-Asad's candidate of choice to the presidency. In exchange for building a strong rapport with Amal, Syria gave Hizbullah the green light to escalate its anti-Israel activity in south Lebanon. In March 1991, Hizbullah was exempted from the government's decision to disband militia groups, and it stepped up its operations against Israeli troops and the SLA in the security belt.

Israel's prompt and strong retaliation did not stop Hizbullah from hurling Katyusha rockets across the border or planting roadside bombs in the security belt that caused most of IDF and SLA casualties. On July 25, 1993, Israel launched Operation Accountability to end, once and for all, Hizbullah's increasingly lethal belligerent activities. Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin believed that Israel could only achieve its objectives if the IDF displaced the residents of the south toward the north, applied pressure on the Lebanese government and scattered Hizbullah's partisans. He called on ". . . the prime minister of Lebanon to take the

initiative and prevent Hizballah terrorists from opening fire on IDF soldiers and the communities within Israeli territory. . . [T]he Lebanese prime minister and his army. . . are capable of this."[38] Despite the ferocity of the Israeli air offensive—referred to by Hizbullah as the Seven Day War—that resulted in a mass exodus of civilians from the south to Beirut, Rabin's objective did not materialize. Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri traveled to Washington and successfully lobbied the Clinton administration to broker a ceasefire based on an oral agreement binding the combatants to avoid targeting civilians. The agreement stood no chance of working because of Hizbullah's insistence on keeping up the fight in the south and Israel's determination to retaliate with excessive force. It, however, implied the tacit U.S. recognition of Hizbullah's right to resist occupation. The assassination of Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin in November 1995 ended the negotiations between Syria and Israel and, consequently, further destabilized the south as military operations escalated in the security belt.

Shimon Perez, Rabin's successor, failed to restart the peace talks. Instead, he decided to launch on April 11, 1996, Operation Grapes of Wrath. The operation ruined his political career. On April 18, 1996, four Israeli shells landed at a UNIFIL position manned by Fijian peacekeepers in the village of Qana killing 105 Lebanese civilians who had sought shelter there. The massacre elicited an outpouring of international sympathy for the hardships endured by Lebanese civilians and condemnation of the Israeli action. The operation ended on April 26, 1996, with a written agreement that reiterated the oral terms that ended Operation Accountability. In the early general elections on May 29, 1996, Perez lost his bid for reelection as prime minister to Likud's leader Benjamin Netanyahu by less than 30,000 votes.[39] Angered by the Qana massacre, Israeli Arabs who traditionally voted for the Labor Party chose to abstain from voting in the 1996 election. Netanyahu's victory exacerbated the IDF low-intensity war in south Lebanon and disillusioned a broad segment of Israeli society about its necessity for the country's security.

FROM "LIBERATION" IN MAY 2000 TO WAR IN JULY 2006

Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982 to defeat the PLO, evict it from Lebanon, and thwart its goal of establishing a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Aware that the Israeli public did not generally support the invasion of Lebanon, especially after the Sabra and Shatila massacre on September 16–17, 1982, Prime Minister Menachem Begin even entertained the idea of withdrawing from Lebanon and turning the south over to the Amal Movement to patrol the border with Israel. Syrian president Hafiz Asad used his influence with Amal to block the deal with Israel.[40] Israel had no specific interest in Lebanon beyond the elimination of the

PLO presence in the country and controlling its water resources in the south. Israel had already achieved the two objectives. In September 1965 "Israeli commandos attacked the Lebanese installations at Wazzani and Hasbani, effectively putting an end to Lebanon's participation in the diversion [of the tributaries of the Jordan River] project."[41] During its occupation of the south between 1978–2000 ". . . it laid the ground for siphoning at least 200 million cubic meters of the Litani under the Khardali bridge."[42]

The IDF believed it could adequately protect Israeli settlements in Galilee from within the Israeli border. It just did not know how to exit Lebanon gracefully. Israel hoped that the May 17 peace treaty would enable it to exit the Lebanese quagmire, but Asad again used his influence with Lebanese Shi'ites to pressure Lebanese president Amin Gemayyil to annul the treaty on March 5, 1984. A midair collision on February 4, 1997, between two IAF helicopters on a mission to Lebanon that killed 73 military personnel was the turning point eventually leading to the withdrawal of the Israeli army from the security belt in south Lebanon. The incident shocked Israeli society and gave rise to the Four Mothers movement that created public momentum to extricate the country from south Lebanon. During his election campaign in 1999, Ehud Barak promised: ". . . to take his forces out of Lebanon within a year of forming his government."[43] He lived up to his promise and withdrew Israeli troops from south Lebanon ten months after he formed his government in July 1999. When Israel pulled out from south Lebanon on May 25, 2000, it decided to terminate its involvement in Lebanese affairs.[44]

Hizbullah argues that the guerrilla warfare it waged against Israelis forced them to abandon their south Lebanon security belt. There is no denying that Hizbullah fighters fought the Israelis vigorously, and occasionally inflicted heavy casualties on them. It is a gross overstatement, however, for Hizbullah to arrogate to itself a convincing battlefield victory. Not long after Israel withdrew its forces from the security belt, Hizbullah came under sustained pressure from non-Shi'ite Lebanese to dissolve its military apparatus. The 1989 Ta'if Agreement that ended the civil war in Lebanon exempted Hizbullah from disarmament on the grounds of resisting continued Israeli occupation of parts of the south.

The Christian Qarnit Shahwan Gathering took the lead in demanding the disbanding of Hizbullah's military apparatus and criticized its show of force in the southern suburbs of Beirut. The Gathering called on Syria to demarcate its borders with Lebanon to determine if Shib'a Farms belonged to Lebanon because Hizbullah used their occupation as a pretext to continue its anti-Israeli resistance. Syria refused to address the issue while the Farms remained under Israeli occupation.[45] Four years before signing the 2006 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Hasan Nasrallah, Michel Aoun sharply criticized Hizbullah fanatics' position on keeping its military component and accused it of collusion with Israel. He

emphasized that "Shib'a Farms is not Lebanese and we kept silent about it. The Lebanese government did not say it had occupied territory relevant to UNSC resolution 242."[46]

Walid Jumblat's Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) coordinated with the late prime minister Rafiq Hariri the French-sponsored draft resolution that demanded the departure of foreign armies from Lebanon (in reference to Syrian military presence), as well as the dissolution of all militias (in reference to Hizbullah). The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) adopted it in September 2004 as Resolution 1559. The architect of the proposal PSP senior member Marwan Hamade survived an attempt on his life a month later, but Rafiq Hariri was killed in a massive explosion in February 2005. Hariri's assassination had further aggravated Lebanese political factionalism and polarized it along the March 14 and March 8 coalitions, with the first opposing the Syrian/Hizbullah alliance and the second strongly supporting it. In March 2006 Hizbullah found itself compelled to participate in the discussions of the national defense strategy for Lebanon to address its disarmament dilemma. From the onset of the dialogue that initiated at the behest of the Speaker of the House and leader of the Amal Movement Nabih Berri, Nasrallah made it clear that he opposed the integration of Hizbullah's military component in the Lebanese army.[47] He rejected the demands to disarm Hizbullah ". . . because it does not cost the treasury anything and also because it [Hizbullah] behaved exemplary in dealing with the Lebanese reality, especially after the liberation."[48]

Seeking to placate its outraged critics and convince them that there was still a legitimate function for its military component, Hizbullah tried hard to kidnap Israeli soldiers and exchange them for Lebanese POW. It specifically sought the release of Samir Qantar who had been in jail since his involvement in the 1979 Nahariya attack that killed four Israelis. On October 7, 2000, Hizbullah succeeded in kidnapping three Israeli soldiers, who turned out to be dead, in Shib'a Farms. Two years later, Hizbullah swapped their remains for hundreds of its prisoners. On July 12, 2006, it launched Operation Faithful Promise to kidnap new Israeli soldiers, but the operation did not go as planned. Hizbullah killed eight IDF soldiers during the operation and captured two other soldiers who were presumed dead. The audacity of Hizbullah's operation and its high human cost humiliated Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert who responded with a major air operation that crippled the Lebanese infrastructure, killed 1,200 civilians, and emptied the south of its residents. There was nothing to support Nassrallah's defensive claim that Israel had prior plans to go to war. Two months before he ordered military action in response to Hizbullah's operation, Olmert had reduced the defense budget by $118 million. Many Israelis described his declaration of war against Hizbullah as a "knee-jerk reaction by a leader with little security experience."[49]

Despite its inconclusive ending, mainly because Israel had no intention of mounting a full-scale ground offensive and reoccupying south Lebanon, UNSC resolution 1701 that ended the 33-day war increased the size of UNIFIL to 15,000 troops, expanded its mandate to the Litani River flow line, and banned the presence of Hizbullah south of it.[50] Hizbullah could still brag about the outcome of the war because, like the kidnapping in 2000, Israel released in 2008 hundreds of Lebanese prisoners, including the highly prized Qantar whom it consistently refused to free in previous prisoner exchanges. Hizbullah continued to adamantly insist on maintaining a military structure separate from the national armed forces. Eventually, in 2014, it discontinued its involvement in the national dialogue because its organizers presented a proposal for a defense strategy exclusively for Lebanon.[51] When the Syrian uprising began in 2011, Hizbullah thoroughly involved in its armed conflict on the side of the regime, ignoring the decision of the Lebanese government to disengage the country from the upheaval next door.

HIZBULLAH DOMINATES LEBANESE POLITICS

Hizbullah objected to the 1989 Ta'if Agreement because it feared it would compromise its military independence and negatively affect its future political status in Lebanon. Its leaders advanced their apprehensions about Ta'if on the pretext that it did not offer a sound framework for effecting political reform in Lebanon. Since Hizbullah could not alter the content of the agreement, its leaders sufficed themselves with criticizing it as short-sighted and unjust, because "it kept sectarian privileges intact, and gave a new life to the Lebanese confessional system."[52] Hizbullah's unwelcoming reaction to Ta'if sounded bizarre because it had only superficially abandoned its exclusivism and particularism, as it staunchly guarded its community of believers in wilayat al-faqih against dissenting Lebanese views, especially Shi'ites who did not take Khomeini's religious and political ideas seriously. It never meaningfully attempted to integrate itself in the multi-confessional and complex Lebanese political system.[53]

Hizbullah's immediate policy response to the Ta'if Agreement took the form of organizing its first constituent congress in November 1989 whose seven-member Shura Council elected Subhi at-Tufaili as Hizbullah's first secretary general. He was sacked in 1991 because he did not acquiesce to Iranian pressure to participate in the first Lebanese parliamentary elections since 1972. It had been the policy of Hizbullah since 1985 to disavow the Lebanese state and demand establishing an Islamic state on its ruins. 'Abbas al-Musawi succeeded him until Israel assassinated him in February 1992. Nasrallah succeded Al-Musawi. In July 1997 at-Tufaili announced in the north Biqa' the revolt of the hungry to protest against the government's austerity cuts that worsened the economic con-

ditions of poor rural Shi'ites. He also criticized Hizbullah for working with the Lebanese political system. At-Tufaili's movement was aimed more at the leadership of Hizbullah than the Lebanese government. Hizbullah moved quickly in collaboration with the Lebanese army to suppress his movement. He became a fugitive from the law with a warrant for his arrest after an army officer was killed in a confrontation with his followers in 'Ain Buday near Ba'albek. In January 1998 Nasrallah dismissed at-Tufaily from the party and closed his dossier.

Hizbullah proceeded to firm up its alliance with Amal ahead of clashing with Lebanese Sunnis for control of national politics. In addition to equally distributing between them the Shi'ite share of parliamentary deputies, they reached a similar agreement to divide municipal seats ". . . in the service of development and [fixing] major issues in every village, town and city that we are present in together."[54] Hizbullah finally understood that in order for it to win domestic recognition it needed to play according to the patron-client nature of Lebanese politics. A year after the assassination of the foremost Sunni politician Rafiq Hariri, which the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) implicated Hizbullah in, Nasrallah signed an MoU with Aoun that paved the way for him to win the presidency in 2016. In October 2006, six ministers from Hizbullah and its allies submitted their resignation from Fuad Seniora's cabinet because he pushed for the adoption of the STL. Seniora turned down the request of Hizbullah to increase the size of his cabinet to give veto power to the opposition. The opposition held a sit-in in downtown Beirut that lasted until May 7, 2008, when Hizbullah stormed west Beirut after the cabinet banned its landline cable network and dismissed the Hizbullah allied airport security chief who made no effort to curtail its unauthorized activity.

The Doha Agreement took place shortly afterward and called for electing a new president and naming Seniora to form his second cabinet. The cabinet was formed in July 2008. The cabinet included 30 ministers and gave Hizbullah and its allies veto power (one-third plus one seat) to block decisions deemed unfavorable to them. Seniora assumed office pending the emergence of a favorable political climate that would allow Hariri to take over. Hizbullah's storming of west Beirut in May 2008 convinced him to live with its political ascendancy. In November 2009 Seniora submitted his resignation, and Hariri quickly formed his cabinet. This development brought Hizbullah closer to dominating the Lebanese political system. The veto power allowed Hizbullah to cause the collapse of Saad Hariri's cabinet in January 2011 when the deliberations of the STL neared the stage of indicting four Hizbullah operatives. His successor Najib Miqai had difficulty dealing with Hizbullah over its violation of the government's policy of disengagement from the Syrian conflict, intervention in appointing senior Sunni security officers, and objection to covering Lebanon's share of the cost of the operations of the STL. He chose to

resign in March 2013 to be replaced by Tammam Salam, a third-tier Sunni politician. It took him ten months to form his cabinet that Nasrallah called ". . . a cabinet of national interest,"[55] implying that it was a trouble-free cabinet. With the formation of Salam's cabinet, Hizbullah could claim that it had succeeded in controlling the Lebanese political system. He urged the FT to act on the basis of understanding the balance of power in Lebanon and accept the nomination of Aoun for the presidency. He directly addressed Saad Hariri: "The Future Movement should come down from its ivory tower and go for dialogue with the FPM. . . . The FPM has demands and the Future Movement should discuss them."[56] He reminded Hariri that "Aoun is a natural candidate. We were and we are still, and we will continue to support this candidacy."[57] Hariri, weakened by the collapse of his construction empire in Saudi Arabia, accepted Hizbullah's assurance that he could keep the office of Prime Minister as long as Aoun stayed in office. Hariri's vacillation and poor political resolve in dealing with Hizbullah caused the Saudis to apprehend him in November 2017. Lebanese diplomatic efforts and an international outcry quickly secured his freedom, while at the same time confirming Hizbullah's predominance in Lebanese politics.

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SEVEN

The Militant Charisma of Hasan Nasrallah

The notion of a savior leader is embedded in the Lebanese Shi'ite psyche. Historical persecution and disenfranchisement allowed the promise of the return of the Hidden Imam to take root in their hearts. The long wait for his return did not weaken the desire of the faithful to celebrate his coming to redeem them and the rest of humanity from suffering, yet it opened a window of hope for an interim leader to emerge and inspire them into action. For many Shi'ites, the coming of Musa al-Sadr from Qom to Lebanon to lead their community appeared as if God wanted to help them out. They endearingly called him imam even though he was neither a source of emulation nor the awaited Imam. His sudden and lasting disappearance injured Shi'ite morale and dampened their hopes of winning the recognition of Maronites and Sunnis. The Amal Movement lost its appeal after al-Sadr disappeared from the political landscape.

The success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and its leaders' interest in Arab affairs impacted Lebanese Shi'ites. The invasion of Lebanon in 1982 gave Iran the opportunity it needed to begin its involvement in Lebanese politics under the guise of resisting Israeli occupation. Iranian revolutionary penetration of Lebanon paved the way for the rise of a home-grown leadership style that had al-Sadr's ability to mobilize the leaderless Shi'ite community, without his pragmatism and acceptance of the eternity of the state of Lebanon and the legitimacy of its confessional political system. An ordinary leader would not have been able to spread the concept of wilayat al-faqih among religiously apolitical Shi'ites. Such a mammoth religious project required the presence of a strong personality capable of using military resistance to occupation to promote unfamil-

iar and provocative religious thought embedded in liberational politics. He had to be a charismatic and prophetic leader.

UNDERSTANDING CHARISMATIC AND PROPHETIC LEADERSHIP

Charismatic leadership is unlikely to emerge in stable social and economic environments. Economically growing societies, especially if they provide opportunities for the expansion in the size of the middle class, tend to avoid the trauma of unfulfilled public expectations and the attendant political unrest that often obstructs the ability for independent thinking. Usually "[a] period of radical social change which causes distress and dissatisfaction among a segment of the population or a group of people cut off from the mainstream of society is generally acknowledged as the typical environment within which a charismatic leader will arise."[1] At least two important factors can explain the charismatic leadership of Musa al-: First, the accumulation of wealth by Shi'ites who immigrated to West Africa and aspired to play a political role upon returning to their local communities. They partnered with al-Sadr since they could not do it alone and became his associates in the Amal Movement. Second, the arrival of Palestinian guerrilla movements to south Lebanon as of the mid-1960s attracted many local recruits to their cause. Arms proliferated in the hands of Shi'ites, which further accelerated the demise of feudal leadership. This created a power vacuum that neither the Palestinians nor their Lebanese leftist allies could fill in. Al-Sadr's political ascendancy benefited from the ". . . breakdown in traditional authority is precisely the appropriate socio-historical circumstance which is necessary for charismatic leaders to gain acceptance for their authority."[2]

In addition to the Israeli occupation of the south and raging civil war elsewhere in Lebanon, the rise of Hizbullah coincided with the beginning of a grave economic crisis and a crippling currency devaluation that impoverished the vast majority of the Lebanese. The U.S. dollar rose from five pounds in 1985 to 1500 pounds when Nasrallah became Hizbullah's Secretary-General in 1992. It is well-established that "[s]evere economic crises such as extreme inflation or depression can be in some respects as psychologically traumatic as war, if not more so."[3] Hizbullah took upon itself the responsibility of providing basic existential needs—such as potable water, primary medical care, and subsidized staple food—for the general public in Shi'ite areas—and in the Biqa' low-cost agricultural seeds and fertilizers, in addition to free transportation to farming areas. It also dispensed fixed monthly allowances for party members and their dependents, as well as food rations to needy families. The discreet and respectful manner in which Hizbullah provided services that ought to have been supplied by the state enabled it to bond with local Shi'ite

communities, attract committed party members, and recruit fighters. The personnel who provided the services behaved in exemplary fashion and did not ask for anything in return. Hizbullah did not obligate the beneficiaries of its largesse to join the party or support its activities. It might be correct to state that its interaction with the Shi'ite community rested ". . . on the good faith of the participants."[4] Such a pattern of interpersonal interactions has roots in Shi'ite religious interpretation that transcends ". . . the logico-philosophical derivation of reality"[5] and delves into metaphysics.

The sociology of Shi'ite Islam places a premium on personal charm and charisma as necessary prerequisites for effective leadership. A major ". . . difference between Sunni and Shia jurisdiction lies more in the sociology of law than in its contextual meaning, or methods of derivation."[6] This helps explain why Shi'ite clerics maintain much closer ties with their constituencies than Sunni clerics. Enduring injustice and oppression for centuries have shaped Shi'ite jurisprudence and influenced the content of messages to the faithful that went beyond religion to address societal issues. Khomeini commented on this point that:

> The Shi'ah school of thought, which is the prevalent one in Iran, has had certain distinguishing characteristics from the very beginning. While the other schools have preached submission to rulers, even if they are corrupt and oppressive, Shi'ism has preached resistance against them and denounced them as illegitimate. From the outset, Shi'is have opposed oppressive governments.[7]

Charismatic religious authority as envisioned by wilayat al-faqih emanates from the conception ". . . of the perpetuation of divine guidance through the leadership of the imams that necessitated authoritative figures who could perform functions of the imams and express their will to their followers when access to the imams became difficult."[8] Charismatic leadership is undemocratic because the leader's followers, who tend to view themselves as incapable of coping with the complexity of life, attribute to him mythical qualities. The three monotheistic religions believe in the coming of the savior-leader, even if they use different terms to refer to him. The Shi'ite creed, however, rests on the notion of the Imam's deliberate occultation for a divine purpose, which makes it a non-negotiable doctrinal matter. Leadership in despotic societies is characterized by "passive acceptance versus skepticism, silence versus outspoken criticism, and compliance as opposed to consent."[9] In Shi'ism, the acceptance of a charismatic leader who possesses religious credentials, and both rebellious and righteous qualities, is an important stage along the path toward ultimate redemption. There is more to leadership than passive acceptance, silence, and compliance; it is about the belief that good is destined to conquer evil. Predisposition to this type of leadership extends ". . . magical qualities to the rebel leader, imputing affective motives to

followers through the arbitrary use of charisma to explain the basis of their commitment."[10]

Hizbullah acquired a reputation for political roughness and crudeness for insisting on the dismantlement of the Lebanese confessional state and supplanting it with an Islamic state compatible with the ideology of the Iranian Revolution. In addition to its aversion to the Lebanese entity, Hizbullah stood accused of kidnapping Western nationals, assassinating Shi'ite leftists, and battling the rival Amal Movement. The appointment of Nasrallah as the Party's Secretary-General indicated a desire to change outward behavior without compromising core values. Unlike his two predecessors Subhi at-Tufaili and 'Abbas al-Musawi who hailed from the north Biqa', Nasrallah was born in the south. The clannish mentality in the north Biqa' is rugged and developed in its barren and inhospitable hills. Its people tend to express their views vociferously. They differ in their disposition from fellow Shi'ites in the south who underwent a different process of social development despite the grip of feudal lords and politicians in the two regions. Shi'ites in north Biqa' lived in isolation between two mountain ranges—one desolate and forbidding (the anti-Lebanon range) and another unfriendly (facing Maronite-inhabited Lebanon range), whereas Shi'ites in the south interacted heavily with the natives of Galilee in northern Palestine. The unique and special advantage the south had over the north Biqa' lay in the proliferation of erudite ulema whose reputation and influence spread from Jabal 'Amil to Iraq and Persia. Their emphasis on religious reasoning and inquisitiveness tempered the beliefs of south Lebanon Shi'ites and moderated their views. Nasrallah's unpretentious discourse and toned-down rhetoric had successfully altered the perception of Hizbullah by virtually all Shi'ites and many Sunnis and Christians.

Many ordinary Shi'ites swear by Nasrallah's name and express no hesitation to martyr their sons to spare the life of al-Sayyid (in reference to him), or to obey his commands because he is ashraf insan [the most honorable person]. This is not surprising because a leader imbued with charisma becomes indispensable to his followers who come to believe "that he can control the forces of history and achieve its transcendental objective."[11] To help grieving parents of fallen fighters cope with their loss Hizbullah, backed by Iranian sources of emulation, searched

> . . . for a new meaning of death in the battlefield. Hezbollah's leaders, working in concert with Iranian preachers, produced a conceptual framework that removed the barriers between the worlds of the living and the dead. . . . Erasing the borders between life and death allows a Hezbollah fighter to assure his parents that he can continue to communicate with them after death, via dreams.[12]

Hizbullah would not have died out without Nasrallah, even though it is unlikely that it could achieve the same level of success. He clamped

down on intraparty dissension and kept Hizbullah together. His constant exhortation and personal example, or in other words, the death of his son Hadi in a confrontation with the IDF in 1997, secured a steady flow of military recruits to fight the IDF/SLA, and also to ensure the survival of the regime of President Bashar al-Asad after the beginning of the Syrian uprising in 2011. In this regard, Nasrallah's capability proved instrumental because "[o]rganizations cannot long survive without members who are committed, who perform their tasks in a consistent fashion."[13] As a first-class persuasive leader, he emerged as Lebanon's unrivaled crowd rouser. In what seems to be typical of Nasrallah's leadership style, the literature on political charisma suggests that "[t]he almost automatic obedience a leader can command from a charismatically oriented following gives him substantial leverage in his maneuvers with other leaders and groups."[14] His ability to command the unquestioning loyalty and obedience of his followers enabled him to take the Amal Movement under his wing, and also to prevail on Sunni and Maronite politicians to become Lebanon's super political actor.

Nasrallah speaks calmly and rationally in his familiar sermonizing tone. When referring to his dispute with the FT or the LF, he always calls for dialogue and emphasizes that "No one can eliminate anyone in Lebanon and we must preserve the atmosphere of dialogue and calm."[15] He effectively ". . . adapt[s] his style of performance to group needs."[16] He goes the extra mile to comply with the prerequisites of the accommodationist nature of Lebanese confessionalism by sounding inclusive and all-embracing, even with those who differ from him, precisely because he is keen on posing as an effective, prudent, and courageous leader.[17] On Lebanon's recurring cabinet formation dilemma, Nasrallah has—whenever he deemed it necessary—displayed resilience and self-mastery in navigating its turbulence. He frequently reminds his audience (be they his supporters or critics), even amid difficult times that ". . . there is tremendous optimism and there is a significant progress at the level of the government formation."[18] Cabinet formation in Lebanon has always been a daunting process because there are more political factions demanding inclusion in it than there are available seats. Nasrallah often volunteers one of Hizbullah's three-seat share in the cabinet to a non-Shi'ite ally in order to remove one hurdle in the face of cabinet formation.[19] Nasrallah's successful leadership demonstrates his ". . . self-adeptness and interpersonal intelligence."[20] His unpretentious speech, tinted with dry humor, attracts both ordinary and sophisticated Shi'ites, and occasionally members of other sects. Ayatollah Khomeini's prophetic leadership style inspired Nasrallah. The Shi'ite legacy of alienation, discrimination, and persecution rests on the recognition of the existence of God-decreed prophetic authority. Iranians transferred to Khomeini leadership authority because of their religious conceptions.[21] By extension, Lebanese Shi'ites passed on similar leadership qualities to Nasrallah.

THE POLITICAL FIGURE OF HASAN NASRALLAH

Born in 1960 to a humble family in Bazuriya village in south Lebanon, Hasan Nasrallah spent his formative years in the Karantina slum in east Beirut. He returned to his village in January 1976 when Lebanese Maronite Christian militiamen set the slum ablaze and massacred more than 1,000 of its inhabitants. Nasrallah's strong religious orientation manifested itself during his early years when, as a child, he walked to find a mosque for his daily prayers in predominantly Christian east Beirut where he spent his childhood. At the age of 16, he joined the Amal Movement, out of his admiration for its founder Musa al-Sadr. Its leaders appreciated his revolutionary zeal and assigned him to represent the Movement in the Biqa' before appointing him to its political council. Nasrallah's quick rise in its ranks did not prevent him, just like many other members in Amal, from quitting it in June 1982. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon was a watershed moment for the political development of Lebanese Shi'ites. Occupation brought the demise of secularism and nationalism and prompted the rise of political Islam, both Sunni and Shi'ite. Nasrallah and other religious members in Amal could not tolerate the acceptance of its leader Nabih Berri to join President Elias Sarkis' six-member committee that included the leader of the Lebanese Forces Bashir Gemayyil. His exit from Amal coincided with the rise of Hizbullah in Balbeck in the Biqa', which Nasrallah readily joined.[22] Hizbullah's chief in Beirut, Ibrahim Amin al-Sayyid, quickly determined that Nasrallah had unique leadership abilities and appointed him as his aide-de-camp. As a result of Hizbullah's organizational reshuffle after its formal launching, Nasrallah took al-Sayyid's position and quickly rose in the party hierarchy to become its chief executive officer. Immediately after Israel's assassination of Hizbullah's secretary general 'Abbas Musawi, the party's consultative council unanimously elected Nasrallah as his successor on February 16, 1992, even though he was not next in the chain of command (i.e., not Musawi's deputy).

After pulling out from the port city of Sidon in 1985, Israel established a security belt in south Lebanon and delegated the task of administering it to the SLA under the command of Antoine Lahd. The Israeli move put it, and its local proxies on a collision course with Hizbullah now bent on resistance. The death of Nasrallah's son Hadi during a military operation in south Lebanon won him respect and popular legitimacy among Lebanese Shi'ites and throughout Arab and Muslim countries. His dignified handling of his son's death gained him instant and broad sympathy: "My son the martyr chose this road by his own will. . . . This can't be a victory for the enemy. It is a victory and a source of pride for Hezbollah and for the logic of resistance in Lebanon . . ."[23] Arab publics contrasted Nasrallah's behavior with their heads of state who groomed their sons to inherit leadership. Even though his popularity remained high among Shi'ites,

his party's implication in the assassination of Rafiq Hariri and active involvement in suppressing the Syrian uprising have demonized him in Sunni Muslim eyes. For them, Nasrallah had indisputably shown his Iranian agenda and its precedence over pan-Arab and domestic Lebanese issues. Nasrallah's bragging about his membership in the party of the supreme leader and readiness to help Iran should it come under attack are widely known to the Lebanese public.[24] He reportedly addressed a group of Iranian students studying in Lebanon and divulged to them the true nature of Hizbullah's commitment to wilayat al-faqih. He told them that the party's central command takes seriously the policy orientation of the supreme leader and refrains from making decisions that might anger him. He added, sorrowfully, that the Maronite town of Jizzine and the Sunni city of Tripoli were not only Shi'ite but also important centers of its jurisprudence.[25] Hizbullah's intervention with the Iranian government forced the newspaper a few days later to retract its story as unverifiable.[26]

NASRALLAH'S UNIVERSALISTIC CHARISMA

Despite his religiosity, Nasrallah does not sound dogmatic, arrogant, or uncompromising. He has adeptly and eloquently harmonized and synchronized between the articulation of religious thought and practice on the ground. His direct speech evinces a simplicity of character, honesty, and transparency. He displays demonstrable asceticism, good manners, humility, and unwavering commitment to the wilayat al-faqih project. His attention to detail and follow-through made him proficient at identifying risks and enabled him to devise ingenious problem-solving techniques. Hizbullah noticed Nasrallah's diligence and knack for innovation and entrusted from 1982 to 1989 with the task of training a grassroots cadre for resisting Israeli occupation forces in south Lebanon. He frequently reiterated such phrases as: "Israel is strong only in our minds. When we free ourselves from the illusion of Israeli invincibility and start using our inner strength, you will find that this entity named Israel is weaker than a spider's web."[27]

Nasrallah promoted loyalty and self-sacrifice and experienced it personally. His eldest son Hadi lost his life during an encounter with the IDF in Mount Rafee in south Lebanon. As has already been indicated in the previous section, Hadi's death in battle won his father tremendous respect and admiration, and extended indisputable domestic legitimacy to Hizbullah's military activity, even by its outspoken Christian critics. Nasrallah instantly became a charismatic leader and a persuasive speaker. The death of Hadi Nasrallah bore good results for Hizbullah in the 1998 municipal election that it chose to contest. Hizbullah's candidates scored a big electoral victory in the vital municipality of Ghobayri in the south-

ern suburbs by winning all 12 seats. Ghobayri is the second most important municipality in Lebanon in terms of area and financial resources. Individual Hizbullah candidates even impinged on Berri's traditional areas of power in south Lebanon and won a few municipal seats.[28] The death of Hadi made Nasrallah an iconic figure and contributed mightily to his political dominance in Lebanon.

In February 1997 two Israeli helicopters collided with each other killing 73 elite troops. The incident sparked the formation of the Four Mothers movement to demand "an end to Israel's involvement in Lebanon."[29] Nasrallah used the fateful collision to tell the Israelis that they were unnecessarily wasting the lives of their young men in an unwinnable war. Seven months later, 12 elite Israeli troops of Shayetet 13 unit were ambushed in Ansariya in south Lebanon in a fateful mission based on misleading intelligence.[30] On the failed Israeli operation in Ansariya in September 1997, Nasrallah reminded Israel to leave Lebanon with no strings attached: "There is no option for the Israeli enemy except to unconditionally get out of Lebanon, and I reiterate that this is only a question of time."[31] When in response to the doomed Ansariya operation Israel threatened Hizbullah with a major military operation, Nasrallah responded defiantly: "We don't know if you're going to do it. If you do it, so be it. We welcome war. We are the descendants of Hussein. We are waiting."[32] Israel did not attack because it was contemplating an exit from the Lebanese quagmire. Nasrallah knew it—and yet he gained additional recognition for challenging the Israelis. Since he understood that Israel wanted to withdraw from south Lebanon, he sought to capitalize on it by broadening the base of Hizbullah's political support.

In February of 1996, Nasrallah announced an initiative to deal with the issue of SLA prisoners and detainees in the custody of Hizbullah. His move followed the unconditional release of three of its militiamen, two Shi'ites, and one Christian. He noted that ". . . Israel had abandoned them, while causing an international furor over the remains of fallen troops in south Lebanon."[33] When the IDF suddenly pulled out from the security belt in May 2000 some 6,000 SLA troops, collaborators, and family members sought refuge in Israel. Many of them returned within a year after Nasrallah saw to it that they received an acquittal, pardon, or a lenient sentence.[34] They received the same treatment given to those who preferred to surrender to Hizbullah instead of defecting to Israel. Nasrallah played a masterful game by showing leniency and magnanimity because vindictiveness would not have helped him win over Christians, given his realization that he could not count on the backing of the Sunnis. In 2010, a prominent official in the FPM and a close associate of Aoun was arrested on the grounds of collaboration with Israel. He received a mild 18-month sentence and returned to a hero's welcome in his Maronite town in north Lebanon.[35] Nasrallah's tactics worked well in meaningfully reducing Christian apprehensions about Hizbullah's ambitions. A

public opinion poll of Lebanese Christians conducted in 2012 showed that only 12 percent of them expressed concern about Hizbullah's military component. The vast majority of the respondents seemed more focused on the lack of electrical supplies (52 percent) and worsening economic conditions (36 percent).[36]

Nasrallah did not leave a stone unturned to garner national support for Hizbullah, especially after domestic pressures increased on him to dismantle its military component, and transform it into a civilian movement after the Israeli withdrawal from the south. He retorted: "The call we are hearing nowadays to shift to political and social activities are misleading because they imply that we are not already involved in them."[37] The truth is that Hizbullah's social welfare functions are central to its mission and have antedated its military activities. Commitment to the public, which it refers to as societal jihad, is built into the foundations of Hizbullah's jihad concept.[38] Nasrallah foresaw that pressure would soon be brought to bear on him to disarm. He was not oblivious to the fact that Israeli politicians wanted to find a reason to justify extricating the country from the Lebanese quandary. In April 1998, Israeli prime minister Netanyahu revealed that he would implement the 1978 U.N. Security Council resolution 425 that called on Israel to pull out from Lebanon. In the 1999 general elections, Ehud Barak's platform included withdrawing the IDF from "the Lebanese quagmire."[39]

Nasrallah preempted the withdrawal of the IDF from the south by targeting those Shi'ites who did not believe in wilayat al-faqih and Sunnis dismayed with the FT's monopoly of representing the interests of their sect. In a shrewd move to enlist them in serving Hizbullah's domestic objectives, he revealed in November 1997 a plan for the formation of Saraya al-Muqawama al-Lubnaniya [the Lebanese resistance brigades] as a separate military formation from Hizbullah. Membership in the Saraya exempted its recruits from the strict religious criteria that governed the behavior of Hizbullah's fighters, and yet controlled by it.[40] In an event to honor Saraya al-Muqawama, Nasrallah demanded the maintenance of strict combat readiness and emphasized that the "battle with the Israeli enemy had not ended yet."[41] This paramilitary force never saw action against the IDF, not even during the 2006 Summer War. Their primary role focused on police action to keep at bay Sunni areas resentful of Hizbullah. The main contribution of Saraya al-Muqawama manifested itself in June 2013 when it set the stage for the Lebanese army's successful operation to rout the Sidon-based movement of Salafi sheikh Ahmad al-Asir that harbored intense animosity toward Hizbullah.

Ecstatic about the Israeli withdrawal from the south, Nasrallah tried in 2002 to maintain the momentum and pushed harder by raising the question of Lebanon's neglected water share of the Wazzani River that flows into Hasbani, which is a major tributary of the Jordan River Basin. The Johnston Water Plan of 1955 set Lebanon's annual share at 30 million

cubic meters. Israel's destruction of water diversion equipment in 1965 and Arab-Israeli wars prevented Lebanon from utilizing its water allotment. Nasrallah used his influence with the Lebanese Council of the South to lay out a 20-inch-wide pipeline to draw water for irrigation purposes. Israel considered the Lebanese action a cause for war. The United States swayed Lebanese officials to avert an escalation in the conflict and settle for a four-inch-wide pipeline to supply ten million cubic meters of drinking water to a few Lebanese border villages. This did not prevent Nasrallah from boasting that: "today we can freely drink from our own waters without owing anybody anything."[42] Nasrallah's account ignored what happened behind the scene between U.S. mediators and Lebanese officials. Nasrallah instigated the crisis, which prompted a bellicose response from Israel, hoping to draw from Wazzani water for irrigation purposes. He ended up accepting what the Israelis offered, i.e., drinking water. He developed the practice of deflecting the attention of his audience from a mediocre performance by quickly shifting the focus of his speech to a timely Palestinian issue. For example, Nasrallah delivered a defiant speech on the occasion of the second anniversary of the second Palestinian Intifada: "We are determined to liberate our land and we will drink from our water . . . and let Sharon do whatever he wants to do, bully and threaten as he wishes."[43]

Nasrallah knew that the time for military resistance was over idespite his insistence that "no one can question the right of the resistance to operate in Shib'a Farms."[44] Lebanon failed to produce evidence to the UN that Shib'a Farms belonged to it because Israel seized them from Syria during the 1967 Six Day War. The 50 square kilometer Farms lay in an un-demarcated area between Lebanon and Syria and their occupation by the latter in 1964 did not make the news in Beirut. The Syrians said they could not provide the maps to prove Lebanon's ownership of the Farms since Syrian and Lebanese engineers were unable to access them "to define the borders."[45] Neither Iran nor Syria wanted Israel to return the Farms to Lebanon because it would have denied Hizbullah the justification for clinging to their weapons in the name of resisting occupation. Nasrallah did not give up because he could not open a front in Shib'a Farms and made up for it by stressing the importance of maintaining Hizbullah's military vigilance for freeing Lebanese prisoners in Israel. In a speech following the Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon in May 2000 he confidently assured his audience that ". . . all prisoners in Israel will soon return to you. . . . and the forthcoming days will prove that Ehud Barak and his cabinet have no other option."[46] As in all his speeches, his deep voice exuded confidence and self-assuredness, yet he knew that Israel wanted to close its Lebanese dossier, even though it took the two sides eight years to strike the final prisoner exchange with the help of German mediation. The termination of the armed conflict with Israel forced Nasrallah to focus, instead, on Palestinians living under

occupation. In a telephone address to the Palestinians in a public ceremony in Nablus on the 13th anniversary of the formation of Hamas, Nasrallah said:

> Let it be known to you that the responsibility laid on you is huge, historical and exceptional. You are at the forefront of this confrontation for the recovery of Palestine and Jerusalem. We all need to acquire the culture that informs us that we are capable of winning . . . and that Israel is an ephemeral entity. . . .[47]

Nasrallah never forgot that he owed his popularity to his taking up arms against Israel and for committing himself to defend the Palestinian cause. It is difficult to find a speech of his that does not speak about the right of the Palestinians to fight for what is rightfully theirs, or to ridicule Israeli leaders. During a meeting between Iranian president Mohammad Khatami and Nasrallah in April 2001, the two leaders assessed the outcome of a Tehran-held international conference in support of the Palestinian Intifada and reiterated their commitment to back the Palestinian people.[48] Then an opportunity arose for Hizbullah to forge close ties with Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), when, in December 2002, Israel expelled 415 Palestinian Islamic activists to south Lebanon. Barred by the Lebanese army from entering the country, they were stuck outside the border village of Marj al-Zuhur facing SLA positions. Hizbullah's cadre soon converged on the tent camp of the deportees and, in addition to providing them with the sustenance, they convinced them during regular nightly discussions and debates of the merits of accelerating suicide bombings. A Shi'ite practice, whose roots go back to Hussein's martyrdom at Karbala', suicide missions were frowned upon by Sunni jurists in accordance with the Koranic verse "And make not your own hands contribute to (your) destruction."[49] Nasrallah had been, even before the deportations, prodding the Palestinians to follow the example of Hizbullah and launch more suicide bombings: "Martyrdom is the only option available for the Palestinian people. Banning it by some religious sites aims at ending the intifadas by taking away their last weapon."[50] Surprisingly, Nasrallah's advice to the Palestinians came after Hizbullah had abandoned suicide missions as ineffective, and opted instead for planting roadside bombs. Hizbullah had hardly ordered a suicide mission after carrying out 36 such operations between 1982–1986.[51]

Nasrallah continued, however, to equate between Israeli occupation of the West Bank and its occupation of south Lebanon. "How could an old and feeble man such as Sharon intimidate us? Our [Lebanese and Palestinian] peoples realized that bloody jihad was their path to victory and salvation. There is no room for compromise and surrender."[52] He appears to have been more interested in winning over Palestinian support and cooperation than in their ability to drive out the Israelis from the West Bank. It would have been a miscalculation for Hizbullah and Ha-

mas/PIJ to have assumed that the Israeli terms of engagement were the same in south Lebanon and the West Bank. While Israel was willing to withdraw from south Lebanon, it categorically refused to do the same in the West Bank, which it refers to as Judea and Samaria, part of the ancient Kingdom of Israel. Nasrallah's poor advice to the Palestinians gave Israel the justification it needed to build a security barrier that made it easier to grab more land. He was desperate to ally himself with the Palestinians to help him relax the unrelenting pressure on him to disarm. Even though the Palestinians held him in high esteem, his difficulties with Lebanese Sunnis and Christians soared, especially after Hariri's assassination. He won a brief respite when war broke out in July 2006. Naturally, the Lebanese did not like the war that forced 900,000 residents to flee the south, damage the infrastructure, and halt the economy, yet they were amazed that Hizbullah kept fighting the Israelis until the end of the 34-day war and inflicted significant casualties on them.

Most Lebanese, including Nasrallah's opponents, were enthused by Hizbullah's daring raid that ignited the war. Especially appealing to them was Nasrallah's defiant statement on the outcome of the raid and the capture of two IDF soldiers: "Even if the whole world comes against us it won't be able to retrieve the two soldiers except through indirect negotiations and exchange of prisoners."[53] The end of the war brought along with it an end to the tenuous national solidarity. With the beginning of the Syrian uprising in 2011, Nasrallah lost interest in expressing support for the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. His new focus became the takfiris [a reference used to describe Sunni fundamentalists]. His occasional mention of the Palestinians in his speeches seemed like lip-service: "Hizbullah and the Lebanese resistance will stand by the Palestinian people's uprising and resistance in our heart, will power, hope and destiny . . ."[54] His discourse changed, and his image as a trans-sectarian leader gave way to a divisive sectarian warlord.

NASRALLAH'S SHIFTING DISCOURSE STRUCTURE: FROM UNIVERSALISM TO PARTICULARISM

The assassination of powerful and internationally connected Hariri removed the major obstacle to Nasrallah's emergence as Lebanon's unrivaled leader, and dominant of its ". . . mainstream body-politic."[55] Three weeks after the assassination, he used an address to 800,000 supporters gathered in downtown Beirut to invite "our partners in the homeland [Sunni and Christian opponents of Hizbullah]"[56] to come to the dialogue table to discuss everything, but they were not in a mood to listen. Hizbullah stood accused of assassinating Hariri and meeting with him would lead to nothing more than endorsing his preeminent leadership. They dismissed his overture to them. Instead, the FT called for a massive rally

in downtown Beirut that attracted one million opponents of Hizbullah and its military wing to denounce Hariri's assassination. The rally ushered in the birth of the loose anti-Hizbullah March 14 coalition. The new development did not dissuade Nasrallah from expressing complete willingness ". . . to discuss everything with the Lebanese political parties . . . and all propositions are negotiable . . .'[57] March 14 leaders did not take his offer seriously because he seemed to be trying to buy time to absorb the repercussions of Hariri's assassination, and also because his willingness to discuss any proposition rang hollow given his outright refusal to disarm Hizbullah.

Nasrallah insisted that the MoU signed between Aoun's FPM and Hizbullah in February 2006 constituted the first building block for the unity of the Lebanese people. Paying lip service to elusive national unity, he denied that Hizbullah targeted any Lebanese faction, and frivolously extended an open invitation to all political groups to join it.[58] Nasrallah never admitted that he just needed a strong non-Shi'ite ally to help him stand against Saudi-backed Sunnis. When Hariri finally acquiesced to Hizbullah and agreed to engage in dialogue with it, Nasrallah summarily dismissed him, saying: "We have been hearing things from the Future Movement about the dialogue sessions, that make us feel as if it is doing the Lebanese a favor by taking part [in them]."[59] Nasrallah's unshakeable allegiance to the Islamic Republic and unwillingness to disarm immobilized the government and put the Lebanese state on hold. He sounded disingenuous when he alleged that "our ambition is to build a strong and capable state that can defend Lebanese sovereignty against Israeli greed and machination."[60] He could not have been serious about slamming at the United States when he fully knew that it spared Lebanon from imposing financial sanctions on it only because it perceived it as a soft state hegemonized by Hizbullah. He bombasted Americans who ". . . act as masters with slaves. . . . But we, the Party of Wilayat al-Faqih, are masters with Wali al-Faqih."[61] No one in Lebanon, including his followers, believed him when he said he aspired to witness the establishment of ". . . a strong army that can confront any Israeli aggression on Lebanon . . . [before] we can easily resolve the question of the resistance."[62] He never ceased to advertise his version of a national strategy that relied heavily on Hizbullah's military wing to defend Lebanon and protect its interests against Israel machinations because the country ". . . cannot be protected by the truce agreement or by international guarantees, which mean American guarantees. . . . We don't trust Bush can even protect a cat in Lebanon."[63]

Faced with soaring disapproval of Hizbullah's actions that dragged the country into war with Israel, Nasrallah resorted to empty rhetoric: "We will not allow the death of Lebanon. We want the country to remain strong and cohesive."[64] He linked the well-being of Lebanon to its ability to maintaining brotherly ties with neighboring Syria. For him, it was

Lebanon's destiny of demography and geopolitics to permanently foster harmonious relations with Syria, since there was no escaping from it: "Syrian presence in Lebanon is not only military; it has always been present in the minds and hearts and will continue in the future."[65] He advocated the formation of a real power-sharing formula that accepted Hizbullah's entitlement to maintain its armed wing and recognized Lebanon's special relationship with Syria and Iran. Once this arrangement is reached Hizbullah would be willing to relinquish to its allies whatever political dividends accrued to it. Having defined the parameters of the operation of the cabinet, he demanded ". . . the formation of a national unity government that can be assured by the one-third guarantee."[66] The one-third guarantee would grant Hezbollah and its allies the ability to block the enactment of policies that disfavored them. When Nasrallah failed to coerce the FT's prime minister Fuad Seniora to give the Hizbullah-led opposition in the cabinet veto power over its policies, Nasrallah ordered his fighters to take West Beirut by force, even though he previously insisted that military action is inconceivable: "Hizbullah will never use its military capabilities internally."[67]

Hizbullah has always had zero tolerance for government intervention in its activities, even when they violated U.N.S.C resolution 1701. In 2007, security forces in Beirut stopped a Hizbullah truck transporting rockets covered with bales of hay to the area of UNIFIL operation south of the Litani. An angry Nasrallah retorted that he "would not forgive anyone for a usurped bullet because his party's arsenal is a right sanctioned both by temporal laws and divine decrees."[68] In this instance, Nasrallah behaved just like medieval European monarchs whose entitlement to the divine right of kings clashed with the fledgling modern foundations of government procedures, and prevailed over them. Neither the army nor the security forces attempted to interrupt Hizbullah's vehicular movement after that incident. Nasrallah has always had reasons to fully remove Hizbullah's military component from the agenda of discussions, as he completely understood that he would lose his political leverage without it. As the source of his pride and confidence, Nasrallah used stern and dismissive language to comment on U.N. Secretary-General Ban Kimoon's concerns about the burgeoning power of Hizbullah: "I was pleased when I heard Ban saying he was concerned with the special power of Hezbollah. Your worries, Mr. secretary-general, comfort and please us. We want you, the U.S. and Israel to be concerned."[69] The deployment of UNIFIL in the South Litani area made it officially off-limits to Hizbullah and meant that provoking Israel would bring about disastrous consequences. Nasrallah sufficed himself to express satisfaction, in the face of military reality with Israel who ". . . is refraining from waging war on Lebanon and Gaza because it knows very well that such a move would be costly due to the resistance's capabilities."[70] In the aftermath of the 2006 Summer War, and his success in controlling the joints of

the Lebanese political system, Nasrallah identified a three-pronged mission for Hizbullah and its military capability: (1) Lebanon's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ); (2) fighting takfiri [accusers of apostasy] Sunni militants; (3) Renewing interest in the Palestinian question.

The origin of Lebanon's energy dispute with Israel goes back to 2000 when Lebanon accepted a U.N. maritime Blue Line bulging into its territorial waters. Both Israel and the United States. recognize the maritime line as a permanent White Line. This line has deprived Lebanon of 860 sq. Km area in the most promising Block 9 in its EEZ.[71] Nasrallah has taken it upon himself to protect Lebanon's offshore gas assets. He called the standoff with Israel a "battle for all of Lebanon . . . [and] if Lebanon's Higher Defence Council were to decide that Israeli offshore oil and gas plants . . . should be forbidden from working, I promise they would stop working within hours."[72] Nasrallah's approach to this issue is sheer Machiavellian trickery since he knows that such a decision is impossible because it means the destruction of Lebanon. Nasrallah, like all other Lebanese politicians, knows that the United States is the final arbiter in all matters relevant to the maritime dispute between Lebanon and Israel. His familiar threats of military action ring hollow: "If you (Israelis) prevent us (from exploration of gas and oil), if you bomb us we will bomb you, and if you hit us we will hit you."[73] Nasrallah kept silent when the Lebanese Petroleum Administration exempted foreign oil companies from drilling in the disputed area of the country's EEZ.

Hizbullah became involved in the Syrian armed conflict soon after the regime decided to militarize it in 2011. Nasrallah gave different reasons for committing his men to participate in its intensifying war. He first said they went there on a mission to defend Shi'ite holy shrines in Damascus, especially the Sitt Zaynab Mosque. Soon afterward, he said their mission in Syria sought to defend Lebanese nationals living on the Syrian side of the border as a result of the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement that carved Greater Lebanon out of Syrian territory. Finally, and to coincide with Hizbullah's direct involvement in the May 2013 Battle of al-Qusayr against the rebels, Nasrallah declared that "if Syria falls into the hands of America, Israel and the takfiris, the people of our region will enter a dark period."[74] After winning in al-Qusayr his statements about direct military intervention in Syria became unabashed and unreserved: "Our fighters are present on Syrian soil . . . to confront all the dangers it faces from the international, regional and takfiri attack on this country and region."[75] At a later stage in the war, he justified his continued involvement in it with the pretext of keeping the rebels away from the Lebanese border. He made it clear that Hizbullah would take matters into its hands if the Lebanese government did not liberate Arsal's outskirts from the jihadis.[76] Nasrallah was unambiguous about his next battle intentions: "I confirm our determination and our firm and strong will that we will no

longer accept any terrorist takfiri to remain on our borders, our outskirts and close to our villages."[77]

Nasrallah frequently antagonized Lebanese Sunnis by continuously describing Syrian rebels as takfiris when it was ordinary Syrians who took to the streets to demand justice and freedom. The Iranians and the Syrian regimes had deliberately and successfully deflected the course of the peaceful uprising into a war against radical Sunni terrorism. Hizbullah acted as a proxy and obediently executed the directives of its ideological masters in Tehran toward this end. Its involvement in the Syrian conflict exacerbated already rising levels of Sunni vs. Shi'ite tensions in Lebanon and triggered terrorist activity against Shi'ites across Lebanon. Hizbullah's military victories in Lebanon and Syria enabled it to virtually monopolize political power in Lebanon and made "Sunnis feeling weak and frustrated."[78]

Despite its battlefield achievements, Hizbullah became increasingly isolated from mainstream Sunni Muslims, regardless of their nationality. Nasrallah opted to attract media attention to the Palestine question, particularly after U.S. president Donald Trump delivered on his election campaign promise to relocate the U.S. embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Demonstrations broke out in the southern suburbs on this occasion as angry protesters chanted familiar anti-American and anti-Israeli slogans. In yet another empty rhetorical statement that sounded unconvincing and incongruent with reality, Nasrallah shouted that "we are proud of our Lebanese unity around the Palestinian cause and the righteous cause of Al Quds."[79] He complained and warned fleetingly against Trump's "intention to announce his so-called 'deal of the century' which is aimed against the Palestinian cause."[80] He implored the so-called resistance axis "to devote all its power and time to the Palestinians. I call on all the resistance factions in the region to unite and put one common strategy and practical plan to face this threat."[81] Nasrallah had already lost most of the influence he once had in agitating the masses across the sectarian divide.

UNINTERRUPTED ISRAELI AIR RAIDS TARNISH NASRALLAH'S IMAGE

Nasrallah did not want war with Israel in 2006, but the situation went out of control after Hizbullah's bloody cross-border raid. Given the magnitude of Lebanese human casualties, displacement, infrastructure damage, and expansion of UNIFIL's role, he admitted that "had we known that the kidnapping of the soldiers would have led to this, we would definitely not have done it."[82] Less than two years later, in February 2008, the chief of Hizbullah international operations Imad Mughniyah who stood accused of masterminding several terrorist attacks against the United

States. and Israel, was assassinated in a Damascus suburb allegedly in a "joint CIA-Mossad operation."[83] Israel held him responsible for the 1994 bombing of the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires that killed 85 people, and the U.S. implicated him in the 1985 hijacking of a TWA plane to Beirut in which an American navy diver was murdered.[84] Surprisingly, or not surprisingly, Nasrallah's pledge of searing retaliation did not occur.[85] Seven years later, an Israeli air raid killed his son Jihad, who commanded Hizbullah's Golan Front along with six field operatives.[86] Their killing amounted to a slap in the face of the IRGC and Hizbullah and drew a limited response in Shib'a Farms. A roadside bomb planted by Hizbullah killed two Israeli troops, and its mild revenge caused Israel to refrain from escalation.[87]

In response to an Israeli air raid on one of its positions in the Biqa' Valley, Hizbullah issued a condemnatory statement using language reminiscent of official Arab responses to Israeli provocations that sought to avoid military escalation. The statement said: "This Israeli aggression will not stand without a response from the resistance, and the resistance will choose the appropriate time, place and method of response."[88] The content of the text indicated that it had decided against retaliation. Nasrallah's pledges of retaliation that did not occur became the norm rather than the exception. Israeli overflights of Lebanese territory increased following Hizbullah's military involvement in the Syrian conflict. In a departure from his defiant and bellicose statements, Nasrallah told Hizbullah's parliamentary deputy Hasan Fadlallah to urge Lebanese president Michel Suleiman and Prime Minister Najib Miqati to exert pressure on the international community to halt Israel's breach of Lebanon's territorial sovereignty.[89] In December 2015, an Israeli air raid near Damascus killed Samir Qantar [dubbed the dean of Lebanese prisoners because he had been in prison in Israel since his participation in the 1979 Nahariya attack], along with several ranking Hizbullah and IRGC personnel. His assassination delivered a powerful symbolic slap to Hizbullah because one of the reasons for its July 2006 cross-border raid was to kidnap Israeli soldiers and swap them for Lebanese prisoners, specifically Qantar. Nasrallah reserved "the right to retaliate for his assassination [Samir al-Qantar] at the time and place of our choice."[90] Hizbullah's minor retaliation two weeks later in Shib'a Farms did not inflict any Israeli casualties, and confirmed its reluctance to provoke Israel into war.[91]

The Israeli air force targeted arms convoys destined for Hezbollah almost 100 times during the first five years of the Syrian armed conflict.[92] The pace of the air raids continued to escalate. Israeli Intelligence Minister Israel Katz acknowledged "that in the last two years [since 2016] Israel has taken military action [against Hizbullah and IRGC sites] more than 200 times within Syria itself."[93] Nasrallah did not have much more to say other than that Hizbullah has "every conceivable type of weapon" that can "break the Israeli national morale and immunity during the upcom-

ing war. . . . Hizbullah is ready and prepared for a confrontation in the Galilee and beyond the Galilee."[94] In commenting on Nasrallah's frequent announcements that Hizbullah is training its fighters to overrun and capture Israeli settlements in the Galilee, senior IDF officers are confident that "Israel's response to any cross-border move will be far in excess of anything he'd expected."[95] Netanyahu was even more vociferous than IDF officers in trying to convince Nasrallah to tone down his extreme rhetoric:

> I heard the words that came from the direction of Hezbollah, and they came from the same person who said after [the second Lebanon war in] 2006 that if he knew what Israel's response would have been to the kidnapping of our soldiers, he would have considered twice whether to do so. So today I recommend he think not twice, but 20 times, because if he confronts us he will get a blow that he cannot even imagine.[96]

Nasrallah had very little to celebrate in the grossly uneven and one-sided confrontation with Israel on Syrian territory except to note—after Syrian air defense shot down a lone Israeli fighter plane for the first time since the 1973 October War—that "Syria and its allies in the axis of resistance managed to shatter the prestige of the Israeli occupation."[97] In his celebratory statement, Nasrallah did not mention that in the wake of the plane's loss, Israel launched its most comprehensive air raids on targets inside Syria since the 1982 Lebanon War.[98]

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EIGHT
Hizbullah's Foreign Ventures

Hizbullah never focused on local Lebanese affairs because it saw itself as a vehicle for achieving a much broader regional plan. Its interest in local politics did not go beyond ensuring the freedom of activity between its Lebanese base and foreign destinations. It did not consider Lebanon ". . . as the main prize. Its preferred objective is to maintain itself as an alternative state, keeping the Lebanese state at arm's length while establishing a modus vivendi with it."[1] Hizbullah has perceived Lebanon with its legacy of persistent inequality and sectarian tensions as "a microcosm of the Middle East's problems and the breathing lung of its problems."[2] In addition to advertising strong religious virtue, it pledged to continue to stand firm against Israel, combat Western cultural invasion, promote Islamic morality, defeat the promoters of apostasy and advocate Islamic universalist values. Hizbullah's cross-territorial ideological ambitions created local, regional and international opposition to its project. Member of Hizbullah parliamentary bloc Nawaf Musawi conveniently oversimplified the problems facing Lebanon by blaming them on Israel and radical Sunni movements, whom he described as takfiri. Even though Musawi lashed out at the Future Trend he, nevertheless, seemed eager to communicate with its officials. He noted that ". . . his party is adamant on pursuing dialogue with the rival Future Movement despite the . . . anti-Hezbollah diatribe by former Prime Minister Fouad Siniora."[3] The 13th Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held in Istanbul in April 2016, whose focus emphasized the need to overcome the Muslim world's interstate conflicts "condemned Iran's role in conflicts across the Middle East and accused Hizbullah . . . of supporting terrorism and fueling instability in the region."[4]

In July 2017, the Lebanese army said it mounted an offensive on ISIS at the Syrian border, while Hizbullah stated that it launched a pincer

offensive from the Syrian side of the frontier. The army, who depended on U.S. largesse for military supplies, said it was not coordinating the assault with Hizbullah or the Syrian army.[5] Even though Nasrallah tactfully said that Lebanon's military and security officials played a significant role in the operation, he preempted the army announcement and made it clear that "the Arsal operation was solely decided by Hezbollah."[6] He seemed keen on emphasizing that Hizbullah had become the trusted defender of the land, the pacesetter of regional liberation and, when needed, the articulator of the Shi'ite Arab awakening. In connection with the latter, Hizbullah issued a stern statement condemning an attack on Shi'ites in Egypt: "The ongoing slander campaign led by fundamentalists and foreign puppeteers has led to the murder of the scholar Sheikh Hasan Shahata and a number of believers."[7] It reacted more strongly to Saudi Arabia's execution of prominent Shi'ite cleric Nimr al-Nimr, which it described as an assassination meant to silence resistance to injustice.[8] No matter what it said or did, Hizbullah always stood faithful to the Iranian Islamic Revolution and its ideology.

PROMOTING IRANIAN INTERESTS

Hizbullah is a virtual empire within the fragile state of Lebanon. Directly created by Iran, its strategic mission goes beyond resisting Israeli occupation and controlling the joints of the Lebanese political system to exporting Khomeini's Islamic revolution and wilayat al-faqih.[9] There is endless evidence to support the claim that Hizbullah is an Iranian Trojan Horse in the Middle East and possibly beyond. Hizbullah has been aptly described as a cavalcade that "covers a wide range of what could be termed Shi'a Islamist militancy in the Middle East . . . [that is] part of the vanguard for furthering the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's 'Islamic Revolution.'"[10] Nasrallah has never hidden his ultimate political aim. He confidently and proudly repeated it: "Our crystal-clear project—being ideological believers—is to establish an Islamic state in which Lebanon is a part of a greater Islamic state ruled by the 12th Imam and his deputy wali al-faqih Imam Khomeini."[11] During Hizbullah's participation in the battle for East Aleppo that enabled the regime forces to retake it in December 2016, a Hizbullah commander in the area acknowledged that: "We are with the Iranians. . . . We have no other choice. . . . We are under their command."[12] Former Hizbullah secretary-general Sheikh Subhi at-Tufaili pointed out that: "Hizbullah would not have participated in the Syrian war had it not been for orders from Tehran to defend Asad's regime."[13]

In December 2013, unknown assailants assassinated in the southern suburbs Hizbullah's military commander Hassan al-Laqqis, who vehemently opposed military intervention in Syria. In a meeting that involved

Nasrallah and Iranian ambassador in Lebanon Mohammad Fathali, Laqqis said: "Our involvement in the war in Syria is a form of apostasy because we are supporting an onerous tyrant against an unarmed population."[14] Lebanon's March 14 general secretariat condemned Hizbullah's subservience to Iran because its "military adventurism in Syria, Iraq and Yemen and political gambling put Lebanon under its mercy by elevating the interests of Iran at the expense of national interest."[15] The Lebanese minister for refugee affairs Mu'in al-Mir'bi lashed out at "the activities of the world's premier terrorist party [Hizbullah] that acts upon Iranian instructions. . . . To be truthful to ourselves and others, we must condemn its behavior."[16] Nasrallah could not hide his satisfaction at the imminent signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action [JCPOA]—which referred to the Iranian nuclear dossier—between Iran and the five-plus-one group. Overtaken by joy, he assured his supporters "that the Iranian nuclear deal will be big and important to the region. . . . Iran will become richer and wealthier and will also become more influential."[17]

Shortly after signing the nuclear deal in July 2015 Iranian minister of foreign affairs Muhammad Javad Zarif visited Lebanon and met with Hizbullah's chief Hasan Nasrallah. The joint statement that highlighted Iran's readiness to cooperate with Arabs to fight terrorism ". . . touched on the impact of the Iranian nuclear deal on the region as well as solutions to the ongoing regional wars and conflicts."[18] In his meetings with government officials in Beirut Zarif did not forget to laud Hizbullah's unique role model as a resistance movement for Lebanon and the region.[19]

THE EVER-PRESENT ISRAELI MENACE AND PALESTINIAN QUESTION

From its very beginnings, Hizbullah took it upon itself to resist the United States who, in its parlance, drove the forces of international arrogance and ensured the persistence of global injustice. The speeches and declarations of its leaders drew a bleak picture of the United States for its collusion with its Israeli bastion in the Middle East to destabilize the region and subjugate its peoples, namely the stateless and displaced Palestinian people. Since the establishment of Hizbullah occurred amid the Iraq-Iran war, and in light of sizable Saudi investment in the Iraqi war effort, it has invariably maintained a hostile stand against the Kingdom and condemned it to nothing more than an American tool and an accomplice of Israel. Given its clandestine ties with Israel, Nasrallah claimed that Saudi Arabia even incited Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to declare war on Hizbullah and Lebanon.[20] Hizbullah's officials have systematically insisted that the Islamic resistance is quite capable of deterring Israeli adventurism. Quibbling over the ministerial policy statement, and

whether it should refer to Hizbullah's resistance, its deputy chief Naim Qassem retorted: "Lebanon owes its resistance for deterring Israel. Lebanon does not exist, is worthless without the resistance."[21] During a visit to Lebanon a few months after the beginning of the Syrian uprising, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon denounced Syrian president Bashar Asad's use of excessive force against his people and reminded him that the Arab region's old order of hegemonic rule had expired.[22] Qassem sermonized him: "He [Ki-moon] should have mentioned the continued Israeli aggression on Lebanon . . . instead of giving the Lebanese lessons and stances that serve the interests of the U.S.-Israeli project. . . ."[23]

The sectarian nature of Hizbullah's military intervention in the Syrian armed conflict that aimed at crushing a primarily Sunni uprising against a repressive Alawite regime dampened its relations with Hamas, who withdrew its exiled leadership from Damascus and called upon Nasrallah to pull out his fighters from Syria.[24] Hamas, as most other Palestinians did, had lost faith in Hizbullah's anti-Israeli claims. During the Gaza 2014 war, the commander of the Quds Brigade Qassem Suleimani declared that Iran stood ready to support the Palestinian resistance. Senior Hamas member Musa Abu Marzuk took him on his offer and called upon Hizbullah to open a second front against Israel to ease the pressure on Hamas. He knew it would not fire a single shot at Israel, and only wanted to demonstrate that Hizbullah was not a resistance party and did not offer anything to Palestine except empty talk.[25] The Egyptian coup of July 3, 2013, that overthrew MB-President Muhammad Mursi increased the regional isolation of Hamas and coerced it to inch closer to rebuilding its ties with Iran and its "axis of resistance." Hamas had compelling tactical reasons for patching up its core ideological differences with Hizbullah, primarily regarding the Syrian uprising and the latter's implementation of a sectarian agenda in suppressing the Sunni uprising. Israel and Egypt imposed a joint blockade of Gaza after Hamas expelled Fateh from Gaza in 2007 that made life unbearable for the majority of its residents.

Hizbullah managed to mend the cracks in the relationship between Iran and the cash-starved Hamas. It convinced its beleaguered leadership to send a delegation led by two members of its political bureau to Tehran to attend the celebrations marking the 37th anniversary of the Iranian Revolution.[26] Thus, in response to the April 2016 Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) summit in Istanbul that labeled Hizbullah a terrorist organization, Abu Marzuk found himself perfunctorily compelled to exonerate it from this charge, and emphasized that if such "categorization is allowed all of us will finally be recognized as such."[27] Hizbullah's anti-Israeli rhetoric continued without letup. In one of many redundant lip service positions on Palestine, Hizbullah's official in charge of the dossier of Palestinian refugee camps in south Lebanon Khalil Hussein confidently announced that "the project of the resistance in the region has won

again by defeating ISIS. These victories draw us closer to ending the Zionist occupation of Palestine."[28]

On the occasion of the 37th anniversary of the International Quds Day that Iran immediately introduced after the success of the Islamic Revolution, Nasrallah expressed "the unwavering commitment of Hizbullah and Iran to the central cause [Palestine] and lauded the role of Iran in the rejectionist axis [rejects recognition of and normalization with Israel]."[29] Listening to Nasrallah speaking on Palestine loudly and threateningly in open-air rallies or from a closed-circuit screen, one gets the impression that the time has come to deliver on his promise to destroy the Jewish state. Hizbullah's propaganda machinery tries to convince skeptics that the sole objective of Israel is to destroy it because it is the only serious and ferocious defender of the Palestinian cause. As one outlet put it "the Palestinian people realize that Hizbullah's promise is truthful, even though we do not know when zero hour [of liberation] occurs."[30] Hizbullah's discourse on Palestine is rhetorical and loaded with "a lot of fanfare with no substance,"[31] and is mainly intended to fulfill the expectations of its credulous followers, and regain its respect and status in the broader Muslim world.

SHORING UP BASHAR ASAD'S REGIME

By the end of 2011, Hizbullah developed the position that Asad's regime had become unsustainable. At such a critical point Khamenei decided to militarize the Syrian conflict and actively immerse Hizbullah in it. Hizbullah positioned itself for intervention in Syria less than a year after the beginning of the uprising in March 2011. An official statement noted that the regional situation is ". . . difficult, harsh and complicated. . . . We fear the [Syrian] conflict will spread to Lebanon."[32] The turning point in its involvement in the raging Syrian upheaval occurred in July 2012 right after a massive explosion in Damascus that killed top military and security members of the Crisis Cell tasked with clamping down on the uprising.[33] Hizbullah's intervention in the Syrian uprising at the behest of Iran, and regardless of the excuses given for it, angered civilian and combatant Sunnis. A Syrian literary forum had some harsh words for Nasrallah: "The master of the resistance [Hasan Nasrallah] is shameless . . . with his rifle aimed in the wrong direction [Syria]. . . . He poked his nose in the wrong place. He did not have to take sides, and he could remain neutral."[34] Hizbullah could not come up with a solid and clear justification for going to war in Syria. Just a few days before sending his militiamen to drive the anti-Asad regime rebels from Qusayr Nasrallah thundered that "Syria has real friends in the region and the world will not let Syria fall in the hands of America, Israel or Takfiri groups."[35] He did not tell his audience what makes Qusayr relevant to Israel or the United States. He

knew, however, that seizing it by the rebels would cut off the regime in Damascus from its lifeline and hasten its capitulation.

Hizbullah's preemptive military campaign in Qusayr, which it seized from the rebels in May 2013 had nothing to do with Lebanese security either. Qusayr lies next to a strategic road juncture that links Damascus to the coast and Aleppo. Its capture aimed at keeping the regime's lifeline open to its Alawite base of support and the vital ports of Latakia and Tartus. Hizbullah's intrusion into Syria had antedated impinging on the security of Lebanese Shi'ite areas by an-Nusra and ISIS. Syrian opposition groups accuse the regimes in Damascus and Tehran of improper collusion with ISIS that made it possible for it to rise and expand in Syria. They believed the ploy would rehabilitate Asad's regime and enable it to keep power.[36] Nasrallah flatly rejected the proposition that Lebanon joins the international anti-terrorism coalition because "America is the mother of terrorism. . . ."[37] His public opposition to the U.S. bombardment of ISIS targets in Syria remains a mystery, which leaves little doubt that Nasrallah's position reflects the instructions he receives from Iran. In 2007 Nasrallah disapproved of the Lebanese army's plan to storm Nahr al-Barid Palestinian refugee camp after Fateh al-Islam militants killed 27 soldiers in a blitz attack near Tripoli. He considered the camp that had become a fortress for radical militants a red line not to be crossed.[38]

Hizbullah used different catchy terms to justify and legitimize its military intervention in Syria, depending on whom they address: fighting terrorism for Westerners; defeating takfiris for Arabs and Muslims; protecting the country's borders for fellow Lebanese. This language renders all anti-regime opposition groups terrorists in the eyes of Hizbullah. It was not difficult for Nasrallah to induce Michel Aoun, even before he became president, to partner with him against Syrian rebels. In Aoun's inner thoughts the triumph of the Syrian uprising meant empowering its Sunni majority and reflecting negatively both on Lebanese Christians and Shi'ites. The two leaders rallied to issue a joint statement warning against "the terrorist takfiri threat endangering the whole region, and highlighted the necessity of fighting it by all means to protect Lebanon and its stability."[39] Qassem used their twisted logic to explain the party's advance in the Qalamoun mountain range, claiming it served to "protect Lebanon, the resistance and Hizbullah's political project and decision."[40] Nasrallah envisaged a common rationale for fighting in Qusayr and Qalamoun, i.e., preventing the Syrian war from spilling into Lebanon: "Had we had not fought in Qusayr and Qalamoun . . . the battle would have been in Beirut and the south."[41] According to Nabil Qaouk, the deputy head of Hizbullah's Executive Council: "The biggest loser is . . . Israel, which was betting on ISIS and the Nusra Front to drain Lebanon, the resistance, the people and the army."[42] Hizbullah's officials neglected to say that the presence of the rebels in Qusayr threatened to choke the regime in Damascus, their presence in Qalamoun's Nabk put them with-

in a stone's throw from the Damascus-Homs highway. Also, their comments did not mention that the rebels' control of Zabadani in Rif Damascus, which they seized from the rebels in July 2015, meant that a successful lightning attack would allow them to block the regime's access to the nearby Beirut-Damascus highway. Damascus is very close to the Lebanese border and, since it is natural for the rebels to try to seize it by force, one would expect the sound of battles to echo across the border.

Hizbullah's much celebrated anti-Israeli resistance and military intervention in Syria do not go well together because its officials and supporters have little doubt that the Syrian regime—just like other Arab regimes—is despotic. Syria is a fulcrum Arab country and controlling it is critical for the projection of Iran's regional power, in addition to being the only lifeline for Hizbullah. During a visit to a military exercise site in the Golan Heights, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu admitted that the Israeli air force carried out dozens of air raids on convoys transporting weapons from Syria to Hizbullah in Lebanon.[43] It is this lifeline that drove Nasrallah to admit that "Hizbullah will be where it needs to be in Syria . . . to defeat this very, very dangerous conspiracy . . . [and] we will bear any sacrifices and all the consequences."[44] According to a Hizbullah field commander in Syria "Bashar al-Assad is only a name; we are controlling everything in Syria. . . ."[45] During the initial stage of the Syrian uprising, some officials in Hizbullah went to the extent of accepting the just objectives of the opposition. Things changed rapidly, however, and in record time to unreservedly support Asad's regime and hastily escalate military intervention on its behalf, even if it meant using excessive force and inflicting indiscriminate death and unnecessary suffering against civilians.[46] Some of Hizbullah's war actions in Syria have contradicted the core of its professed moral values. It has been implicated in a series of massacres that killed thousands of civilians—either by directly participating in them or by just turning a blind eye, since Hizbullah's personnel usually advised, trained, and commanded Iraqi and Afghani Shi'ite militiamen. Some of the most gruesome and disturbing massacres include Deir Baalba near Homs (April 2012), al-Malikiya in Rif Aleppo (February 2013), Tall Shughaib east of Aleppo (March 2013), al-Nabk between Damascus and Homs (December 2013) and Darayya in Rif Damascus (between 2012–2016).[47]

Since it is committed to wilayat al-faqih, Hizbullah has a religious obligation to execute the binding commands of the supreme leader. It scrambled to justify the Syrian war decision. Hizbullah had little time to prepare its Lebanese Shi'ite constituency and its organizational structure for its military role in Syria, mostly because of the high moral and religious implications of its intervention that would instantly transform it from a resistance movement into an occupation force. Hizbullah found refuge in exacerbating sectarian animosity that had been simmering since its invasion of mostly-Sunni west Beirut in 2008 to mobilize Shi'ites into

action and to scare them to submit to its military intervention. In this regard, its involvement in the Syrian armed conflict came in the context of the counter-revolutions to the Arab uprisings.[48] Nasrallah's defense of Asad's regime rang hollow and failed to convince critically-minded Shi'ites: "We say it clearly: we are against toppling the Syrian regime that is ready for reforms for the sake of the Syrian people."[49] When a former Hizbullah fighter who spent time in Israeli jail criticized the party's participation in the Syrian war, he was summoned for interrogation by the Lebanese Public Security concerning his post. The interrogating officer told him "there were consequences for expressing an opinion against Hizbullah and urged him to leave the country if he wanted to speak his mind."[50]

Hizbullah plans to maintain a permanent military presence in Syria, and Nasrallah left no doubt about it: "We are not quitting Syria even after its conflict is resolved."[51] It might be relevant to mention Hizbullah's role in Syria's demographic transformation that resulted in the flight of millions of Sunnis from the country. To assist it in its task Hizbullah trained members of the Syrian regime's National Defense Forces on urban warfare to recapture east Aleppo and other rebel-held areas as early as 2013.[52] Reports claim that the regime had naturalized two million Shi'ites from Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon and housed them in the areas of fleeing Sunnis.[53] Hizbullah does not have sufficient manpower to control large swaths of land in Syria. This fact prompted its leadership to train and finance local militias to serve as foot soldiers in its new territorial domain. In a boastful statement, Nasrallah said Hizbullah had won the war in Syria, and that it was "making history in the region."[54] Hizbullah's focus on defeating the Syrian uprising did not lead it to ignore its vital political, military and economic interests in predominantly Shi'ite Iraq.

TRAINING AND MENTORING IRAQI SHI'ITES

Right after the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, Nasrallah dispatched Hizbullah commander Imad Mughniye to Basra, where he took charge of liquidating pro-Saddam Hussein's Ba'th Party members in the city and laid the foundation for its expansion throughout the country.[55] Quickly afterward the IRGC expanded Hizbullah's role to train Iraqi Shi'ite militias and introduce them to asymmetric warfare techniques to ambush U.S. troops in Iraq. In November 2006, U.S. intelligence revealed that Hizbullah had been training al-Mahdi army in Basra and Baghdad's al-Sadr City Shi'ite slum.[56] A few months later, the U.S. Army accused a senior Hizbullah operative captured in Basra of aiding Iran in south Iraq.[57] In 2006 Hizbullah founded and organized Iraq's Kata'ib Hizbullah from four Iranian backed and sponsored Iraqi militias (the Brigade of Abu al-Fadl, the Karbala Battalions, al-Sajjad Battalions and Zayd bin Ali Battalions).[58]

Hizbullah had consistently and adamantly denied ever engaging in any activity in Iraq. It was not until the sweep of ISIS through much of Iraq that Nasrallah shyly admitted the presence of Hizbullah in Iraq: "We may not have spoken about Iraq before, but we have a limited presence because of the sensitive phase that Iraq is going through."[59] His careful choice of words implied that he did not want to implicate Iran in Hizbullah's mission of sabotage in Iraq.

In June 2014, ISIS seized Mosul, swept through northern Iraq and drew close to Baghdad. The gloomy military situation drove Ayatollah Ali Sistani to issue a call to arms.[60] Nasrallah admitted that Hizbullah played an active role in the combined effort to drive off ISIS militants: "Our Iraqi brothers asked us to send military experts to assist in training and in sensitive battle situations."[61] In Iraq, as in Syria, Iran has been the sole determinant of the scope and rationale for deploying Hizbullah's troops. The public justification given for basing them in Najaf, Karbala, and Samarra has been the protection of Shi'ite religious shrines, whereas in Sunni Tikrit and Mosul it is the need to assist thinly spread government forces.[62] It also relied heavily on Iraqi Shi'ites to fight under its command in Syria. A Hizbullah commander in Aleppo confirmed that "there were a lot of Iraqis, but we call the shots. . . . Most of the push is led by Hezbollah."[63] The pool for recruiting young Lebanese Shi'ites to fight in Syria is a bit small. Thus, Hizbullah spared no effort to recruit Iraqi Shi'ites to fight in Syria as expendable foot soldiers. Its recruiting methods depended heavily on a sectarian appeal to attract Iraqis to enlist in military formations to defend the Shi'ite faith in Syria.[64] Hizbullah's military role in Iraq—where it remained constrained in terms of involved personnel differed fundamentally from its war effort in Syria—where its participation was a game changer and reached its maximum deployment capacity. Hizbullah suffered minuscule military losses in Iraq compared to Syria, where the casualty toll since 2012 includes several thousand fighters. Hizbullah lost more than 50 field commanders in Syria[65] and only one in Iraq near Mosul since 2014.[66]

Iraqi Shi'ites fight under direct Hizbullah command, but in the war against ISIS in Iraq, it fought under the banner of the PMF [Popular Mobilization Forces] and the Iraqi army. Nasrallah justified intervention there as "a moral, humanistic and nationalistic duty."[67] He went further to say that "we were asked to help our brothers in Iraq both in training and direct battlefield engagement, and I admit that this effort was required from us [by the supreme leader]."[68] Even though the good relationship between al-Hashd al-Sha'bi and Hizbullah is "carried out with the knowledge and agreement of the Iraqi government,"[69] Baghdad "continues to [publicly] deny the participation of Hezbollah elements in battles for Mosul. . ."[70] This denial did not prevent the Iraqi Minister of Foreign Affairs Ibrahim al-Ja'fari from denouncing the Arab League's decision to brand Hizbullah as a terrorist organization. He defended the

PMF and Hizbullah because they "preserved Arab dignity, and whoever accuses them of terrorism is a terrorist."[71] The undecided official position vis-à-vis Hizbullah has not deterred it from pursuing and maintaining solid ties with Iraqi Shi'ite leaders, especially Muqtada al-Sadr. Hizbullah is a role model for many Iraqi politicians, and it spares no effort to provide them with political counsel and military backup. Iran depends on Nasrallah to rein in maverick and volatile and unpredictable al-Sadr.[72]

Hizbullah's relations with Iraqi Shi'ite politicians have not always been based on a sense of morality, compassion, or fraternal duty. When in 2014 Lebanese police arrested former Iraqi prime minister Nuri al-Maliki's son Ahmad for smuggling into the country one and a half billion dollars and illegally depositing the money in unauthorized accounts, Hizbullah pressured the General Security apparatus to release him.[73] Organizational personnel in Hizbullah engage in illicit personal activities in Iraq, in collusion with local Shi'ite militias, that include—but are not limited to—drug trafficking, money laundering, importation of expired medications and dollar smuggling. In 2010 the Lebanese Customs Authority at Beirut's harbor seized a shipment of expired medications destined for Iraq.[74] Iraq's unaccounted for riches have lured associates with Hizbullah into the country's lucrative business market.[75] Carcinogenic fertilizers, pesticides, and other banned products are often shipped unimpeded from Lebanon to Iraq since Hizbullah's operatives control the traffic of goods at Beirut's airport and harbor.[76]

Iraqi Shi'ites are hardly fond of Iranians. Their shared sectarian consciousness did not provide a sufficient incentive to engender affinity. Historical legacy and cultural bias led to mutual misunderstanding and apprehension. Despite the phenomenal growth of its influence in Iraq since the United States. toppled Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003, Iraqi Shi'ites continue to view Iran with suspicion. As native speakers of Arabic whose commitment to Ayatollah Khomeini's revolution is total and unquestionable, Iran found in Lebanese Hizbullah an extremely useful intermediary to transplant its revolutionary religious ideas among Iraqi Shi'ites, who happen to have a strong Arab national identity and find it easier to communicate with like-minded Arabs than Persian coreligionists. Hizbullah has been mostly successful in constructing the ideological foundations of the Iranian Islamic Revolution among Iraqi Shi'ite politically and militarily mobilized groups. Hizbullah is more critical for Iran in Iraq than in Lebanon because it is a bigger strategic prize. Iran's prevalence in Iraq gives it an edge in the balance of power in the tug-of-war with Saudi Arabia over Gulf policies, whereas Tehran's leverage in Lebanon through Hizbullah does not give it the upper hand against Israel.[77]

TAMPERING WITH GCC SECURITY AND UNNERVING SAUDI ARABIA

Iran attempted to export the model of Lebanese Hizbullah to Middle Eastern countries that had Shi'ite communities. In the 1980s and 1990s, the countries of the GCC seemed hospitable for exporting the Islamic Revolution. At that time, Iran's objectives were modest because it was aware of the limits of penetrating a region of vital interest to the United States. The terrorist activities of Iranian pawns mostly reflected the Islamic Republic's exasperation at U.S. and GCC countries' policy of preventing it from reasserting itself as an accepted regional power. Iranian and Hizbullah's subversive activity in the Gulf Arab states became increasingly visible in the last few years as Tehran pushed aggressively to project its power in the Arab world, with a particular eye on its primary regional adversary, Saudi Arabia. In the aftermath of the Arab Spring uprisings, Yemen emerged as a focal point for Iranian activity. Hizbullah and "its Iranian patron have also sought to push their agenda through organizing political conferences and media workshops in Lebanon.[78] Former Iranian consul general in Dubai Adel al-Assadi, who defected in 2001, acknowledged that immediately after the revolution the country's new leaders had planted hundreds of sleeping cells in GCC countries and linked them to Hizbullah to coordinate their activities.[79] Even though Hizbullah tried with little success to establish for itself a niche presence in the Gulf as early as the mid-1980s "there is a huge awareness, now that the Hezbollah is a threat in the Gulf."[80] It is reasonable to assume that Hizbullah has been successful in establishing a bare foothold in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region mostly in the form of sleeper cells (even if not firm enough to threateningly destabilize their political systems) that works in tandem with Iran's sectarian agenda and minor security infringements.[81]

The subversive role of Hizbullah that mainly takes the form of training Gulf Shi'ite activists in its military camps in Lebanon, as well as providing their networks with logistic support when traveling abroad, has been grossly exaggerated by paranoid and xenophobic GCC royals. Deeming Hizbullah a terrorist organization of global reach, they found no difference between its military and political wings.[82] One would accept that Hizbullah's use of its military capabilities outside Lebanon, in battles unrelated to its proclaimed conflict with Israel, undoubtedly threatens regional peace and security. Aside from propaganda, agitation, and scathing criticisms of Gulf governments—particularly of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain—Hizbullah cannot change their status quo. Hizbullah's conspiratorial and violent methods in the Gulf peaked in the 1980s and 1990s and tapered off afterward. Iran, through its Saudi connections in the Eastern province established in 1987 Hizbullah al-Hijaz, whose members received their military training in Lebanese Hizbullah's bases in

south Lebanon. It launched a spate of terrorist attacks against oil installations and Saudi diplomatic missions abroad. Its most lethal attack that occurred in June 1996 targeted U.S. residential quarters in al-Khobar killing 20 Americans and wounding hundreds more.[83] The party fizzled in 2003, and its chief Ahmad al-Mughassal, who orchestrated al-Khobar Tower bombing, was arrested upon his arrival aboard a flight from Tehran to Beirut in 2015. It is curious that his arrest and repatriation to Saudi Arabia took place one month after the Five Plus One countries reached the Iran nuclear deal in July 2015. Immediately after the invasion of Iraq Hizbullah chose to seize upon an exceptional opportunity in Iraq and the sudden rise of its Shi'ite majority to power.

Hizbullah's collaboration with local and fragmented Saudi Shi'ite groups was minimal and ineffectual. Since its establishment, Hizbullah has harbored strong disdain for Saudi royals and their Wahhabi doctrine, which it equated with fanaticism and adulteration of Islam. For the most part, however, it kept its animosity for Saudi Arabia under wrap, especially during the presidency of Iran's Mohammad Khatami (1997–2005) who wanted to defuse tensions with Saudi Arabia. Hizbullah did not particularly care for Khatami's reformist approach. His succession by conservative Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Saudi Arabia's support for the STL to investigate the assassination of Rafiq Hariri, and implicate Hizbullah in it, prompted it to unleash a withering barrage of criticism for Saudi Arabia. The cold war between Saudi Arabia and Hizbullah continued to escalate after the former launched Operation Firmness Storm (OFS) in March 2015 against Yemen's Huthis who swept through most of the impoverished country, meeting little resistance from the national army.[84] In response to the initiation of the Saudi-led OFS, Hizbullah issued a statement that ". . . strongly condemns the Saudi-U.S. aggression targeting the brotherly people of Yemen, its national army and its vital installations . . . this aggression secures U.S. interests and does a great favor for the Zionist enemy."[85] Hizbullah systematically links Saudi Arabia to U.S. imperialism and Zionism, and it has consistently used this ploy to maintain its popular legitimacy and keep the revolutionary zeal alive by redirecting its followers' anger away from regional ventures. Thus, it viewed the Saudi decision to sanction 12 of its cadres ". . . as a quick subjugation to U.S. dictates. . . ."[86]

Nasrallah unleashed his angriest attack on Saudi authorities after they executed renowned Shi'ite cleric Nimr al-Nimr. He said that "[t]he execution was very shocking and surprising . . . this Saudi regime pays no respect to a Muslim world, Muslim sects, or even an international public opinion."[87] He seems to have aimed at mobilizing worldwide Shi'ite protests against Saudi Arabia. Al-Nimr's execution triggered anti-Saudi demonstrations in Iraq, Bahrain, Lebanon, Pakistan, and Turkey.

Saudi injudicious and short-sighted decision to launch OFS against the Huthis gave ammunition to its critics, including Hizbullah who did

not miss the opportunity to escalate its rhetoric against the Kingdom's royals. Hizbullah's parliamentary bloc moved quickly to issue a condemnatory statement. It said: "The catastrophic results and consequences on the stability of Yemen and the region have confirmed that the Saudi regime's aggression against Yemen is a historic and strategic sin. . . ."[88] The Saudi-led OFS should not have happened, but the royals' paranoia, xenophobia, and myopic worldview made it happen. Despite their repetitive claims about their strong connections to Iran and Hizbullah "[i]t is simply inaccurate to claim that the Huthis are Iranian proxies."[89] Power politics and tension have always characterized Saudi-Yemeni relations. Shortly after King Abdulaziz had established his kingdom, his troops marched toward Yemen after seizing Asir and, with British air support, occupied Jizan and Najran. Under duress, Imam Yahya of Yemen signed in 1934 the Ta'if Agreement that recognized the new territorial status quo with Saudi Arabia. Since then, the prospect of Yemen's vengeful comeback has haunted Saudi Arabia. The Zaydis who hail from the impregnable northern highlands of Sa'da Mountains ruled Yemen for centuries until the commander of Imam al-Badr's palace guards Abdullah al-Sallal overthrew them in September 1962. The republican regime neglected Zaydi Sa'da, and the brief alliance between them and the Saudis ended in 1967. Saudi patronage of Yemeni tribes and politicians deliberately excluded Sa'da that the Yemeni government had neglected.

Sparked by a desire for political and economic integration, the Houthi insurrection that started in Sa'da in 2004 had nothing to do with Iran or Hizbullah. Hung up on the past, rich Saudi Arabia ruled out financial assistance for the struggling Zaydis who turned to their leader Hussein Badreddin al-Huthi to redeem them, and to his son Abdulmalek after his death. It was not until 2013 that Iran began supplying them with light arms, missile components, and cash.[90] Much of Iran's military assistance to the Huthis goes through Hizbullah, especially missile technicians and communications personnel. The Huthis are experts in guerrilla warfare in rugged mountains and do not need for foreign trainers. Iranian and Hizbullah military aid to the Huthis is token and aims only at annoying and embarrassing Saudi Arabia by lobbing an occasional ballistic missile over its territory. A videotape confiscated by Saudi troops in Yemen showed a Hizbullah trainer instructing Huthi fighters on the psychological impact of randomly shelling Saudi border sites in Jizan and Najran.[91] In an isolated incident, Yemeni government forces arrested four Hizbullah operatives and charged them with smuggling weapons to the Huthis.[92]

Saudi Arabia is extremely sensitive to criticisms of the fighting ability and spirit of its armed forces, even though it spends more than ten percent of the country's GDP on defense.[93] Saudis take to heart hurtful claims about their combat capabilities such as Nasrallah's "the Saudi family will be defeated in Yemen,"[94] or "the Saudi regime is too weak and impotent to be able to wage war on Iran."[95] Sometimes, their defen-

siveness slides into a delusional rage. In response to frequently undermining their military competence, the Saudi media posted a video on YouTube simulating Saudi invasion of Tehran under the command of crown prince Muhammad bin Salman that ended with the surrender of the commander of the Quds Brigade Qassem Suleimani.[96]

There is nothing spectacular or striking about Hizbullah's meddling in other GCC member states beyond Kuwait in the 1980s. Kuwait supported Iraq during its war against Iran and, in retaliation, Iran founded Kuwaiti Hizbullah that carried out a spate of terrorist attacks—using fictitious names with assistance from Lebanese Shi'ites who were in the process of launching their own Hizbullah—that included an attempt in 1985 to assassinate the late Emir of Kuwait Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabbah.[97] In August 2017 Kuwait lodged a formal protest to Lebanon over Hizbullah's meddling in its internal security and sectarian affairs.[98] Two years earlier Kuwait uncovered an espionage cell in 'Abdali near the Iraqi border. The Kuwaiti ministry of interior claimed that Lebanese Hizbullah smuggled arms and espionage gear to attack vital installations and create a state of sectarian tension between Sunnis and Shi'ites. The 'Abdali affair stunned Kuwaitis who thought that Hizbullah's terrorist activities in the country were a thing of the past, and also because the Kuwaiti Development Fund (KDF) had been active in south Lebanon since 2006. The KDF played a significant role in reconstruction after the 2006 Summer War and has been building hospitals and schools in Shi'ite areas since then.[99] Kuwait demanded from the Lebanese government to curtail Hizbullah's terrorist activities or face retaliatory political, diplomatic, economic and financial measures, including the suspension of all projects in Lebanon of the KDF.[100] In reality, Hizbullah had nothing to do with the weapons that the 'Abdali cell members were accused of storing for use in sabotage operations in Kuwait. The weapons that consisted of light arms date to the brief period of the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait in 1990–1991 and belonged to the Kuwaiti resistance. The order to store the expired arms came from former Kuwaiti intelligence director Azbi al-Fahd, who at one point considered targeting Israeli interests in Qatar.[101] Saudi Arabia pressured the Kuwaiti government to dramatize the issue and blame it on Hizbullah.[102]

Iran sought to target U.S. interests in Bahrain during the 1980s, which was part of a later scheme that included taking U.S. hostages in Lebanon and bombing its embassy and Marines headquarters near Beirut international airport. It is highly unlikely that Iran wanted or expected that, with Hizbullah's assistance, it could include the GCC countries in its orbit of influence knowing that the United States considered them vital to its national interests. Iran founded the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain (al-Jabha al-Islamiya li-Tahrir al-Bahrain) in 1981 to sabotage the country's peace and possibly to overthrow the rule of al-Khalifa. Iranian behavior in Bahrain did not differ from the way it sought to destabilize

Kuwait during the Iraq-Iran War. There is no evidence to implicate Bahrain's al-Wefaq Islamic Society (Jam'iyat al-Wefaq al-Watani al-Islamiya) in collusion with Iran. Al-Wefaq advocates religious and cultural pluralism and equal opportunity for all Bahrainis. The United States expressed disapproval of the Bahraini government's crackdown on opposition activists, and when the head of al-Wefaq 'Ali Salman received a life prison sentence in 2018, the State Department voiced concern over the verdict.[103] In September 2018 Bahrain put some 170 local Shi'ites on trial allegedly for taking part in terrorist activities inspired by Lebanese Hizbullah.[104] It is highly unlikely that Hizbullah would maintain a physical presence in Bahrain, and the accusations of the government in Manama have not been independently verified. The small island country of Bahrain is fully protected by more than 2,000 Saudi and U.A.E. troops who arrived there under the name of Peninsula Shield Force to quell the 2011 uprising against al-Khalifa. More important than this force is the presence in Bahrain of two U.S. bases and more than 8,000 personnel attached to the U.S. Fifth Fleet. Both Hizbullah and its IRGC overseer know that Bahrain is not the right place for tampering with U.S. interests.

There is not much more for Hizbullah to do to annoy Bahrain's al-Khalifa rulers, in addition to denouncing their despotism and subservience to Saudi Arabia, except to host Shi'ite dissidents and train young militants on low-intensity terror attacks in its training camps in Lebanon. Nasrallah never misses an opportunity to come harsh on Bahrain's rulers. The range of topics he frequently brings up is Bahrain's political naturalization of Sunnis from Syria, Jordan, Yemen, and Pakistan to offset the Shi'ite majority there. He warned that the "day will come when Bahrain is inhabited by another people. . . . As it will be with Zionists in Palestine."[105] Nasrallah's invocation of resemblance to the Zionist takeover of Palestine seeks to emphasize his point and establish a permanent connection between Zionism, the United States, and traditional GCC states.

Hizbullah's activities in the UAE are even more restrained than elsewhere in the Gulf. Iran has vital business interests in Dubai that makes it irrational to sabotage them. The UAE ". . . has long been home to an Iranian community. There are an estimated 400,000 Iranians in the UAE [mostly in Dubai] and some 10,000 Iranian businesses."[106] This interdependence with Iran does not stop insecure UAE security officials from overstating Hizbullah's operations. In 2013 the UAE announced busting what it called a cluster Hizbullah cell that spied on vital government installations, military sites, commercial facilities, and top political and security personnel. UAE authorities claimed that the cell sought to recruit local nationals and organize them in sleeping cells.[107] Political and security espionage is not unusual among supposedly GCC allies. In 2011 Muscat announced it discovered a breach of Oman's security by a UAE spy network that was denied by Abu Dhabi.[108] The UAE has come under

suspicion for using Israeli software technology to spy not only on Qatar and dissidents but also on Saudi officials.[109]

SOURCES OF FUNDS: THE END JUSTIFIES THE MEANS

For years, Hizbullah depended on total financial support from Iran. Foreign sanctions and fluctuating oil prices had and still have negatively impacted its revenues, especially when local and regional developments required it to expand its operations and reach. Hizbullah learned about the importance of establishing business networks from the PLO who, in the 1970s, invested a portion of periodic cash donations from GCC countries to build a business empire that covered several countries in Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia.[110] The PLO pursued legitimate transnational economic activity through SAMED [Palestine Martyrs Works Society]. Its varied enterprises included cash crops such as poultry farming and banana, as well as real estate, and tax-free airport shopping. Hizbullah's better-known businesses range from advanced communication gear, night vision goggles, sniper rifles, common chemicals used in manufacturing improvised explosive devices, security equipment, hospitals, supermarkets, restaurants, construction material, bakeries, home appliances, and furniture.[111] Apart from general financial support from Iran and Lebanese Shi'ite businessmen's activities in Asia, West Africa, and Latin America, Hizbullah derives most of its other funds from worldwide illicit and repugnant trade. In recent years Hizbullah discontinued the tradition of organizing fund-raising Ramadan iftars for fear that wealthy Shi'ites would not attend to avoid being placed on the U.S. terrorist blacklist for funding terrorism.[112]

More than 30 percent of Hizbullah's revenues come from drug production and trade.[113] In 2016 Abidjan airport security arrested a Lebanese national traveling on a French passport as he tried to smuggle 1.7 million euros of drug money out of the Ivory Coast.[114] Hizbullah used the services of the Lebanese banking system to launder drug money until the Lebanese Canadian Bank (LCB) scandal of 2011 when the U.S. Treasury threatened to impose sanctions against banks doing business with Hizbullah.[115] Hizbullah used "LCB to launder narcotics proceeds—as much as $200 million per month."[116] The French prosecutor-general indicted a ring of 15 members and referred them to the French Criminal Court in Paris for trial on charges of money laundering, drug trafficking, and conspiracy.[117] Reporting suggests that its underground businesses include—in addition to the well-documented drug trafficking and money laundering—organ trade, kidnap for ransom, exploiting socially marginalized and financially desperate Syrian refugee women in prostitution, and trading counterfeit money and goods.[118] Hizbullah had been accused of marketing fake Chinese weapons both in Lebanon and abroad.[119] Hizbul-

lah's involvement in Iraqi affairs is no longer limited to the country's security and military dimensions but has grown to encompass a broad line of licit and illicit business ventures. Its investments there started in 2006 during the Prime Ministership of Nuri al-Maliki, who removed all restrictions on the ability of businesspeople affiliated with Hizbullah to fully immerse themselves in the country's economic and financial sectors. Hizbullah invested in the hotel industry, premium restaurants, and levying customs duties on behalf of the ministry of finance in exchange for a one percent commission. In a country plagued by rampant corruption and fraud, Hizbullah's business activities brought it close to the Iraqi centers of decision making.[120] The chief of Iraqi police in Basra, Rashid Filaih, reported that 80 percent of drugs in the city come from Iran.[121] This figure includes Afghani opium and Lebanese hashish trafficked through Iranian borders.

Nasrallah has denied against evidence that Hizbullah has anything to do with the world of business:

> We do not have commercial projects, and we do not have investment institutions that work through banks. I say to the entire world, and as transparently as possible, that Hizbullah's salaries, expenditure, meals, beverages, arms and rockets are from the Islamic Republic of Iran.[122]

Nobody would expect Nasrallah or any other official in his party to admit that corruption and objectionable transactions in Hizbullah are rampant. In one instance Hizbullah kidnapped a Saudi national in Lebanon and demanded one million dollars to set him free.[123] The Jaafar clan in the north Biqa' that traffics drugs on behalf of Hizbullah once shot dead four Lebanese soldiers to avenge the killing of a drug lord. They often clash with the army over their wide range of prohibited business activities. Widely recognized as notorious and trigger-happy, the "Jaafar clan is infamous in Lebanese law enforcement circles. Lebanese officials allege that the family is connected to international rings that traffic heroin, hashish and cocaine."[124] Hizbullah is very active in the real estate business in Syria, where many Sunni homeowners are desperate to sell their houses and resettle abroad.[125] Hizbullah cooperates with expatriate Lebanese businesspeople to run its businesses in West Africa, such as Star Trade Ghana Limited and Blue Lagoon Group, Sierra Leone.[126] The media accused Hizbullah of running the largest ever prostitution network in Lebanon that enslaved 75 Syrian refugee women. In order to deflect attention from any role in it, its agents deliberately chose to locate the brothel near the Christian city of Jounieh.[127] The Syrian National Council (SNC) accused Hizbullah of trading with destitute refugees' organs to cover the cost of its military intervention in Syria that consumed 40 percent of its total fiscal revenues.[128]

It is almost entirely unthinkable that Hizbullah would involve itself in abhorrent activities such as drug trafficking, organ trade, and prostitu-

tion to generate funds. In this regard, Hizbullah's behavior is reminiscent of the Barbary Corsairs who, between the 16th and 18th centuries, preyed on Christian ships in the Mediterranean. They deemed it proper to dispossess Christian non-believers of their properties since they were in a state of war with them [Dar al-Harb]. The Koran authorizes the use of formidable force against disbelievers: "Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; and those who are with him are strong against Unbelievers, (but) compassionate amongst each other."[129] One can interpret this verse to mean that the life and well-being of disbelievers do not matter. A more direct verse legitimizes seizing and enjoying the belongings of disbelievers: "But (now) enjoy what ye took in war, lawful and good. . . ."[130] This verse makes the disbelievers' possessions spoils of war. The Imamate doctrine is one of the five principles of faith in Shi'ite Islam, and disbelievers—in reference to Sunnis—are considered nawasib [haters of Imami Shi'ites]. Faith is incomplete without believing in the Imamate, and that makes Sunnis—let alone Christians, Jews, and believers in the philosophical religions—morally flawed and doctrinally heretical. Punishing nawasib—even if it means killing them—is morally required and sanctioned by faith.[131]

Khomeini left no doubt about how he deeply felt about Sunnis: "Others are not our brothers even if they were Muslims . . . treating them with disrespect is a necessity of the faith."[132] It is reasonable to claim that his followers—and this includes Hizbullah and Iraqi Shi'ite militias—share his thoughts on Sunnis. Khomeini's position on Sunnis expediently changed, at least publicly, since 1979 and the inauguration of his aggressive Arab policy that aimed at exporting the Islamic Revolution. Militant Shi'ites consider themselves in a state of truce with Sunnis until the return of the Hidden Imam. It is halal [permissible] if Shi'ites can somehow take over Sunni money provided they pay the fixed al-khums (20 percent of the total amount) to the representative of the Imam.[133] During the Battle of Qusayr, Hizbullah fighters executed wounded Syrian rebels on the basis of a mandatory religious assignment.[134] Iraqi Shi'ite death squads—mostly recruited from the Sadrist Jaysh al-Madhi—have killed countless Sunnis since the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. They waged, for example, a massive ethnic cleansing campaign in Baghdad: "Those Sunnis who aren't simply executed by their neighbors are being systematically driven out of the city's Shi'ite neighborhoods."[135] The anti-Sunni pogrom in Iraq that was condoned by the government played a significant role in the rise of a generation of ISIS militants bent on revenge.

SEARCHING FOR A NEW *RAISON D'ETRE*: HIZBULLAH PREACHES GOOD GOVERNANCE

Aware of the decline of its regional role and shrinking financial resources—that have been aggravated by the tarnishing of its image as a resistance movement—Nasrallah chose to refocus Hizbullah's efforts on addressing the stubborn issue of Lebanese government corruption. He stressed that the U.S. sanctions would not roll back his promise to fight corruption because it ". . . is a duty that is as sacred as resisting occupation."[136] Nasrallah's venture into the unachievable task of clamping down on corruption came at the worst possible time between the relocation of the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem in May 2018 and Trump's recognition in March 2019 of Syrian-occupied Golan Heights as sovereign Israeli territory. For a self-proclaimed resistance movement that relentlessly advocates the centrality of Jerusalem to its mission of liberation, one would have expected Hizbullah to announce a tangible counter-policy to the embassy relocation. It did not, except for a brief outburst of rhetorical condemnation. U.S. recognition of Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights has effectively sealed the fate of Shib'a Farms that Israel seized from the Syrian army during the Six Day War, and weakened Lebanon's claim to it. Instead of addressing the serious consequences of Trump's decision, Nasrallah warned about what the U.S. president might do next: "We must expect Trump to recognize Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank."[137]

Undeterred by local criticism to its military timidity vis-à-vis Israel, Hizbullah used corruption as a means to deflect attention from its inability to answer U.S. and Israeli escalation. The founders of the Lebanese state that did not include a single Shi'ite hailed from prominent Christian business families. The founders included Michel Shiha, Charles Corm, Petro Trad, and Henri Pharaoun. They established a political system with an eye on furthering their business interests and excluded transparency and accountability from its operations. The founders introduced a confessional political system, in collaboration with Maronite Bishara al-Khoury and Sunni Riad al-Sulh, respectively the first post-Independence President and Prime Minister. The system delegated to the major sects most prerogatives that generally belong to the state. This arrangement made it easy for corrupt politicians and administrators to seek shelter in the sanctity of their sects that the system awarded immunity. Prosecuting a corrupt official meant putting an entire sect on trial. Bribery and corruption, and the need to stop them pervaded the Presidency of al-Khoury (1943–1952). His successor Camille Sham'un (1952–1958) did not heed the demands to try and imprison him.[138] The entrenchment of corruption grew to become an unwritten contractual component among Lebanese sects, including the Hizbullah-Amal alliance, that keeps breathing life into Lebanese confessionalism.[139]

It is difficult to convince many Lebanese that Hizbullah is serious about stemming corruption because it is embedded in the political system. Its success in establishing its own state within the state of Lebanon had only been possible due to the fragmentation and weakness of the country, let alone the corruptive transactions of its political system. Enabling the state ". . . is bound to weaken Hizbullah's project."[140] Hizbullah's clamor about corruption serves it in at least three ways. First, it informs impoverished Shi'ites that it is keen on addressing their worsening living conditions as a result of Lebanon's severe and unprecedented economic crisis. Second, it exposes the rampant corruption of its political opponents who for years preyed with impunity on public funds. Hizbullah's enemies in Lebanon see it as a Trojan Horse in the cabinet whose primary objective from championing the fight against corruption is "cowing them into submission to its dictates."[141] Third, by spearheading the campaign against corruption, which is unlikely to make headway, Hizbullah deflects attention from its unwillingness to provoke Israel into war, the massive human cost it incurred in the course of the Syrian war, and the damage it did to Lebanon's relations with the GCC countries.

Hizbullah's foreign ventures have spread its limited manpower thin, overburdened its infrastructure, brought worldwide hostility to it, and broadened the rift between Shi'ites and Islam's Sunni majority. Its foreign activities as an Iranian pawn hit hardest in Lebanon. The human toll of its regional wars caused grief to many Shi'ite families in Lebanon. By assuming enormous responsibilities dictated by its Iranian patrons, it invited international sanctions, contributed to the further decline of the struggling Lebanese economy—for reasons unrelated to it—and put it on the brink of collapse. Hizbullah's image as a messenger of terror tarnished Lebanon's once-shining reputation throughout the Arab World, and especially in the GCC countries that happily absorbed its surplus workforce. Hizbullah's actions that are driven by millennial zeal have led the GCC countries to place a moratorium on issuing work visas for Lebanese nationals, and also ban travel to it, which delivered a severe blow to the country's previously thriving tourism sector.

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NINE

The New Shi'ite Psyche: Implications for Lebanon and the Region

Hizbullah has come a long way since its appearance in 1985. From an austere party that dedicated itself to providing essential public services to poor Shi'ites and fighting the Israeli occupation of south Lebanon, Hizbullah grew to dwarf the Amal Movement before becoming Lebanon's sole hegemon. The upheavals that swept the Arab World from the U.S. invasion of Iraq to the Syrian uprising made Hizbullah the premier agent for spreading Iranian influence in the region. Hizbullah is already beginning to face an existential dilemma since it does not possess a genuine value system and an intellectual scope outside the wilayat al-faqih model of religious thought.[1] After his expulsion from Hizbullah, at-Tufaili claimed that "the resistance had regressed into a security force guarding the borders of Israel."[2] Fighting Israel belonged to an early stage of its development that is now irrelevant. Since Israel's exit from south Lebanon Hizbullah has failed to present a convincing alternative rationale to justify its continued existence. Hizbullah could hide its illicit activities in Iraq after the fall of the Ba'thist regime, but the enormous magnitude of its open involvement in the Syrian armed conflict drew instant criticism, even from independent Lebanese Shi'ites. Nasrallah's speeches ceased to impress many members of his audience, even if they were unwilling to admit it to outsiders.[3] He could no longer count on his charismatic righteousness to win the support of a Shi'ite mass audience for Hizbullah's transnational mission.

THE SLIPPERY SLOPE OF NASRALLAH'S CHARISMA

There is considerable research on the dark side of charisma. One study points out that ". . . leadership does not always lead to good things. Great leaders can be responsible for catastrophic disasters."[4] One drawback of charismatic leaders is their ability to control the emotions and thinking of their followers. A cult of personality arose around Nasrallah as the politico-military legitimacy of Hizbullah has mostly revolved around his leadership style. Nasrallah's rationalizations and excuses for sending young men to fight and die in Syria decreased the base of Hizbullah's popular support because for years Shi'ites were told to stay focused on the Palestinian cause. Strategically, it might be realistic to judge Nassrallah's behavior in Syria as indicative of derailed and destructive leadership because it violated his party's organizational mission.[5] Al-Sadr placed Shi'ites on the map of Lebanese politics and Nasrallah transformed them into the country's preponderant sect in the name of resistance to Israel, but his regional endeavors have shown that there are limits to the transformational powers of charismatic leaders.

Trust is essential in winning others over and maintaining their bond with the movement. It is particularly essential with charismatic leadership because it can be a double-edged sword.[6] The strength of trust and loyalty can cause a charismatic leader to develop an exaggerated, and therefore potentially dangerous, sense of self-importance: "If it [charisma] grows too powerful, the leader becomes ineffective at motivating others. . . . Over time, deepening loyalty creates negative changes in the leader's behavior."[7] Leaders can also use their charisma ". . . to hide their less attractive characteristics such as ego, manipulation, deceit, and selfishness."[8] Nasrallah never gives the impression of being selfish or deceitful. To the contrary, he lives frugally and leads by example. His personal qualities endeared him to the vast majority of Shi'ites and, until 2005, to many non-Shi'ites, especially after his son Hadi died fighting to end the Israeli occupation of south Lebanon while Arab heads of state groomed their sons to succeed them. It is glaringly evident, however, that Nasrallah had manipulated Shi'ites to believe, even if temporarily for some of them, that it was a matter of time before ISIS and an-Nusra would come after them. Nasrallah's decision to join the war in Syria was made in Tehran. After the end of major operations there, former Iranian Chair for National Policy and National Security Alaeddine Boroujerdi announced that Hizbullah would stay in Syria.[9] Nasrallah only echoed Boroujerdi's announcement more than a year and a half later about staying put in Syria until further notice.[10] Were it not for Khamenei's decision to prevent the fall of Asad's regime, Nasrallah would not have intervened in Syria, but as a soldier in the supreme leader's army, he had to oblige out of duty.

An adverse consequence of Nasrallah's charismatic discourse is his over exaggeration of Hizbullah's military capabilities and battlefield victories. Thus, Israel's unilateral withdrawal from south Lebanon on May 25, 2000, becomes a day of liberation, the outcome of the 2006 summer war a Divine Victory, and Hizbullah's military involvement in Syria a triumph of the "axis of steadfastness" against the United States, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and takfiris. Nasrallah's power projection has generated among Shi'ites a deceiving sense of security and control. Some argue that "[c]harisma produces collective narcissism. . . . It increases our own sense of pride within ourselves, as well as the group to which we belong. This leads to a deluded sense of superiority over others. . . ."[11] Nasrallah's speeches come laden with sensationalism and melodrama. In an interview during the July 2006 war he said: "As long as there is a missile that is fired from Lebanon that targets the Zionists, as long as there is one fighter who fires his rifle, as long as there is someone who plants a bomb against the Israelis, the resistance [Hizbullah] still exists."[12] Nasrallah is mostly responsible for achieving a perception of invincibility in the collective Shi'ite mind that fostered arrogance and a sense of entitlement from which a new Hizbullah-centered identity has risen. While by no means representative of Lebanese Shi'ites whom it suppressed with severity, Hizbullah's heavily armed community has succeeded in disabling the Lebanese political system with the help of spiritual and ideological guidance from Iran.

STALLING LEBANESE POLITICS

Hizbullah seemed bent on undermining the authority of the Lebanese state to exercise its territorial sovereignty after Israel suddenly withdrew from the south in 2000. It used continuing Israeli occupation of Shib'a Farms, Ghajar village, and Kfar Shuba Hills as a pretext against disarming. Arguing that its mission had not been completed "Hizbullah not only prevented the LAF [Lebanese Armed Forces] from establishing control over south Lebanon but also refused to disarm and become a purely civilian political party.[13] Hizbullah gave its "resistance" an aura of moral righteousness and self-sacrifice that mandated recognition and praise at the highest political levels. It became customary for every Lebanese cabinet since the Ta'if Agreement to include in its inaugural statement a clause on the right of the national resistance to liberate border areas occupied by Israel. Suspecting that the government of Tammam Salam would drop this ritual, Hizbullah and its allies threatened in February 2014 to withhold their vote of confidence. An anonymous Hizbullah source retorted: "Whoever promised foreign powers to cross out the mentioning of the resistance should reconsider his stance. We will not abandon the blood of our martyrs."[14] Granting Salam's cabinet parliamentary confi-

dence had to await a compromise agreement that recognized the right of all Lebanese people to ". . . resist the Israeli occupation, repel its attacks and take back the occupied territory."[15]

Hizbullah took full advantage of Lebanese political corruption and the total absence of accountability in its social, economic, and political transactions. The Lebanese confessional system grants internal autonomy and immunity to its constituent sects. This situation renders the Lebanese people incapable of deciding the fate of the country because there is no control mechanism to question the activities of their corrupt and bankrupt politicians.[16] The Lebanese government has failed to provide essential public services such as water, electricity, and garbage disposal. The waste management problem goes back to the early civil war years when successive governments failed to fix the country's decayed infrastructure. As a result, Lebanon ran out of landfill space. There is a never-ending garbage crisis in Lebanon that became a cause of global embarrassment in 2015. The unresolved issue of garbage collection "became a glaring symbol of a sectarian power system unable to meet basic needs . . ."[17] Hizbullah does not identify with Lebanon as a national entity, which is not surprising given that the Lebanese do not have an agreed-upon identity. An edict by Khomeini decreed that the "Lebanese system is illegitimate and criminal, and it is necessary for the [Shi'ite] Muslims to rule Lebanon."[18] One would not expect Hizbullah to dissent from the teachings of the founder of wilayat al-faqih. This did not prevent Hizbullah from penetrating the Lebanese state and dominating the joints of its decision-making apparatus. It would not have been possible for Hizbullah to undertake the regional role assigned to it by Iran without first stalling the operations of the Lebanese political system, and then controlling the country. In a meeting with Prime Minister Saad Hariri, U.S. president Donald Trump described Hizbullah—years after it dominated the country—as a menace to Lebanon.[19] In addition to placing the political system on hold, Hizbullah has also ensured that the army, thanks to the presence of a large number of loyal Shi'ites in its top echelons, would never confront or fail to coordinate with it. There is no question that the "army's decision making belongs to Hezbollah. The army must follow wherever Hezbollah leads . . ."[20] This has been the case since 1990 when the pro-Hizbullah commander of the army Emile Lahoud rebuilt the Lebanese army in a manner that it would not later clash with Hizbullah.

OBSESSION WITH AVENGING HISTORICAL PERSECUTION

Shi'ites share the view that a gross historical injustice occurred when Imam 'Ali was denied the right to succession after the death of Prophet Muhammad. Unlike Sunni fundamentalism that wants to reshape the

world, "Shi'i fundamentalism . . . is engrossed in intra-Islamic debates over thorny religious issues, particularly the question of who should preside over the Muslim community."[21] Hizbullah, just as the founder of the Amal Movement al-Sadr did in the 1960s and 1970s, used Shi'ite dispossession and the martyrdom of Imam Hussein to rally and mobilize community members into its ranks with great success because "[t]he Karbala paradigm provides Shiism with moral values and model figures. . . . It nourishes a collective memory shared by the whole Shi'ite world. . . ."[22] In the 20th century, Sunni irreligious intellectuals viewed religion with disdain and held negative perceptions about Shi'ite religious rituals, especially self-flagellation. The rise of Sunni fundamentalism in the wake of the 1967 Six-Day War and the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran created a new politico-religious path to power. Ironically yet predictably, political Islam triumphed in Iran, where the religious establishment had always struggled to keep from being dominated by the ruling elite.

The folk religious culture of Sunnis has traditionally looked down upon Shi'ites and accused them of heresy. They often persecuted them; at best, they ignored them. Sunni jurists consensually ruled that Shi'ites were munafiqs [hypocrites] and, therefore, more dangerous than the infidels because they consciously adulterate Islam under the guise of loving the Household of the Prophet and attributing Divine qualities to the Imams.[23] Shi'ite awakening instantly ensued with earnest in Iraq and the Gulf after the fall of Saddam Hussein and also brought a surge of vigor to Lebanon's Hizbullah. The new Shi'ite psyche has freedom at its core: "[F]ree to be Shias, free to challenge Sunni power and the Sunni conception of what it means to be a true Muslim; free to reclaim their millennium-old faith."[24] Fityan Ali [knights of Ali]—a little-known and notorious Shi'ite militia first heard of during the first year of the 1975–1999 civil war, and now secretly associated with Hizbullah—posted condolences in Sunni west Beirut to Sahib al-Zaman [in reference to the 12th Imam] mourning the loss of fallen fighters acknowledged as servant soldiers of Imam Hussein.[25] The poster did not mention that they died in Syria for fear that would tarnish their martyrdom, due Shi'ite divisions over the rationale for fighting there. A poster meant to incite sectarian animosity read: "Imam Hussein is the brother of Zainab (heroine of Karbala), who was taken into captivity. He is the triumphant spiller of blood, martyred and beheaded at Karbala."[26]

Hizbullah's heavy military involvement in the Syrian conflict against the uprising earned it the suspicion of Sunnis who constitute the majority of the population in the Arab region.[27] Sunnis view Hizbullah's participation in the Syrian war as a hostile act of sheer sectarian hostility to abort the uprising and complete the establishment of a Shi'ite crescent stretching from northern Afghanistan to Lebanon. Shi'ites have been "treated as the enemy within . . . [and] were the first to come under suspicion when there was an external threat to the ruling Sunni establish-

ment"[28] since the Crusades. Hizbullah's military aggressiveness has reopened unhealed Sunni-Shi'ite wounds from the past and jeopardized the very idea of the Lebanese state. More than 60 percent of Shi'ite elites have no political affiliation even though most of them sympathize with Hizbullah and defend it in international forums. It risks losing much of the base of its popular support if it refuses to abandon its expansionist sectarian agenda.[29] Hizbullah contributed to the bloody sectarianism of public life in Syria and Iraq and forced the Lebanese into submission to its might. The upheavals that have rocked the region since the early 1980s strengthened Arab Shi'ites and eclipsed Sunni influence. During the Iraqi-Iranian War, the late Iraqi president Saddam Hussein used to exhort GCC royals to support his war effort because Iraq was the eastern gate of the Arab World and if it collapsed, the Iranians, whom he referred to as Safavids, would overwhelm them.[30] It is common for scholars to predict that "[t]he overall Sunni-Shia conflict will play a large role in defining the Middle East as a whole and shaping its relations with the outside world,"[31] due to the radicalization of Sunni vs. Shi'ite sectarian identity. Hizbullah insists that it remains a fundamentally anti-Israeli resistance movement and readily dismisses any sectarian charges against it. Privately, however, it bills itself as the sole defender of Lebanon's Shi'ites, but its claims are disputed by at-Tufaili who describes its sectarian behavior as injurious to the long-term relations between Islam's two major sects.[32]

PURSUING REGIONAL CONFLICTS THAT HURT SHI'ITES

Shi'ites initially endorsed Hizbullah's Syrian war effort because its leadership fanned fear and anxiety about the takfiris' impending penetration of Lebanon. Nasrallah took advantage of the trust and legitimacy that accrued to him as a result of Hizbullah's fight against Israel and won the compliance of his base of support with the assertion that it was a jihadist duty to protect sacred Shi'ite shrines and residents in Syria, and make the Lebanese border impervious to ISIS and an-Nusra. Compliance turned to disillusion in the successive turn of events in Syria. More than 250,000 Shi'ites attended Amal's rally marking the 38th anniversary of al-Sadr's disappearance. The huge turnout showed a noticeable change in Lebanese Shi'ite mood that favored Berri's neutral stand on the Syrian conflict. The Shi'ite rank and file have never appreciated Hizbullah's Syrian policy.[33] There is a steady and discernible erosion in Hizbullah's public image among Shi'ites because of its involvement in the Syrian war, and for meddling in the affairs extremely sensitive to criticism GCC countries—like most if not all other Arab countries—even if only vocally. Shi'ites resent Hizbullah leaders' continuous criticism of of GCC governments because it has made them unwelcome in these oil-rich countries. In a rare

show of conciliation with Kuwait after it suspended issuing visas to Lebanese Shi'ites in response to the 'Abdali Cell case, Nasrallah stressed ". . . Hizbullah's keenness on the best relations between Lebanon and Kuwait. . . . We are ready to discuss any ambiguity through the diplomatic channels . . ."[34]

Sayyid Ali Fadlallah, son of the late Ayatollah Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah, warned Iraqi prime minister Nuri al-Maliki about the repercussions of his government's and Hizbullah's support for the regime of Bashar Asad on the future of Lebanese Shi'ites.[35] Prominent Lebanese Shi'ite clerics Ayatollah Hani Fahs and Sayyid Mohammad Hasan al-Amin issued a joint statement expressing support for the Syrian uprising and accused the Syrian regime of derailing it into a sectarian conflict.[36] Many Shi'ites fear that they are next in line after the end of the war in Syria since they see no reason to rush into a war that they have no business in or affinity for either of its combatants. Asked if he liked Syrians, an ordinary Shi'ite replied candidly and without restraint: "No, but I must pretend liking them in order not to violate the dictate of Sayyid Hasan Nasrallah."[37] Despite the Shi'ite public's disinterest in Asad's regime and aloofness from it, Hizbullah chose to play on sectarian divisions to mobilize Shi'ite fighters for its war. Its behavior in Syria "attests to a movement that lost its direction."[38] Memorial posters of fallen Hizbullah fighters in wars and battles with Israel are a familiar sight in Shi'ite town and village squares, but there are hardly any posters for fighters lost in Syria. The Secretary-General of the Islamic Arab council in Lebanon Mohammad 'Ali al-Husseini gave a negative assessment of the outcome of Hizbullah's Syrian war effort: "Many Shi'ites believe Hizbullah has been defeated in Syria. Its role there has no impact on the survival of the regime of Bashar Asad since Russia has become the foremost and only decisive player there."[39]

Hizbullah has exaggerated its victory against Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham in Arsal's outskirts in July 2017. The battle was part of a deal that allowed the Syrian rebel movement to relocate to its major bastion in Idlib. Even though Hizbullah succeeded in controlling both sides of the Syrian-Lebanese border, the fact remains that it is ". . . only there, and only to the extent that the United States and Russia will tolerate . . ."[40] Hizbullah also involved the Syrian and Lebanese armies in the battle, each from its side of the border, and made sure to coordinate their military efforts: "The Arsal operation also marks an unprecedented, indirect coordination between the Lebanese state and the Syrian regime via Hezbollah as an intermediary."[41] Thanks to Hizbullah, this indirect coordination ushered in the first step in reintegrating the Syrian regime in Arab politics. Many Shi'ites, including Hizbullah fighters, abhor the role of mercenary troops assigned to them by Iran. Mustafa Badreddine, who led Hizbullah's international operations unit after Imad Mughniyah's assassination, died mysteriously in Syria in May 2016. A Hizbullah announcement said a

Syrian rebel shell caused his death, which the Syrian opposition rejected outright. Rumors suggest that he was killed by his comrades who blamed him for dragging young Shi'ites into the costly Syrian quagmire.[42]

Some Shi'ites have complained about the Syrian regime's responsibility for militarizing the uprising and rebranding it into a war on terror. Up to 1,000 al-Qaeda prisoners curiously escaped from Iraq's notorious Abu Ghraib prison in July 2013, and many of them went to Syria.[43] An-Nusra, a shadowy al-Qaeda-affiliate group, first appeared in December 2011 with two suicide bombings in Damascus. Syrian opposition activists insist that an-Nusra is a Syrian intelligence creation intended to subvert the peaceful uprising and undermine moderate activists.[44] A former Syrian security official revealed that the regime released hundreds of jailed extremists to derail the uprising and cast it as a terrorist initiative. The regime "made it possible for them [the extremists] to attack isolated army positions and seize their arsenals."[45] As one Alawite army defector put it: "The regime sacrificed our lives to create takfiris."[46] Special security advisor to al-Asad, 'Ali Mamluk hinted at the regime's Machiavellian approach to crush the uprising. He boasted without compunction: "We are practical and not theoretical. . . . In principle, we don't attack or kill them [terrorists] immediately. Instead, we embed ourselves in them and only at the opportune moment do we move."[47]

Orthodox Shi'ite clerics believe Hizbullah committed a historical sin and a religious blunder for fighting on behalf of Asad's regime against the majority of his people. Lebanese Shi'ite cleric 'Abbas al-Jawhari condemned its actions in Syria: "The party violated the natural course of Twelver Imami Shi'ism and its history of resisting oppressors and siding with the oppressed."[48] Embarrassed by its high casualties, Hizbullah deliberately downplays the number of its dead in Syria by burying them near Sitt Zaynab Shrine in Damascus or at Wadi as-Salam [valley of peace] Cemetery in Najaf.[49] The idea behind burying them there is to minimize the number of fighter funerals in Lebanon and deny the media the opportunity to tally the actual total of Hizbullah's human losses. Defensive pro-Hizbullah advocates allege that the events in Syria appear to be a sign of the impending appearance of the Hidden Imam and his army, that could be Hizbullah's, to conquer evil once and for all.[50] The Hizbullah-Amal oligarchical alliance does not allow the emergence of a third political force within the sect. They tolerate expressions of personal feelings and opinions as long as they do not lead to mass mobilization: "There are two realities among Lebanese Shi'ites: the authoritarian alliance of Hizbullah and AMAL, and the marginalized rank-and-file."[51] This reality is unlikely to change in the context of the region's existing geostrategic equation.

Hizbullah's legitimacy was once predicated on a commitment to the Palestinian cause and battling Israelis in south Lebanon. Local and regional events since 2006 and Hizbullah's transition from a liberation

movement into a regional proxy player has seriously undermined its legitimacy and credibility in Shi'ite eyes. Nasrallah tried to restore Hizbullah's tarnished popular legitimacy with bombastic and completely unrealistic threats of war against Israel. In one threat, he warned the Israelis against attacking Lebanon because they would regret it thanks to Hizbullah's missiles that have all of Israel within their range. If they choose to fire the first shot of war, they should ". . . not only. . . empty the ammonia tank in Haifa, but also to dismantle the nuclear reactor in Dimona."[52] Israel did not take Nasrallah's rhetoric seriously and reacted ". . . with a mixture of mockery and cynicism. . . . Everyone, primarily Hezbollah, knows that the results of any war or military action against Israel will be catastrophic."[53] Nasrallah has not kept pace with the fears and needs of Shi'ites who for decades were plagued by war, and in recent years have had to endure financial hardship because the Hizbullah-Iranian nexus shut them out of the GCC job market.

BURNING BRIDGES FOR THE SAKE OF A MILLENNIAL CALLING

Israel's withdrawal from south Lebanon strengthened Hizbullah's position in Lebanon and transformed vociferous Shi'ites into an obedient public that swore by the life of al-Sayyid [Nasrallah], and unquestioningly believed everything he told them. At-Tufayli, who served as the first secretary general of Hizbullah from 1989–91, started warning about the erratic path of Hizbullah years before Israel abandoned south Lebanon. Since organizing anti-Hizbullah protests in 1997, he became a vocal critic of the party, particularly over its perceived subordination to Iran, whom he accuses of using it solely ". . . to serve its own interest."[54] The president of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) Maryam Rajavi remarked that the leaders of the Iranian Revolution want to dominate the Middle East. She described the regime in Tehran as "the main instigator of sectarian discord, fundamentalism and terrorism in the entire region."[55] The founder of Hizb al-Intima' al-Lubnani [Lebanese Option Party] Ahmad al-As'ad had fierce criticism for Hizbullah and the Amal Movement: "Enough for intimidating the Shi'ites to keeping them living under your mercy and the mercy of your arms! Why do you so blindly follow Iran? What do we Shi'ites gain from dependency on Iran?"[56] Lebanese Shi'ite religious authority 'Ali al-Amin condemned Hizbullah's lack of concern for the well-being of fellow Shi'ites: "We do not accept to brush off Arab Shi'ites as belonging to parties that follow Iran. Arab Shi'ites' loyalty should be to their countries."[57]

Opposition to Hizbullah is growing, even though it remains confined to private meetings. The outcome of the 2016 municipal elections in south Lebanon demonstrated that Hizbullah's popularity is declining. In many

towns in south Lebanon, the electoral lists formed by leftist parties succeeded in grabbing many seats from the Hizbullah-Amal electoral alliance.[58] The elections pointed to the emergence of unambiguous Shi'ite discontent with Hizbullah and Amal that might have severe repercussions in the future.[59] Anti-Hizbullah punitive measures by Arab countries have influenced many Shi'ites to rethink their support of it. Pressured by Saudi Arabia into accepting its policy line, the Arab League, as ineffectual as it is, had the majority of its foreign ministers agree to label Hizbullah as a terrorist organization. The Arab League's announcement came on the heels of a Saudi decision to cancel a previous commitment to contribute four billion dollars toward arms purchases for the Lebanese armed forces.[60] GCC member states started deporting Lebanese Shi'ites in 2009, but the pace picked up after Bahrain's failed uprising in 2011. In May 2018, Saudi Arabia coordinated with the United States Treasury Department to blacklist key Hizbullah members and businesses linked to their sources of funding, to drain them. A new batch of sanctions that banned Lebanese Shi'ites from employment in the Gulf followed a powerful Saudi statement that labeled Hizbullah as a global terrorist organization and concluded that there was no difference between its political and military wings.[61] Shi'ites are denied work visas even if they receive job offers from private sector businesses in the Gulf.[62]

The fragmentation of the social and demographic fabric of Hizbullah is unlikely in the near future, but it is inevitable when peace returns to Syria, and the standoff between the United States and Iran comes to a realistic conclusion. Given the deeply entrenched politico-religious fragmentation of Lebanese politics, a Shi'ite rebellion against Hizbullah is unlikely. What is more likely is its transformation into a political movement with an unofficial and significantly scaled down military wing as similar to other Lebanese sects. No matter how the question of Hizbullah is resolved, Lebanon will always be susceptible to outside interference, since there is no realistic chance that the Lebanese can agree on undoing their confessional system, especially at a time when it is spreading into the region. Hizbullah's political project in Lebanon is contingent upon Iran's growing regional posture. Should Iran's political system change as a result of the pull of internal or international pressure, Hizbullah would lose its status as the leading politico-military force in Lebanon.[63] In 2004, King Abdullah of Jordan warned about the emergence of an ideological Shi'ite Crescent from Beirut to the Persian Gulf. Hizbullah's military involvement in Syria and Iraq gave the impression that this project neared completion. Even before the Arab uprisings, some warned about the expansion of the Shi'ite Crescent to become an ideologically Full Moon.[64] This notion is far-fetched. Nobody has ever questioned the existence of Sunni religious affinity that spreads beyond the Arab region to countries as far as Indonesia. This affinity has been far more sentimental than political, and hardly ideological.

There is no place for Iran in the Shi'ite temperament. Iran is missing from the Shi'ite collective consciousness. The language barrier widens the gap between the Shi'ite temperament and Iran. Shi'ites do not understand Persian to listen to Khamenei's speeches. Just as the Sunnis do not identify with the Saudis because the leader of the Future Trend [Saad Hariri] is a staunch ally of Saudi Arabia, Shi'ites similarly do not embrace Iranian identity just because Hizbullah is a staunch ally of Iran.[65] The Shi'ite movement in Arab west Asia is essentially demand-oriented, and not inherently sectarian. It is mostly domestic, and only sentimentally touched by the travails and achievements of its coreligionists elsewhere in the broader region, including Iran itself. There are obvious limits to Shi'ite Arab political interaction with Iranians due to lingual-cultural differences, societal-segmental barriers, as well as territorial-national aspirations.[66] Shi'ite Arab demands, be they in Lebanon or elsewhere in the region, are mainly political, social, and economic, and they antedate the Iranian Revolution and the establishment of Hizbullah:

> [T]his rivalry is a pure inter-Arab world power-sharing conflict rather than an ideological Iranian-Arab rivalry . . . given Iran's political dynamics and the existing cultural-societal and historical distinctions between the Persian and Arab masses, the realization of an ideology-dominated Shiite crescent, is rather difficult, if not impossible.[67]

History has a self-correcting mechanism, and its logic informs that the rise of Hizbullah and the consolidation of its powers amount to little more than a transient millennial event. The Ta'if Agreement redeemed Lebanese Shi'ites and fully integrated them into the country's national politics before Hizbullah thrust itself into it with a big bang.

NOTES

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