

Hezbollah: *The Myth of Moderation*

A Monograph
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Abstract

A SAMS Monograph by MAJ Shaw S. Pick, United States Army 54 pages

The emergence of non-state actors and sub-national entities on the world stage has presented the established international system with challenges for which it is ill equipped to handle. The historical inclination to resort to military force when diplomacy fails is becoming a less viable model as new and powerful non-state actors establish themselves in the international order with implications for their host nations and the nations of the world.

Hezbollah, or the Party of God, is an established Shi'ite *ji*had movement that has operated out of Lebanon since its founding by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard in 1985. Situated in a key strategic location in the Middle East and bordering the state of Israel, Hezbollah's status as one of the most well-organized and well-armed non-state actors in the world is cause for some concern to the United States and its allies. This concern was realized when Hezbollah initiated a 34-day war with Israel in 2006. In addition to being a well-armed *ji*had organization, Hezbollah also controls the largest voting bloc in the Lebanese parliament, giving it virtual veto power in the Lebanese government.

For the aforementioned reasons, many national security professionals and academic researchers have spent years studying this shadowy group. Among the many opinions of Hezbollah, there is a growing body of literature and academic discourse that puts forth the theory that Hezbollah is going through a 'Lebanonization' process. This process of political integration, it is said, is causing Hezbollah to evolve from a violent Iranian-inspired *ji*hadi group to a mainstream part of Lebanese society and politics, and that this process will ultimately result in its disarmament. The allure of this theory of moderation and reformation of Hezbollah is understandable. The potential for the moderation and ultimate disarmament of the best-equipped militant Islamist organization in the world holds much cause for hope. It is difficult, however, to ignore Hezbollah's 25-year history of kidnappings, bombings, and targeting of civilians in its *ji*had against the West and Israel.

This monograph examines Hezbollah, Lebanon, and Iran through a modified DIME framework in order to determine whether Hezbollah has indeed experienced a fundamental shift away from Iranian-inspired Shi'ite extremism and violence and moved towards an ideology of moderation within Lebanon. Modified for the unique Islamic identity of Hezbollah and both Iran and Lebanon, a religion component has been added to the analysis in order to better understand which view of Islam these entities adhere to.

Ultimately, this monograph will show that Hezbollah sees the authority of the Lebanese state as secondary to that of the regime in Tehran, and this informs both their thinking and their actions. This is of significant importance to both Lebanon and the United States, as the existence of a well-funded, well-armed sub-national *ji*hadi group operating freely within a country with which the U.S. has diplomatic ties is immensely problematic.

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Introduction

Inter-state diplomacy is the foundation for how nations and their peoples interact, but the emergence of non-state actors and sub-national entities can present that system with challenges for which it is ill equipped to deal. The historical inclination to resort to military force when diplomacy fails is becoming a less viable model as these new actors establish themselves in the international order with implications for their host nations and those of the world.

Hezbollah, or the Party of God, is an established Shi'ite *jihad* movement that has operated out of Lebanon since its founding in 1985.¹ At any given time, Hezbollah will be described as a global criminal-terrorist organization, an Arab resistance movement, the Shi'a vanguard of social justice, an Iranian proxy army, or a mainstream Lebanese political party.

There is a growing body of literature and academic discourse that puts forth the theory that Hezbollah is going through a 'Lebanonization' process. This process of political integration, it is said, is causing Hezbollah to evolve from a violent Iranian-inspired *jihad* group to a mainstream part of Lebanese society and politics, and that this process will ultimately result in its disarmament.²

The United States has historically had good relations with Lebanon based on its democratic character, its cultural and religious diversity, and a sizeable Lebanese-American population. In light of Hezbollah's initiation of armed conflict with Israel in, 2006, and the fact

¹ Naim Qassem, *HIZBULLA: The Story from Within*, Translated from Arabic by Dalia Khalil, SAQI, 98

² Mona Harb & Reinhoud Leenders, *Know Thy Enemy: Hizbullah, 'Terrorism' and the Politics of Perception*, Third World Quarterly, Vol 26, No.1, 2005, This article explains the 'Lebanonisation' theory that Hezbollah is normalizing its ideology as a result of its entry into Lebanese politics. This normalization is characterized by Harb as 'a fundamental change from the principles of rejectionism and violence towards domestic courtesy and accomodation',173

that this conflict was launched from Lebanese soil, it would seem that obtaining a deeper understanding of a group like this and an accurate discernment of its ultimate objectives would be prudent for both Lebanon and the U.S.

This monograph analyzes the Hezbollah organization in an attempt to determine whether Hezbollah has indeed experienced a fundamental shift away from Iranian-inspired Shi'ite extremism and violence and moved towards an ideology of moderation within Lebanon. In examining Hezbollah, Iran, and Lebanon within the DIME framework of state power, the goal is to determine whether Hezbollah ultimately sees itself as representing the interests of Beirut or Tehran. Ultimately, this monograph will show that Hezbollah sees the authority of the Lebanese state as secondary to that of the regime in Tehran, and this informs both their thinking and their actions. This is of significant importance to both Lebanon and the United States, as the existence of a well-funded, well-armed sub-national *jihad* group operating freely within the sovereign territory of a U.S. ally is immensely problematic.

Methodology

Scholarly understanding of Hezbollah in its first decade of existence presented the group as either a violent terrorist organization or a sacred Islamic resistance movement fighting to liberate Palestinian lands. Since the mid-1990s, Hezbollah's growing political and military presence in Lebanon has led many to characterize the group as a 'state-within-a-state' in Lebanon.³

³ Hussain Abdul-Hussain, *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, vol.8, The Hudson Institute: <http://www.currenttrends.org/research/detail/hezbollah-the-state-within-a-state>, accessed 18 November, 2010

In view of this characterization, this monograph utilizes a framework of the elements of state power to analyze Hezbollah in relation to both Lebanon and Iran to determine if, and to what extent, Hezbollah has moderated its stance to be more representative of Lebanese society. This framework examines Hezbollah, Lebanon, and Iran through the Religious, Diplomatic, Informational, and Military lenses. This is often referred to as the DIME framework. Considering the strong Islamic identity of Hezbollah, Iran, and a majority of Lebanon, a Religion component is added to the model. In addition, the Economic element is not considered, as Hezbollah's funding sources are largely clandestine and therefore difficult to analyze in unclassified research.

The DIME analysis is admittedly a western framework for expression when discussing the elements of national power. Though not an all-encompassing method for analysis and understanding, it is a widely accepted and understood model which acts as a guideline for determining the interests of nations and formulation of strategy.⁴

Using the modified DIME framework, this monograph will begin with an analysis of the religious and political ideologies of Hezbollah, Lebanon, and Iran. A primer on key concepts in Shi'a Islam will provide a foundation for analysis of the particular guiding principles of Shi'ism that shape Lebanese, Iranian, and Hezbollah religious thought and action. Scholarly Islamic works, historical analysis, manifestos, and leadership pronouncements are the primary sources of data for this analysis.

In the political analysis, the paper will examine the national policy objectives of Hezbollah, Lebanon, and Iran utilizing historical analysis, current national security literature, and

⁴ H. Richard Yarger and George F. Barber, *The U.S. Army War College Methodology for Determining Interests and Levels of Intensity*, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Carlisle, PA, 1997, <https://dde.carlisle.army.mil/authors/natinte.htm>, accessed 18 November, 2010

statements of the leadership in order to determine if there is a history of policy convergence between Hezbollah and either Lebanon or Iran.

Following the political analysis, the Information domain analysis will explore the strategic messaging of Hezbollah, Lebanon, and Iran to determine what these entities actually say to their audiences, both internal and external. This will determine to what extent Hezbollah's strategic messages converge or diverge from those of the governments of Lebanon and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The primary sources of data for this section will be print, television, and internet messages produced by the Lebanese and Iranian governments, and the Hezbollah media apparatus. Finally, Hezbollah's military structure and tactics are compared to those of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and the Lebanese Armed Forces to identify commonalities in military organization, doctrine, and tactics.

Literature Review

There is no shortage of literature on Hezbollah, of both Western and Middle Eastern origin. Not surprisingly, much of the work done on Hezbollah characterizes the group as an ultraviolent Islamist organization with a large dossier of kidnappings and suicide bombings. Much of the counter perspective is produced by opponents of Israel who sympathize with the Palestinian cause and view Hezbollah as the vanguard of Arab resistance to Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands. This 'Terrorist vs. Freedom Fighter' debate was the primary focus of Hezbollah related discourse from its founding throughout the first half of the 1990s. It was at this time that Hezbollah made its foray into Lebanese politics and Hezbollah scholars began to try to

understand what this meant for Hezbollah and for Lebanon.⁵ Many Middle East analysts, including respected Hezbollah scholar Augustus Norton, began to talk of the inevitable ‘pragmatizing’ effect that political participation would have on Hezbollah.⁶

This new vein of research into Hezbollah’s growing political power has resulted in a body of literature that attempts to understand Hezbollah within this uniquely Lebanese political context. This new view of Hezbollah as an adaptive political organization focused solely on protecting Lebanese sovereignty has been termed the ‘Lebanonization of Hezbollah’.⁷ This ‘Lebanonization’ theory puts forth that Hezbollah has fundamentally shifted away from absolute rejectionism and violence, and embraced pragmatic political accommodation.⁸

Judith Harik’s 2007 book *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism* is one of the most recent works which puts forth the “Lebanonization of Hezbollah” argument. In Harik’s view, Hezbollah has evolved into a political party that operates within the confessional Lebanese system of government while representing the interests of the poor Shi’a of South Lebanon, the Daniyeh slum of Beirut, and the rural Shi’a of the Bekaa Valley.

The purpose for Hezbollah’s change, Harik states, was to break the terrorist myth that the West and Israel impose on it.⁹ In order to do this, Hezbollah developed a two-pronged strategy of irregular warfare, or ‘resistance’ against Israel and a public relations strategy to allay Lebanese

⁵ Augustus Norton, *Hezbollah, A Short History*, 98

⁶ Augustus Richard, *Hizballah: From Radicalism to Pragmatism?*, Middle East Policy 1998, 8 <http://find.galegroup.com/lumen.cgscarl.com/gtx/start.do?prodId=AONE&userGroupName=97mwrlibAB>, accessed 26 Nov. 2010

⁷ Mona Harb & Reinhou Leenders, *Know Thy Enemy: Hizbullah, ‘Terrorism’ and the Politics of Perception*, Third World Quarterly, Vol 26, No.1, 2005, 183

⁸ Ibid, 183

⁹ Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 2

fears of Hezbollah's desire for an Islamic state.¹⁰ Harik's theory is grounded in the distinction between Hezbollah's military (resistance) wing, and its political apparatus. The separation of the military, or 'resistance' wing, from the political apparatus frees Hezbollah's political members from being associated with the armed militia members operating outside the bounds of the Lebanese State and bestows upon Hezbollah political operatives a degree of legitimacy.¹¹

Harik does not explore the significance of the continued relationship between the military and political arms of Hezbollah through the organization's high council on which Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah sits. Nor does Harik explain the lack of a relationship between the armed Hezbollah and the Lebanese Armed Forces, whom the Lebanese President has openly identified as the only legitimate defenders of Lebanese sovereignty.¹²

The arbitrary separation of the political and military components of Hezbollah frees Harik from discussing how Hezbollah and Lebanon can reconcile Hezbollah's armed status in violation of UN Security council resolutions calling for its disarmament. Ultimately, Harik focuses on Hezbollah's political participation and its much renowned social services programs as evidence of a fundamental shift in the group's founding values.

Where Harik characterizes Hezbollah's political moderation by removing the armed wing and invoking the concept of 'resistance', Joseph Alagha characterizes it differently. In his

¹⁰ Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 3

¹¹ BBC Web Article dated March, 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7943357.stm>, (accessed 26 Nov, 2010) Harik's theory has practical implications, as this excerpt from a BBC news article indicates: "Last week, the UK said it would establish low-level contacts with the group, citing "positive political developments". A British diplomat told the BBC's Kim Ghattas in Washington that the decision had been driven by the belief that it was possible to encourage Hezbollah to move away from violence. But a senior US official told reporters on condition of anonymity that he was unhappy with the move. He said he would have liked Britain to explain "the difference between the political, military and social wings of Hezbollah because we don't see a difference between the integrated leadership as they [the British] see it"."

¹² Oren Barak, *The Lebanese Army: A National Institution in a Divided Society*, 193

dissertation, *The Shifts in Hezbollah's Ideology*, Alagha suggests that Hezbollah has modified its outward identity by shifting emphasis between its religious ideology, political ideology, and political program.

Alagha states that Hezbollah has moved from an exclusivist religious ideology to a more encompassing political ideology, which manifests itself in a grassroots political program that is devoid of extremism.¹³ Alagha develops an argument that Hezbollah has adapted to the Lebanese political realities, and this equates to a fundamental shift in Ideology. This is a significant logical leap that requires further analysis, as Hezbollah's Shi'a doctrine does not distinguish between religious and political life.

Neither Harik or Alagha develop the possibility that Hezbollah might have adapted their method of achieving their ultimate goals, but that those ultimate goals have not changed. Ultimately, Harik, Alagha, and other proponents of the 'Lebanonization' theory conclude that Hezbollah's move into Lebanese politics is proof of its desire to chart its own course independent of Syrian and Iranian influence. Whether or not Hezbollah represents the interests of Syria or Iran from *within* the Lebanese political construct is a line of inquiry that 'Lebanonization' proponents do not address.

While the 'Lebanonization' theory goes much further in trying to understand Hezbollah than the previous 'terrorist label' models, it seems to myopically focus on Hezbollah's most recent statements and actions without considering its foundational beliefs and long history.

¹³ Joseph Alagha, *The Shifts in Hizbullah's Ideology*, 373

These two works by respected scholars of Hezbollah and Lebanon give cause for hope that Hezbollah and other groups like it can moderate, but serious questions remain.¹⁴ As a sub-state entity that is active on the world stage, an analysis of Hezbollah across the religious, political, informational, and military domains should provide a better understanding of Hezbollah's goals and objectives in relation to those of the Lebanese government.

Key Concepts in Shi'a Islam

In order to analyze Hezbollah in any way, one must appreciate that it is primarily a religious entity, and its religion is a particular version of Shi'a Islam. Though a comprehensive view of Shi'a Islam is beyond the scope of this work, there are some foundational concepts in Shi'ism that will enhance the reader's ability to compare and contrast Hezbollah's religious ideology to that of Iranian and Lebanese Shi'a thinking.

The roots of Shi'a Islam reach back to the beginning of Islam and the death of the Prophet Muhammad. Upon the Prophet's death, his family and close supporters disagreed on who would be his successor, or caliph. The man elected to be caliph was the Prophet's uncle and close companion Abu Bakr. The rival candidate for succession was Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of

¹⁴ Eyal Zisser, *The Return of Hizbullah*, Middle East Quarterly Fall 2002, 4, Eyal Zisser's counter to the Lebanonization theory: "The fact that in recent years its military power has grown to strategic proportions, with the aid and encouragement of Iran, proves that the Lebanese "veil" worn by Hizbullah is exceedingly thin. Sham "Lebanonization" allows the organization to continue building its military strength undisturbed and to attract a political following for future struggles, not only against Israel but also within Lebanon".

Muhammad. Those who believed that Ali was the rightful successor to the Prophet were referred to as ‘partisans of Ali’ (*Shi’at Ali*).¹⁵

Although Ali did eventually give allegiance to the chosen caliph, he did not recognize any of the legal precedents set forth by the first three caliphs on matters of jurisprudence.¹⁶ This would become a significant difference in the development of both Sunni and Shi’a schools of legal thought. Ali was regarded not as a bitter agitator, but as a quietist opposition leader. This theme of quietist opposition (*ta’qqiya*) as opposed to activism and protest (*ta’bia*) would dominate Shi’a thinking for centuries.

The first key concept in Shi’a Islam is that of divinely-sanctioned succession. Ali would eventually become the fourth caliph after Uthman’s murder in Egypt. The significance of this is not to be understated, as Ali’s supporters considered him the first caliph to combine the spiritual and dynastic traditions of succession. This is the genesis of the Shi’a notion of the *Imamate*, with Ali being the first *Imam*. Going forward, all Shi’a *Imams* of this divine lineage embodied both political and spiritual authority.¹⁷ These *Imams* would enjoy a privileged spiritual status from the Shi’a faithful not only for their knowledge, but also for their inclusion in this unbroken line of infallible *Imams* going back to Ali.¹⁸

In Twelver Shi’ism, which is the majority Shi’a sect within the countries in question, this line of *Imams* would include eleven successors to Ali, at which point the twelfth *Imam*,

¹⁵ Rodger Shanahan *The Shi’a of Lebanon*, 9

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 9

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 10

¹⁸ Vali Nasr, *The Shi’a Revival*, 68

Muhammad al-Muntazar vanished in 941CE.¹⁹ The Twelfth *Imam*, it is believed, was hidden by god in this miraculous state of occultation, or hiddenness, in order to protect his life.²⁰ The Shi'a believe that the return of the vanished *Imam* will initiate the final struggle between good and evil, and ultimately result in the rule of the entire world under perfect Islamic justice.²¹ In the absence of the Vanished *Imam*, the responsibility for protection and guidance of the Shi'a communities around the world would fall to the highest echelon of the Shi'a clerical community, the quasi-infallible Jurists viewed as sources of emulation, or *marja-i taqlid*.²²

Another critical feature of the development of Shi'a Islam is the celebration of martyrdom, or *Shahada*.²³ The concept of sacrificing oneself on the part of the Muslim community is regarded in Shi'a Islam as the highest testament of faith.²⁴ This notion of martyrdom is embodied in the legend of the death of Ali's son Husayn in Karbala in 680 CE.²⁵ This is a galvanizing idea to Shi'a, as it represents the death of a divinely chosen *Imam* at the hands of illegitimate oppressors.

The martyrdom of Husayn infused the Shi'a with deep passion, but this passion was countered by their numerical inferiority to the newly established and growing Sunni sect, which considered the Shi'a heretics. The persecution that befell the Shi'a communities and their relative

¹⁹ Rodger Shanahan *The Shi'a of Lebanon*, 11

²⁰ Vali Nasr, *The Shi'a Revival*, 67

²¹ *Ibid*, 67

²² *Ibid*, 71

²³ *Ibid*, 57

²⁴ *Ibid*, 57

²⁵ Rodger Shanahan *The Shi'a of Lebanon*, 11 When Yazid, the Umayyad Caliph denied Ali's son Husayn his rightful position of authority, Husayn faced his illegitimate oppressor, was betrayed by fellow Shi'a in Kufa, Iraq, and was martyred in what would become a defining moment in Shi'a Islamic history.

numerical weakness forced Shi'a leaders to adopt a form of political and spiritual quietism (*ta'qiyya*) which allowed them to hide their true intentions and in some cases even their sect to outsiders.²⁶ In Shi'a logic, this ensured the survival of the Shi'a community until such time as they could seize their rightful power, or be saved by the return of the Hidden *Imam*.²⁷ These combined elements of denial of rightful leadership, martyrdom, defeat, and dispossession would simmer for centuries until the explosion of Shi'a protest in the 20th century.

The last key component of Shi'a Islam is the concept of *Jihad*. *Jihad* in Arabic is literally 'to exert'.²⁸ This exertion of the soul in service to Allah can take many forms, both spiritual and physical. Classical Islamic jurists distinguished four ways in which the believer could successfully fulfill his duty of *Jihad*: by his heart, his tongue, his hands, and the sword.²⁹ In Shi'a Islam, *Jihad* is intimately linked to the doctrine of *walaya*, or allegiance to the *Imam*. Thus, *Jihad* can only be justified by the *Imam*, and when directed must be obeyed.³⁰ The greatest honor a Muslim can achieve is to die in the conduct of *jihad* and be declared a martyr, or *shahid*. *Shahadat*, which literally translates to 'to witness', is the highest form of declaration of faith.³¹

²⁶ Rodger Shanahan *The Shi'a of Lebanon*, 13

²⁷ *Ibid*, 13

²⁸ Majid Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Land of Islam*, 55

²⁹ *Ibid*, 56

³⁰ *Ibid*, 66

³¹ Taleqani, Mutahhari, Shari'ati, *Jihad and Shahadat: Struggle and Martyrdom in Islam*, VII IRIS, 1986, Ali Shari'ati defines *Shahadat* as follows: "*Shahadat* , in summary, in our culture, contrary to other schools where it is considered to be an accident, an involvement, a death imposed upon a hero, a tragedy, is a grade, a level, a rank. It is not a means, but a goal itself. It is originality, it is completion, it is a lift, It is itself a midway to the peak of humanity, and it is a culture...It is an invitation to all generations in all ages, if you cannot kill your oppressor, then die"

Hezbollah

Analysis of Hezbollah Religious and Political Ideology

Hezbollah is a militant Shi'ite religious group that originated in the Ba'albeck-Hermil region of Lebanon in the early 1980s.³² This was a very turbulent time in the Middle East in general, and Lebanon in particular. The founding of Hezbollah was the result of a series of events that occurred in this troubled region. The nascent Shi'a social protest movement of Sayyid Musa-al Sadr was being radicalized by the raging Lebanese civil war, the Israeli invasions of south Lebanon in 1978 and 1982, and the successful Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979.³³ These events turned what was a religiously-guided political protest movement into an armed, militant *jihadi* cause aimed primarily at what was considered the enemy of Islam-the state of Israel.³⁴

The founding members of Hezbollah were disenchanted Islamists that split from the AMAL movement in Lebanon due to its insufficient Islamism and lack of aggressiveness against Israel's incursions into Lebanon.³⁵ These men, led by Husayn al-Musawi, were the most militant

³² Naim Qassem, *HIZBULLA: The Story from Within*, Translated from Arabic by Dalia Khalil, SAQI, 98

³³ Magnus Ranstorp, *Hiz'ballah in Lebanon*, 29

³⁴ *Ibid*, 31

³⁵ Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 39. AMAL is an acronym for the Arabic *afwaj al-muqawama al-lubnaniya* which means 'hope'. The movement was founded in 1975 by *Imam* Musa-al Sadr when he merged his Shi'a social welfare 'Movement for the Disinherited' into an existing Shiite militia on the eve of the Lebanese Civil War. Sadr did this primarily for collective security, not to engage in fighting. AMAL had a tradition of secularism and cooperation with the PLO as opposed to Hezbollah's extreme Shi'a Islamist ideology. They were widely seen as corrupt and unwilling to wage jihad against Israel.

Islamists in the Lebanese Shi'a community and drew their inspiration and initial material support from the recently established Islamic Republic of Iran.³⁶

Religiously, Hezbollah received more than inspiration from Iran. Hezbollah subscribed to the Iranian version of Twelver Shi'ism, central to which is the role of *wilayat al-faqih*, or absolute rule of the Jurisprudent (*Imam Khomeini*).³⁷ The other pillar of Hezbollah's religious ideology was the fundamental belief in *Jihad* and Martyrdom in the Iranian, rather than classical Shi'a sense.

Hezbollah actually ranked its martyrs based on whether their deaths were premeditated. A soldier of God who knowingly gave his life in what the West would call a suicide operation would be ranked higher than one who falls in combat against an enemy.³⁸ This quote by Amal al-Islami shows the emulation of these types of operations in relation to the famed martyrdom of *Imam Husayn* at Karbala, "Our suicide squads are as precious to *Allah* as the Martyrs of Karbala".³⁹

For most of its early years, Hezbollah operated in extreme secrecy and divulged very little information about itself. In 1985, Hezbollah published what it called the 'Open Letter to the Downtrodden in Lebanon and the World' in which they outlined their identity, goals, and ideology. This was mainly a political document aimed at a Lebanese audience, but provided a

³⁶ Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 22

³⁷ Joseph Alagha, *The Shifts in Hezbollah Ideology*, 13

³⁸ Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbu'llah: Religion and Politics*, 132

³⁹ *Ibid*, 132, This is indicative of the value Hezbollah places on the practice of *jihad* and martyrdom. They equate their foot soldiers' suicide bombings with the honor and valor associated with the Prophet's grandson, *Imam Husayn's* fight to the death in 680 CE. *Jihad* requires one to face his enemy at arms, but more desirable to go knowingly to your death in the defense of God and Islam, thereby becoming a *Shahid*, or Martyr.

glimpse into Hezbollah's religious beliefs and goals. In the Open Letter, Hezbollah clearly identified the main sources of their culture as the *Qur'an*, the infallible *Sunna*, and the rules and religious edicts of the Shi'a jurist identified as Ayatollah Khomeini, whose authority is absolute and in no need of interpretation, only abidance.⁴⁰

Most importantly, Hezbollah makes it very clear in the first paragraph that they are not a political entity, but a worldwide Muslim nation (*umma*) tied to the Muslims throughout the world by Islam and that armed resistance is a religious duty (*wajib shar'i*).⁴¹ In 2004, Hezbollah published an updated identity and goals statement in which it reconfirmed its ideological opposition to the existence of Israel, its ideal of the liberation of Jerusalem, utilization of martyrdom, or suicide operations, and the establishment of an Islamic Republic in Lebanon.⁴²

In contrast to classical Shi'a traditions, Hezbollah makes no secret of their adherence to the controversial Islamic concept of the absolute rule of the Jurist. In so doing, they seem to pledge their highest form of allegiance to an Iranian cleric, as opposed to any Lebanese figure of political or religious authority. In clearly calling for realizing the ideal of an Islamic state in their Open Letter, Hezbollah again seems to embody a vision of Islamic supremacy, which is at odds with classical Shi'a traditions. Considering the inseparable nature of religion and politics in Islam, Hezbollah's political ideology should resemble its Islamic thinking.

In its thirty-year existence, Hezbollah has evolved in regards to its political platform. In the 1985 Open Letter, Hezbollah clearly identified itself as a resistance group committed to armed resistance to Israel and the United States with the ideal of an Islamic state in Lebanon

⁴⁰ Joseph Alagha, *The Shifts in Hezbollah Ideology*, 224

⁴¹ Ibid, 224

⁴² Ibid, 245

based on the Iranian model. This political stance is illustrated by their leader Hussein Nasrallah's 1986 statement, "From the point of view of God and Sha'ria, we are required to establish God's rule over any part of this earth".⁴³

Hezbollah devoted entire sections of its 1985 Open Letter to swearing allegiance to Ayatollah Khomeini, castigating moderate Arab regimes, and identifying America, NATO, and Israel as its primary enemies.⁴⁴ Subsequently, Hezbollah stated its opposition to the seated government of Lebanon and its goal to radically change it.⁴⁵ The government of Lebanon, it should be remembered, had disintegrated during the civil war, and emerged in 1990 looking much like the confessional government of the 1943 National Pact. This post-civil war government was secular, divided along confessional lines, and afforded Lebanese Shi'a unequal representation considering the size of the Shi'a population.⁴⁶

Hezbollah leadership, although deeply rooted in Iranian Shi'a Islamic doctrine, decided in the early 1990s to enter into the Lebanese political scene as a representative of Lebanon's Shi'a population. Hezbollah seemed to have determined that overturning the current political order of Lebanon into a second Islamic Republic was a goal temporarily out of their reach. The long tradition of confessional government and secular Syrian influence in Lebanon made this much

⁴³ Nicholas Noe: *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*, 32

⁴⁴ Joseph Alagha, *The Shifts in Hezbollah Ideology*, 225

⁴⁵ Ibid, 229

⁴⁶ Taleqani, Mutahhari, Shari'ati, *Jihad and Shahadat: Struggle and Martyrdom in Islam*, VII, There has not been an official census in Lebanon since 1932. At that time, the Shi'a were a minority at approximately 19% of the population (although this fact is still debated), and the Maronite Christian population was somewhere near 50% . The confessional government of Lebanon founded in 1943 National Pact after the end of French Mandate allocated government leadership positions according to these statistics. Current estimates are difficult to make, but the CIA estimated the Shi'a population to be over 40% as far back as 1986. The significance of this is that the Shi'a of Lebanon have been politically underrepresented since the founding of the nation.

harder to achieve than Hezbollah's founders and their Iranian sponsors had hoped. Seeing its primary goal as out of reach, Hezbollah chose at this point to pursue its second political goal of conducting *jihad* against Israel.⁴⁷ This campaign of resistance against Israel would require public backing and a high degree of autonomy for Hezbollah.

Hezbollah constructed its political platform around the narrative of oppressors and oppressed which tied into its Shi'a Islamic narrative closely.⁴⁸ In this narrative, the first world nations led by America and including Israel were labeled oppressors and the third world nations of the world were cast as the downtrodden and oppressed. This oppressor-oppressed view played to both their domestic political narrative, which built on the longstanding social protest ideas of Musa al-Sadr as well as their existential struggle against Israeli occupation and its repression of the Palestinian people.⁴⁹ It is interesting to note that by 2008, the majority of Palestinians that Hezbollah was waging *jihad* to liberate actually favored a nonviolent solution to the conflict.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Judith Harik: *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 19

⁴⁸ Ibid, 117

⁴⁹ H.E. Chehabi, *Distant Relations: Iran and Lebanon in the last 500 years*, 157, Sayyid Musa al-Sadr was a highly regarded Shi'a *Imam* considered by many to be the father of the Lebanese Shi'a protest movement. He founded the Movement for the Deprived (*Harakat al-Mahrumin*), a social-political protest movement attempting to force the Lebanese government to address Shi'a grievances. His movement was traditionally non-violent, even when he was forced to associate with the Shi'ite militias during the civil war. His reputation was as a bridge-builder within Lebanon's political domain. For a detailed discussion of Musa al-Sadr, see the section on Lebanese Shi'a ideology and politics in this monograph.

⁵⁰ Lydia Saad, 2008 Gallup Poll, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/103618/Palestinians-Israelis-Favor-Nonviolent-Solutions.aspx>, (accessed September 23, 2010) Sixth installment in a 2008 Gallup Poll series examining attitudes toward the peace process among Israelis and Palestinians. The Gallup Poll suggests people on both sides reject violence, finding a majority of Israelis and Palestinians saying they favor nonviolent forms of resistance and negotiation as the best approach to achieving self-determination and security. Only about a third in Israel, and slightly fewer in the Palestinian territories, favor "armed struggle" as the better solution. The peoples of both countries are in broad agreement that it is "never justified" for an individual person or small group of persons to target and kill civilians. Nearly three-quarters in Israel and an even higher percentage in the Palestinian territories take this view. That leaves only 22% in Israel and 14% in the Palestinian territories saying this type of violence is "sometimes justified" or that it "depends."

Before it could become a deeply entrenched participant in Lebanese politics, Hezbollah had to obtain approval from Iran and Syria. Hezbollah relied on Iran for funding and training, but it relied on Syria for the logistics route to bring in arms and people.⁵¹ From the time of its founding, Iran and Syria had agreed on supporting Hezbollah as a common lever against Israel. Syria wanted the return of territories lost to Israel in the 1973 war (primarily the Golan Heights), and Iran wanted an unfettered ability to continue armed *jihad* against Israel.⁵² Once Hezbollah gained approval from its two main patrons, it was free to develop itself as a political entity in Lebanon.

The decision to reach political accommodation with a non-Islamic Lebanese government did not sit well with many in Hezbollah's ideological core or in Iran's clerical leadership. The internal debate that Hezbollah went through was heated, and resulted in some of the party's most militant clerics being marginalized in order for Hezbollah to continue its quest for political legitimacy.⁵³ The most militant thinkers, represented by Subhi Tufayli, felt that participating in Lebanon's non-Islamic government was ultimate betrayal of Hezbollah's founding principles.⁵⁴ The issue was only settled when Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini approved of Hezbollah's entry into Lebanese politics.⁵⁵ This was in accordance with Hezbollah's adherence to the *velayat al-faqih* doctrine in which it recognized the Iranian Supreme Leader as the final authority in all matters religious and political.

⁵¹ Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hezbollah*, 63

⁵² Judith Harik: *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 47

⁵³ *Ibid*, 59

⁵⁴ Augustus Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 99

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 100

Hezbollah built its political platform around the narrative of ‘resistance against Israeli occupation’ rather than other Islamist aspects of its identity. This was done precisely to divert the concern of many Lebanese citizens (many of them Shi’a) about Hezbollah’s real intentions in regards to establishing an Islamic state. Hezbollah leadership were very attuned to the average Lebanese citizens’ wariness of the organization. This concern was well founded, as illustrated by Judith Harik’s 1992 survey which showed only 13 percent of Lebanese Shi’a supported an Islamic state in Lebanon.⁵⁶ By 2006, 92 percent of Lebanese citizens desired the preservation of a multi-faith society.⁵⁷

Hezbollah moved quickly and impressively on the domestic political scene, creating a social service and reconstruction wing to the party. In maintaining their founding principle of *jihad*, Hezbollah aptly named this new organization the ‘*jihad* for building’, or, *jihad al-binna*.⁵⁸ Currently, their network of hospitals and other social welfare services has expanded across southern Lebanon and services non-Shi’a Lebanese as well. The Hezbollah social services unit was described by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for West Asia as one of the best equipped units.⁵⁹ The sources of funding of Hezbollah’s social service programs, particularly from Iran, are difficult to ascertain.

⁵⁶ Ghorayeb: Hizb’ullah: *Politics and Religion*, 35

⁵⁷ 2006 Gallup Poll, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/25489/Lebanese-See-Hezbollah-Politically-Stronger-After-Conflict-Israel.aspx>, (accessed on September 23, 2010)

⁵⁸ Judith Harik: *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 90

⁵⁹ Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hezbollah*, 49

Hezbollah reaped political rewards by dropping language of establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon and showing an apparent willingness to work across confessional lines. By the year 2000, it held the largest party bloc in the legislative chamber of the Lebanese parliament.⁶⁰ There is no doubting that the political image of Hezbollah has changed in the past 30 years, but what is difficult to determine is whether its original political goals have altered substantially. As late as 1998, well after its move into Lebanese politics, Hezbollah leadership were still making statements in which they reinforced their pan-Islamic ideology, and rejected the state of Lebanon as an “unnatural French colonial creation”.⁶¹ This is still their stance despite the fact that only 8 percent of Lebanese citizens support a society based on Sharia law.⁶²

Fifteen years after its initial foray into Lebanese politics, Hezbollah successfully built a public image of a Shi’a religious organization concerned primarily with the well-being of Lebanon’s poor Shi’a, and the protection of Lebanon’s sovereignty. This image was tested in 2008 when the Lebanese government declared Hezbollah’s secret communications network illegal and Hezbollah responded by fighting Lebanese security forces in a 6-day street battle in Beirut, in which 65 people were killed.⁶³

Based on its own 1985 Open Letter, Hezbollah was born to establish Islamic order in Lebanon, defeat Israel, and fight Western imperialism.⁶⁴ Not surprisingly, Hezbollah seems to be

⁶⁰ Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hezbollah*, 150

⁶¹ Ghorayeb: *Hizb’ullah: Politics and Religion*, 76-77

⁶² Dalia Mogahed, Special Report: *Muslim World, Islam and Democracy*, Gallup Poll Consulting, University Press, 2

⁶³ Krista E. Wiegand, *Reform of a Terrorist Group: Hezbollah as a Lebanese Political Party*, Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, Dept. of Political Science, Georgia Southern University, 677

⁶⁴ Joseph Alagha, *The Shifts in Hezbollah Ideology*, 225, 227

struggling to reconcile its uniquely Iranian Shi'a ideology of *jihad*, martyrdom, and *velayat al-faqih* with its desire to forge a mainstream Lebanese political identity. Its social programs have gone a long way towards this goal, but its demonstrated willingness to resort to violence when pressured indicates a hesitancy to submit itself completely to the political arena.

As discussed earlier, Hezbollah has worked tirelessly at creating a public image within Lebanon that is based on its concern for the rights of poor Shi'a and its unflinching dedication to the defense of Lebanon's sovereignty. An analysis of Hezbollah's strategic messaging should clearly reinforce this uniquely Lebanese identity. Whether or not this is the case remains to be seen.

Analysis of Hezbollah Information Operations

Hezbollah has one of the most extensive media operations of any sub-state actor. Hezbollah has never had to rely on the capabilities of the Lebanese government to communicate its message of resistance and western aggression to a worldwide audience. Hezbollah maintains an entire media department as a formal sub-structure within the organization.⁶⁵ This media department oversees a vast network of satellite, internet, and print media. Al Manar TV, Hezbollah's Iranian-funded satellite media service, broadcasts the Hezbollah message to an estimated 200 million homes all around the world despite the U.S. government's attempts to limit the companies selling it airtime.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Judith Harik: *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 161

⁶⁶ Steven Stalinsky, "Terrorist TV: Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV Should be shut down," National Review, April 04, 2006, <http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/stalinsky200604040821.asp> (accessed Sept 23, 2010)

The themes of Hezbollah's media wing are in line with its stated goals and objectives in its Open Letter. Its primary theme is that of resistance and *jihad* against Israel and the West. Hezbollah's website, Al Intiqad, prominently displays web sections labeled 'Islamic Resistance', 'Conflict with Israel', and 'Iranian Affairs' on its website.⁶⁷ The Iranian Affairs section of Al Intiqad thoroughly covers the prevailing issues of contention between Iran and the West, and places articles from countries such as Cuba and Venezuela in its current events section. It is noteworthy that on Hezbollah's primary website, the only mention of the Lebanese government is in a feature condemning the Lebanese judiciary for a decision that is counter to Hezbollah's interests.⁶⁸

During the numerous conflicts in which Hezbollah has involved itself, it has carefully constructed its narrative of pious soldiers of God defending their sacred land against the infidels, striving for divine victory on behalf of the downtrodden Islamic masses.⁶⁹ The other narrative that Hezbollah has manipulated in its messaging is that of the excessive and reckless force used by its enemies against its own brave martyrs.

This portrait of disproportionality was used to maximum effect against Israel in the 2006 war, subsequently leading to international condemnation of Israel's military response on Lebanese civilians.⁷⁰ In another example of the primacy of their Islamic ideology, Hezbollah's Al

⁶⁷ Hezbollah Al Intiqad English website: <http://english.moqawama.org/index.php>, (accessed Sept 23, 2010)

⁶⁸ Hezbollah Al Intiqad English website: <http://english.moqawama.org/essaydetails.php?eid=12191&cid=225>, (accessed Sept 23, 2010)

⁶⁹ Marvin Kalb, *The Israeli Hezbollah War of 2006: The Media as a Weapon in Asymmetrical Conflict*, Harvard University, 6

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 9

Intiqad website did not frame their perceived victory over Israel as a victory for the national resistance of Lebanon, but rather as a ‘divine victory’ in a *jihad* against the Zionist entity.⁷¹ Noteworthy is Hezbollah’s ability to broadcast its strategic messages directly at the Israeli population via Hebrew language broadcasts aimed at undermining the confidence of Israelis in their own government.⁷²

Hezbollah clearly demonstrates an appreciation for, and mastery of, information operations. Its messages, however, do not seem to reflect its supposedly moderate Lebanese political face, but rather appear to be grounded in its Iranian-inspired Islamist ideology of *jihad*. Ironically, Hezbollah considers this *jihad* narrative as distancing it from the terrorist label it so abhors.⁷³

It is by now clear that Iranian influence is present in Hezbollah’s religious doctrine, its political platform, and its strategic messaging. It is undeniable that the source of Hezbollah’s strength is not limited to its popular support alone, but also resides in its sizeable and well-armed militia. Continued Iranian influence in Hezbollah’s armed apparatus would understandably be a source of great concern for the government of Lebanon.

⁷¹ Hezbollah Al Intiqad English website:
<http://english.moqawama.org/essaydetails.php?eid=4853&cid=238>, (accessed on Sept 23, 2010)

⁷² Judith Harik: *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 161

⁷³ Ibid, 189, Harik identifies this avoidance of the ‘Terrorist’ label as one of Hezbollah’s primary justifications for its legitimacy. Hezbollah’s views of its military and ‘martyrdom’ operations as legitimate within the context of its Islamic religious duty of *jihad* as well as the right of legal armed resistance grounded in international law are critical arguments to the “breaking of the Terrorist myth” as Harik calls it.

Analysis of Hezbollah Military Organization and Tactics

Hezbollah's military-security apparatus is under direct control of the *Shura* Council and is comprised of the Islamic Resistance (*al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyyah*), and the Party Security Apparatus (*Amn al-Hizb*).⁷⁴ The resistance section controls the enforcement, recruitment, and combat sections. The *jihad* Council is another component of the Hezbollah military organization that is unique to its Islamist character. The *jihad* Council is a separate arm from the Security Apparatus. This *jihad* Council is headed by the Secretary General himself with suspected Iranian Revolutionary Guard representation.⁷⁵

Hezbollah's *jihad* council makes all decisions on conduct of *jihad*, whether armed or unarmed. As stated earlier, Hezbollah subscribes to the Iranian *velayat al-faqih* concept according to which the Iranian Supreme Leader has final approval on all matters. This includes the waging of *jihad*. When armed *jihad* operations are chosen, it is not Hezbollah in Lebanon that makes the final decision, but the *wali al-faqih*, or Supreme Leader in Tehran.⁷⁶

The role of the Iranian *Pasdaran*, or early Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps, in founding and training the founders of Hezbollah is well documented. The fact that these were among the most radical Islamist revolutionaries to come out of Iran is significant because they forged Hezbollah's military ethos.⁷⁷ The long and vicious Iran-Iraq war saw the advent of the Iranian martyr doctrine, where Iran used waves of men and boys to march to their deaths in the

⁷⁴ Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah*, 71

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 69

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 70

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 85

face of Iraqi defenses.⁷⁸ The Iranian founders of Hezbollah exported this zealous martyrdom doctrine and the tactics used against Iraqi forces to Lebanon's Bekaa Valley.

Hezbollah has always admitted to the use of martyrdom operations, but closely controls their use. Much is made of the fact that Hezbollah has not conducted a suicide, or martyrdom operation in some time. As recently as 2005, however, Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah warned that Hezbollah would fight any attempt to disarm the militia the way the 'Martyrs fought in Karbala', alluding to Hezbollah's willingness to revive its martyrdom doctrine.⁷⁹ Despite Hezbollah's use of pseudo-conventional military tactics in its 2006 war with Israel and the pronounced lack of suicide operations, it is not clear that Hezbollah has shifted away from the ideology and the organizational structure for waging classic Iranian Shi'a martyrdom operations.

Iran's significant influence on Hezbollah permeates all domains of state power. Hezbollah practices a uniquely Iranian form of Shi'a Islam, calls for the establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon in its political identity statement, features Iranian affairs prominently in its strategic messaging, and maintains an Iranian-trained Islamic militia prepared to die in the

⁷⁸ Kenneth Katzman, *The Warriors of Islam*, 19, The Iranian Revolutionary Guard has always placed its Islamic revolutionary purity above military rationale and efficiency. The tactics used by the Revolutionary Guard and the *Basij* volunteers during the Iran-Iraq war were completely militarily unsound but fulfilled the Islamic soldiers' commitment to martyrdom in service of Islam. Iranian Revolutionary Guards were completely willing to trade military effectiveness for Islamic fervor and zeal. It was the most zealous of these Iranian soldiers of Islam that went to Lebanon to train Hezbollah's first generation of fighters.

⁷⁹ Nicholas Noe, *The Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*, 349, This is a clear reference to martyrdom operations in the tradition of the *Imam* Husayn's martyrdom in the battle of Karbala. Nasrallah is making it clear in this statement that Hezbollah will use all means at its disposal to include suicide operations to prevent disarmament.

service of God. A closer look at the Islamic Republic of Iran will further reinforce this relationship between Hezbollah and the Islamic Republic.

Iran

Analysis of Iranian Religious and Political Ideology

Iran's Shi'a consciousness can be traced back to the Sufi Master Shah Isma'il's adoption of Twelver Shi'ism and the establishment of the Safavid Dynasty.⁸⁰ Most of the Safavids were Sunni, and this is why Shah Isma'il reached out to Arab Shi'a scholars from Lebanon, Mesopotamia, and Bahrain to establish Twelver Shi'ism as the state religion and force the conversion of his Sunni subjects.⁸¹ Despite being the predominant religion, Iranian Shi'ism was subservient to the political rule of the Shahs and later, the monarchs.

Other than a proto-Islamic movement under Jamal al-Din al-Afghani in 1891⁸², Shi'a Muslims were forced to adopt the quietist, or *taqiyya* approach to practicing their faith without active protest. This willingness to quietly endure religious and political marginalization allowed the Shi'a community to survive centuries of Iranian societal evolution, from the fall of the Safavid dynasty and subsequent rise of Qajar Iran, to the opening of Iran to trade with Europe and foreign installation of the Pahlavi monarchy.⁸³ It is with the Pahlavi monarchy that Iran's Shi'a began to visualize an opportunity to shift from the quietist to activist mode of practicing their faith.

⁸⁰ Chehabi, *Distant Relations: Iran and Lebanon in the Last 500 years*, 3

⁸¹ *Ibid*, 4

⁸² Sherifa D. Zuhur, *Iran, Iraq, and the United States: The New Triangle's Impact on Sectarianism and the Nuclear Threat*, Strategic Studies Institute 2006, 35

⁸³ Chehabi, *Distant Relations: Iran and Lebanon in the Last 500 years*, 9

In his youth, Ayatollah Khomeini (the future Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran) was a student in Arak studying Shi'ism under Shaykh Abdel Karim Hairi who took the young boy to study in Qom.⁸⁴ Khomeini's life was a classic story of Shi'a oppression and dispossession. He grew up in extreme poverty, with little family, and in a country that was constantly the object of foreign interference.⁸⁵ The Hairi school of Islamic thought that Khomeini studied in did not espouse the direct role of the jurist (*marja*) in politics, but rather as a consultative guide and protector of the Shi'a community.⁸⁶

Khomeini's hostility towards the Pahlavi monarchy increased throughout his life as he saw the King 'westernizing' his country and ignoring Islamic principles. The American coup of 1953 that overthrew the popularly elected Prime Minister Mossadegh created a backlash of Iranian nationalist fervor that clerics like Khomeini attempted to absorb into their Islamic ideology.⁸⁷ Ironically, it was the writings of Sunni fundamentalists such as Hassan al-Banna of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood that put forth the idea that Islam was not an end to itself, but rather a tool for uniting Muslims around the world against the encroachment of the West.⁸⁸ This idea resonated with Khomeini.

⁸⁴ R.Scott Appleby, *Spokesmen for the Despised*, 23

⁸⁵ Ibid, 23, British and Russian Imperialism reached a high point in Iran when Khomeini was a child. The 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention basically partitioned Iran into three parts, with Russia in the north and Britain in the Southeast and a neutral area along the coast. The imperial powers dissolved the Second Majlis government in 1911, and Russia occupied Northern Iran. This foreign interference culminated with the Russian bombing of the shrine of the eighth *Imam* Reza, the most hallowed Shi'ite site in the country.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 23

⁸⁷ Ibid, 28

⁸⁸ Ibid, 28

In Khomeini's published work *al Hukuma al Islamiya*, Khomeini denounced the long line of Iranian governments as corrupt and illegitimate, and their leaders as idol worshippers.⁸⁹ Khomeini began to feel that the only way to save Iran and the Shi'a communities was the establishment of Islamic rule. It was in pursuit of this goal that he developed his controversial idea of the Rule of the Jurisprudent, or *velayat al-faqih*.

Khomeini put forth a logical argument of immense nuance. First, he argued the primacy of Islam in that to relegate Islam to simply a form of worship subservient to the state is a perversion imposed by imperialist western powers. Next, he argued that any non-Islamic government was unjust, therefore illegitimate. In light of these two facts, he concluded that only a qualified person must rule an Islamic state, and that person is the Shi'a Jurist, or *faqih*.⁹⁰

This concept of an Islamic state ruled by a jurist was not new to Shi'a Islam. The ruling jurist most Shi'a looked to however, was the Vanished *Imam* himself or the *Mahdi* (the guided one), and until the Vanished *Imam*'s return or the appearance of the *Mahdi*, it was blasphemous to imply a simple earthly *Imam* could fill this role.⁹¹ Khomeini disagreed fundamentally.

Khomeini countered this by extracting Qur'anic verses in which he argued that the Prophet and Ali intended religious scholars to enforce laws pending the return of the Twelfth *Imam*, and that this political authority was in no way imitative of the spiritual status of the divine *Imams*.⁹² This idea of an earthly Shi'ite source of emulation (*marja-i taqlid*), or Jurist exercising

⁸⁹ Danial D. Pick, *The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Mandate of the Jurist*, Princeton University, 2000, 22

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 22, 23

⁹¹ R.Scott Appleby, *Spokesmen for the Despised*, 32

⁹² *Ibid*, 34

what was heretofore the realm of the line of the divine *Imams* is a significant departure from conventional Shi'a doctrine. This clever decoupling of the earthly duty to enforce the laws of Islam and the spiritual status of the divine *Imam* enabled Khomeini to position himself as a candidate for absolute rule of his desired future Islamic State of Iran.

The importance of the year 1979 cannot be understated in understanding development of contemporary Iranian Shi'a ideology. Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi was deeply unpopular and viewed as illegitimate, radical Sunni Muslims had seized the Grand Mosque in Mecca, the Lebanese Shi'a were fighting both a civil war and an Israeli occupation, and revolution was in the air in Tehran.

As the Shah became weaker in facing the allied revolutionary forces of the students, intellectuals, bazaaris, and the clerics, his monarchy fell to the revolutionary government of Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan.⁹³ Bazargan was an engineer by education and a member of the modernist Iran Liberation Movement. He was considered a modernist with a liberal approach to Shi'ism. Khomeini supported him until he sensed Bazargan threatened his vision of a pure Islamic state.⁹⁴ In November, 1979 Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini realized his vision when the Assembly of Experts of the new Islamic Republic of Iran approved the constitution identifying him by name as the *marja i-taqlid*. He was now the Supreme Ruler of the world's first modern Islamic State.⁹⁵

What is most impressive about Khomeini was how he cleverly manipulated Shi'a Islamic doctrine while hiding his true intentions from everyone until it was the right time to strike.

⁹³ R.Scott Appleby, *Spokesmen for the Despised*, 46

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 47

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 49

Moreover, Khomeini cleverly switched back and forth from *ta'qiyya* to *ta' abia* (quietist to activist) Shi'ism depending on the situation. In addition, he implemented flexible use of Shi'a *jihad* doctrine by making accommodations with others who did not share his ideals in order to bide his time until he was in a position of strength to seize back power and Islamic lands.⁹⁶ This shrewd maneuvering showed Khomeini's mastery of Shi'a doctrine and Islamic law.

Khomeini did not only reinterpret the idea of clerical rule in Shi'a Islam, he also took the Shi'a concept of martyrdom to an entirely new level. The Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88 saw Khomeini unabashedly celebrate the large-scale martyrdom of Iranian youth in the struggle against his technically superior foe.⁹⁷ Khomeini saw the battle trenches as "centers for worship of God"⁹⁸, and tied the survival of the Islamic Republic to the deliberate pursuit of martyrdom.⁹⁹

The Iranian version of Shi'a Islam is unique in that under Ayatollah Khomeini, it codified the relationship between the religious leadership and the political leadership of a nation within the structure of an Islamic state. Iranian Shi'ism also gave state sanction to the pursuit of martyrdom in the defense of the state. In the Iranian model, martyrdom was no longer a uniquely religious issue between believer and God, but a tactic of the Islamic soldiers of Iran. Given Khomeini's blending of Islam and the State, Iran's political manifestation would understandably resemble its Shi'a Islamic underpinnings.

In the eyes of the Iranian leadership and many Iranians, Iran is exceptional within the greater Middle East. Iran has the largest population, land mass, the largest military, and a long

⁹⁶ Majid Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Land of Islam*, 67

⁹⁷ R.Scott Appleby, *Spokesmen for the Despised*, 55

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 58

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 58

history of culture and civilization.¹⁰⁰ Most importantly, Iran sees itself as the only successfully established Islamic state, and as such, the leader of the worlds' Muslims.¹⁰¹

Iran's interests have always been to protect a country long coveted by outsiders, whether Ottoman Turks or Tsarist Russians.¹⁰² In the 20th century, Iran's experiences with the world's great powers did not improve. Soviets, British, and ultimately American powers were continually involved in Iranian affairs. Iranians, like their Arab neighbors whose countries were a result of colonial mapmaking, reject outside intervention in internal Iranian affairs. Iranians consider America the responsible party for the toppling of the democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh in 1953, and the subsequent installation of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi to the Peacock Throne.¹⁰³

The Shah attempted to legitimate the monarchy by emphasizing the ancient pre-Islamic Persian heritage of Iran by celebrating the superior Aryan and Indo-European identity as opposed to the Arab identity of the region.¹⁰⁴ This emphasis on 2,500 years of dynastic Persian rule marginalized those who identified with the past 1,400 years of Shi'a Islamic traditions. Compounding this cultural dissonance was the Shah's program of what his opponents considered

¹⁰⁰ Bahman Baktiari, *The World as Seen from Tehran: Global Strategic Assessment*, NDU Press, 195

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 195

¹⁰² Ibid, 193

¹⁰³ Judith Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 31-2

¹⁰⁴ Arshin Moghaddam, *Iran in World Politics: The Question of the Islamic Republic*, 46, The Shah of Iran made a conscious decision to identify contemporary Iranian society with Iran's pre-Islamic Persian history. This was a rich history dating back 2,500 years. Iran's Shi'a Muslims, however, had a different tradition dating back to Shah Ismail's conversion of Iran's Sunni Safavids to Shi'a Islam. Shi'as suffered under successive Persian dynasties for centuries until the establishment of the Islamic Republic finally offered them their rightful position of leadership.

‘Westoxification’ of Iranian identity.¹⁰⁵ These anti-monarchic and anti-imperialist sentiments were increasingly emanating from the Islamic thinkers such as Ali Shariati, and became the primary component of the revolutionary narrative that overthrew one of the most powerful monarchs in the Middle East.¹⁰⁶

The nascent Islamic Republic of Iran immediately fought for its survival when Saddam Hussein in neighboring secular Ba’athist Iraq attacked Iran in 1980 in order to stop the Islamic revolution in its tracks. Iran fought a brutal eight-year war during which it was convinced of U.S. support to Iraq.¹⁰⁷ It was during this war that Iran found its first geopolitical alignment with Syria (Syria broke off relations and oil exports to Iraq) and solidified its hostility towards the U.S.¹⁰⁸

When Israel invaded Lebanon to crush the PLO fighters there, and the subsequent UN peacekeeping forces arrived in Beirut (a force including American Marines), the Iranians acted. The new leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini immediately made clear Iran’s stance to Western intervention when he dispatched 800 Iranian *Pasdaran* (predecessors to the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps) to the Bekaa valley to train a group of militants resisting the 1982 Israeli invasion and western intervention in Lebanon.¹⁰⁹ This group of fighters trained by Iran’s most zealous Islamic warriors would become Hezbollah.

¹⁰⁵ Arshin Moghaddam, *Iran in World Politics: The Question of the Islamic Republic*, 49

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 55, Ali Shriati was an Iranian Islamic thinker. His ideas were shaped by his education in Paris, where he came into contact with French Leftist thinkers. He began to critique the Westernization of his Iranian society as the ultimate source of Iran’s cultural demise.

¹⁰⁷ Judith Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 33

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 33

¹⁰⁹ Magnus Ranstorp, *Hizb’ullah in Lebanon*, p34

Throughout the 1990s and into the 21st century, Iran has been unbending in its hostility to the West and its denial of recognition of the state of Israel. Iran considers its sphere of influence as Afghanistan through the Gulf, Iraq, and Turkey to Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Israel.¹¹⁰

Regionally, it considers itself the preeminent military and political power in the Middle East and is adamantly opposed to the extensive U.S. military presence throughout the Persian Gulf region.

According to a National Defense University global strategic assessment, Iranian leadership, whether Persian Nationalist or Clerical-Islamist, feels that there is a tangible threat to the Iranian nation and regime and that eventually they will have to fight again and fight alone.¹¹¹ In light of this perceived threat to its survival and its inability to defeat the West in conventional warfare, Iran seeks to set two interrelated conditions that will allow it to execute its foreign policy objectives abroad via its surrogate entities like Hezbollah; these conditions are plausible deniability and deliberate ambiguity.¹¹²

Hezbollah seeks these same objectives in Lebanon. First, as a sub-national with an armed militia, it can execute operations without consulting the Lebanese government or burdening it with responsibility. Second, by moderating its Islamic rhetoric without disavowing its goals of an Islamic state, it purposefully sustains a sense of ambiguity about its ultimate goals.

Iran's political view of itself as the leader of the world's Muslims and constantly under threat from the West combined with its Shi'a Islamic traditions of oppression, struggle, and martyrdom produce a potentially dangerous sense of impending conflict for the Iranian

¹¹⁰ Global Institute for International Studies, *Global Strategic Assessment*, NDU Press, 196

¹¹¹ Bahman Baktiari, *The World as Seen from Tehran: Global Strategic Assessment*, NDU Press, 193

¹¹² Global Institute for International Studies, *Global Strategic Assessment*, NDU Press, 196

leadership. Iran's operational approach to survival along the dual axis of deniability and ambiguity make its sponsorship of Hezbollah as a strategic tool quite understandable. Considering Iran's sense of inevitable conflict with Israel and the West, it will be interesting to see what Iran says through its state-run information arm.

Analysis of Iranian Information Operations

As one would expect, strategic messaging from Iran is tightly controlled by the Tehran regime. The messaging on the few available English language news outlets such as the semi-official FARS and the state-run IRNA closely follows the anti-West, anti-Israel theme. The front pages of both the FARS and IRNA websites contain stories condemning UN sanctions against Iran, defense of the Iranian nuclear program, and a categorical rejection of the Arab-Israeli peace process restarted in August 2010.¹¹³

The anti-western messaging of the Iranian regime is both direct and indirect. Iranian journalists routinely quote Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps commanders in their statements regarding the American desire to establish permanent military bases throughout the Middle East in order to dominate the region.¹¹⁴ Quite clear in these messages is the declaration of these IRGC commanders that they are prepared to target specific American bases in the region if attacked by

¹¹³ FARS website, <http://english.farsnews.net/newstext.php?nn=8906121048>, accessed 5 October, 2010

¹¹⁴ FARS News, <http://english.farsnews.net/newstext.php?nn=8906061592>, (accessed 5 October, 2010). Vahid Mojdeh referred to the United States' long-term military buildup in number of countries, and cautioned that when the US builds a military base in a state it means that Washington wants to remain in that region forever: Afghan Analyst Vahid Mojdeh told FNA, "One of the United States' warmongering plans is opening military bases in every part of the world because it wants to have military presence throughout the world," Vahid Mojdeh told FNA

the U.S. or Israel.¹¹⁵ The indirect challenge to the west is manifest in the prominent displays of international relations stories featuring nations with difficult relations to the United States, such as Venezuela and China.¹¹⁶ This anti-western stance is illustrated by Iran's membership in the Non-Aligned Movement of developing nations.¹¹⁷

There is very little information in the Iranian news regarding Lebanon other than stories featuring high-level Iranian diplomats meeting with Hezbollah leadership.¹¹⁸ In view of the Iranian regime taking no hard political positions in regards to Lebanon, it is noteworthy that the regime has taken a specific stand on the disarming of Hezbollah.¹¹⁹ As a final indicator of Iranian-Hezbollah affinity, the home page of the state-run IRNA website prominently displays a blended photograph of Iranian President Ahmedinejad and Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah over a background of the Lebanese national flag.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ FARS News, <http://english.farsnews.net/newstext.php?nn=8907071166>, accessed 5 October, 2010

¹¹⁶ IRNA News, Iran Daily: <http://www.iran-daily.com/1389/7/13/MainPaper/3792/Page/2/Index.htm>, accessed 5 October, 2010

¹¹⁷ Non-Aligned Movement Homepage, <http://www.nam.gov.za/index.html>, accessed 5 October, 2010, This movement, founded in 1961 by Yugoslav President Tito, has become a bastion of condemnation of Western Colonialism, which provides Iranian leaders another global platform for its messaging.

¹¹⁸ FARS News, <http://english.farsnews.net/newstext.php?nn=8810280842>, accessed 5 October, 2010

¹¹⁹ FARS News archive, <http://english.farsnews.net/newstext.php?nn=8504250528>, (accessed 5 October, 2010). Iranian Supreme Leader quoted, "Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei said the Lebanese may never allow a disarmament of Hizbollah to happen since they are grateful to this movement and regard it as their own force of Islamic resistance to the Zionist aggression"

¹²⁰ IRNA Iranian Language Website (translated by Google Translator), http://translate.google.com/translate?hl=en&sl=fa&u=http://www.irna.ir/&ei=0SWrTPDsMIa6sQP79MDIAw&sa=X&oi=translate&ct=result&resnum=6&ved=0CDkQ7gEwBQ&prev=/search%3Fq%3Dthe%2Biranian%2Bofficial%2Bnews%2Bagency%26hl%3Den%26rlz%3D1G1GGLQ_ENUS259%26prmd%3Div, (accessed 5 October, 2010)

Thus far, Iran's version of Shi'a Islam with its emphasis on clerical state rule and the cult of martyrdom has shown to be woven into the Iranian political narrative of standing as an Islamic bulwark against Western and Israeli interference. This narrative is quite apparent in the Iranian information domain as well. It is clear at this point that Hezbollah shares a deeply religious bond with the Islamic leadership of Iran. The element of Iranian national power most directly responsible for the creation of Hezbollah, however, is not the Ayatollahs, but the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Analysis of Iranian Military Organization and Tactics

As discussed earlier, Iran has the largest standing army in the Persian Gulf region. Its conventional military is rather typical. The Iranian Army, Navy, and Air Forces are equipped with legacy U.S. equipment left over from the Pahlavi monarchy, and some Iranian produced weapons systems. Iran has recently established an Air Defense Command, which indicates an increased concern about ballistic missile strikes against its key infrastructure programs to include its nuclear program.¹²¹

What distinguishes Iran's military structure from that of most countries is its separate components such as the Revolutionary Guard Corps and Qods Force which have Islamic revolutionary credentials and report directly to the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini. From the early days of the Islamic Revolution, Khomeini required highly loyal and motivated Islamic

¹²¹ LTG Ronald Burgess, Statement to the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, <http://www.dia.mil/public-affairs/testimonies/2010-04-13.html> (accessed on 23 Sept 2010)

warriors to ensure not only the survival of the revolution, but its exportation. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard was created for just that purpose.¹²²

The IRGC has acted ever since as the elite element of the Islamic Republic's armed forces. It was these 'Guardians of the Revolution' who perfected the Iranian concept of martyrdom, or *Shahada* with their human wave tactics.¹²³ Even today, Iran's military doctrine and organization is designed to deter any potential attacker through threats of asymmetric strikes abroad via surrogates like Hezbollah, attrition warfare at home, and regional actions that would prove to be highly disruptive, such as strikes against Israel and mining of the Straits of Hormuz.¹²⁴

In the past decade, there have been uncertainties about the balance of power between the clerical leadership in Iran and the senior IRGC officials.¹²⁵ Considering the radical ideological backgrounds of both groups, and Hezbollah's deep-rooted ties to both, it is important to know which group has sway over Hezbollah leadership in Lebanon. As mentioned earlier, the Iranian Supreme Leader was the one who gave approval for Hezbollah to enter the Lebanese political domain. It can be deduced from this fact that the Iranian religious leadership is willing to pursue its agenda in Lebanon indirectly. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard leadership, on the other hand, has shown itself willing to act more directly, and violently in pursuit of its objectives. Which group is steering Hezbollah and its militia could have very different consequences for Lebanon.

¹²² Kenneth Katzman, *The Warriors of Islam: Iran's Revolutionary Guard*, 95

¹²³ *Ibid*, 19

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, 1

¹²⁵ Global Institute for International Studies, *Global Strategic Assessment*, NDU Press, 194

We have now seen that Hezbollah and the Islamic Republic of Iran are closely linked across all domains of national power. They share a unique Shi'a religious ideology and political goals of an Islamic state free from Israeli occupation. The strategic messaging of both Iran and Hezbollah closely follow their stated political and religious programs. Militarily, Hezbollah owes its very existence to the zealous trainers of the Iranian *Pasdaran* who created the organization and taught its members how to wage *jihad* in the name of God. Hezbollah goes to great lengths to present itself as a resistance organization of Lebanese patriots fighting for Lebanese sovereignty. We have seen how much Hezbollah resembles Iran. How much does it resemble its own motherland?

Lebanon

Analysis of Lebanese Religious and Political Ideology

Lebanon has a very old and rich Shi'a tradition dating back to Abu Dharr Al-Ghifari in the mid-seventh century. Abu Dhar Al Ghifari lived and practiced his faith in the Jabal 'Amil area of southern Lebanon, where there was a tradition of inter-sectarianism dating back to 1585 under Ottoman Rule.¹²⁶ It was actually from Jabal 'Amil that Twelver Shi'a Islam was exported to Iran in the sixteenth century¹²⁷ For Lebanese Shi'a scholars, the center of learning was actually the Arab Najaf school in Iraq, rather than the Iranian school in Qom.¹²⁸ Of note here is that the Najaf school was not known for an activist form of Shi'ism.

¹²⁶ Keddie, *Shi'ism and Social Protest*, 143-144

¹²⁷ Chehabi, *Distant Relations: Iran and Lebanon in the Last 500 years*, 45

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, 39

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Lebanon was under French mandate and developed a robust economy.¹²⁹ Beirut became a banking and transportation hub in the Mediterranean region in which a cosmopolitan, rather than pious lifestyle was the hallmark. Unfortunately, the benefits of this wealth, growth, and opportunity did not extend to most of the Shi'a population of Lebanon.¹³⁰ As previously discussed, the Shi'a consciousness was shaped over a millennium by a narrative of denial of rights, persecution, martyrdom, and struggle.¹³¹ By the 1960's, not much had changed. The Shi'a of Lebanon were concentrated in south Lebanon and the Bekaa valley where their conditions lagged far behind those of the mostly Maronite Christian and Sunni capitalist classes in Beirut.¹³² Illiteracy rates among Shi'a communities outside Beirut ranged from 30 percent to a staggering 62 percent illiteracy among the women of the Bekaa valley.¹³³ The Shi'a were living their narrative of dispossession, and looked to their faith for deliverance. The man who would end Shi'a quietism in contemporary Lebanon was a man named *Imam* Musa al-Sadr.

Sayyid Musa al-Sadr came to Lebanon from Iran in 1959 to lead the Shi'a community in the coastal city of Tyre.¹³⁴ Sayyid Musa had ties to Lebanon, but had studied in Najaf and had impeccable religious credentials. Sayyid Musa saw that politics offered his people no recourse, but Islam-inspired social protest could. He created the Movement of the Deprived (*Harakat Al-*

¹²⁹ B.J.Odeh, *Lebanon: Dynamics of Conflict*, 44

¹³⁰ B.J.Odeh, *Lebanon: Dynamics of Conflict*, 116

¹³¹ Vali Nasr, *The Shi'a Revival*, 57

¹³² Majed Halawi, *A Lebanon Defied*, 60-61

¹³³ *Ibid*, p. 62

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, 121

Mahrumin) in Lebanon in 1974 as a social protest organization representing the Shi'a of Lebanon. This was a populist movement to bring the plight of the Shi'a to the attention of the Lebanese government.¹³⁵

In 1975, Sayyid Musa was elected chair of the Supreme Islamic Shi'a Council in Lebanon, where he outlined the platform of the SISC to include improved socio-economic standards, equality and harmony among Muslims, cooperation with all Lebanese communities, and support for the Palestinian resistance.¹³⁶ This socially focused, Lebanese-centric, and pluralistic platform would fall victim to the Lebanese Civil War in 1975.

The sectarian violence of the Lebanese Civil War forced unarmed and non-militant movements like al-Sadr's to align with armed Shi'a organizations in the interests of collective security. The civil war, combined with Israeli strikes in south Lebanon targeting PLO fighters resulted in the creation of the armed AMAL (*Afwaj al-Muqawama al-Lubnaniyya*) movement.¹³⁷

The AMAL, though an armed Shi'a militia during the civil war, did not pursue a radical Islamist agenda, but was considered more secular in its overall stance due to its ties to Syria's secular Alawite regime.¹³⁸ Despite this militarization of his social movement, Sayyid Musa al-Sadr maintained his populist agenda, and through his ecumenical approach maintained good relations across confessional lines.¹³⁹ He was described as having 'indelible open mindedness' and of being a bridge builder between Islam and Christianity because he understood that although

¹³⁵ Beverly Milton, *Islamic Fundamentalism Since 1945*, 56

¹³⁶ Beverly Milton, *Islamic Fundamentalism Since 1945*, 143

¹³⁷ Ibid, 56, AMAL is the acronym for the Arabic word *Afwaj al-Muqawama al-Lubnaniyya*, which means 'Hope'

¹³⁸ Rodger Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon*, 110

¹³⁹ Beverly Milton, *Islamic Fundamentalism Since 1945*, 57

he was a Shi'a, poverty in Lebanon was not exclusively a Shi'a problem.¹⁴⁰ As far back as 1969, Sadr had warned the Lebanese against fanaticism and egoism.¹⁴¹ Tragically, *Imam* Musa al-Sadr disappeared mysteriously on a visit to Lybia in 1978, thereby leaving the Shi'a of Lebanon to men with different ideas about obtaining justice for the Shi'a and the methods for obtaining it. This all occurred on the eve of the Iranian Islamic Revolution.

The next religious leader to emerge and shape the Lebanese Shi'a narrative was Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah. Fadlallah was a contemporary of Sadr's, having studied in Najaf as well. Having lived through the civil war, he was radicalized by his experiences in Beirut during this time.¹⁴² Fadlallah had a central belief that the Shi'a heritage was one of resistance, and that the Shi'a were Islam's true protectors.¹⁴³ Though Fadlallah was more radical than Sadr, his narrative was one of resistance by the faithful, but not the overthrow of the Lebanese government. He was of the opinion that it was inappropriate for Shi'a Jurists to deviate from their religious duties and interfere in politics or resort to force to change political conditions.¹⁴⁴

Both Sadr and Fadlallah focused on the prevailing realities of the Lebanese situation and stressed accommodation with other religious communities as essential precondition to Shi'a

¹⁴⁰ Majed Halawi, *A Lebanon Defied*, 128, Described by Karam Pakradouni of the Lebanese Armed Forces. This account in Halawi's book (footnote 15, p. 128) was taken from Fouad Ajami's review of *The Vanished Imam*, by Tarif Khalidi in the *Journal of Palestine Studies* XVI, no. 3 Spring 1987): 150-153

¹⁴¹ Majed Halawi, *A Lebanon Defied*, 133. al-Sadr's warning to the Shi'a of Lebanon was, "We do not deny the existence of an oppressed and oppressor, but we do not want to turn the oppressed into the oppressor. We need to develop intellectually. Our intellectual development, not only as a state, but as a people, rests in the cultivation of the feeling of patriotism, which we must pursue"

¹⁴² Rodger Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon*, 153

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, 154

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 154

political advancement.¹⁴⁵ Both men understood that religious pluralism and cross-confessional rule was an inseparable part of Lebanese society and nothing short of a second civil war would change that. Neither man wanted to see Lebanon torn by another war.

This religious pragmatism stood in great contrast to the Shi'a revolutionary doctrine emerging from Iran. As opposed to the puritanical martyrdom-obsessed Iranian Shi'ism, the Lebanese Shi'a celebrated triumphs and defeats of Shi'a history, mourned Husayn, but they also danced in the village square during weddings. The Khomeini-ist version of 'pure' Islamic order seemed very far removed from Lebanese Shi'a objectives and aspirations.¹⁴⁶ The Shi'a traditions in Lebanon are both rich and longstanding. As one of the birthplaces of the 20th century Shi'a protest movement, Lebanon's Shi'ism has always been uniquely Lebanese, that is to say, very political in nature.

Lebanon is an Arab state governed by a multi-confessional government that, despite its pro-western leanings, does not formally recognize the state of Israel, and has set the settlement of the Arab-Israeli issue as a pre-condition for recognition. Confessionalism, or rule and power divided among the country's main religious sects, has dominated Lebanese society and politics dating back to the Post World War I French mandate.

France began its withdrawal from its territorial holding in the early 1940s, and the alliance of Muslim and Maronite Christian business elites became the first manifestation of this form of confessional government known as the 'National Pact of 1943'.¹⁴⁷ This form of proportional representation based on sect size was based on the 1932 census, which gave the

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 155

¹⁴⁶ Majed Halawi, *A Lebanon Defied*, 205

¹⁴⁷ BJ Odeh, *Lebanon: Dynamics of Conflict*, Zed Books Ltd, 42

Maronite Christians a majority.¹⁴⁸ There has not been another census taken in Lebanon since then, which increasingly frustrated the Shi'a of Lebanon as their sect size grew to parity or even majority status by the later 1970s. This Shi'a population growth combined with Sayyid Musa al-Sadr's Shi'a social protest movement and the galvanizing events of the time such as the Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973 to create significant tension in Lebanese society.

Lebanese society cracked in 1975 when the country devolved into a bloody 15-year civil war during which Syria invaded Lebanon and maintained a 29-year presence there under the guise of a 'stabilization force'. Any religious and political cooperation that the pre-civil war confessional governmental system had facilitated was now reversed, as Lebanon's communities withdrew into their sectarian enclaves and armed militia organizations. From 1975 until 1990, Lebanon's government ceased to exist as militia groups fought for control of the country.

The Lebanese Civil-War came to an end with the Saudi-sponsored Ta'if conference. The Ta'if agreement was significant in that it laid the foundation for the post civil-war government of Lebanon. Its key components were the phased abolition of political sectarianism (but with no deadline), power sharing was changed from 6:5 Christian-Muslim ratio to 5:5, codified Syrian involvement in support of the government, and the disarmament and disbanding of all militias within 6 months.¹⁴⁹ The changes to the confessional government of Lebanon were minimal. Although the Shi'a made some gains through an empowered Parliamentary Speaker, the confessional system of government was, and is, the way Lebanon is governed. The clause requiring disarmament of militias led to the disarmament of every militia except Hezbollah. This

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 43

¹⁴⁹ Nicholas Blanford, *Killing Mr. Lebanon, The Assassination of Rafik Hariri and its Impact on the Middle East*, I.B. Tauris, 38

was, and still is, in violation of both the Ta'if accords and UN Security Council Resolutions, but Hezbollah still maintains its military wing independent of the Lebanese Armed Forces.

The most recent Lebanese political leader to emerge was reminiscent of the capitalist-trader tradition of Lebanon's past. Rafik Hariri, a billionaire Sunni Arab politician, served as Prime Minister of Lebanon from 1992-1998 and again from 2000-2004. Hariri was extremely well connected and immensely wealthy and was seen as someone who could lead Lebanon's revitalization from the destruction of the civil war.¹⁵⁰ Many Lebanese, tired of war and destruction, hoped that Hariri would leverage his contacts and exceptional business acumen to attract foreign aid and investment to Lebanon. Hariri's background as a businessman and politician implied a tendency to compromise, and compromise with Israel was unacceptable to Syria, Iran, and therefore Hezbollah.¹⁵¹

The Israeli unilateral withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000 created tensions for both Hezbollah in that its primary *raison d'être* of *jihād* on behalf of Syria and Iran had been removed. This led to a rising anti-Syrian sentiment in Lebanon, as most Lebanese saw no reason for Syrian troops on their soil now that Israel had retreated.¹⁵² The anti-Syrian sentiment in Lebanon continued to build as the Syrian government showed no signs of leaving.

This anti-Syrian sentiment exploded in 2005 when Rafik Hariri was assassinated by who many believed to be Syria with possible Hezbollah assistance.¹⁵³ The resulting anti-Syrian

¹⁵⁰ Nicholas Blanford, *Killing Mr. Lebanon, The Assassination of Rafik Hariri and its Impact on the Middle East*, I.B. Tauris, 66

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, 66

¹⁵² Judith Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 50

¹⁵³ Nicholas Blanford, *Killing Mr. Lebanon, The Assassination of Rafik Hariri and its Impact on the Middle East*, I.B. Tauris, 207

backlash was coined ‘The Cedar Revolution’ which forced a withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon in 2005. The United Nations opened an investigation in 2005, which, 5 years later, has yet to submit its final report.¹⁵⁴

By 2005, Hezbollah had shown that it was at odds with the mainstream Lebanese political authority of Rafik Hariri, and had lost its direct support from Syria. Faced with this challenge, Hezbollah resorted to its core competency of armed *jihad* against Israel in order to reestablish itself as a legitimate Lebanese ‘resistance’ movement while it still had its arms.

In July 2006, Hezbollah unilaterally executed military operations against the Israeli IDF by killing eight and capturing two IDF troops in the area south of Aitta Shaab village.¹⁵⁵ Israel responded with a combined arms assault into Lebanon that targeted suspected Hezbollah sites in Beirut, to include the Beirut International Airport. The ensuing 34-day war launched by Hezbollah without consulting the sovereign government of Lebanon resulted in hundreds of civilian Lebanese deaths and the complete destruction of 14 years of rebuilding efforts throughout Lebanon. Hezbollah’s revival of the anti-Israeli *jihad* narrative in the minds of the Lebanese people garnered it an almost hero status.¹⁵⁶

Not all Lebanese were so enthusiastic. Ironically, it was the Shi’a of south Lebanon who were most inconvenienced by having their homes and livelihoods destroyed.¹⁵⁷ Though some

¹⁵⁴ D.A. Bellemare, Commissioner, UNIIC, *The Tenth Report of the Independent Investigation Commission established pursuant to UN Security Council resolutions 1595 (2005), 1636 (2005), 1644 (2005), 1686 (2006), and 1748 (2007)*

¹⁵⁵ Nicholas Blanford, *Killing Mr. Lebanon, The Assassination of Rafik Hariri and its Impact on the Middle East*, I.B. Tauris, 213

¹⁵⁶ Judith Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, preface

¹⁵⁷ Nicholas Noe, *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*, 12

speculate that Hezbollah's 2006 move against Israel had the blessing of the Tehran leadership, there is no direct evidence to establish this. There is also no evidence that Hezbollah's leadership consulted the government of Lebanon before starting an inter-state war on its southern border.

Lebanon's religious and political landscape are complex and volatile to say the least. Memories of the civil war, Israeli and Syrian military intervention, and the awareness of a heavily armed Hezbollah in the south must occupy the thoughts of all Lebanese citizens, but none more than the national leadership. Like both Hezbollah and Iran's information domain, Lebanon's information efforts are a reflection of its religious, political, and military realities.

Analysis of Lebanese Information Operations

As expected, Lebanon's strategic messaging is reflective of its troubled past, fractious politics, and current fragile state of peace. The Lebanese government maintains the National News Agency of the Lebanese Republic. This government-run news outlet maintains a very neutral theme of internally focused cooperation amongst its many factions.¹⁵⁸ There is very little subject matter that could be deemed inflammatory, and certainly no mention of Hezbollah, Iran, or Israel on the government website.¹⁵⁹

The focus of the political discourse surrounds the UN Special Tribunal for Lebanon investigating the 2005 assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and the political tensions surrounding this investigation. There is much concern of renewed internal strife if the

¹⁵⁸ Lebanese National News Agency, <http://www.nna-leb.gov.lb/indexeng.php>, (accessed 5 October, 2010)

¹⁵⁹ Lebanese National News Agency, <http://www.nna-leb.gov.lb/detailse.php?cat=sece>, (accessed 5 October, 2010)

tribunal hands down the anticipated indictments of Syrian officials and Hezbollah figures.¹⁶⁰ The tensions are such that Lebanon's President Michel Sleiman and the Prime Minister Saad Hariri reminded all factions of their duty to preserve peace under the Ta'if agreement.¹⁶¹

Despite refraining from inflammatory rhetoric in the media, the Lebanese government has shown no hesitation in airing its grievances in more formal venues such as the United Nations. Lebanese ministers have consistently shown a willingness to lodge their complaints against Israel and seek redress from the international community through the established processes of the UN.¹⁶² It is clear that the Lebanese government pursues its strategic messaging through much more conventional means than do Iran and Hezbollah. The legitimacy inherent in statehood and the absence of pariah status affords even a divided and fragile state such as Lebanon much more productive venues for communicating with the world.

Unlike Hezbollah's media wing and the Iranian government's tightly controlled media, it is outside the state-run news sphere that Lebanon exhibits a varied and vibrant media arena. This implies a limited degree of control by the Lebanese government over the media. As a result, all parties to the Lebanese political melee are represented, to include Hezbollah, which has the most polished media apparatus of all. Unfortunately, for mainstream Lebanese society, Hezbollah's

¹⁶⁰ The Daily Star Website,
http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=1&categ_id=2&article_id=120006#axzz11VJ6aoR9,
(accessed 5 October, 2010)

¹⁶¹ The Daily Star Website,
http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=1&categ_id=2&article_id=119548#axzz11FW1zEoc
(accessed 22 September, 2010)

¹⁶² President Michel Slieman, speech at 65th Session of UN General Assembly,
<http://www.presidency.gov.lb/english/PhotoGallery/Pages/NewsDetails.aspx?NewsRef=7014&vidCat=%D8%AE%D8%B7%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%AA%0D%0A> (accessed 22 September, 2010)

frighteningly professional media operations project a message that looks and sounds more like Iran's FARS news than the Lebanese National News Agency.

Thus far, Lebanon's Information domain reflects the religious and political realities of Lebanese society in that it is delicately balanced so as not to be a catalyst for civil strife.

Lebanon's religious sects and their associated positions of political power are deeply rooted in this balancing act that is Lebanese society. Despite so much chaos in its history, the Lebanese Armed Forces have managed to remain a reasonably respected institution within the country.

Analysis of Lebanese Military Organization and Tactics

Lebanon's military has traditionally been a reflection of its society. In the case of Lebanon, that evokes images of sectarianism, confessional quotas, and perceived inequalities in representation. The Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) struggled to survive through the Lebanese Civil War, never quite disintegrating, but never strong enough to stop the militia violence. Considering the collapse of the central government and presence of Syrian troops in the country, the Lebanese Army was the only institution that could claim to represent Lebanese society as a whole, and this bestowed a sense of legitimacy on them.¹⁶³

The Ta'if accord of 1989 ended the civil war, strengthened the army, but also left Syria firmly in control in Lebanon due to certain clauses authorizing Syrian military presence. Syrian forces, which entered Lebanon to help end the civil war were required to leave the country within two years of the accord; they would stay for another 17 years.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Oren Barak, *The Lebanese Army: A National Institution in a Divided Society*, 133

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 169

Despite operating in the shadow of the Syrian occupation forces, the Lebanese Army attempted to rebuild its ranks from amongst the entire breadth of the population. This was an attempt to overcome the sectarianism of the civil war era.¹⁶⁵ Unfortunately, the Lebanese Army was never allowed to modernize its equipment or solidify its authority while the Syrian military remained in Lebanon. By the 2005 withdrawal of Syrian forces in the aftermath of the Hariri assassination and subsequent ‘Cedar Revolution’, the Lebanese Army was in no position to challenge the last remaining armed militia: Hezbollah.

The pressure mounting on Lebanon to disarm Hezbollah was scheduled to be addressed on 25 July 2006 at a National Dialogue session. Hezbollah had made it clear that it opposed any attempt to disarm it, and thereby weaken the ‘Lebanese resistance’ role it filled. On 12 July 2006, a few weeks before the National Dialogue session was to meet, Hezbollah initiated an interstate war with Israel. Whether this was timed to derail the National Dialogue or to rally support for its resistance narrative is impossible to know, but what is clear is that Hezbollah did not consult the Lebanese government or military when taking this decision.

This unilateral decision by Hezbollah to instigate armed conflict with Israel openly tested Prime Minister Siniora’s assertion that “only the State has the legitimate right to declare peace and war since it represents the will of the Lebanese”.¹⁶⁶ The tactics applied by the Lebanese Army in its minimal combat dossier are quite conventional. Unlike Hezbollah’s Iranian inspired military tactics, there is no evidence of attacks on civilian targets or martyrdom operations. In further distinction between Hezbollah and the Lebanese Army, the Lebanese Army’s official

¹⁶⁵ Oren Barak, *The Lebanese Army: A National Institution in a Divided Society*, 178

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 193

website identifies the state of Israel by name rather than as a Zionist entity, at least acknowledging its existence.¹⁶⁷

Despite these distinctions, the Lebanese government expressed support to Hezbollah upon Israel's targeting of Lebanese cities and infrastructure during the 2006 war. Not surprisingly, resistance to Israeli military action is a galvanizing phenomenon in Lebanon, and Hezbollah has shown itself to be extremely perceptive in exploiting it. There are indications, however, that this is not a bottomless well of support. One Lebanese Army Officer wrote in his analysis of the war that a positive outcome of the conflict was Hezbollah's wariness of provoking Israel again, thereby losing support amongst its partners.¹⁶⁸ It seems that Hezbollah's sub-national armed status, though tolerated by its home country, is not universally appreciated.

Conclusions

Religion and Politics

Through this exploration of the long and rich traditions of Shi'a Islam, distinctions between the entities under analysis have emerged. The classical Shi'a traditions of apostolic succession and the belief in the return of the vanished Twelfth *Imam* are common to mainstream Shi'a the world over. The innovative concept of the absolute political rule of the jurist, or *velayat al-faqih* is a uniquely Iranian creation that is not accepted outside of Iran, except by Hezbollah.

¹⁶⁷ Lebanese Army Mission Statement, <http://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/English/Mission.asp> (accessed 28 SEP 10)

¹⁶⁸ LTC Hany Nakly, *The 2006 Israeli War on Lebanon: Analysis and Strategic Implications*, U.S. Army War College, 11

The significance of this tenet cannot be overstated in that Hezbollah swears its highest form of allegiance to the *faqih*, or Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Derivative of this concept of the rule of the jurist is the concept of an Islamic State ruled by that jurist. As we saw in the analysis of Hezbollah, this was a foundational component of their identity and goals statement (Open Letter). It is also noteworthy that they have never disavowed their desire for an Islamic State in Lebanon. What is more noteworthy is the lack of popular support in Lebanese society for a state governed by Islam and absolute clerical rule.

Lastly, Hezbollah has adopted another Iranian innovation that differs from the classical teachings of Shi'ism. The Iranian version of *Jihad* and Martyrdom perfected in the long and bloody Iran-Iraq war imbued Hezbollah's zealots with a love of death through *jihad* that is difficult to reconcile with the traditions of Husayn at Karbala. Despite Hezbollah's view of itself as inheriting the mantle of the guardian of Lebanon's dispossessed Shi'a and the faithful vanguard of *jihad* against infidels, a closer look reveals that their concepts of just war and just governance look very Iranian as opposed to Lebanese.

Politically, Hezbollah has cast itself as the reluctant opposition within the Lebanese government system. Hezbollah's political goals from their founding manifesto clearly articulate a desire for abolition of the confessional system of government and the establishment of an Islamic State in Lebanon. Though they have softened their rhetoric upon their entrance into Lebanese politics, they have maintained through countless public statements that Lebanon's governmental system and even its geographic manifestation are foreign creations and therefore illegitimate. Lebanon's system of government, though imperfect, has survived a civil war, and is what the majority of Lebanese society would prefer as evidenced by various polling results.

Hezbollah's definition of itself as a legitimate political entity in Lebanon is problematic in that it finds itself subject to, and rejecting, various United Nations Security Council resolutions to disarm. At the same time, Hezbollah routinely invokes the same body of international law in justifying its right to 'legal resistance' against Israeli aggression. As seen in the analysis,

Hezbollah's willingness to operate within the political system only suffices insofar as that participation achieves its objectives. When threatened by that political system, it has shown its willingness to resort to violence as it did in its 2008 takeover of Beirut. Hezbollah's political model is difficult to characterize as political participation, but rather as political-military opposition to the Lebanese government. Hezbollah's Shi'a-Christian alliance in the Lebanese Parliament exists less to govern, than to prevent undesirable policies from being implemented.

Information: Strategic Messaging

As would be expected, the strategic messaging of the entities under analysis closely follow their political platforms. In the case of Lebanon, the realm of information is not robust. Lebanon's informational element seems consumed by a desire to prevent internal conflict that is deeply rooted in memories of violent civil war. It is not lost on anyone that Lebanese society is fragile, and still subject to external interventions that could reignite the sectarian fighting. Nobody in Lebanon wants that, and therefore, they avoid inflammatory rhetoric in their strategic messaging apparatus.

Iran and Hezbollah are not burdened by such constraints. As a pariah state and sub-national actor respectively, they operate at the fringes of the mainstream global media, and thus their information campaigns are more focused and incendiary. Iran's media is entirely state run, and produces a steady stream of anti-Western, anti-Israeli rhetoric while barraging its own population with a sense of inevitable western aggression and their readiness to defeat the enemy.

Hezbollah runs an amazingly effective and professional media wing. Their websites and magazines are more polished than those of both Lebanon and Iran. Hezbollah balances their internal and external messaging very well, as evidenced by the popular grassroots support they enjoy in the Lebanese Shi'a population. Their management of the Israeli resistance narrative, and their willingness to decisively engage Israel in combat (all of which was skillfully covered on Al Manar TV) won them veritable hero status among segments of the population which completely

disagree with their religious and political stances. This manipulation of Israeli aggression and Lebanese sovereignty has provided Hezbollah with latitude to operate which it would not otherwise enjoy. Hezbollah does not attempt to hide its close relationship with Iran. Iranian leadership, political affairs, and ideological statements figure prominently on Hezbollah websites and magazines. The same cannot be said of Lebanese government messages in the Hezbollah media program.

Military: Military Organization and Tactics

It is in the military realm where Hezbollah most resembles its patron Iran. As previously shown, Hezbollah was literally founded by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards following the Iranian Revolution. Iranian elements have continued a presence in Lebanon ever since, and Hezbollah has never denied this relationship. Hezbollah's early use of suicide tactics and continued use of asymmetric and irregular warfare tactics against Israel are illustrative of this Iranian fingerprint on Hezbollah. Further, Hezbollah's *jihad* doctrine and deference to the Supreme Leader in Iran require Ayatollah Khomeini's authorization for conduct of *jihad*. Hezbollah has also never denied this.

Militarily, Hezbollah's religio-military structure is not only similar to the Iranian construct, but actually includes Iranian Revolutionary Guards representation on Hezbollah's decision-making council. Unlike the Lebanese Armed Forces, Hezbollah has a long history of confirming its consideration of all Israeli citizens as valid military targets, and therefore legitimates its use of rocket attacks on Israeli cities and towns. The greatest distinction between Hezbollah and the Lebanese Armed Forces is that the Lebanese Armed Forces are answerable to the Lebanese State. Hezbollah is not, and has no plans on ever being so.

Implications

As this monograph has demonstrated, Hezbollah, or “Party of God” is not the party of Lebanon, but something different. As an entity operating with state-like powers within a sovereign state, its existence is problematic. Exacerbating this problematic situation is Hezbollah’s unshakable connection to the Islamic Republic of Iran and its inclination to pursue goals more in line with the Islamic Republic than with the state of Lebanon. Considering Hezbollah’s state-like characteristics, the application of a modified DIME framework was applied to determine whether Hezbollah aligns closer to its professed homeland or to the regime in Tehran. The results clearly show that Hezbollah subscribes to Iranian Revolutionary Shi’ism, supports Iranian policy objectives and strategic messaging, and has organized and fought using Iranian tactics and doctrine.

There are those who feel that by entering Lebanese politics, Hezbollah has shown itself to be a pragmatic organization with inclinations towards moderation of its ideology. This monograph has shown that when viewed through the lens of elements of state power, Hezbollah remains much what it was in 1985, and does not resemble mainstream Lebanese society. It is said that Hezbollah resides in the realm of the possible, and that it has simply adjusted to its environment until conditions facilitate the pursuit of its real objectives. Considering Hezbollah’s emulation of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini as its source of ultimate emulation, one might remember that Khomeini did not unveil his true intentions to rule the Islamic Republic until he was certain of the success of the revolt and his moment to strike presented itself. Hezbollah has a choice to make in Lebanon; will it be a part of a future Lebanon that is a prosperous member of the international community, or will it pursue its vision of a wider Shi’a crescent?

The United States of America has had a long diplomatic history with Lebanon, and considers it a strategic partner in the region. The existence of an armed *jihad* group in Lebanon

with goals and objectives aligned more closely with those of the Iranian government constitute a threat to Lebanon, the region, and the interests of the United States.

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