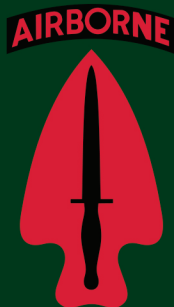


Assessing Revolutionary and Insurgent Strategies

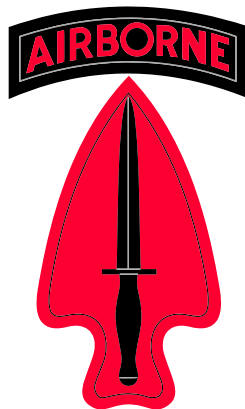
**UNCONVENTIONAL WARFARE CASE STUDY:
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IRAN
AND LEBANESE HIZBOLLAH**



United States Army Special Operations Command

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AND LEBANESE HIZBOLLAH**



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National Security Analysis Department

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Figure 3-1. Map of Lebanon. Map courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, “Lebanon (Political) 2002,” The University of Texas at Austin, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/lebanon_pol_2002.jpg. Globe derived from Map Resources © 2014, Map Resources, Lambertville, NJ 08530, www.mapresources.com.

Figure 3-2. Distribution of religious groups in Lebanon in 1983. Redrawn from a map courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, “Lebanon—Distribution of Religious Groups 1983,” The University of Texas at Austin, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/lebanon_religions_83.jpg.

CHAPTER 1.
INTRODUCTION

International relations scholars of a realist persuasion emphasize that conflict is an inherent and chronic condition of an international system featuring a multiplicity of self-interested actors, with international politics essentially boiling down to a struggle for power among nations with competing interests. Implicit within this perspective is the idea that all nations will seek out all available means and power resources to improve their relative positions within regional and global distributions of power. One such potential tool for doing so is sponsorship of proxy groups to advance the interests of a state. States often use proxy groups to wage unconventional warfare against another state, including against a state that the sponsoring state ostensibly would like to at least maintain amicable relations with.

The literature on outside sponsorship of proxy groups, and in particular the actual mechanics of sponsorship, is relatively sparse. This perhaps should not come as a surprise, as recent information is likely to be highly classified; additionally, countries may be hesitant to discuss their dealings with outside groups even if collaboration occurred in the past. This report fills this lacuna by detailing one of the most interesting and effective partnerships between a sponsoring state and a proxy group, that between Iran and Lebanese Hizbollah.

In the early 1980s, Iran organized a group of angry Lebanese clerics, who were simultaneously enraged by Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon and inspired by Iran's 1979 revolution that overthrew the hated Shah. These clerics formed the vanguard of what was to become Hizbollah, the "Party of God." In due course, Hizbollah eventually forced Israel to withdraw from Lebanon in 2000, allowing the group to claim that it was the first Arab force to inflict a defeat on the Jewish state. This achievement was not lost upon Tehran. As related by Robert Baer in the book *The Devil We Know*:

In October 2000, Ayatollah Khamenei, Ayatollah Khomeini's successor as supreme leader—the only real executive power in Iran—made it clear what the victory in Lebanon meant for Iran. It was during a secret address to Iran's National Security Council. After the usual long preamble, larded with quotations from the Koran, Khamenei put both his hands on the conference table. He looked around the room to make sure everyone was listening. "Lebanon," he said, pointedly using the Arabic pronunciation Lubnan, "is Iran's greatest foreign policy success. We will repeat it across Dar al-Islam (the Islamic world) until all of Islam is liberated."¹

This report details Iran's motivation for sponsoring Hizbollah and, as much as possible, describes the mechanics of its support. The substantial overlap in terms of ideology and interests between the two parties is perhaps not quite as close as between "lips and teeth," a phrase once used to describe the closeness of the relationship between North Korea and China, but in general the partnership was (and is) characterized by a substantial mutuality of interests and ideological affinity. The relationship was initially borne out of Iran's desire to check Israeli expansion into Lebanon and even to "liberate" Jerusalem, as well as to export its revolution and Islamic form of government, first to Lebanon and then to lands beyond.

Although the latter goal has since been moderated, nonetheless the partnership has thrived as a result of Hizbollah's acceptance of the uniquely Iranian concept of *velayat-e faqih*, or The Governorship of the Jurisprudent, a theory of Islamic governance developed by Ayatollah Khomeini to justify clerical rule. As described in subsequent pages, Hizbollah's acceptance of this notion formed the bedrock of its relationship with Iran, and indeed the close ideological and theological relationship it promoted between the two parties is one of the distinctive features of this example of a state's sponsorship of an outside proxy actor.

This case study is organized as follows. Chapter 2 discusses the external sponsor and in particular details Iran's varied motivations for sponsoring Hizbollah and the evolving intellectual milieu in Iran before the 1979 revolution. The fervent cross-fertilization of ideas among secular, anti-Western intellectuals and Shia theologians led to a dramatic reinterpretation of the Shia faith, which in turn fueled the Iranian revolution and provided the intellectual foundation for Hizbollah's initial desire to replace the Lebanese political system with an Islamic regime patterned on the Iranian model.

Chapter 3 addresses Lebanon itself, with a focus on the socio-economic and political vulnerabilities that provided Iran with exploitable entryways into the country. The history of Shia grievances, combined with their dramatic population growth in Lebanon during the twentieth century, the collapse of the Lebanese state during the civil war, and Israel's 1982 invasion, provided Iran with an opening to help shape the political trajectory of Lebanon's Shia community, which, at the commencement of Iran's sponsorship of Hizbollah, was only just beginning to mobilize into politics on a mass basis.

Chapter 4 turns to the proxy itself, focusing on its organizational structure, its methods of warfare and political activities, and its evolving narrative. Hizbollah's acceptance of the Lebanese political system after the Taif agreement of 1989 forced it to temporarily set aside the goal

of establishing an Islamic state in Lebanon. However, its insistence on eliminating Israel (which it sometimes refers to as the “Zionist entity”) remained a constant.

Chapter 5 discusses the mechanics of Iranian assistance to Hizbollah, including aid (military and financial) and training, and the various Iranian ministries involved in providing support to the proxy force. In the early years of sponsorship, the Iranian embassy in Damascus played a critical role in providing and coordinating assistance to the group. This chapter also details Iran’s collaboration with Hizbollah in the July 1994 attack on the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina headquarters in Buenos Aires, as Argentine authorities have pieced together a highly detailed report that provides a fascinating glimpse of the collaboration between sponsor and proxy in an external operation. The study concludes with an evaluation of the effectiveness of Iran’s sponsorship of Hizbollah.

NOTE

¹ Robert Baer, *The Devil We Know: Dealing with the New Iranian Superpower* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2008), 55.

CHAPTER 2.
EXTERNAL SUPPORTER

DESCRIPTION/BACKGROUND

Any understanding of Iran's relationship with Hizbollah must account for the dramatic reinterpretation of the Shia faith that occurred in Iran in the two decades leading up to the 1979 revolution. This reinterpretation was an outgrowth of the crisis of legitimacy of the Pahlavi monarchy, combined with the profound socioeconomic changes and dislocations brought about through the early and mid-twentieth century modernization efforts initiated by Reza Shah and his son, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi. Iran in 1900 was described by one observer as

a fairly primitive, almost isolated state, barely distinguishable as an economic entity. About one-fifth of the population of about 10 million lived in small towns; another quarter consisted of nomadic tribes; while the rest eked out an existence in poor villages. Agriculture was the primary occupation, and the almost complete lack of roads, railways or other transport facilities made it essential for each geographic region to be self-sufficient in foodstuffs. Industrial activity was sparse, with no serious attempts having been made to explore or exploit a potentially vast array of natural resources.¹

Another observer noted:

Families were large; women had no rights; men could have as many as four wives; and male children were strongly preferred. In order to keep the peasants ignorant and poor, the landowners opposed the establishment of schools or clinics.²

More than 95 percent of the population was illiterate, and education largely entailed mullahs instructing boys in reading and writing; calligraphy; Arabic grammar; and the memorization of Koranic passages, verses of poetry, and Shia catechism.³ Additionally, land ownership was highly skewed, with 1 percent of the population owning 56 percent of the land in the early 1960s.⁴

Such underdevelopment posed a threat to Iran's independent existence, as it translated to a lack of capacity and power resources to withstand Russian and British domination. Similar to Meiji Japan in the mid-nineteenth century and Turkey under Ataturk, Iran found that it was imperative to modernize lest it face a future of vassalage to outside powers. Indeed, the comparison with Turkey is perhaps more apt, as both countries had to deal with elements opposed to modernization in the form of traditionalist landowners and a religious establishment hostile to secularism.⁵ Hence, after Reza Khan's successful coup deposing

the decrepit Qajar dynasty in 1921 and his accession to the throne (as Reza Shah) in 1925, the new king commenced a modernization program that was continued by his son. Over time, this effort generated the seeds of the monarchy's destruction as it led to the disenchantment of the religious class and the establishment of a middle class and intelligentsia frustrated with the centralization of power under the monarchy.

Various reforms proposed by the new king promoted the expansion of the secular state into matters hitherto monopolized by the clerical establishment. Reforms in education, law, and the status of women represented an encroachment of a modernizing state into society and formed the basis for state–society tensions. In education, Reza Shah established a state education system featuring six years each for elementary and secondary instruction based on a modern curriculum, a policy that diminished the authority of the religious establishment, which had previously maintained a monopoly on educational instruction.⁶ Additionally, in 1932 secularization was introduced into the judiciary when a law was enacted that required the registration of documents and property to be handled solely by secular courts (as opposed to sharia courts).⁷ Religious officials who had previously derived a significant portion of their income administering these activities suffered a further blow in 1936 when new legislation required that judges hold a degree either from the Tehran Faculty of Law or from a foreign university. Both reforms led many religious officials to abandon the judiciary.

Another key reform effort involved the uplift of women. The educational reforms mentioned above involved the compulsory education of girls as well as boys, and in 1934 women were admitted to the law school and school of medicine in Tehran.⁸ The February 1936 law that restricted women's use of the all-encompassing and funereal chador was particularly noteworthy; in 1928 demonstrations broke out in Tabriz against the unveiling of women.⁹

Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi continued his father's modernization drive with his so-called White Revolution, his government's signature effort to modernize Iran's social and economic systems. The establishment of universal (and in particular female) suffrage was one component of this effort, as was land reform. Reza Shah's effort at land reform, the 1937 Land Development Act, which sought to encourage the optimum use of land by both landlords and peasants, failed because its implementation was left to landlords.¹⁰ In the early 1960s his son enacted legislation to reduce the size of large estates. Given that many members of the legislature were large landowners, to achieve land reform he found it necessary to dissolve the legislative branch for a period of time and rule by decree (the Six-Point Reform Program, the main policy initiative of the White Revolution approved in a national

referendum in January 1963, promoted land reform).¹¹ Land reform also drew the resistance of the ulama,^a as many mullahs themselves were also large landowners, especially in the provinces of Azerbaijan, Kerman, and Isfahan.¹² In February 1960, Ayatollah Borujerdi, the leading *mojtahed* (jurisprudent) at the time, issued a statement indicating that any effort to limit the size of landed estates was contrary to Islam.¹³

Such reforms contributed to a crisis of state legitimacy that was further compounded by Mohammad Reza's foreign policy and in particular his pro-Israel and pro-US orientation, especially his acquiescence to the instrumental use of Iran as a frontline state against the expansion of Soviet influence in the Persian Gulf and Middle East.¹⁴ The latter implied inclusion within the American orbit and a measure of subservience to the interests of the United States, which the clergy saw as inimical to the national-religious identity of the country.¹⁵

The modernization drive under the Pahlavis led to the mobilization of the religious establishment. In January 1963 the ulama organized a violent demonstration to obstruct the national referendum on the Six-Point Reform Program.¹⁶ This demonstration was followed up in March 1963 by violent clashes between the Shah's secret police and oppositional clerics and religious students.¹⁷ And on the tenth day of Muharram (June 2), which commemorates the martyrdom of Husayn, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini was arrested after giving an inflammatory sermon in which he labeled the Shah as the living "Yazid of our time."^{18,b} The arrest of Khomeini and his followers led to clashes in Tehran, and resentment against the Shah grew considerably in Qom and other important religious cities, such as Mashhad and Yazd.¹⁹

The clergy's grievances concerning the modernization and secularization of society under the Shah and their reduced social and economic status within the new order combined with those of liberals and Marxists opposed to the concentration of state power under the monarchy, leading to the establishment of a somewhat uneasy clerical-secular opposition to Mohammad Reza. Leading thinkers from both of these camps, with members of the liberal and Marxist intelligentsia either educated abroad in Europe or America or espousing foreign ideas, contributed to a combustible intellectual milieu characterized

^a Ulama are Muslim religious scholars with experience in Islamic jurisprudence, which in turn endows them with the ability to pronounce on matters related to sharia, or Islamic, law.

^b Husayn, the revered and canonical third imam within the Shia pantheon of imams, refused to swear allegiance to Yazid I, the Umayyad caliph, because he considered the rule of the Umayyads unjust. Yazid's army intercepted Husayn in Karbala, Iraq, where he was beheaded in the Battle of Karbala in 680 AD.

by Marxist-populist, anticolonial themes and the cross-fertilization and hybridization of ideas. This intellectual ferment led to the reinterpretation of Shia doctrine and contributed, after more than a millennium of “quietism,” to the emergence of revolutionary Shiism.

One such thinker was Ahmad Fardid, a leading scholar of German philosophy and in particular the work of Martin Heidegger. Fardid coined the highly influential term *gharbzadegi*, or “Weststruckness,” meaning a state of infliction by a corruptible force identified as *gharb*, or West.²⁰ Fardid saw Iranian national culture as an organic entity with Westernization impairing rational disposition and depriving Iranians of natural, moral, and authentic existence.²¹ The notion of *gharbzadegi* was picked up by Jalal al-Ahmad, who made it the title of a 1962 book. Al-Ahmad saw Westernization as obliterating authentic existence and the key aspects of Western modernization, such as urbanization, industrialization, and female liberation, as examples of the exploitative nature of Western modernity that deprived countries in the Third World of their native culture.²² Most importantly, al-Ahmad saw religion as a force of cultural renewal, capable of liberating Iranians from their mental and material dependence on the West. Al-Ahmad’s ideas contributed to the notion of dynamic Shiism, as he advocated a revolutionary role for members of the clerical establishment who, in conjunction with non-Westernized intellectuals, were called on to resist colonialism and Westernization. Rahimi²³ noted that al-Ahmad’s ideas provided the inspiration for his religious readers, such as Khomeini, to reinterpret Shia ideas such as martyrdom and justice in terms of a nativist and anticolonialist discourse.

Another key intellectual at this time was Dr. Ali Shariati, an Iranian sociologist educated at the University of Mashhad. Shariati completed his graduate studies at the Sorbonne in Paris in 1963, where he studied the works of Jean-Paul Sartre and other existentialist thinkers and participated in anticolonial circles during the Algerian struggle against metropolitan France.²⁴ Rahimi noted that “while Al-Ahmad was keen on consciousness raising about the effects of Weststruckness, Shariati was eager to bring about a new consciousness transformation of a revolutionary type that would develop out of a new understanding of Shiism,” and specifically one that was inherently antiestablishment.²⁵ More specifically, he contrasted the institutionalized quietist version of Shiism, which he labeled “Safavid Shiism,” with “Alid Shiism,” a dynamic variant that he argued represented the original spirit of Islam and called on believers to take positive action to fight injustice on earth.²⁶

Through an exegesis that distinguished jihad from *shahadat*, or martyrdom, Shariati was perhaps the one most responsible for engendering a cultic devotion to martyrdom and an interest in its instrumental

use among Iran's revolutionary generation of leaders. In a speech titled "Jihad and Shahadat," Shariati noted that a *shahid* is one who "negates his whole existence" for a sacred ideal.²⁷ The canonical example is provided by the martyrdom of Husayn, who "consciously welcomed death"²⁸ by choosing to fight the forces of Yazid, the Umayyad caliph whom Husayn regarded as an illegitimate ruler. Shariati argued that Husayn chose to engage in battle knowing it would lead to his demise "so that [the consequences] of his act might be widely spread and the cause for which he gives his life might be realized sooner. Husayn chooses shahadat as an end or as a means for the affirmation of what is being negated and mutilated by the political apparatus."²⁹

It is noteworthy that a *shahid* chooses self-obliteration not only because of the propagandist value of the deed itself but also because it represents a choice of death over dishonor. In contrast, a *mujahid* (i.e., a person engaged in jihad) is a sincere warrior who may die in the line of fire as an unintended outcome of fighting for his or her faith but who does not consciously choose *shahadat*.³⁰ Thus, "shahadat is an invitation to all generations, in all ages, if you cannot kill your oppressor, then die."³¹ Shariati called on Muslims to resist the corruption of society through *shahadat*, by seeking the "red death of martyrs" rather than dying the "black death" of cowards.³²

Indeed, Shariati's ideas were influential among Iran's revolutionary leaders, who believed that the true tenets of Islam required the Shia to abandon the quietist tradition that had dominated Shiism for more than one thousand years in favor of a more activist interpretation that sought to reverse the years of misfortune and subjugation suffered by Shia. For instance, Hojjat al-Islam Muhammad Mohammadi Reyshahri, the first minister of intelligence for the Islamic Republic, once criticized conservative or "court" ulama^c for tampering with "the hadith^d found in the books of both the Shi'is and the Sunnis" in order to "invite Muslims into submission and quiescence toward oppressive and tyrannical rulers."³³ He also stated:

The Koran invites people to rise up against despotic governments and oppressive rulers. The hadith we attained . . . from the great [scholars] of Islam [call on

^c In the current context the term *court ulama* is an epithet, similar to, for example, the term *house negro* used during the era of slavery in America. The former term was used to deride previous religious scholars who counseled the Shia against interpreting the tenets of their faith in a politicized manner.

^d The hadith is the written record of the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad, his family, and his companions. Unlike the Koran, it is not regarded as the actual word of God, and so the Koran takes precedence over the hadith. Nonetheless the hadith is considered an important source of law, practice, and doctrine.

Muslims] to renounce submission and indifference in the face of the rulers' injustices . . . [and] to rise up in revolt for the institution of equality and justice.³⁴

He further noted that the court ulama of the past had rendered service to oppressive rulers by concealing the inherently liberating nature of Islam, and so “stupefied” the minds of the faithful as to facilitate the oppressive rule of tyrannical regimes throughout the *umma* (Islamic community).³⁵

In a February 1980 sermon given during a *khutbah*, or Friday congregational prayer, Hojjat al-Islam Sayyid ‘Ali Khameneh’i, later to become supreme leader of Iran, noted that the 1979 revolution had shown that Islam is a “religion and a doctrine capable of awakening thirty-six million people from their centuries of sleep under oppression” and of “humiliating” the enemy.³⁶ Additionally, in an October 1979 sermon he corrected his audience on the correct meaning of the Arabic word *sabr* (patience or self-possession), which is mentioned in Koranic verse 103:3: “Enjoin on each other *sabr*.” He cautioned that those unfamiliar with Arabic might be forgiven for thinking that *sabr* might justify quietism by signifying the following:

Sit down in [the] corner and be indifferent to all events, difficulties and issues. [Even] if they inflict a blow on your head, don't say “Ouch!” Be patient (*sabr kun*). They plundered your possessions, they squandered [your] resources, wealth . . . and culture—sit down, be patient; God willing, the Hidden Imam will arrive and rectify everything. Be patient, sir, be patient.³⁷

Rather, Khameneh’i informed his listeners that *sabr* means to be constantly in a position of struggle, facing hardships and afflictions and never giving respite to the enemy.³⁸ Specifically, it denotes “struggle and jihad against imperialism and global Zionism.” Furthermore Khameneh’i noted that only Islam is capable of motivating people “to struggle . . . to jihad, to martyrdom (*shahadat*),” while other philosophies leave them “blind and deaf, without a will . . . fatalistic and submissive.”³⁹

For Iran’s radical generation of clerics, the revolutionary potential of Islam compared favorably with that of various Western ideologies. In Friday sermons in September 1981, Hojjat al-Islam ‘Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, a one-time president of Iran and member of the Assembly of Experts of the Islamic Republic, criticized “the school of thought of Marx and Lenin” for viewing Islam and religion in general as an opiate that kept the masses subdued. For Rafsanjani, the Islamic Revolution of 1979 revealed the falsity of such charges because it demonstrated

that religion was “the greatest stimulant of the masses” and that Islam was the most effective ideology of revolution.⁴⁰ In 1988, Khameneh’i noted that, as opposed to “materialist” ideologies (such as communism and capitalism) that view individual will as determined and thus not autonomous, Islam teaches that human beings possess free will and are autonomous with respect to their social action and choices.⁴¹ To support this revolutionary conception of Shia Islam, prayer leaders often cited Koranic verse 13:11, “Surely, Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change their own condition,” and based on it, Rafsanjani, in a February 1982 sermon, argued that “humanity is not a deterministic movement, but rather a voluntary movement that should be initiated by society, by the people themselves.”⁴² Thus, according to this interpretation of Islam, “the basis of revolution and the condition for the progression of a revolution . . . is man.”⁴³

Another key concept is that of *entezar*, or the messianic expectation of the return of the Hidden Imam, and Ram noted that the exportation of the Islamic revolution is deeply rooted in a dynamic reinterpretation of this concept first articulated by Shariati in the late 1960s.⁴⁴ Given failures by the Shia to regain what they regarded as their usurped and rightful leadership of the Islamic community, a passive notion of *entezar* emerged in 873–874 AD concerning the occultation of the twelfth imam. This conception called on the Shia to patiently wait for the return of the hidden imam, conceived as the Messiah (Mahdi) who would appear at the end of time, without taking any actions to change their state of existence.⁴⁵

Shariati rejected this passive conception of *entezar*. Somewhat similar to Christian Zionists who support the modern state of Israel in the belief that doing so will hasten the second coming of Jesus, Shariati conceived of a greater role for human agency in effectuating divine prophecy, arguing that “true” *entezar* required Muslims to take positive actions to encourage the return of the hidden imam from occultation and thereby bring forward the time of their final and eternal salvation.⁴⁶ While the elimination of injustice and oppression could occur only with the return of the imam, in the meantime the faithful can lay the conditions for the imam’s revolution not with “prayers . . . but with a banner and a sword, with true holy war involving all responsible believers.”⁴⁷ For Shariati, human intervention in the form of revolutionary action to eliminate oppression and promote universal justice was actually necessary to create favorable conditions for the return of the Mahdi, because the hidden imam would otherwise not return.

For Iran’s revolutionary leaders, particularly in the immediate period after the revolution, when the establishment and link with Hizbollah was effected, such action was not to be limited to Iran. As noted

by Khameneh'i in June 1980, setting the conditions for the return of the Mahdi required the following steps:

First, on the elimination and eradication of the roots of injustice and overflowing tyranny (*toghyan*). I mean, in the society . . . [of] the *vali-ye 'asr* [the Lord of the Time; the Hidden Imam] there should be no oppression and injustice; *not only in Iran . . . in the entire world* [emphasis added]. There should be no economic oppression, no political oppression, no cultural oppression, not any kind of oppression . . . exploitation, inequality, unreasonable demands, and hooliganism . . . must be eradicated.⁴⁸

Khameneh'i also noted in June 1980 the important world-historical role played by the Iranian people in launching a revolution that in turn would hasten the return of the Mahdi:

We, the nation of Iran, have . . . made a revolution. Our revolution was the necessary prelude and a great step in the path of that goal which the Imam of the Age (*emam-e zaman*) was sent . . . to accomplish. If we had not taken this great step, surely the appearance of the *vali-ye 'asr* would be postponed. You, the people of Iran . . . [are] the cause of the advancement of the great human movement towards [its] destination in history, and the cause of hastening (*tasri'*) the appearance of the *vali-ye 'asr*.⁴⁹

Yet the Islamic revolution was only the first step, "a drop of water in the vast ocean of the Mahdi,"⁵⁰ noted Rafsanjani. It was Iran's manifest destiny, noted Khameneh'i in a Friday congregational sermon in March 1980, to pursue dynamic *entezar* to the four corners of the earth:

We must . . . strive to export our revolution throughout the world . . . The Qur'an is not confined to the town of Mecca, it is not limited to the Quraysh infidels. [The Qur'an] is not satisfied with . . . guiding the people of one town or one country to happiness and salvation. It is for the inhabitants of the world (*'alamin*), for [all] people and for mankind . . . [T]he message of Islam must hasten to deliver the people wherever there is poverty, wherever there is discrimination, wherever there is oppression.⁵¹

Another key intellectual and theological cornerstone of the Islamic revolution, and one that played a critical role in the relationship

between Hizbollah and Iran, is *velayat-e faqih*, or The Governorship of the Jurisprudent. Although this concept is most often associated with Khomeini, particularly because he authored a publication in 1971 of the same title, it was Husayn Ali Montazeri who first made the most extended defense of this concept with the 1964 publication of a four-volume work in Arabic titled *Legal Foundations of the Islamic Government*.⁵² In this work, Montazeri justified the temporal rule of the most senior Shia cleric, who as the most legitimate representative of the Mahdi possessed the requisite legitimacy and qualifications to wield spiritual and political authority during the era of occultation.⁵³ Any other form of government was bound to be either corrupt or tyrannical.

The Koranic verse on which *velayat-e faqih* is based is the so-called “authority verse” (Koran, IV:59): “Obey God, His Prophet, and those who command authority.”⁵⁴ Shia catechism instructs that the Prophet and the twelve imams are infallible and capable of revealing divine truth and therefore have the right to guide humanity, which is structurally fallible and lacks the intellectual and moral capacity to understand the esoteric meaning of the Koran, the Prophet’s *Sunnah* (traditions), or the traditions of the imams.⁵⁵ Hence, during the period of occultation, the *mujtaheds*, by virtue of their religious training and knowledge, should assume the responsibility of guiding fallible humanity.⁵⁶

Traditionally the Shia regarded the clerical assumption of political authority as theologically problematic, because the establishment of the Islamic order can occur only with the return of the hidden imam.⁵⁷ Such thinking was the basis for quietism, and indeed in the 1950s Khomeini ascribed to the teachings of Ayatollah Borujerdi, the leading *mujtahed* at the time, who rejected clerical involvement in politics.⁵⁸ In the 1940s book *Kashf al-Asrar (Revealing of the Secrets)*, he stated “We do not claim that the government (*hokumat*) should be in the hands of the theologian (*faqih*),” but that the government should act “according to . . . divine law.” Therefore, clerics should have *nezarat* (supervision) of “the legislative and the executive branches of the Islamic state.”⁵⁹ Additionally, as late as April 1964, Khomeini stated “We say the government should stay. But it should respect the laws of Islam, or at least the constitution.”⁶⁰

Yet by the late 1960s and early 1970s Khomeini’s view of the relationship between religious and political authority began to change. In his 1971 work *Velayat-e Faqih* Khomeini denounced nationalism as an imperialist conspiracy meant to divide Muslims. More specifically, he argued that after World War I imperialist powers imposed unfavorable structural change by dividing the “Islamic homeland” into “peoples and petty states” and placed stooges in these territories to safeguard their political and economic interests.⁶¹ For Khomeini, it was imperative

that Muslims unite under the banner of Islam to resist imperialism (and Zionism).⁶²

Who should lead the *umma* against the rapacious and conniving West? Khomeini's theory of *velayat-e faqih* argued that the imams' right to rule devolved onto religious jurists and that if one of them succeeded in establishing a government, the other jurists were required to follow him.⁶³ More specifically, society should be ruled by the most knowledgeable and morally upright *mojtahed*.⁶⁴ This individual, Khomeini conceded, does not possess a personal covenant with Allah, as do the Prophet and the imams, nor does he possess the imams' personal infallibility. However, Khomeini bestowed "functional *velayat*" on the jurisconsult, which signified that the jurisconsult has sacred knowledge to determine the hidden meaning of the Koran and therefore participate in the final revelation of the word of God.⁶⁵

In pledging allegiance to Khomeini upon its founding, Hizbollah ascribed to this conception of *velayat-e faqih*. Indeed, Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah has stated that "the decision of peace and war is in the hands of the jurisconsult, not in the hands of the intellectuals, researchers, scientists, and regular politicians."⁶⁶ Additionally, he stated "Where is the force in us? What is Hizbollah's secret? The power is in the obedience to Khomeini's *velayat*. The secret of our strength, growth, unity, struggle, and martyrdom is *velayat-e faqih*, the spinal cord of Hizbollah."⁶⁷

STRATEGIC GOALS AND INTEREST IN RESISTANCE MOVEMENT

Iranian foreign policy as it relates to Hizbollah can be seen both from a broad perspective involving timeless, transcendent, and at times noble concerns related to geography, geopolitics, Islamism, and the concern for the weak and powerless, and from a narrow, base perspective involving realpolitik, power projection, and regime security. Regarding the former, and in particular geopolitics, Iran's resource endowment and strategic location have conspired to ensure that the country draws the attention of major international and extraregional powers. For instance, in 1920 Soviet troops entered Iran and sponsored the communist Republic of Gilan in northern Iran, although Moscow withdrew its troops after Reza Khan's February 1921 coup.⁶⁸ Additionally, the British had acquired control of the oil-rich province of Khuzestan, although Reza Shah eventually reimposed central control over the region.⁶⁹

During World War II the country was invaded in August 1941 by both Britain and the Soviet Union and subsequently occupied, as it was feared that Iran's policy of neutrality would prevent the supply of much-needed war matériel to the USSR after Hitler's invasion of the Soviet

Union.⁷⁰ More specifically, the British and Russians were interested in securing the Trans-Iranian Railway, which linked the Caspian port of Bandar Shah with the Persian Gulf port of Bandar Shahpur and represented the most effective means of transporting US supplies to the Soviet Union.⁷¹ However, the history of British and Soviet domination of the country prevented Reza Shah from giving these two powers the extraterritorial control they sought over the railway.⁷² To preserve the dynasty, Reza Shah abdicated and was exiled to South Africa.^e

Fears of external domination persisted after the end of the war. The country's resource endowment had previously drawn the interest of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, and concerns over excessive foreign control of the oil sector resulted in demands, led by parliamentarian and later Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq, for the nationalization of the oil sector, which was accomplished in March 1951. Unwilling to accept this setback, the British teamed up with the US Central Intelligence Agency to unseat Mosaddeq in a 1953 coup, as the United States was concerned that Mosaddeq's brand of populism and cooperation with the communist Tudeh (Masses) party would open the door to Soviet influence in the country, perhaps even a communist takeover.^f

Fears of outside domination and the blocking of Iran's external ambitions by foreign powers were major concerns, regardless of who was in power in Tehran. Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, the main beneficiary of the 1953 coup, believed that by virtue of being an old and territorially established civilization, Iran should exert influence beyond its borders, particularly within the Persian Gulf region. Yet the Palavis were also concerned that outside powers would conspire to prevent Iran from assuming its natural role.⁷⁶ Similar geopolitically based fears surrounding sovereignty and national greatness motivated the Islamic revolutionaries who took power in 1979, as they feared that outside "satanic" powers were trying to destroy Iran's unique revolution.⁷⁷ Indeed, concern with sovereignty and independence was reflected in

^e More specifically, the British issued the following understated threat to Reza Shah: "Would His Highness kindly abdicate in favour of his son, the heir to the throne? We have a high opinion of him and will ensure his position. But His Highness should not think there is any other solution."⁷³

Additionally, in a repeat of 1920–1921, by 1945 the Soviets had set up puppet regimes in the Iranian provinces of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan, although Iran was able to convince the Soviets to evacuate its troops by offering Moscow major oil concessions.⁷⁴

^f Griffith⁷⁵ argued that Mosaddeq was in favor of neutrality or "negative equilibrium," in contrast to the Shah, who believed that Iran was too weak to remain neutral within a bipolar international system and therefore had to align with the United States to contain what he perceived as a Soviet threat to Iran's independence and territorial integrity. However, political polarization pushed Mosaddeq toward the Soviets and the Tudeh party, who were willing to work with the prime minister to first remove the Shah and then Mosaddeq himself.

one of the main battle cries of the revolutionaries in 1978–1979: “*Azadi, Esteqlal: Jomhouri Eslami*” (Freedom, Independence: Islamic Republic).⁷⁸

Lord Palmerston’s observation that nations have no permanent friends or allies, only permanent interests, was illustrated by Iran’s long-standing concern with sovereignty, exceptionalism, and regional influence regardless of the nature of the regime in Tehran. These interests caused Iran to turn from friendliness toward the West and Israel under the Shah to violent hostility after the Islamic Revolution in 1979. From this perspective, Iran’s sponsorship of Hizbollah reflects a persistent theme in Iranian foreign policy, as it provides the country with an asymmetric strategic deterrent against hostile regional (Israel)^g and extraregional (United States) powers, representing (from the Iranian perspective) a Western and colonial implant (Israel) and an interloper and interventionist (the United States), both seeking to limit Iranian power and ambitions in the Middle East. Such a deterrent assumes greater importance when one considers that Iran still lacks a nuclear deterrent against the large, sophisticated nuclear arsenals of the United States and Israel and that Iran’s conventional capabilities are no match for those that American forces can bring to bear in the Gulf region.

Iran’s support for Hizbollah is also motivated by sentimental factors related to Islamic ecumenism and the spread of Islam along with a socially constructed conception of Iran’s role as the defender of the world’s downtrodden and oppressed. Regarding the former, in the last section it was noted how a dynamic notion of *entezar* was fostered by Iran’s revolutionary generation, which called for the spreading of the revolution to other lands to pave the way for the return of the Mahdi. After the revolution there were numerous statements by top Iranian officials regarding the need to export the revolution, particularly to the Muslim world, as a way of fostering Islamic universalism. Indeed this notion was given a constitutional mandate through Article 11 of the Islamic Republic’s constitution, which states:

In accordance with the sacred verse of the Koran (“This your community is a single community, and I am your Lord, so worship Me” [21:92]), all Muslims form a single nation, and the government of the Islamic Republic has the duty of formulating its general policies with a view to merging and union of all Muslim peoples, and it must constantly strive to bring

^g Bergman⁷⁹ reports that in one 2006 meeting in London with Western diplomats, an Iranian diplomat is quoted as saying that Hizbollah is “one of the foundations of our strategic security. It serves as the first Iranian defensive line against Israel. We do not accept that it must be disarmed.”

about the political, economic and cultural unity of the Islamic world.⁸⁰

Additionally, Article 3 notes that the Islamic Republic has the responsibility to seek the “expansion and strengthening of Islamic brotherhood and public cooperation among all the people” and to frame “the foreign policy of the country on the basis of Islamic criteria, fraternal commitment to all Muslims, and unsparing support to the *mustad’afin* (oppressed) of the world.”⁸¹

The constitution also directly addresses the role to be played by the IRGC. Article 150 states:

The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, organized in the early days of the triumph of the Revolution, is to be maintained so that it may continue in its role of guarding the Revolution and its achievements. The scope of the duties of this Corps, and its areas of responsibility, in relation to the duties and areas of responsibility of the other armed forces, are to be determined by law, with emphasis on brotherly cooperation and harmony among them.⁸²

Furthermore, the preamble assigns an expeditionary role to the IRGC:

In the organization and equipping of the country’s defense forces, there must be regard for faith and religion as their basis and rules. And so the Islamic Republic’s army, and the corps of Revolutionary Guards must be organized in accordance with this aim. They have responsibility not only for the safeguarding of the frontiers, but also for a religious mission, which is Holy War along the way of God, and the struggle to extend the supremacy of God’s Law in the world.⁸³

Thus, the IRGC has been given a constitutional mandate to spread Islam abroad. Interestingly, Iranian officials, in an effort to broaden the appeal of the revolution, are often at pains to downplay the Shiite nature of the revolution and instead emphasize their ecumenism. For instance, in September 1984 Khameneh’i stated:

We have no intention of bringing the Sunni brothers to Shi’ism or the Shi’i to Sunnism. Rather, the unity . . . of Muslim brothers should evolve around a common axis and common bases . . . Experience has shown . . . that diversity of beliefs never prevented two brothers from praying [together], from launching Holy War, from performing the annual pilgrimage to

Mecca (*hajj*), or from issuing collective declarations on Islamic issues. What is important is unity of purpose and unity of principles, and this exists between the Shi'i and Sunni brothers in all the Muslim lands. The best axis for the unity of the Islamic community is the [Prophet Muhammad] . . . [A]ll the Muslim countries should lay aside their [petty] differences and strive to establish unity among all Muslim societies by creating one popular movement against the oppressors (*mostakbarin*).⁸⁴

Yet Bar noted that Khomeini (and Khameneh'i after him) did not see himself as the leader solely of Iran or of Shiites, but rather regarded the *velayat-e faqih* as transcending sectarian differences and serving as a leader for the entire *umma*.⁸⁵ Notably, Hizbollah regarded the authority of the *velayat-e faqih* as extending to all Muslims. Naim Qassem, the deputy secretary general of Hizbollah, stated:

The Jurist-Theologian's native land has no relation to the scope of his dominion. The same is true of the spiritual authority and the geographical scope of such authority. He could be Iranian or Iraqi, Lebanese or Kuwaiti, or any other. His nationality is thus not related to his qualifications, for he carries the toll of Islam . . . As guardian of Muslims, Imam Khomeini governed the Islamic state in Iran as a guide, leader, and supervisor of the Islamic system on that territory, but defined the general political commandments for all Muslims anywhere they lived in the context of preservation of the resources of Muslim states; enmity towards hegemony; protection of independence from domination and subjugation; work towards unity, especially on fateful and common issues; confrontation of the cancer implanted forcefully in Palestine as represented by the Israeli entity . . . His successor, Imam Khameneh'i, assumes the same role and authorities.⁸⁶

Additionally, as alluded to previously, Iran's revolutionaries conceived of the Islamic Republic as a defender of the world's downtrodden, and indeed in their idealistic enthusiasm they regarded the welfare of the world as an important concern of the new republic. As noted in Article 154:

The Islamic Republic of Iran has as its ideal human felicity throughout human society, and considers the attainment of independence, freedom, and rule of

justice and truth to be the right of all people of the world. Accordingly, while scrupulously refraining from all forms of interference in the internal affairs of other nations, it supports the just struggles of the *mustad'afun* (oppressed) against the *mustakbirun* (oppressors) in every corner of the globe.^{87,h}

Despite the pledge of forbearance in Article 154, it is apparent that the Iranian constitution, in requiring the government to spread Islam, foster Islamic universalism, and champion the cause of groups and countries it regards as oppressed, provides the IRGC, and in particular the Qods Force, with wide legal latitude to intervene abroad. From Iran's perspective, the sponsorship of Hizbollah addresses several of these themes, given the historical persecution of and deprivation suffered by the Shia in Lebanon. The 1982 Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon provided Iran with an opportunity to seize the mantle of Islamic resistance against the Jewish state in particular and Zionism in general and spearhead the "liberation" of Jerusalem. In turn, Hizbollah's successful resistance against Israel promotes a version of Islamic universalism, with Iran as leader of the Islamic world to the detriment of Saudi Arabia which, as guardian of the two holiest sites of Islam in Mecca and Medina, is typically regarded as the natural leader of the *umma*.

However, various authors have stressed that there are limits on the degree to which Iran has sought to Islamize its foreign policy. Ehteshami and Hinnebusch noted that by the late 1980s, owing to war fatigue and the death of Khomeini, Iranian foreign policy entered a more pragmatic phase.⁸⁹ Additionally, Bar noted a number of cases where Iran set aside Islamism and support for Islamic causes and opted instead to work to establish or maintain good relations with countries that were battling various Islamist movements, including India (despite Kashmir), Armenia (despite Nagorno-Karabach), China (despite the oppression of the Uighur Muslims in western China), and Russia (despite Chechnya).⁹⁰ Bar also related a candid admission by Rafsanjani, who in 2003 noted that had Iran's constitution been rewritten, it would have been more ambiguous regarding the country's mission to combat the oppression of Muslims everywhere. Such passages would have been rewritten in a "more relative and limited" fashion, and more

^h Interestingly, Rajaei⁸⁸ noted that there was unanimous support for this article when it was debated by the Assembly of Experts when this body reviewed the proposed constitution. As a result, the deputy chairman of the assembly noted: "This consensus is a proof that our revolution . . . is a universal one and contrary to what some may say it will not be limited within the boundaries [of Iran], provided we make a model society out of our own country." Such sentiment led Rajaei to conclude that the universality of the revolution and its ideology were taken for granted by Iran's revolutionary generation.

emphasis would have been given to maintaining Iran's independence rather than fighting oppression.⁹¹

In view of the element of pragmatism that eventually emerged in Iran's foreign policy, it is important to note that sponsorship of Hizbollah furthered less glorious and more vulgar interests related to *raison d'état*. It has already been noted that Hizbollah provides Iran with a power-projection capability that enables it to carry out a version of extended deterrence, *extended* meaning farther away from Iran's borders. More specifically, in the 1980s the sponsorship of Hizbollah allowed Iran to leapfrog the containment imposed by war with Iraq to appeal to a broader constituency in the Middle East, and afterward, as noted by Byman and Kreps, Iran's relationship with Hizbollah allowed it to more credibly deter Israel. As the authors noted, absent the capability and reach provided by Hizbollah, Iran could not hope to respond militarily to every perceived Israeli transgression, given the relative weakness of Iran's conventional forces and its desire to avoid interstate conflict. Working through Hizbollah allowed Iran to more credibly commit to acting against Israel because Israel would find it politically difficult to retaliate against Iran for actions undertaken by the movement, even if it is believed that those actions were taken at Iran's behest.⁹²

Lastly, one could perhaps argue that Iranian sponsorship of Hizbollah (and similar groups) shortly after the revolution was motivated in part by defensive concerns, and in particular by the need to safeguard regime security. One empirical study noted that states undergoing a revolutionary regime change are almost twice as likely to be involved in war as are states that emerge from a more evolutionary process of political development,⁹³ and one such motivating factor (as was the case with revolutionary France after the fall of Louis XVI) is the belief that a revolution must be exported in order to protect it at home. Ehteshami and Hinnebusch noted that by 1987 Iran was at odds with many regional countries,⁹⁴ and in particular it considered the Gulf monarchies, including Saudi Arabia, "un-Islamic" (owing to their monarchical form of government), and therefore illegitimate, and puppets of the United States.^{95,i} Additionally, Iran was fearful that these states, in combination with the United States, would seek to reverse the revolution.⁹⁸ As Khomeini once noted, "If we remain in an enclosed environment we shall definitely face defeat."⁹⁹

ⁱ A 1987 comment by Rafsanjani regarding Saudi Arabia is quite telling. After clashes between Iranian pilgrims and Saudi security forces during the 1987 *hajj*, Rafsanjani proclaimed that Iran must "uproot the Saudi rulers . . . and divest the control of the holy shrines from [them]."⁹⁶ Interestingly, there are strong indications that these clashes were organized by Iran, as Khomeini issued an order in 1987 that called for an uprising in that year's pilgrimage to Mecca.⁹⁷ If this is indeed the case, this staged incident offers evidence that Iran was looking for a pretext to overthrow the Saudi dynasty.

Thus, the sponsorship of Hizbollah and other groups to make the region more Islamic and radical may be seen as motivated, at least in part, by defensive concerns, because revolutionary regimes established with Iran's help may have been friendlier to the Islamic Republic. Of course, as Walt noted, Iranian leaders did not appear to recognize how their own actions and calls for exporting the revolution generated insecurity in neighboring countries. Instead, Iran interpreted regional opposition as evidence of an inherent hostility brought about by internal corruption, dependence on the United States, and the un-Islamic nature of countries in the Gulf and Middle East. Hence, to the extent that Iranian sponsorship of Hizbollah was motivated by defensive concerns related to the safeguarding of the revolution at home, such threat perceptions were likely exaggerated.¹⁰⁰

RESISTANCE MOVEMENT SELECTION

In the early 1980s Iran decided it was preferable to establish a new Shiite-based organization to mobilize Lebanon's Shia community rather than rely on Amal, an existing Shia organization established in the mid-1970s by a charismatic theologian, Imam Musa al-Sadr. Al-Sadr, the son of an influential Lebanese Shiite scholar, was born in the Iranian religious city of Qom in 1928 and made his way to Lebanon in the late 1950s. Social scientists argue that the creation of Hizbollah minimized potential "principal-agent" issues that may have arisen had Iran partnered with a less Islamized organization, such as Amal.¹⁰¹ But before specifically addressing such issues, as a backdrop we present a brief history of the formation of Amal and its subsequent split with Hizbollah.

The Shia community in Lebanon is widely regarded as originating in the seventh century, when Abu Dhar al-Ghafari, a companion of the Prophet Muhammad, was expelled to Jabal Amil in south Lebanon for his sympathy for Ali.^j Over time the Shia settled in Jabal Amil, the Bekaa Valley, and Kiswaran, although their villages were subjected to raids by the Mamluks. The Shia were viewed with suspicion by the Mamluks and by the Ottomans, both Sunni rulers.¹⁰³ A link with Iran was established during the Safavid era, as the Ottomans viewed Lebanese Shia as potential fifth-columnists and so proceeded to expel many to Persia.^{104,k} Owing to the tradition of quietism, for more than a millennium the Shia largely suffered in silence as they waited patiently

^j Other scholars locate the temporal origin of Lebanon's Shia community in the eleventh century.¹⁰²

^k The Safavid Dynasty ruled Persia from 1501 to 1736 and in the first year of their rule introduced Twelver Shiism to Persia by making it the state religion.

for their final redemption with the arrival of the Mahdi. Compared with Lebanon's other sectarian groups, by the twentieth century the Shia were at the bottom of all socioeconomic indicators, a reality made visible to them when urbanization made them conscious of their unenviable lot.^{105,1} Additionally, quietism contributed to their political marginalization.¹⁰⁶

The history of Lebanon's Shia community advanced along a new trajectory with the arrival of al-Sadr in the mid-twentieth century. Before al-Sadr initiated a process of ethnic mobilization, political and economic ideology, and particularly leftist ideology, had formed the basis of Shia mobilization in Lebanon, as disaffected youth coalesced around the Lebanese Communist Party, the Lebanese Baath Party, Nasserite groups, and the Syria Social Nationalist Party.¹⁰⁷ However, al-Sadr's efforts led to the establishment in 1969 of the Supreme Islamic Shiite Council, the first institutional body in Lebanon's history to represent the interests of the country's Shiites.¹⁰⁸ This body was established after widespread Israeli bombing of Palestinian bases in south Lebanon, and was intended to be primarily a forum for the emerging Shiite bourgeoisie in Lebanon, whose path to political power was blocked by the traditional Shiite leadership and landowning class (*zuama*).¹⁰⁹

Like various contemporaries at the time, al-Sadr rejected quietism in favor of a more dynamic and activist Shiism, and so he sought to establish a mass Shiite movement that would campaign for social justice. He conceived a nonviolent organization, although he taught that martyrdom for the sake of establishing a just society may require a violent revolution.¹¹⁰

This movement found expression in 1974 with the establishment of the Movement of the Deprived (Harakat al-Mahrumin), and in 1975 this movement established a militia, Amal (Afwaj al-Muqawamah al-Lubnaniyyah, or Battalions of the Lebanese Resistance), which means "hope" in Arabic, to represent the Shia in Lebanon's looming civil war. Although founded as a militia, Amal would sprout a political organization whose base went beyond the frustrated bourgeoisie that backed the Supreme Islamic Shiite Council to also include the peasantry and poor urban migrants. Through Amal, al-Sadr pressed for protection from Israeli raids in the south, improved living conditions in southern Lebanon, and a greater share of political representation, development expenditures, and government jobs for Lebanon's Shia.¹¹¹

As noted by Chehabi, Amal was not a tightly integrated and homogeneous organization.¹¹² It attracted members from Beirut, the Bekaa

¹ See the section "Historical Context: Nexus of Socioeconomic Conditions and Creation of Vulnerabilities" in Chapter 3 for more information on the historical, social, and economic conditions of Lebanon's Shia community.

Valley, and south Lebanon, with those from south Lebanon being more anti-Palestinian than the former two, and ideologically it counted on both secular and Islamist members. Additionally, in the late 1970s clerical members of the Lebanese Da'wa Party, frustrated by the secretive and underground nature of the organization, joined Amal at the behest of Iran.^m Many of these Lebanese clerics had established links with their Iranian counterparts while completing their religious training in the holy city of Najaf (in Iraq), and Iran encouraged them to infiltrate Amal to spread a revolutionary Islamic message to a broader audience and to challenge the secular orientation of Amal.¹¹⁴

Amal was initially trained by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and by al-Saiqa, the Syrian-sponsored Palestinian movement, and it was also a member of the Lebanese National Movement (which was formed by Druze leader Kamal Jumblatt to challenge the ascendancy of the Maronites),¹¹⁵ although it later turned against the movement and supported Syria's effort to end the civil war. Amal also turned against the PLO, as it blamed the group's cross-border shelling of Israel for the devastation visited on Shia villages by Israeli actions in response to PLO guerrilla activity.¹¹⁶

The split with the PLO revealed Amal's overall preference for a less hard-line Islamist orientation, as it offered evidence that the group (or at least its secular leadership) was willing to at least tolerate Israel's existence as long as the Jewish state left the Shia in peace. Further evidence for the group's relative moderation was provided in 1981 with the election of Nabih Berri as leader.ⁿ Given his aversion to militant Shiism,^o Berri led Amal along a secular path, as the group came to represent the interests of middle-class Shia frustrated with the power of the *zuama* and other entrenched interests in Lebanon, as well as the interests of southern Shia tired of Israeli reprisals against the PLO.¹²⁰ Additionally, Berri did not seek the dismantlement of Lebanon's confessional

^m The Iraqi Da'wa Party was founded in Iraq around 1958, and after the Baathist coup in 1968, many *ulema* educated in Najaf were expelled to Iran, Lebanon, and the Gulf. Some of the exiles in Lebanon founded the Lebanese Da'wa Party.¹¹³

ⁿ By this point al-Sadr was no longer involved with Amal. In fact, Musa al-Sadr disappeared on a visit to Libya in August 1978, allegedly as a result of Libyan foul play. The disappearance made al-Sadr into a martyr figure, as people were quick to draw an obvious parallel to the hidden imam. The disappearance drew the concern of Khomeini, who pressed Libyan officials to look into the whereabouts of al-Sadr.¹¹⁷

^o Chehabi¹¹⁸ noted that while Berri viewed the Iranian revolution as a positive event, he did not regard it as a panacea for the problems of the Shia in Lebanon, and over time he grew disenchanted with the Islamic Republic. This may have been due to the purging of pro-Amal members from the revolutionary regime in 1980–1981 and their replacement with individuals with pro-Palestinian sentiment. It should be noted that senior Iranian revolutionaries had trained in Amal camps in Lebanon, and that Khomeini's two sons, Mustafa and Ahmad, had trained in Amal camps in south Lebanon in the 1970s, as well as in PLO camps near Beirut.¹¹⁹

system,^p and instead supported relatively modest reforms that sought to include the Shia within a united and secular Lebanon. For instance, Amal supported Syria's "50-50" proposal made in 1976 for the distribution of legislative seats between Muslims and Christians (it also did not challenge Maronite control of the presidency), and it called for civil service jobs to be awarded on merit.¹²¹

The emergence of Hizbollah from Amal occurred after Israel's 1982 invasion of southern Lebanon, a seminal event in the history of modern militant Shiism. Between 1969 and 1981, Palestinian militants in Lebanon killed 298 Israelis in the northern Galilee, and the Israeli invasion was designed to permanently end the Palestinian presence in Lebanon.^{122,q} Before the invasion, the Islamist elements of Amal were growing unhappy with Berri's rule. In 1981 members such as Husayn al-Musawi (who became the official spokesman of Amal and its deputy leader in 1981) and Sayyid Subhi al-Tufayli criticized Berri for not being supportive of Khomeini and for being insufficiently Islamist, with al-Musawi declaring at the fourth Amal congress in April 1982 that Amal fighters were ready to retake Jerusalem on Khomeini's orders.¹²⁴

The Israeli invasion led to the Islamist break with Amal. Much of the initial resistance was led by leftist groups,¹²⁵ and indeed Amal's leadership in southern Lebanon instructed its fighters not to resist the Israelis and even to turn over their weapons if ordered.^{126,r} Additionally, Berri agreed to be the Shia representative on the five-member Committee of National Salvation, which was to negotiate with the Israelis and with Philip Habib, President Ronald Reagan's appointee to medi-

^p For more information regarding Lebanon's political system, see the section "Historical Context: Governing Environment" in Chapter 3.

A "confessional system" refers to a form of sectarian representation in a government whereby there is a proportional allocation of political seats and governmental billets according to religious or ethnic groups.

^q Interestingly, Bergman¹²³ noted that Israeli war aims were much broader than simply removing the Palestinian threat from Lebanon. Defense Minister Ariel Sharon wanted Israel to conquer southern Lebanon, then link up with the Maronites in Beirut to remove the PLO and Syrians from Lebanon. Bashir Jemayal, the leader of the Christian Phalange Party, would be installed as the leader of Lebanon. It was hoped that the expelled Palestinians would take over Jordan and remove the Hashemite dynasty that ruled that country and in the process give up their claim to the West Bank. The Syrians helped to derail these plans by blowing up Jemayal during a meeting at Phalange headquarters in Beirut.

^r It should be noted that the Shia in south Lebanon initially welcomed the Israeli invasion, indeed with handfuls of thrown rice, as they hoped that Israel would get rid of the hated PLO. Yet they turned against Israel once it appeared as if Israel was making preparations for a long-term occupation of southern Lebanon. Additionally, Israel's "iron fist" occupation policy alienated many Shia. Shia grievances centered around Israeli reliance on mass detentions, curfews, house searches, roadblocks, and the destruction of orchards. Israelis also arrested sheikhs and community leaders, and the Shia were also upset with the brutality of the South Lebanese Army (SLA), the Shia militia sponsored by Israel.¹²⁷

ate the conflict. Berri's participation drew the ire of Iran's ambassador to Lebanon, who called on Berri to resign from the "American committee."¹²⁸ Berri subsequently agreed to a peace plan that would involve the removal of PLO fighters from Lebanon, a decision opposed by Islamist members of Amal. This dispute was brought for arbitration to Iran's influential ambassador to Syria, Ali-Akbar Mohtashemi, who ruled in favor of the Islamists. Berri refused to abide by this decision, which prompted al-Musawi to head to the Bekaa Valley and announce the establishment of a new organization, "Islamic Amal," as well as proclaim that the Islamic Republic of Iran was the final arbiter on Islamic matters (including determining what was and was not Islamic).¹²⁹

Other militant Shias itching for a more forceful and Islamist response to the Israeli invasion also made their way to the Bekaa Valley, including members of student and mosque groups, members of committees in support of the Iranian revolution, and Shias who had fought with Palestinian organizations. Among such individuals were Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah, the current secretary general of Hizbollah, and Imad Mugniyah, the terrorist mastermind who would play a prominent role in Hizbollah's relationship with Iran and in the group's attacks abroad.¹³⁰ Delegates from each of the various organizations present in the Bekaa Valley formed a nine-member committee to establish a new organization committed to the concept of *velayat-e faqih* and the struggle against Zionism.⁵ This committee sent Sheikh Subhi al-Tufayli and Sayyid Abbas al-Musawi (who would become Hizbollah's first and second secretary generals, respectively) to Iran to ask the Iranian leadership to appoint an arbiter for disagreements to ensure that decisions were consistent with Islamic law.¹³² Iran's High Defense Council subsequently agreed to the creation of a "Council of Lebanon," which, once back in Lebanon, proceeded to build the organizational structure of Hizbollah, and Khomeini also sent a personal representative to the country.^{133, t}

At the time of Israel's invasion the IRGC's Unit for Liberation Movements was hosting a conference on liberation movements from around the world on the birthday of the hidden imam, which Iran had declared as "World Dispossessed Day."¹³⁵ In attendance from Lebanon were Sheikh Shamseddin, Sayyid Fadlallah, Raghieb Harb, and Subhi al-Tufayli, who asked for Iranian help. In July 1982, Iran proceeded to

⁵ Mohtashemi would play an active role in the formation of Hizbollah. At one point he requested al-Musawi to provide him with a list of all Amal members who were sympathetic to the Iranian revolution, and he played a leading role in bringing together members of Lebanese Da'wa, the Association of Muslim Students, and Amal into Hizbollah.¹³¹

^t The name Hizbollah, which means party of God, was inspired by a Koranic verse (*Surat al-Ma'ida*, 5:56): "those who accept the mandate of God, his prophet and those who believed, Lo! The Party of God, they are the victorious."¹³⁴

send its defense minister, the IRGC commander, and the commander of the army's ground forces to Syria to inquire how Iran could provide assistance. Earlier in March, Iran had reached an agreement that brought Syria into the Iranian orbit, with Syria receiving cheap Iranian oil while agreeing to close a pipeline carrying oil from Kirkuk, in northern Iraq, to Tripoli.¹³⁶ Given Syria's realignment toward Iran, President Hafez al-Assad could not now turn down the Iranian request to send troops to Lebanon.^u

Shortly after the invasion, Syria, concerned with the Israeli threat, agreed to the establishment of a forward-deployed Iranian headquarters in the border town of Zebdani.¹³⁸ Among the initial deployment of Iranian troops were members of the 27th brigade, named after the Prophet Muhammad himself, and a battalion from the regular army's elite 58th ranger division, with the combined force sent under the name "Forces of Muhammad the Prophet of God" (Qova-ye Mohammad Rasul Allah).¹³⁹ Some commanders of the 27th had fought against Kurdish rebels in Iran and therefore had experience in guerrilla warfare, and they had also distinguished themselves in conventional combat against Iraq.^{140, v} Mohtashemi, the Iranian ambassador to Syria, greeted them at the airport, and the Iranian forces were also well received by the Syrian populace, some of whom welcomed them by shouting slogans in Persian.¹⁴² For Khomeini, this initial deployment allowed for the establishment of "a forward strategic position which makes proximity to Jerusalem possible."¹⁴³

^u Iran had also sought to send troops to Lebanon in 1979 shortly after the revolution. In November 1979, Mohammad Montazeri, who once had attended a training camp in Lebanon, launched a "Revolutionary Organization of the Masses of the Islamic Republic" and went to a PLO solidarity conference in Portugal. At the conference he promised to recruit one hundred thousand Iranian volunteers to fight for the Palestinians, and recruits started training at a camp near Tehran. In December 1979, four hundred volunteers arrived in Damascus without prior notification, and one of the slogans they chanted was "Today Iran, tomorrow Palestine." However, as a secular dictator, Assad was not eager to introduce an extremist movement into Syria and Lebanon and had the four hundred volunteers sent first to a Palestinian refugee camp and then back to Iran (only about forty of the first thousand volunteers ever made it to Lebanon). Montazeri had managed to make it to Beirut, but Assad ordered his capture and elimination. Fortunately for Montazeri, a phone call from Khomeini to Assad led to his release.¹³⁷

^v Interestingly, DeVore and Stähli noted that, overall, many of the tactics imparted by the initial Iranian contingent were not appropriate for the Lebanese theater. Specifically, the Iranians stressed their belief in the psychological impact of "human wave" attacks, which were employed in combat against Iraq. However, employed against the Israelis, this tactic simply resulted in large losses for Hizbollah. The authors quote one United Nations observer as stating that "They [Hezbollah] were very amateur, foolhardy in many ways, but very brave. They just walked into the line of fire and were cut down very badly. It was just like watching the Iranian assaults against Iraq." Hizbollah eventually changed tactics by emphasizing small combat teams and irregular warfare tactics.¹⁴¹

The initial Iranian contingent arrived in Syria on June 11, 1982, six days after the start of the Israeli invasion and on the day in which Israel proclaimed a cease-fire. Iranian commanders held meetings with Syrians to determine how best to deploy Iranian troops against Israel, but it became apparent to Iran that the Syrian government was primarily interested in using the Iranians for propaganda purposes.¹⁴⁴ Many personnel in this initial deployment were sent back to Iran to fight against Iraq, but a contingent of eight hundred Iranian IRGC members did make their way to Baalbeck, in Lebanon. This figure was reinforced by seven hundred more IRGC personnel, and most of those deployed were military instructors and fighters, as well as a “Cultural Unit” consisting of clerics who engaged in intensive religious indoctrination for Hizbollah and Islamic Amal members.¹⁴⁵ The primary missions of the IRGC in Lebanon, at this time and beyond, were religious guidance and military training. As noted in 1991 by Hadi Reza Askari, the IRGC commander in Lebanon, “the guard is not a militia; our mission is to train the people to fight Israel.”¹⁴⁶

Over the next two years the IRGC was able to make its presence felt. In September 1983 it assisted Hizbollah in seizing the Sheikh Abdullah barracks, the army’s main base in the Baalbeck area.¹⁴⁷ The base was renamed after Imam Ali, and it served as the headquarters of the IRGC in Lebanon, with Askari sending instructors to provide training in combat and sabotage. The IRGC deployment also led to the Islamization of social mores, as bars stopped serving alcoholic beverages, women began sporting the Iraqi black abaya, the “Voice of the Iranian Revolution” radio station began broadcasting eight hours of religious programs and sermons, and pictures of Khomeini and exhortations to seek martyrdom sprouted up on walls.^{148,w}

The IRGC mission at this time was also supported by significant Iranian funding that was used to finance various social services that helped build inroads into the local Shia community and facilitate recruiting and indoctrination.^x Funds were used to assist Hizbollah in establishing religious schools, clinics, and hospitals, as well as to provide cash subsidies to families below the poverty line.¹⁵⁰ Funds were

^w The IRGC did establish some popularity with the Shia populace in the area by providing assistance to villages on the weekend and by not exhibiting predatory behavior common to other militias.

^x The integration of the IRGC into Baalbeck and elsewhere in Lebanon was facilitated by the many leading Hizbollah officials who studied in Najaf and formed relationships with important Iranian officials. For instance, Ibrahim al-Amin, Abbas Musawi, Hassan Nasrallah, and Subhi al-Tufayli, each of who is or was a leading figure in Hizbollah, studied in Najaf. Mohtashemi, the Iranian ambassador to Syria who played a critical role in the formation of Hizbollah, studied in Najaf under his mentor Khomeini, and he established a close relationship with future Hizbollah clerics.¹⁴⁹

also used to pay recruits \$150–\$200 per month, which was far more than they could have earned from other militias, and by July 1984 the IRGC established six military centers in the Bekaa Valley for training Hizbollah and Islamic Amal fighters.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, the IRGC, and by extension Hizbollah, was able to expand into other parts of Lebanon, including Beirut in April 1983 and also into south Lebanon.¹⁵²

In addition to serving as a forward operating base against Israel, the IRGC presence in Lebanon served as a testing ground to assess whether the revolution could be exported. Iranian officials were hopeful, envisioning an Islamic version of the domino theory. As noted by the former Iranian ambassador to Lebanon, Hojjatoleslam Fakhr Rouhani, Lebanon is “a platform from which different ideas have been directed to the rest of the Arab world,” and as a result “an Islamic movement in that country will result in Islamic movements throughout the Arab world.”¹⁵³

These sentiments were shared by Hizbollah officials at the time, who espoused the transnational mission of the Iranian revolution. For instance, Sheikh Subhi al-Tufayli stated, “We do not work or think within the borders of Lebanon . . . this little geometric box, which is one of the legacies of imperialism. Rather, we seek to defend Muslims throughout the world.”¹⁵⁴ On a separate occasion, Husayn al-Musawi noted that the establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon “is not our demand”; rather, the aim was the establishment of an “all-encompassing Islamic state” that incorporated Lebanon.¹⁵⁵ Additionally, one Hizbollah cleric, a Mahdist, noted that “the divine state of justice realized on part of this earth will not remain confined within its geographic borders and is the dawn that will lead to the appearance of the Mahdi, who will create the state of Islam on earth.”¹⁵⁶

The first step, however, was the establishment of the ideal Islamic state in Lebanon. In this regard, Iranian officials were of assistance. In fall 1982, Hizbollah clerics, under the auspices of Iran’s Office of Liberation Movements, which was controlled by the IRGC, drafted a charter and constitution for the establishment of an Islamic region in Lebanon modeled on the Iranian system. Additionally, in December 1982 Sheikh al-Tufayli was appointed the “President of the Islamic Republic.”¹⁵⁷ Yet, as will be discussed later, both Iran and Hizbollah would eventually temper their demands, realizing that neither Syria nor the other confessional groups in Lebanon would permit the establishment of an Islamic regime patterned on the Iranian model within Lebanon.

The preceding discussion makes clear why Iran chose to establish Hizbollah rather than work with Amal. Hizbollah’s acceptance of *velayat-e faqih*, its strong antipathy toward Israel and willingness to use violence to eliminate the Jewish state, and its initial enthusiasm to

spread the Iranian revolution minimized what social scientists refer to as “agency losses” within what are known as principal–agent relationships. These types of relationships entail a situation in which an actor, the principal, delegates a task to another actor, the agent, who is given a “conditional grant of authority” by the principal to act on its behalf.¹⁵⁸

By delegating, the principal relinquishes some control over the ability to influence outcomes, as some autonomy must be bestowed on agents to act on the behalf of the principal. The risk, of course, is that the actions taken by an agent may diverge from the preferences of the principal, either through incompetence on the part of the agents or, more problematically, because the interests of agents and principals diverge.¹⁵⁹ As noted by Kiewiet and McCubbins, agency losses refer to the costs assumed by the principal when agents, motivated by interests not entirely consistent with the desires of the principal, engage in undesired actions on the principal’s behalf.¹⁶⁰

Within the current context, Iran can be viewed as a principal that has delegated authority to Hizbollah, the agent, to act on its behalf. The decision to establish Hizbollah, rather than work through Amal, was therefore more efficient from the standpoint of principal–agent theory given Hizbollah’s acceptance of the doctrine of *velayat-e faqih* and the substantial overlap between Iran’s foreign policy goals and those of Hizbollah.^y

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CHAPTER 3.
HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The preceding chapter presented a detailed account of the intellectual milieu and political developments that gave rise to a virulently anti-Western and religiously fundamentalist movement that radically transformed Iran's foreign policy and political and social systems. Concurrent political developments and social tensions in Lebanon provided the underlying structural context that presented the Mahdists among Iran's nascent revolutionary leaders with an ideal opportunity to enact their manifest destiny of redeeming humanity through the worldwide export of the revolution. More specifically, rising Shia population totals in Lebanon interacted with key components of the modernization process underway in the country, primarily urbanization and the expansion of education, which raised Shia aspirations while concurrently making them aware of their socioeconomic backwardness and political marginalization. These developments in turn led to a crisis of state legitimacy, as they generated Shia (and broader Muslim) grievances against the confessional system established in 1943 by al-Mithaq al-Watani, or the National Pact.

The final addition to this perfect storm was the 1982 Israeli invasion, which, in addition to generating resistance to the Israeli presence that was soon led by angry Islamist elements within the Shia community, also highlighted the collapse of the Lebanese state during the civil war, which lasted from 1975 to 1990. This vacuum, in turn, was filled quite eagerly by Iran's new revolutionary leaders, who saw an opportunity to mobilize Lebanon's Shia population under Iran's direction, and in particular to effectuate the "liberation" of Jerusalem and the establishment of an ideal Islamic state in Lebanon as a prelude to its expansion elsewhere in the Islamic world and beyond. Therefore, this chapter commences with a discussion of the geographic, socioeconomic, and political conditions in Lebanon that provided exploitable entryways for the expansion of Iranian influence in the country, beginning with a brief discussion of Lebanon's physical environment and how patterns in physical (and human) geography likely impacted the calculations of Iranian planners.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT^a

Approximately one-third of the land is arable, with one-fifth currently being cultivated.² The population is concentrated most densely along the coastal areas, especially in the capital city of Beirut and the major population centers of Sidon and Tyre to the south and Tripoli to

^a Portions of this section were adapted from the existing Hizbollah case study found in *Casebook on Insurgency and Revolutionary Warfare Volume II: 1962–2009*.¹

the north. The Litani River, which flows south from the Bekaa Valley before turning sharply westward toward the Mediterranean, is a major source of water and also provides for irrigation and hydroelectricity.



Figure 3-1. Map of Lebanon.

Harris suggested that Lebanon’s geography can be divided into three strategic zones,³ and his categorization provides a useful framework for understanding Iran’s initial forays into the country in the early 1980s. The first zone, which could perhaps be labeled a core, consists of the Mount Lebanon region in the north, which, as the name suggests, is geographically demarcated by the Mount Lebanon mountain range

in the north of the country. This area consists of the coastal areas north of Beirut as well as the territory up to the Qurnet al-Sauda' massif in the north to the Shuf highlands to the south. The strategic importance of this region derives from its proximity to Beirut, as control of the Mount Lebanon region allows for control of land communication with the capital.⁴

Harris also noted that the Mount Lebanon region achieved de facto autonomy within the Ottoman Empire sometime in the sixteenth century.⁵ Once known as "Little Lebanon," this region traditionally featured a significant Maronite population as well as a noteworthy Druze presence.⁶ In September 1920 France delimited the geographic extent of the modern state of Lebanon by adding the remaining two regions of Harris's categorization to establish Greater Lebanon. The coastal cities of Beirut, Tripoli, and Sidon were agglomerated to Little Lebanon, as were the peripheral areas of the south and the Bekaa Valley.⁷ Iran's initial forays were focused on this latter region, as this was the area where Lebanon's Shia population was concentrated.^b As Harris appropriately noted:

For Syria and Iran, Shi'is are distributed conveniently between a concentration abutting Israel, in southern Lebanon, and another population in the central and northern Bekaa, well placed for logistics and organization. This situation has been useful for exerting pressure on both Israel and Beirut.¹⁰

The phrase "Belt of Misery" describes the southern suburbs of the capital, which in the past were inundated with thousands of Shiite and Palestinian refugees fleeing the south. The near-constant conflict until 2006 has meant that standards and regulations for public works and buildings are rarely enforced, and the area is best described as a slum. South Lebanon, from where Hizbollah draws most of its support, is generally considered the area bordered by the Litani River Gorge to the north, the Mediterranean to the west, the Bekaa Valley to the east, and Israel to the south. Green, hilly, and dotted with deep valleys, the terrain is inhospitable to large, armored vehicles.¹¹ Many of the region's

^b Kramer noted that in the early 1980s Iran initially focused on the Bekaa Valley, as the Shia inhabitants of that region had felt excluded from Amal, who drew many of its leaders from south Lebanon.⁸ Additionally, Wege noted that Iran targeted the Hamiya, Musawi, Aqueel, Shahadehs, and Ezzedeens clans.⁹

villages are situated on hilltops, providing Hizbollah fighters with clear lines of fire and ample cover against ground attacks.^c

With respect to the geographic extent of the resistance movement, Hizbollah operates throughout Lebanon; however, its supporters and most of its operations are focused in southern Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley, and south Beirut. These three regions represent the areas where most Shia live in Lebanon.^d South Lebanon, near the border with Israel, is the focus of most of Hizbollah's military preparations and activities, while the Bekaa Valley is used for training and other activities, as it is considered safer because of its distance from Israel. During the civil war, Hizbollah was involved in fighting in Beirut, and while it maintained a security presence in the city, Beirut is no longer the primary focus of Hizbollah's combat operations. Much of Hizbollah's support comes from the sprawling slums of south Beirut where many Shia have congregated in recent decades. This is also the area where most of Hizbollah's social services and other nonmilitary activities are focused.¹⁴

SOCIOCULTURAL ENVIRONMENT^e

As Hizbollah is primarily a Shia organization, it is important to understand the role of sectarian identity in Lebanese society, especially since sectarian affiliation represents the most powerful form of cultural identity in modern Lebanon, with the predominant groups falling under the two broad categories of either Muslim (Sunni, Shiite, Druze) or Christian (Maronite, Greek Orthodox, Catholic).^f Although recent exact population figures are not available, Muslims account for roughly 54 percent of the overall population of about four million, and Christians account for nearly 41 percent.¹⁵ The presence of approximately four hundred thousand Palestinian refugees, most of who remain in camps, is a further strain on this delicate demographic map.^g About

^c Exum pointed out that operations on this hilly terrain, which require dismounted infantry, are much different than the operations the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) have traditionally carried out in other regional campaigns. Additionally, the terrain renders Israel's technological advantage mostly useless.¹²

^d Using information from the Saudi food distribution program in 1988, Faour estimated that approximately 307,000 Shia resided in Beirut's southern suburbs at the time, with 328,000 in the Bekaa and 354,000 in south Lebanon.¹³

^e Portions of this section were adapted from the existing Hizbollah case study found in *Casebook on Insurgency and Revolutionary Warfare Volume II: 1962–2009*.

^f Ethnically, the Lebanese state is very homogenous; roughly 95 percent of the population is Arab. Kurds, Alawites, and Ismaelis are also present, as are Armenians (the only major non-Arab population) although in smaller numbers.

^g Estimate from "Lebanon Camp Profiles," United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=73>.

60 percent of the Muslim population is Shia, with the remainder being Sunni and Druze.^h Maronites account for roughly 75 percent of the Christian population. Of note is the rapid rise of the Shia population since the mid-twentieth century, with Shia population totals tripling between 1956 and 1975 from 250,000 to 750,000; by the 1980s it was the largest group in Lebanon, at 1.4 million compared to 800,000 each for Sunni and Maronite.¹⁶

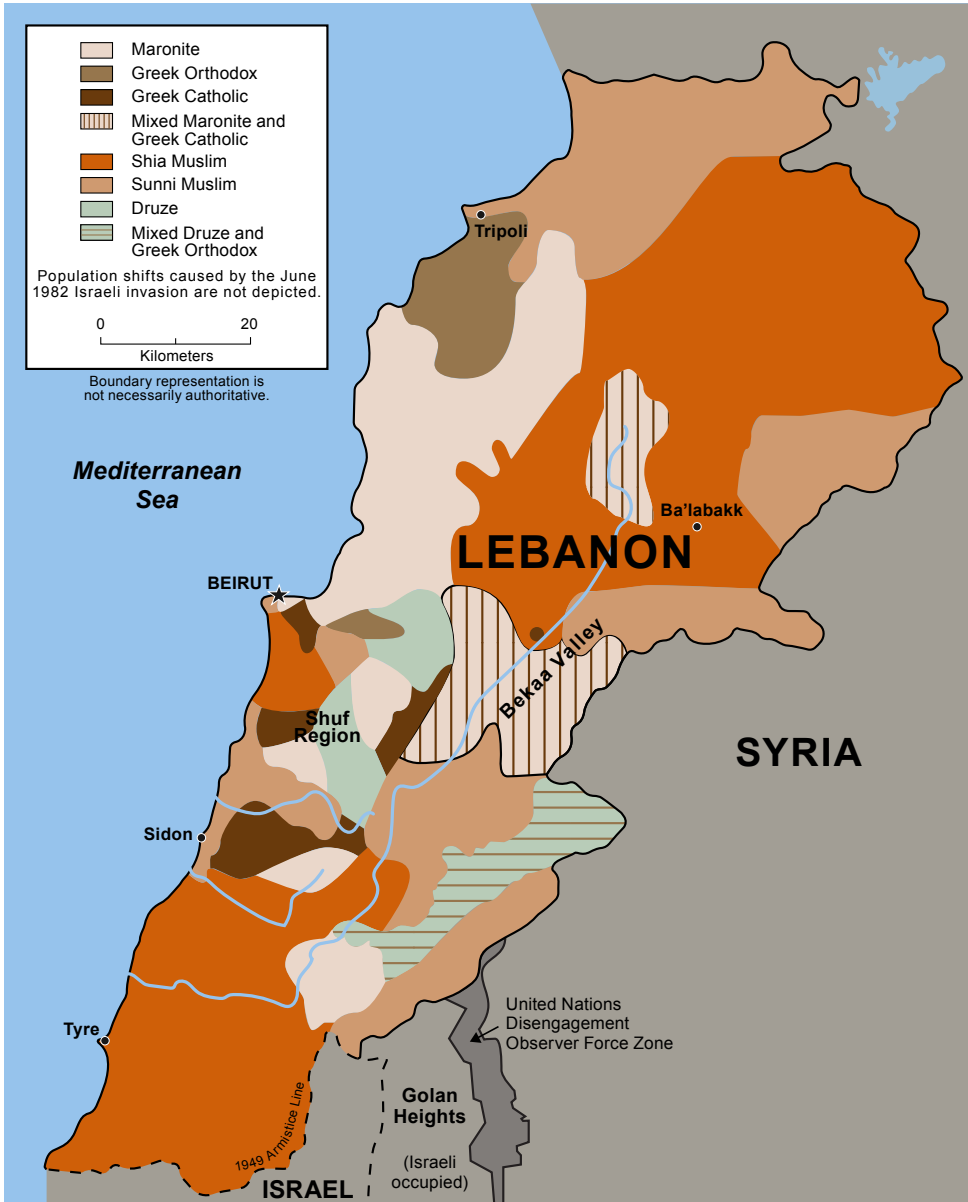


Figure 3-2. Distribution of religious groups in Lebanon in 1983.

^h Shia and Sunni Muslims consider the Druze a heretical sect and do not recognize members as fellow Muslims. Additionally, the Shia were regarded as heretics by Sunni rulers.

The country's sects are distributed largely along geographic lines, a phenomenon that was further reinforced by the civil war of 1975–1990. The various natural obstacles of Lebanon—mountain ranges, fast-flowing rivers, and climatic extremes—facilitate the isolation of factions on the basis of clan, ethnic, and religious ties.ⁱ The south, which shares a border with Israel, is predominantly Shiite, whereas the mountains have traditionally been inhabited by Christians in the north and Druze in the south. The far north, around Tripoli, has traditionally been a Sunni population center.

In addition to the unique nonconformist character of many of the groups (including Maronites, who were considered Christian heretics, as well as Shiites and Druze) that sought refuge in the area's mountains, exclusionary identification had been reinforced by decades (if not centuries) of communal conflict. The salience of communal differences was only heightened in 1920 as France (with the approval of some Maronite elites, such as the Maronite patriarch Ilyas Huwayyik)¹⁸ grafted upon the Maronite core of “Little Lebanon” surrounding Sunni and Shiite regions. This enlargement of Lebanon to its modern-day configuration was achieved within the context of the peace settlement between Turkey and the victors of World War I, which also resulted in Beirut becoming the capital of the French Mandate for Syria and Lebanon. Additionally, under French sponsorship the Maronite majority within Little Lebanon dominated politics and the economy of Greater Lebanon, with Sunnis afforded greater decision-making authority than would have been the case with the establishment of a “Greater Syria” (and with Shias dominated by both Christians and Sunnis).¹⁹

Description of the Economy^j

Agriculture accounts for approximately 6 percent of gross domestic product²⁰ and a majority of rural households engage in agricultural activity at least part time. However, agriculture is the sole source of

ⁱ Winslow states: “As a home for ancient coastal settlements; as Phoenician city states; entrepôt centers (under Persian, Greek Roman and Byzantine rule); as a haven for dissentients (during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods); and as semi-independent chieftaincies (under the Egyptian Mamluk and Ottoman Turkish Sultanates), the mountains and coast of Lebanon have often operated politically as separate entities. The mountains, many of them tree covered until the late nineteenth century, gave water and protection to their inhabitants. Because of them, historical Lebanon has served as a refuge for a great variety of groups, sects, and individuals who have had to flee the larger systems nearby. The *rawasab* (residue) of other peoples and cultures have discovered the independence of the mountain and have been stubborn to keep it. The result has been to pack a great deal of diversity into a small area.”¹⁷

^j Portions of this section were adapted from the existing Hizbollah case study found in *Casebook on Insurgency and Revolutionary Warfare Volume II: 1962–2009*.

income for nearly half of the population of south Lebanon, and repeated conflicts with Israel on the southern border have been extremely disruptive to the local population.^{21,k} The wide variation in topography and climate allows for the production of temperate and tropical crops. Fruits and vegetables, which require high inputs of labor, capital, and water resources, are largely grown along the coast, whereas agriculture in the Bekaa Valley is dominated by staples such as potatoes, tomatoes, and sugar beets, as well as hashish, which is a major cash crop. Cereals and olives are grown in the north, and wheat, tobacco, and figs are cultivated in the south. Unlike many states in the region, minerals are scarce in Lebanon and are mined only for domestic consumption, not for export.

Throughout most of Lebanon's history, there was a severe bias in favor of the economic center—that is, the Christian and Sunni elite. The only real exception to this was under President Shihab (1958–1967), a general who embarked on a systematic campaign to deliver the social justice he and his technocratic circle of advisers felt was driving the state's debilitating sectarianism.¹ After the conflict of 1958,^m Shihab instituted significant changes meant to redress socioeconomic inequality, including imposition of an equal distribution of high-level administrative posts between Christians and Muslims (which resulted in a large boost for Muslims) and a dramatic increase in government spending. He also founded a central bank to facilitate state regulation of the economy and agencies for planning, statistics, development, and social security, and dedicated substantial resources to public works projects such as roads, schools, and irrigation schemes.

To accomplish these projects, Shihab used the domestic security services to weaken the political power of the ruling elite clans, who opposed these economic policies because their primary beneficiary was the poor Shiite periphery. This socioeconomic experiment came to an end roughly a decade later, when the commercial and landed elite finally put aside their sectarian differences to pursue their common interest in laissez-faire economics. The ensuing programs of economic

^k Farmers not only lose their harvest during conflict but must also wait until unexploded munitions and mines are removed before returning to work; livestock populations have also been decimated by repeated conflict, and animal husbandry has most likely been in constant decline since the civil war began in 1975.

¹ This section is based on Harris, *Faces of Lebanon: Sects, Wars, and Global Extensions*.²²

^m In the aftermath of the merger between Egypt and Syria in 1958, which came together to form the United Arab Republic (UAR), fighting broke out in Lebanon pitting those (primarily Sunnis and Shias) who sought submergence under the UAR and those, primarily Christians, who supported the Maronite-led government's efforts to preserve the independence of Lebanon. Harris noted, though, that the conflict was not a full-scale sectarian war; there were Muslims who supported the Maronite-led government along with Christians who opposed the government.²³

liberalization eventually earned Lebanon the title of Switzerland of the Middle East, especially for its banking secrecy laws and loose financial regulations, notably the absence of restrictions on the movement of capital. It soon became a regional finance hub where Gulf monarchs, socialist dictators, and nervous bourgeoisie spirited away their fortunes. Although this inflow was interrupted by the civil war, the rush of liquid assets benefited well-connected elites, who used their access to capital and their ability to bypass the already weak bureaucracy to construct high-end shopping districts and luxury hotels adjacent to the slums and bombed-out buildings, thus further underscoring the division between Lebanon's economic elite and those on the periphery.

Nexus of Socioeconomic Conditions and Creation of Vulnerabilitiesⁿ

The history of the Shia in Lebanon is suffused with a heritage of collective suffering that has a distinct communal character²⁴ yet also reflects the grievances of the global Shia community. Centuries of persecution by majority-Sunni empires, as well as the contemporary Shia community's minority status in most of the states where communities do exist, create a powerful basis for political mobilization. However, as was noted in the preceding chapter, Shia traditions and Shia leaders historically promoted political quiescence, even submission, to perceived tyranny and injustice.

Before the 1979 revolution, the Shia of Lebanon had no powerful patron and instead composed the class of "hewers of wood and drawers of water."²⁵ In the great struggle between the (Sunni) Ottoman Empire and the (Shia) Safavid Empire, the latter originating in what is modern-day Iran, Lebanon's Shia had the misfortune of being a religious minority in an empire at war with its sectarian brethren. They were under near-constant military assault from Ottoman officialdom, the ravages of which were partly to blame for the principles of political passivity the community cultivated in the intervening centuries.²⁶

Additionally, during the early and mid-twentieth century the Shia community, and the Muslim community more generally, lagged behind Christians in various measures of socioeconomic development. As noted by el Khazen, rather than reflecting an intention of state policy, the Christian community was relatively more effective in mobilizing a well-developed private sector and communal institutions that imparted educational and social services without state support.²⁷ One former

ⁿ Portions of this section were adapted from the existing Hizbollah case study found in *Casebook on Insurgency and Revolutionary Warfare Volume II: 1962–2009*.

prime minister of Lebanon, Takiyeddin al-Solh, attributed this deficit to a failure to accept Western civilization:

Christian society is more advanced than Muslim in almost all spheres, even though the Muslims are catching up. This is chiefly because the Muslims took far longer than the Christians to open themselves to Western civilization . . . When some Muslims now accuse the Christians of enriching themselves at the expense of Muslims and exploiting them, that is false. The Christians gained their lead in the time of the Turks, through their own work and efforts.²⁸

El Khazen also noted that the establishment of educational and social institutions by the Christian community predated the establishment of the modern state of Lebanon in 1920 and that those that came after were more advanced than comparable state institutions.²⁹ This head start contributed to uneven communal socioeconomic outcomes by mid-century, with Christians surpassing Muslims on many indicators, and Sunnis outpacing Shia within the Muslim community. For instance, in the mid-1940s local ownership of banks (as opposed to foreign ownership) was entirely in Christian hands, while 87 percent of lawyers and doctors and 88 percent of engineers were Christian.³⁰ Meanwhile, in 1932 the illiteracy rate of the Shia community was a staggering 83 percent (among Sunnis it was 66 percent).³¹

Later on in the twentieth century, as pan-Arab nationalism and leftist political ideologies swept the region, they also influenced Shia youth in great numbers. The Baath Party, numerous communist parties, and the Syrian Socialist Nationalist Party appealed to the economic and social grievances that were dormant in Shia political awareness for decades. Yet, in a country so defined by sect, kinship, and clan, ideological parties based on more abstract notions of class were difficult to assimilate. As a result, many political platforms based on class grievances were rewritten using the language of sectarian identity, cloaking goals such as social justice and equality in a distinctly Shia language. Growing rates of urbanization, literacy, and exposure to printed material, as well as large inflows of worker remittances, increased the educational attainment of many Shia, but these changes were not mirrored by increasing employment opportunities.³²

In addition to these factors, additional phenomena contributed to both the sectarian conflict and the rise of Hizbollah. These included the post-World War I process of dismantling the Ottoman Empire, the establishment of the confessional system of political representation, and the huge influxes of Palestinian refugees, which sparked the fifteen-year civil war that lasted from 1975 to 1990. During the dismemberment

of the Ottoman Empire, the victorious European powers divided the spoils among themselves, with an eye more toward maintaining equilibrium between their colonial possessions than toward creating viable nation-states based on ethnic and religious divisions.

Although the French sheltered and protected the Maronite population in the new state of Lebanon, often violently,^o the state's Muslim populations identified more with the anti-French and anti-British independence movements sweeping through the rest of the Arab world. In this context, the declaration of the Lebanese state's independence (from the French) in 1943 represented an informal accommodation reached between Lebanon's two key internal stakeholders regarding the significance of the country's internal composition and its impact on its external orientation. Specifically, the Sunnis realized that the acceptance of a Greater Lebanon featuring a large number of Western-leaning Maronites need not inhibit aspirations for Arab unity so long as the Maronite leadership accepted Lebanon's "Arab face."³⁴ For their part, Maronites realized that Lebanon was not sustainable without Muslim political participation and a close relationship with other Arab states. Yet they required Muslims to accept the uniqueness of Lebanon and its relations with the West.³⁵

The confessional system was enshrined in two agreements, the National Pact (unwritten) of 1943 and, later, the Taif Accords that brought an end to the civil war. The National Pact gave Christians the presidency and a guaranteed parliamentary majority while reserving the positions of prime minister and speaker of the parliament for the Sunnis and Shia, respectively. Later, the Taif Accords redressed the fundamental representative inequalities (brought about by rapid Shia population growth in the mid- to late-twentieth century) by weakening the constitutional powers of the Maronite presidency and granting Muslims and Christians guaranteed equal representation in parliament.^p

Although the final Taif agreement provided the technical basis for a new government, it did little to address the underlying issues that would contribute to future outbreaks of violence; for example, it did not include an accurate gauge of the current demographic distribution or determine the fate of civil-war-era militant leaders. In most cases these leaders—many of whom were responsible for civilian massacres

^o French forces (with Maronite volunteers) bombed Shiite villages and crushed Shiite forces. Additionally, the French forced Shia ulama and community leaders to sign a document blaming the Shia for the outbreak of violence.³³

^p More specifically, the National Pact granted Christians a 6:5 ratio of seats in Parliament, while the Taif Accord shifted this ratio to 5:5 between Christians and Muslims. While providing greater equity among the different sectarian groups, the Taif Accord essentially ratified the confessional system, as the most important political offices were still reserved for specific confessional groups.³⁶

and other crimes—achieved formal amnesty, and they (or their family members and closest affiliates) continued to dominate the political scene.

In addition to sectarian tensions, which had simmered since Lebanon's independence until breaking out into full-scale conflict, the country was also a staging ground for continued conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. In 1969, the Cairo Agreement, signed by the commander of the Lebanese Army and Yasser Arafat, established the legitimacy of Palestinian guerrilla activity (against Israel) in southeastern Lebanon and ensured that the Lebanese government would not act to restrain the Palestine Liberation Organization's (PLO's) activities. The expulsion of the PLO from Jordan in 1971 made the Lebanese arena even more crucial to the group, and afterward much of the group's activity was carried out from bases on Lebanese territory. However, the weakness of the Lebanese state provoked both Palestinian and Israeli retaliation. In 1973, armed clashes between the Lebanese Army and Palestinian fighters broke out as the Lebanese government was unable (or unwilling) to prevent Israeli retaliation, and five years later, in 1978, Israel launched a full-scale invasion of southern Lebanon to end Palestinian incursions into Israeli territory. The Lebanese military proved unable to reign in the PLO—even as the PLO's activities drew increasingly destructive responses from Israel. The demonstrated weakness of the state military led many sects and prominent political families to intensify their efforts to build up their own militias.³⁷ The scales finally tipped toward civil war in 1975 when a spate of (successful and failed) political assassinations and large-scale reprisals against unarmed civilians soon turned into generalized fighting. Initially, fighting was largely limited to Palestinians and Phalangists (right-wing Christian militias controlled by the Maronite Christian politician Bashir Jemayal), but it then spread to more general Christian versus Muslim violence.

For the ensuing fifteen years, Lebanon's confessional communities targeted one another even as Syria, Israel, the United States, and the PLO joined the fighting, marked by a dizzying array of temporary alliances and broken agreements. Much of the fighting took place in Beirut and the Shiite population centers in the south where the PLO was launching attacks against Israel. Nearly a quarter of a million were believed to have died, nearly one-fourth of the population was injured, and the economy collapsed almost completely. Each confessional group had at least one militia, although throughout much of the war several armed groups claiming to represent their sectarian communities were in direct competition with one another, carrying out reprisals against their own populations.

Hizbollah coalesced several years into the fighting, around 1982, as the violence migrated from Beirut into the south and as fighting between the PLO and Israel escalated, culminating in a second Israeli invasion. Even the 1989 Taif Accords, which brought an end to the fighting by guaranteeing Christians and Muslims equal representation and making the (Sunni) prime minister and (Shiite) speaker responsible to the legislature rather than the (Maronite) president, did little to directly address Shia grievances, which were distinct from those of Sunni Muslims. The accords themselves were possible because there was no clear victor in the fifteen-year civil war and because the census necessary to provide an objective basis for constructing representative institutions was too dangerous and destabilizing to conduct. Thus, although Shiites were given more political power and representation, it was still far short of their actual demographic weight.

It was during this time that an influential imam from a notable religious family, Musa al-Sadr, traveled to Lebanon from Iran, intent on mobilizing the Shia population outside the confines of either the leftist (nonreligious) parties or the few dominant feudal families who ruled the community in pursuit of their own narrow interests. Congruent with the emerging notion of dynamic Shiism developed by Iranian thinkers at the time, al-Sadr turned Shiite history and ceremony from a collection of passive ritual lamentations into calls to action, and by the mid-1970s, he had succeeded in establishing Amal, a Shiite militia and precursor to what Hizbollah would later become.⁹

Al-Sadr worked hard to lure Shia recruits away from the PLO and its secular-leftist Lebanese allies, whom he accused of using the Shia as disposable “cannon fodder.”^r Although he lent rhetorical and ideological support to Palestinian aspirations, al-Sadr insisted that he was unwilling to expose the already poor and marginalized Shia of the south to additional suffering, and in 1976, when it became clear the Shia would bear the full brunt of fighting between the PLO and Israel, al-Sadr threw his support behind Syria, which intervened on behalf of the Maronite Christians to weaken the PLO and its leftist (and Lebanese nationalist) allies.⁴⁰ Al-Sadr was also less antagonistic toward the Maronite Christians because he believed they were driven to violence by an existential fear rooted in their minority status and their own historical experience with persecution.⁴¹ Yet he also criticized the Chris-

⁹ The following statement is indicative of al-Sadr’s successful use of leftist themes to mobilize the formerly passive Shiite population: “Whenever the poor involve themselves in a social revolution it is a confirmation that injustice is not predestined.”³⁸

^r Indeed, more Shia died in the early stages of the civil war (before Hizbollah was founded) than any other sect. The coalition of parties fighting the Christians—the Lebanese National Movement—was led by the Druze Kamal Jumblatt, who al-Sadr accused of a willingness to “combat the Christians [down] to the last Shia.”³⁹

tian political establishment for its gross neglect of the southern region of Lebanon and for its campaign of repression against poor Shia. This neglect in turn created a vacuum that Iran and Hizbollah were able to exploit after the Israeli invasion in 1982.

Governing Environment^s

Although Lebanon was technically a democracy for the thirty years before the outbreak of civil war in 1975, political and economic power in the state was highly skewed in favor of the Maronite community and, to a lesser extent, the Sunni elite. Although independence was granted (under French protection) in 1926, the French continued to practice de facto rule through their Maronite Christian allies, principally to prevent possible unification into a single state of “greater Syria,” which the Christians saw as an existential threat and the French saw as a potentially ungovernable state composed of competing demographic groups.⁴² This combined French–Maronite rule proved oppressive and led to frequent clashes with the state’s many confessional groups.

Subsequent decades saw attempts to redress what many non-Christians saw as institutional obstacles to their representation (notably the National Pact of 1943, which enshrined representation according to the outdated 1932 census), as well as conflicts that foreshadowed the bloody civil war that would begin in 1975 (mainly the 1958 civil conflict). The conflict in 1958, halted in part by direct US intervention, later proved to be a sign that the legitimacy of the earlier pact was dissolving. The severe underrepresentation of the Shiite community in parliament as well as government and civil service jobs, combined with its massive population shift in the second half of the twentieth century, required more than marginal tinkering within the existing institutional design.

The inflexibility of the confessional system, which did not allow for gradual changes in representation in response to demographic realities, created a political powder keg. Resources were also allotted to sect-based resource networks, which meant that the much larger Shia population received significantly less (per capita) state assistance.⁴³ Meanwhile, the economic growth that did take place was not in the agricultural or industrial sectors, which is where most of the Shiite population labored. The fact that the Shia members of parliament came overwhelmingly from the landed elite and were completely un beholden to their poor constituents exacerbated these problems.

^s Portions of this section were adapted from the existing Hizbollah case study found in *Casebook on Insurgency and Revolutionary Warfare Volume II: 1962–2009*.

Syria was also a major player in the Lebanese political scene. Syrian influence and control were nearly ubiquitous after 1976, when troops entered the country with at least the tacit approval of Lebanon's Christian leadership, who reluctantly turned to Damascus after appeals for a second US intervention (after 1958) went unanswered.⁴⁴ The Christians, for their part, feared that the combined numerical superiority of the Palestinian fighters along with their Shia and Druze allies would finally succeed in ending Christian political dominance. The Syrians feared the same, although their ultimate concern was that the rise in radical (leftist, pro-Palestinian) Muslim opposition would pull Syria into a war with Israel, which they would quickly lose.⁴⁵

During the civil war, Syrian troops fought many parties, Christian and Muslim, and the most apparent pattern of alliances among the warring parties was the frequency with which they shifted. This reflected Syria's overall strategy, which was to maintain a rough balance among all the warring factions. Preventing the dominance of any single group and ensuring a fragmentation of power fostered the impression that Syria's presence was indispensable to stave off anarchy.⁴⁶ Thus, when the Maronites again appeared to be on the cusp of reestablishing their dominance (achieved with Israeli assistance) in the late 1980s, Syria acted to sabotage their rise by aiding the anti-Maronite opposition.

In May 1991, at the conclusion of the civil war and after the signing of the Taif Accords, the Lebanese and Syrian regimes signed the "Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation, and Coordination." This treaty formalized the Syrian presence in Lebanon (considered illegal by many) and called for the establishment of a Higher Council consisting of senior officials from both countries, and which would manage four permanent interstate committees: for prime ministerial "coordination," foreign affairs, economic and social policy, and defense and security.⁴⁷ This agreement was followed by the August 1991 Defense and Security Pact, which facilitated greater Syrian penetration of Lebanon's army, intelligence services, security agencies, and Interior Ministry.⁴⁸ In one notable passage, Lebanon was required to "exchange information related to all security and strategic matters, national and internal, to exchange officers . . . including military instructors . . . to achieve the highest level of military coordination;" while another required the "banning [of] any activity or organization in all military, security, political and information fields that might endanger and cause threats to the other country."⁴⁹ Not surprisingly, Harris noted that the Lebanese government approved this agreement without most ministers having seen the actual text.⁵⁰

Because of the range and depth of interested parties (both domestic sectarian groups and foreign parties), as well as the absence of

adequate checks and balances, domestic politics in Lebanon resembled a patronage-based system. Consequently, the awarding of political office depended on personal loyalties rather than competence. These underlying conditions facilitated the communal politicization that provided the organizational scaffolding on which Hizbollah could be built.⁵¹ In this regard, the Shia “awakening” had more in common with the politicization of other Lebanese sects than with any universal Islamic revival.⁵² Still, individual actors—both religious and secular—played important roles in this mobilization, notably Palestinian activists, leftist groups, and Imam Musa al-Sadr.⁵³ As was noted in the preceding chapter, al-Sadr, who came to Lebanon from Iran in the late 1950s, founded Amal, which, unlike Hizbollah, appealed more to middle-class Shia frustrated with the political elite and who railed against the brutality of PLO guerrillas who were engaging in their own occupation of the south.⁴ The disappearance of al-Sadr in 1978—and the decision by Amal’s leadership to participate in the Committee of National Salvation—contributed to the establishment of Hizbollah, which took advantage of the leadership vacuum left by al-Sadr’s absence and Amal’s apparent collusion with the Maronite Christians.⁵⁵ The narrative emerging from Hizbollah in the early 1980s called on the public to resist the Maronite-dominated Lebanese government.⁵⁶ Israel’s 1982 invasion, which prompted Iran’s penetration of the Shia areas of the country, also directed Shia anger toward the Jewish state.

NOTES

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- 3 William W. Harris, *Faces of Lebanon: Sects, Wars, and Global Extensions* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1996), 53.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 56.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 11.
- 6 *Ibid.*
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⁴ Ironically, although Amal was founded by an Iranian-born cleric and its members were originally trained by Fatah (PLO), Amal would later be distinguished from Hizbollah both by its political distance from Tehran and by its opposition to the PLO’s presence in south Lebanon.⁵⁴

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- 19 Ibid, 41–42.
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- 22 Harris, *Faces of Lebanon*, 146–149.
- 23 Ibid., 143–144.
- 24 Amal Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbullah: Politics and Religion* (Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2002), 7.
- 25 Fouad Ajami, "Lebanon and its Inheritors," *Foreign Affairs* 63, no. 4 (1985): 778–799.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Farid el Khazen, *The Breakdown of the State in Lebanon, 1967–1979* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 70.
- 28 Ibid., 70–71.
- 29 Ibid., 70.
- 30 Ibid., 61.
- 31 Ibid., 65.
- 32 Ajami, "Lebanon and its Inheritors"; and Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbullah: Politics and Religion*, 7–8.
- 33 Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah*, 11.
- 34 Harris, *Faces of Lebanon*, 136.
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- 38 Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 18.
- 39 Karim Pakradouni, *La Paix Manquee* (Beirut: FMA Editions, 1983), 106, cited in Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 19.
- 40 Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 19–20.

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- ⁴¹ Ibid., 19.
- ⁴² Keegan, “Shedding Light on Lebanon,” 4.
- ⁴³ Laura Deeb, “Hizballah: A Primer,” *Middle East Report*, July 31, 2006.
- ⁴⁴ Simon Haddad, “The Political Transformation of the Maronites of Lebanon: From Dominance to Accommodation,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 8, no. 2 (2002): 32.
- ⁴⁵ Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Raymond A. Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 72.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid, 129.
- ⁴⁷ Harris, *Faces of Lebanon*, 292.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., 293.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid., 292.
- ⁵¹ Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbullah: Politics and Religion*, 9.
- ⁵² Ibid.
- ⁵³ Ibid., 8–9.
- ⁵⁴ Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 17–22.
- ⁵⁵ Saad-Ghorayeb, *Hizbullah: Politics and Religion*, 14–15.
- ⁵⁶ Emmanuel Karagiannis, “Hezbollah as a Social Movement Organization: A Framing Approach,” *Mediterranean Politics Journal* 14, no. 3 (2009): 365–383.

CHAPTER 4.
THE RESISTANCE MOVEMENT

NATURE OF THE RESISTANCE MOVEMENT

Chapter 2 noted that Hizbollah was founded on a belief in Islamic universalism guided by *velayat-e faqih* and was also committed to the goals of representing the interests of the Shia community along with fighting Zionism and what it regarded as oppression. These goals and others were announced to the world in 1985 with the organization's "Open Letter" addressed to the "Downtrodden in Lebanon and in the World." Before this time the organization itself could at best be characterized as a loose collection of like-minded individuals with a similar set of goals.

Regarding *velayat-e faqih*, the open letter is quite clear, stating:

We obey the orders of one leader, wise and just, that of our tutor and *faqih* (jurist) who fulfills all the necessary conditions: Ruhollah Musawi Khomeini. God save him! . . . Our behavior is dictated to us by legal principles laid down by the light of an overall political conception defined by the leading jurist (*wilayat al-faqih*) . . . And when it becomes necessary to carry out the Holy War, each of us takes up his assignment in the fight in accordance with the injunctions of the Law, and that in the framework of the mission carried out under the tutelage of the Commanding Jurist.¹

The open letter is also quite clear regarding the source of inspiration for the group:

As for our culture, it is based on the Holy Koran, the Sunna and the legal rulings of the *faqih* who is our source of imitation (*marja' al-taqlid*). Our culture is crystal clear. It is not complicated and is accessible to all.²

Chapter 2 discussed in detail the intellectual milieu that contributed to the emergence of dynamic Shiism in the 1960s and 1970s, and as is to be expected given the timing of the emergence of the group, upon its founding Hizbollah accepted Khomeini's notion of "functional *velayat*," where in the age of occultation the *velayat* represents God's testimony.³ Hence, as God's act of revelation to the infallible Prophet and the imams endowed them with *velayat* over the *umma*, in their absence this authority is delegated to the *velayat-e faqih*, with the implication that "anybody who disobeys him or the jurists disobeys God."⁴

Additionally, for Hizbollah the necessity of establishing an Islamic order was made apparent by God's revelations to the Prophet Muhammad and his rightful heirs, the Shia imams, who were called on to

guide the Muslims in constructing a just Islamic society.⁵ Interestingly, however, the open letter betrayed a tension between the desire for an Islamic state and self-determination on the part of the Lebanese people, as it stated:

Let us put it truthfully: the sons of Hizballah know who are their major enemies in the Middle East—the Phalanges, Israel, France and the US. The sons of our umma are now in a state of growing confrontation with them, and will remain so until the realization of the following three objectives: (a) to expel the Americans, the French and their allies definitely from Lebanon, putting an end to any colonialist entity on our land; (b) to submit the Phalanges to a just power and bring them all to justice for the crimes they have perpetrated against Muslims and Christians; (c) *to permit all the sons of our people to determine their future and to choose in all the liberty the form of government they desire. We call upon all of them to pick the option of Islamic government which, alone, is capable of guaranteeing justice and liberty for all. Only an Islamic regime can stop any further tentative attempts of imperialistic infiltration into our country* [italics added].

Hence, in addition to serving as a moral and religious imperative, an Islamic government for Hizbollah served an instrumental purpose, as it represented the ideal form of social and political organization for combating what it regarded as imperialism.

In this regard, various countries were singled out for special attention (as the preceding quote attests), especially the United States:

The US has tried, through its local agents, to persuade the people that those who crushed their arrogance in Lebanon and frustrated their conspiracy against the oppressed (*mustad'afin*) were nothing but a bunch of fanatic terrorists whose sole aim is to dynamite bars and destroy slot machines. Such suggestions cannot and will not mislead our *umma*, for the whole world knows that whoever wishes to oppose the US, that arrogant superpower, cannot indulge in marginal acts which may make it deviate from its major objective. We combat abomination and we shall tear out its very roots, its primary roots, which are the US. All attempts made to drive us into marginal actions will fail, especially as our determination to fight the US is solid.

We declare openly and loudly that we are an *umma* which fears God only and is by no means ready to tolerate injustice, aggression and humiliation. America, its Atlantic Pact allies, and the Zionist entity in the holy land of Palestine, attacked us and continue to do so without respite. Their aim is to make us eat dust continually. This is why we are, more and more, in a state of permanent alert in order to repel aggression and defend our religion, our existence, our dignity. They invaded our country, destroyed our villages, slit the throats of our children, violated our sanctuaries and appointed masters over our people who committed the worst massacres against our *umma*. They do not cease to give support to these allies of Israel, and do not enable us to decide our future according to our own wishes.^{6,a}

Norton noted that France was singled out for its support of the Maronite community and for arms sales to Iraq.⁸ Israel, of course, was also the target for invective, as the group refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Jewish state and rejected all forms of negotiations with it. A section of the open letter titled “The Necessity for the Destruction of Israel” stated:

We see in Israel the vanguard of the United States in our Islamic world. It is the hated enemy that must be fought until the hated ones get what they deserve. This enemy is the greatest danger to our future generations and to the destiny of our lands, particularly as it glorifies the ideas of settlement and expansion, initiated in Palestine, and yearning outward to the extension of the Great Israel, from the Euphrates to the Nile.

Our primary assumption in our fight against Israel states that the Zionist entity is aggressive from its inception, and built on lands wrested from their owners, at the expense of the rights of the Muslim people. Therefore our struggle will end only when this entity

^a The Soviet Union also did not escape criticism. Norton noted that Hizbollah adopted the notion of “neither East nor West,” which was espoused by Iran’s revolutionaries.⁷ Additionally, one commentator, writing in the Hizbollah newspaper *al-Ahd* in May 1987, stated, “The Soviets are not one iota different from the Americans in terms of political danger, indeed are more dangerous than them in terms of ideological considerations as well, and this requires that light be shed on this fact and that the Soviets be assigned their proper place in the forces striving to strike at the interests of the Muslim people and arrogate their political present and future.”

is obliterated. We recognize no treaty with it, no cease fire, and no peace agreements, whether separate or consolidated.

We vigorously condemn all plans for negotiation with Israel, and regard all negotiators as enemies, for the reason that such negotiation is nothing but the recognition of the legitimacy of the Zionist occupation of Palestine. Therefore we oppose and reject the Camp David Agreements, the proposals of King Fahd, the Fez and Reagan plan, Brezhnev's and the French-Egyptian proposals, and all other programs that include the recognition (even the implied recognition) of the Zionist entity.⁹

Twenty-four years passed before Hizbollah released an update. The 2009 manifesto was developed during the seventh political conference of the group and announced during a press conference in Beirut in November 2009.¹⁰ The group still called for the destruction of Israel and the removal of Western influence from the Islamic world, but in other respects there are notable contrasts with the 1985 open letter. Most importantly, the group dropped its calls for the establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon. Specifically, the 2009 manifesto calls for the creation of a “political system that truly represents the will of the people and their aspirations for justice, freedom, security, stability, well-being, and dignity.”¹¹ In the 1980s the group regarded the Lebanese political system as clientelistic and irredeemably corrupt, and while the middle-class members of Amal sought to ingratiate themselves within the system, Hizbollah sought its overthrow and replacement with an ideal-form Islamic government. Gleis and Berti argued that this shift reflected a level of pragmatism, as the group realized that an Islamic form of government grounded in *velayat-e faqih* was simply not realistic in Lebanon's multi-confessional society.¹² Additionally, the authors argued that this shift reflected perhaps a recognition by Hizbollah that it had a stake in Lebanon's political system, as the group had been participating in elections since the early 1990s and, as a result, had acquired significant political clout.^{13,b}

^b Additionally, Gleis and Berti take a fairly dim view of Hizbollah's intentions, arguing that the group, in addition to continuing to desire the destruction of Israel, also seeks to rebalance the global distribution of power to the detriment of the United States, and its participation in the Lebanese government is simply a tactical shift given the group's realization that force is not a viable option under current conditions. Rather, the authors note that the group has called for combatting its enemies “by hand” or, notably, “by tongue” depending on circumstances.

Lastly, the group also paid homage to Syria and Iran. It praised Syria's role for leading the resistance against Israel, and the group reaffirmed the importance of the relationship with Iran, stating:

Hezbollah considers Iran as a central state in the Islamic world since it is the state that dropped through its revolution the Shah's regime and its American-Israeli projects. It's also the state that supported the resistance movements in our region and stood with courage and determination at the side of the Arab and Islamic causes on top of which is the Palestinian cause.¹⁴

The group also toned down its Islamic universalism, as it dropped its call for the establishment of a pan-Islamic state (that was to begin with the export of the revolution to Lebanon). It stated:

What we call for today is not a merging unity in the Arab or Islamic world. We rather call for the unity between Arab and Islamic states which guards these states' and nation's specifications and sovereignty.¹⁵

Strategies and Supporting Narratives

The differences between the 1985 open letter and the 2009 manifesto reflect Hizbollah's changing strategy (as well as important continuities) in the intervening period. After the Taif agreement Hizbollah no longer sought to replace the Lebanese political system with an Islamic state, and on the battlefield it focused on the Israeli enemy. Consequently it largely adopted irregular techniques in place of terrorist tactics. An interesting perspective through which to analyze the changes and continuities of its strategy is by analyzing the discourse espoused by the group, and social movement theory (SMT) is one tool through which to analyze the group's narrative.

SMT, and in particular the subfield of SMT that emphasizes the notion of a "frame" and the social construction of meaning and "reality," offers a useful paradigm to deconstruct insurgent narratives and understand how they promote collective action. Developed by sociologists to understand the formation and evolution of a variety of social movements (such as, for example, the white separatist movement in the United States, the environmental movement, the civil rights movement, and the anti-abortion movement, among others), the concepts developed by social movement theorists can also be fruitfully applied to study various insurgent movements, which can also be seen as social movements.

A fundamental concept within SMT is that of a “frame.” Goffman defined frames as “schemata of interpretation” that enable people “to locate, perceive, identify and label” events that they experience or become aware of.¹⁶ More simply, a frame represents a worldview or paradigm through which events and concepts are interpreted, and as such it represents a means through which meaning is constructed and “reality” is interpreted. Within the context of a social movement (or an insurgency), by assigning motives and meanings, a frame can help promote collective action. Leaders of social movements can do this by developing what Benford and Snow label as a “collective action frame,” which consists of “*action oriented* [italics added] sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization.”¹⁷ Thus, collective action frames perform an interpretive function by simplifying and condensing the “world out there,”¹⁸ especially in ways “intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists.”¹⁹ A key aspect of a collective action frame is that it is “not merely aggregations of individual attitudes and perceptions but also the outcome of *negotiating shared meanings* [italics added],”²⁰ such as, say, through narratives, writings, and the exchange of ideas among a community of people.

Benford and Snow noted that collective action frames perform three core framing tasks, specifically diagnostic framing, prognostic framing, and motivational framing.²¹ The first involves problem and victim identification and the attribution of responsible actors and causes of the problem. The second entails the specification of a proposed solution and a strategy for carrying out corrective action. Motivational framing provides a rationale for engaging in remedial collective action, including an appropriate vocabulary of motive.²²

Each of these concepts can be fruitfully applied to an analysis of the evolution of Hizbollah’s narrative over time. Karagiannis noted that in the 1980s Hizbollah’s diagnostic frame centered around an “injustice frame,” in which Lebanon’s ills were blamed on the Israeli occupation and on what it regarded as a sectarian and illegitimate political system.²³ The 1985 open letter noted that “the present regime is the product of an arrogance so unjust that no reform or modification can remedy it. It should be changed radically.”²⁴

However, Karagiannis noted that after the acceptance of the Taif agreement, the group’s diagnostic frame changed from an injustice frame to an unfairness frame.²⁵ That is, once Hizbollah set aside the goal of overthrowing the political system and, indeed, began to participate in politics, it began to emphasize the unfairness and sectarianism

of the Lebanese political system. For instance, its election program from 1992 noted:

It is now imperative to cooperate with other devoted parties in order to complete the necessary steps towards . . . the forging of internal peace on the basis of political concord that is furthest as could be from abominable sectarian biases or narrow confessional discriminations.²⁶

Additionally, the group's election program from 1996 emphasized "the unbalanced nature of the Lebanese political system and the wrong practices by [the government] led to the deepening of corruption, favoritism . . . besides establishing the sectarian, confessional and regional divisions."²⁷ Of course, there are also notable continuities in Hizbollah's narrative despite its change in domestic strategy, as the 2009 manifesto also identified Israel as a problem that needed to be eliminated.

A prognostic frame specifies a proposed solution and a strategy for implementing the latter. As has been noted, in its early years Hizbollah's prognostic frame centered on establishing an Iranian-style Islamic government in Lebanon. As Nasrallah once stated:

We do not believe in multiple Islamic republics; we do believe, however, in a single Islamic world governed by a central government, because we consider all borders throughout the Muslim world as fake and colonialist, and therefore doomed to disappear. We do not believe in a nation whose borders are 10,452 square kilometers in Lebanon; our project foresees Lebanon as part of the political map of an Islamic world in which specificities would cease to exist, but in which the rights, freedom, and dignities of minorities within it are guaranteed.²⁸

Yet after the Taif Accords, Hizbollah's prognostic frame became more geographically bounded and territorialized, as the group focused on improving conditions in Lebanon. Its 1996 electoral program noted:

Achieving justice and equality among the Lebanese is considered one of the main bases for establishing a dignified and prosperous country in which all the Lebanese engage in the process of construction with drive and solidarity under equality of opportunities, equality for all, individuals, classes and areas, in rights and duties, whether political, economical or social.²⁹

Hence, rather than adhering to a prognostic frame centered on the motto “Islam is the answer,” the group adopted a frame that Karagiannis described as a prognostic “frame of representative governance,” which emphasized the establishment of a pluralistic political system in which some notion of justice and fairness prevailed.³⁰

Lastly, despite the evolution of Hizbollah, there is continuity to its motivational frame, which, as is the case with all social movements, is intended to encourage and incentivize actual participation. Karagiannis noted that the group heavily used Shia religious symbols and narratives to encourage participation in the movement. One such strategy involved equating the sacrifices made by Hizbollah leaders with those of canonical Shia imams. For instance, after the assassination by Israel of Sayyid Abbas al-Musawi, Hizbollah’s secretary general at the time, Nasrallah noted that his death “epitomized the events at Karbala” and that Musawi “was just like al-Hussein, a body without a head; just like al-Abbas, with [his] hands severed; and just like the greatest Ali, with [his] torn flesh.”³¹

Additionally, Karagiannis also noted that the group has consistently adopted a “Jerusalem liberation frame,” in which the group framed its military actions against Israel as a religious duty for devout Muslims to “liberate” Palestine and Jerusalem from infidels.³² Jerusalem, as the location where Muslims believe the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven, typically received special mention. On one occasion Nasrallah noted that “Jerusalem is the land of Allah; it constitutes an Islamic cultural dimension not subject to negotiation or compromise.”³³ Additionally, a slogan adopted by the group was Kadimoun Ya Quds (“We are coming Jerusalem”).

On other occasions, the group’s motivational frame de-emphasized religion and instead grounded its resistance against Israel on pan-Arabism and nationalism, with an emphasis on liberating Arab territory from Israel and protecting Lebanon’s independence. For instance, after the Israeli release of a long-held Lebanese prisoner, Nasrallah linked Hizbollah’s struggle against Israel with the struggles of Palestinian groups by noting that:

the resistance movements in the region and particularly in Lebanon and Palestine are complementary continuous movements with cumulating efforts, experiences and sacrifices so that they might accomplish the same objectives in liberating the land, people, and sacred places.³⁴

On another occasion, Nasrallah painted the group as a defender of Lebanon’s independence and territorial integrity, noting that

“Hizbollah, along with its friends and allies, is the first defender of genuine sovereignty, genuine independence, and genuine freedom—and I add to them national dignity, honor, and pride.”³⁵ Hence, the group’s motivational frame was flexible enough to appeal to various audiences, whether devout Shias motivated by liberating Jerusalem, secular (and Sunni) Arabs nursing grievances against Israel, and Lebanese keen on maintaining the country’s independence (at least with respect to Israel).

Structure and Dynamics of the Resistance Movement^c

Leadership

Hizbollah is headed by a nine-member Shura Council, one member of which is elected as the secretary general. Seven members are Lebanese while two members are Iranian, specifically from the embassies in Beirut and Damascus.³⁷ Members are elected to the council for three-year terms by the Central Council, an assembly of almost two hundred party founders and cadres. Because the members of the Central Council are not necessarily representative of the rank and file of the party, Hizbollah does not resemble most Western political parties^d but instead is similar in structure to the Iranian political system, in which the Assembly of Experts elects the Council of Guardians.

The members of the Shura Council have mostly been clerics, although there have also been laypersons with needed skills (such as in health, social affairs, finance, and information technology) on the council. They must however demonstrate faith in Islam and belief in *velayat-e faqih* before being considered for leadership positions. The original Shura Council had only one member who was not a cleric; however, after the Taif Accords there was an increase in laity on the council, with the number of non-clerics increasing to three members. This was reversed after 2001 among concerns that Hizbollah was straying

^c This section is primarily based on Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbollah*, 44–79.³⁶ Various other sources were used, as detailed in the endnotes within this section.

^d Abu-Khalil noted that Hizbollah bears the hallmarks of a Leninist revolutionary organization. For instance, both Hizbollah and Leninist political organizations stress that ideological knowledge is the province of a privileged few, who are responsible for uplifting and guiding the ignorant masses. In the case of the Leninist organization, this privileged few consisted of a communist elite that interpreted communist doctrine and helped develop class consciousness among the toiling masses. Similarly, in the case of Hizbollah the leadership of the party does not believe that the interpretation of religious texts should be left to those who are not religious scholars and that it was the responsibility of the ulama to foster Islamic consciousness among the masses. And whereas a Leninist party is based on the notion of “democratic centralism,” in which all decisions are to be taken by the leadership and executed by members, in the case of Hizbollah authority flows from the ulama to the entire community.³⁸

from its core principles, and the council at that time again shifted back to only one non-cleric.

The Shura Council elects the secretary general and his deputies and the chairmen of the five councils that constitute the executive administrative apparatus. The Shura Council is a highly homogenous group and primarily works by consensus, with members finding mutually beneficial arrangements and appointing each other's preferred candidates to important posts.

The Shura Council is in charge of overall administration, planning, and policy making. Rulings by the council are considered to be religiously binding on party members. When disagreements arise within the council the *wali al-faqih* (jurisconsult) can be called on to make a ruling that is binding on the council. The *wali al-faqih* at the founding of Hizbollah was Ayatollah Khomeini and is currently Khomeini's successor as supreme leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khameneh'i. Although there is no formal rule that Hizbollah is tied to the supreme leader of Iran, and in theory Hizbollah could select another religious leader as its *wali al-faqih*, in practice the financial and operational ties between Iran and Hizbollah make it likely that this connection will continue into the future.

The secretary general at present is Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah, who has held the post since 1992, when Sayyid Abbas al-Musawi was assassinated by Israel. The secretary general is supposed to be limited to only two terms; however, Ayatollah Khameneh'i issued a religious ruling that Nasrallah may continue beyond this limit, and the Shura Council has continued to elect him every three years. While technically subordinate to the Shura Council, Nasrallah has a strong personal following and enjoys substantial political support from Iran. The death of his son in 2000 in fighting with Israeli troops increased Nasrallah's support among Hizbollah's membership and was seen as a personal sacrifice for the movement.

Organizational Structure

The operations of Hizbollah are split between the executive administrative apparatus and the military and security apparatus. Both organizations are controlled by the Shura Council and secretary general but operate separately. The executive administrative apparatus consists of five councils, each headed by one of the members of the Shura Council. The Executive Council runs programs in education, health, information, construction, finance, and external relations and also handles some security issues. The politburo operates as an advisory council to the Shura Council. The Parliamentary Council is tasked with issues regarding Hizbollah members of parliament and involvement of

Hizbollah in the Lebanese political system. The Judicial Council functions as Hizbollah's internal judicial system. During the chaos of the civil war, the Judicial Council handled all manner of legal issues in Hizbollah areas, but with the growth of the Lebanese state some functions have been transferred to the national courts, although the Judicial Council continues to handle internal matters. The Jihad Council analyzes the enemy and identifies the appropriate means to use against it. These means can include martyrdom operations and fighting but also unarmed methods. For the Jihad Council to advocate the use of violence requires approval by the *wali al-faqih*.

Although the Jihad Council decides on the strategies and tactics of jihad, implementation is left to the military and security apparatus, whose exact structure is harder to identify and has proven difficult to penetrate. The apparatus is technically under the direct control of the Shura Council but in reality is under the personal control of the secretary general. It is divided into the Islamic Resistance and the Security Organ.^e The Islamic Resistance is the military wing of the party and is divided into two sections: the enforcement and recruitment section and the combat section. Enforcement and recruitment provides religious indoctrination and reinforces belief in *wilayat al-faqih*, while the combat section provides martial training. The outcome of training determines which combat role a recruit will fill. The combat section is divided into four organs, or units, with the first unit consisting of martyrs, who carry out extremely dangerous missions including, but not limited to, suicide missions; the second unit consists of commandos or special forces, who represent personnel who have excelled in guerrilla warfare; the third unit consists of rocket launchers and other weapons specialists; and the final unit consists of the regular fighters, who are trained for combat but whose primary responsibility is surveillance, logistics, and medical support.

Hizbollah's military command structure is divided by region and then by sector. It is highly compartmentalized to reduce the risk that individuals who are captured or otherwise compromised will be able to give away information about the whole organization. Although there are clearly operational connections between Hizbollah and the

^e Levitt's description of Hizbollah's military apparatus is slightly different from that of Hamzeh.³⁹ He locates the Islamic Resistance and units responsible for internal and external surveillance and the protection of party leaders under the Jihad Council, which in turn reports to the Shura Council. Additionally, he identified another structure, Hizbollah's external operations wing, known as either the Special Security Apparatus or the External Security Organization, as falling under the purview of the Jihad Council. The latter was reportedly led by Imad Mugniyah before his death. In any case, in either Levitt's or Hamzeh's categorization, Hassan Nasrallah would be the dominant authority over the Jihad Council and the military and security apparatus.

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), the degree of cooperation is unclear. There are reports that the members of the IRGC work in Hizbollah's operational headquarters.^f

The other branch of the military and security apparatus is the Security Organ. It is divided into two sections, the first known as Party Security and the second as External Security. Party Security is tasked with preventing enemies from penetrating the party, and it keeps files on all party members and all people who approach the party. Hizbollah members are required to report meetings, contacts, and relations with all individuals and groups. Reportedly, Israel and the United States have made many attempts to penetrate Hizbollah, heightening awareness among Party Security and general membership of the intelligence threat.⁴⁰ The primary function of External Security is counterintelligence, to prevent the organization's enemies in Lebanon and abroad from penetrating the organization. This division may have cells in a number of Western countries and potential connections to Iranian intelligence, although little is known about the exact structure and capabilities of the External Security branch.

The membership of Hizbollah is estimated to be more than two hundred thousand. The vast majority of the membership is Shiite, although members of other Lebanese sects are allowed to join, and some do. Hizbollah is the largest of all Lebanese political parties, although the party is controlled by a cadre of elites, the Central Council, which makes leadership decisions. The membership of the party does not have any direct influence on leadership decisions. Financing for Hizbollah comes from a few wealthy donors and from Iran,^g not from members, further reducing Hizbollah's reliance on its members.

Hizbollah is highly selective in whom it recruits as members. After the inception of the organization in 1982, Hizbollah relied on mass mobilization of members along family and clan lines, depending on personal connections to maintain operational security. Given the political situation after the Israeli invasion, finding sufficient numbers of recruits was not a problem. Today the situation has changed, and the addition of new members relies on a formal process of recruitment. Hizbollah is able to be discerning in whom it allows into the organization and has multidimensional criteria for recruits, including religious observance, hostility toward Israel, and dedication to promoting justice and dignity for the Shia community.⁴¹

^f See *Chapter 5. External Support* for more information regarding the links between Hizbollah and the IRGC.

^g See *Chapter 5. External Support* for more information regarding Iranian financial sponsorship of Hizbollah. See also the section titled *Resources and External Support* later in this chapter for more information on Hizbollah's sources of financing.

The process of identifying potential members starts with recruiters in Shia villages and neighborhoods throughout the country. Hizbollah runs schools, summer camps, and scouting groups and also organizes soccer leagues and other events for young Lebanese in order to develop interest in the organization as well as to give recruiters a means of identifying prospective future members. Some basic training and familiarization with the concepts of guerrilla warfare occurs at young ages, but the formal recruitment process does not start until recruits are at least eighteen years old. Recruiters look for young men who are pious, disciplined, modest, intelligent, healthy, and well behaved. Traits seen as moral flaws, such as listening to music, drinking alcohol, driving fast cars, and flirting with girls disqualify young men from being recruited.⁴²

After being selected as a possible recruit, the process of joining Hizbollah usually takes two years. The first year is called *tahdirat*, meaning reinforcement or preparation. It consists of training on Hizbollah's ideology and culture. Recruits must accept the leadership of the party and accept the party's religious views. Many recruits decide during this year that they are not willing to accept the requirements and discipline that the party demands and drop out of the process, while others are considered unfit by the organization and are not asked to continue.^{43, h} The reinforcement process is supposed to strengthen the positive moral traits for which the recruits were originally identified. Recruits live in an atmosphere of religion and faithfulness, with the purpose of making them love Hizbollah and fully accept the group's ideology. During this first year, prospective members do not receive any military training and do not even see a gun.⁴⁵

The second year of the process is called *intizam*, meaning ordered discipline or commitment. During this part of the process the recruits are taught discipline, as well as physical fitness and military training. It is during this stage that the recruit's role in the party is determined. This role could be in the military, political, or social branches of the party.⁴⁶ Despite the rigors of the indoctrination process, self-reliance and autonomy are encouraged, and members' personal religious views help to determine which roles they play in the organization. Members are allowed to decide for themselves whether they are willing to

^h Berman noted that there is an important logic underlying the sacrifices and hardships that radical religious organizations such as Hizbollah impose on members. By requiring members to make costly or painful sacrifices, such organizations weed out what economists refer to as "free riders," or individuals who cheat on their obligations to a group but who nonetheless enjoy the benefits of group membership. The identification of true believers and those willing to bear any cost makes organizations such as Hizbollah extremely deadly and difficult to defeat because those who are accepted as members are unlikely to defect and act as informers, as the Israelis have found out.⁴⁴

volunteer for martyrdom missions. Members are expected to progress individually through a process known as the “greater jihad,” consisting of developing a personal religious connection with God. This is contrasted with the “lesser jihad,” which includes military conflict. Although the military jihad is the more visible aspect of Hizbollah from an outsider’s perspective, the rigors of the internal religious aspects of the organization are more challenging for many members.⁴⁷

During the 1980s and 1990s, Hizbollah ran training camps in the Anti-Lebanon Mountains near the border with Syria. The camps were in fixed positions but were assumed to be safe, both because of their position far from Israel and because they were covered by Syrian air defenses. In 1994, however, the Israeli Air Force attacked one of the camps, killing forty recruits in a nighttime raid. This attack precipitated the bombing of the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA) six weeks later, killing eighty-five people.⁴⁸ Since the Israeli attack on its training facilities Hizbollah has avoided fixed locations. Even the recruits are not told where they are going. They are loaded into vans with covered windows and driven long distances with multiple switchbacks to ensure the location of the training sites remains secret.⁴⁹

The training process involves hauling rocks and heavy equipment up mountainsides while instructors launch surprise ambushes on the recruits, complete with explosives and live ammunition to teach the recruits to operate under fire. Physical deprivations include hiking without shoes and sleeping in the open without blankets. Members are allowed one canteen of water per day for drinking as well as washing before prayers. Recruits are taught how to use AK-47s, rocket-propelled grenades, mines, and other explosives. Some individuals are given advanced training with other weapons. Everyone receives training with communications equipment, and special emphasis is placed on navigation, surveillance, and avoiding detection. Some members are selected for more advanced training in Iran, under the supervision of Hizbollah trainers at IRGC facilities.⁵⁰

Acceptance into the party is contingent on passing a security review by Party Security. Some members with specialized and needed skills can skip the reinforcement and ordered discipline stages, but all members are required to pass the security review.⁵¹ Any potential member who has lived overseas, as many Lebanese have, receives extra scrutiny. Areas where Hizbollah operates are patrolled by internal security officers who observe members’ activities and keep track of any foreigners and other outsiders who are in the area.⁵²

Members usually receive little or no pay for the first two or three years in Hizbollah. As they progress through the organization there is limited pay; however, the organization provides support for housing,

education, and other needs. The strict moral code that members are required to follow prevents them from accepting money or other gifts. Although the financial benefits are limited, members know that their needs will be taken care of and that if they die their families will be provided for.⁵³

Hizbollah, as a particularistic party that represents Shia interests, recognizes that it cannot represent all of Lebanon, or all of the Islamic community, and as such has created what it calls the Islamic Current to improve cooperation with other groups that share similar interests and goals. These groups include other Shia groups, such as Islamic Amal and Faithful Resistance, as well as non-Shia groups, including Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hamas, and the Islamic Association of Lebanon.⁵⁴

An additional form of outreach is conducted through what are known as umbrella groups, which cooperate with Hizbollah but to a lesser degree than Islamic Current groups. These include the Assembly of Muslim Clergy, an organization of Sunni and Shiite clerics working to bridge differences within the Islamic community, and the Lebanese Resistance Brigades, an organization formed by Hizbollah and consisting of Islamists and non-Islamists who come together to fight Israel. The Lebanese Resistance Brigades can be used by Hizbollah to bring more fighters under its command without posing an internal security threat because these fighters are kept separate from the Islamic Resistance.⁵⁵

Command, Control, Communications, and Computers

Hizbollah's media outlets rank among the largest information network of any regional political party and include the satellite channel Al-Manar (the beacon) with more than ten million viewers as well as four licensed radio stations and five licensed newspapers, all of which garnered substantial receipts through advertising sales. Al-Manar, available throughout the Arab world via satellite, has a corporate atmosphere with state-of-the-art editing and production equipment as well as a team of foreign correspondents located throughout the Middle East, Europe, and North America.⁵⁶ Unlike much of the Western media, which has abided by a taboo on depicting grisly images of the dead and wounded, Al-Manar has openly shown such images (although it is worth noting that many other regional media outlets have done so as well). Such material has routinely included maimed and dead children, disembodied limbs, and even live feeds (during the 2006 war) of civilians being shelled during Israeli air raids.

Al-Manar's pioneering use of footage from actual battles with Israeli soldiers has been widely credited with helping to reverse regional feelings of impotence in the struggle with Israel.⁵⁷ The channel also targeted Israeli audiences with psychological operations aimed at

demoralizing the public; messages were based on Hizbollah's understanding that Israeli society was incapable of and unwilling to absorb large casualties because of its tightly knit social fabric.⁵⁸ The use of Google maps technology in 2006 allowed the station to pinpoint particular locales in northern Israel to target, creating substantial anxiety for residents. In addition, the station also launched the "Who's Next?" campaign, which displayed a continuously updated photo gallery of the latest Israel Defense Forces (IDF) casualties followed by the image of a question mark superimposed over an empty silhouette.⁵⁹ Its post-2006 investment in longer-range antennae allowed the station to send its signal as far as Haifa, Israel's third-largest city. In addition to targeting parties directly involved in the conflict, Hizbollah also crafted messages for parties that had influence over regional conflicts, including the United States and neighboring Arab countries.

Finally, cyberspace has also become an important arena for Hizbollah's communication strategy. The organization's technicians have routinely hijacked servers and websites to transmit their own information, while also ensuring that ordinary traffic was not disrupted and that their hijacking activities remained unnoticed.⁶⁰ In addition to using the web to transmit information among group members, Hizbollah has used it to send information to the media. Because Hizbollah has an extensive presence on the web and the information available on its websites appears credible, the information has been used by Israeli journalists and other correspondents covering the region. When several Israeli teenagers launched a cyber attack on a number of Hizbollah sites (as well as those of Hamas and the Palestinian Authority) in 2000, the response was intense. Hackers struck the Knesset (the Israeli parliament), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and an IDF site and later also targeted the Israeli prime minister's office, the Bank of Israel, and the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange.⁶¹

Hizbollah's battlefield communications network was crucial to the group's military successes in the 2006 war with Israel. Official reports indicate that the group was successful in rebuffing Israeli efforts to jam its communications systems south of the Litani River (jamming signals are restricted in range to relatively small areas). In addition, reports suggest that the group may have possessed the capability to disrupt some Israeli communications.⁶² Despite a relatively high level of technological sophistication, Hizbollah used landlines (primarily copper cable, which is highly susceptible to jamming and tapping). Most of these lines were merely laid next to existing utility lines (both public and private), enabling the group to use existing infrastructure and link far-flung outposts and offices. Yet, the vulnerability of these lines meant that the organization did not rely on them except as a secondary

or emergency method of communication. Increasingly, the group has replaced older copper cable wiring with fiber-optic lines to serve its headquarters, television and radio stations, military compounds, and mobile rocket-launching facilities, because fiber-optic material is immune to many of the deficiencies of copper wiring.¹

Mobile communications technology—primarily cell phones, which are inexpensive, portable, and lightweight, but also satellite phones—is the group’s most common method of communication. During the 2006 conflict, Hizbollah used an elaborate system of radio call signs and a closed cellular phone system; the latter was designed to handle short message service and e-mail as the primary formats of information exchange.⁶⁴ Because jammers could disrupt the flow of signals only in a small area and were also limited by mountainous terrain (the Lebanese theater being both large and mountainous), Hizbollah operatives were largely able to evade Israel’s efforts, which were concentrated in a few high-value areas, to deny the flow of communication. Hizbollah’s Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah underscored the centrality of the group’s communication network in 2008 when, as the Western-backed Lebanese government declared the organization’s media assets both “illegal” and an “attack on Lebanese sovereignty,” he declared these assets to be the group’s single most important weapon and stated that any disruption to the network perpetrated by government authorities would be an act of war.

Resources and External Support

Hizbollah has been able to draw on a wide range of financial sources, including funding from Iran, sympathetic donors in Arab countries, and the group’s own extensive business interests (both licit and illicit). The group has also raised funds in Africa by taking advantage of the large expatriate Lebanese community on the continent. Levitt noted that most of the funds raised in Africa come from “expatriate donations, Mafia-style shakedowns, front companies, and even blood diamonds and drugs.”⁶⁵ Israeli officials have identified the Ivory Coast and Senegal as important centers of fundraising activity on the continent, and the group is suspected of profiting from the trade in “blood diamonds” originating from Angola, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.⁶⁶

Additionally, the sizeable Lebanese expatriate community in South America has made the region, in addition to Africa, a hub for generating finance, and in 2008 a drug probe found that the

¹ VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) transmitted by fiber-optic cable would be a particularly secure form of communication available to the group.⁶⁵

Lebanese operator of an enormous cocaine money-laundering operation in Colombia donated a portion of his proceeds to Hizbollah.⁶⁷ Estimates of Iranian resources flowing to Hizbollah range from a low of \$100 million per year to a high of \$350 million.⁶⁸ Other forms of Iranian assistance have included hardware; training provided for military and “resistance” activities; the services of Iranian engineers, doctors, and other professionals; and financial services designed to help the group evade international sanctions. However, most of these funds come from private foundations and charitable organizations in Iran or from the IRGC.

Financing from Arab donors to Hizbollah was primarily in the form of tithes (the portion of income that believers are required to donate to charitable causes under Shiite religious law), as well as donations from individuals, groups, small businesses, and banks in the Arab world and among the Shiite international community.⁶⁹ Hizbollah also received significant income from the group’s domestic business chains, which include supermarkets, gas stations, department stores, restaurants, construction companies, and travel agencies, as well as offshore companies, banks, and currency exchanges. Most of this money was held in Tehrani banks to prevent seizure of the group’s assets; these Iranian institutions also operated under the legal strictures of Islamic finance, which provided added religious legitimacy.^j In addition, several Lebanese financial institutions acted as intermediaries between Hizbollah and mainstream banks, facilitated by extremely lax transparency and oversight of the financial sector.^k During the 2006 war, Israel bombed as many as twelve banks, including two large ones, Al Baraka and Fransabank, as well as the home of a bank manager.⁷¹

Political Activities^l

At the end of the civil war, Hizbollah made a decision to become involved in the Lebanese political system. The decision to make the transition from a militant group to a political party was contentious within the leadership. Hizbollah’s originally stated purpose was to

^j Islamic law forbids Muslims from earning interest (the proceeds of idle capital), which is considered usury by religious scholars. However, in practice, these banks often function similarly to non-sharia-compliant banks, merely using some intermediary asset to provide a degree of separation so that the interest payment does not pass directly from the borrower to the lender. Not surprisingly, Islamic jurists in the Gulf countries, where finance is most plentiful and there is the most potential for earning interest, have introduced or approved many of these creative instruments.⁷⁰

^k These include Bayt Al-Mal (House of Money) and the Yousser Company for Finance and Investment of Lebanon.

^l Portions of this section were adapted from the existing Hizbollah case study in *Casebook on Insurgency and Revolutionary Warfare Volume II: 1962–2009*.

support the creation of an Islamic state, and while some leaders and clerics advocated involvement in politics as a means of promoting this goal, others felt that involvement in a secular government was profane and therefore illegitimate for an Islamic organization. Sheikh Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, revered by many Hizbollah members although not formally part of the group, supported involvement, swaying the opinion of many in Hizbollah. The final decision to become involved was made by Ayatollah Ali Khomeini in his capacity as Hizbollah's *wali faqih*.⁷²

Hizbollah candidates ran in the 1992 Lebanese election. Since then Hizbollah has continued to win about 10 percent of the seats in the National Assembly. Although religious issues play a part in Hizbollah's appeal to voters, the organization also appeals to voters using secular messages. The history of poverty and disenfranchisement of the Shia community has made appeals for justice and development powerful electoral issues for Hizbollah. Hizbollah has also made use of practical electoral alliances with groups of different ideologies, at times working with Maronite and communist groups that it fought bitterly against during the civil war.⁷³

In municipal elections, Hizbollah competes with Amal for support in Shia areas. Hizbollah has done well in the southern suburbs of Beirut, but in south Lebanon and Bekaa competition between Hizbollah and Amal has been intense, showing that although it is popular, Hizbollah does not have the unconditional support of the Shia community. Further evidence that Hizbollah has to respond to the desires of the voters, rather than dictate policy to its supporters, was the establishment of the "Revolution of the Hungry," a breakaway faction started by Subhi al-Tufayli, a former secretary general of Hizbollah who left the party and ran a separate slate of candidates to protest a perceived lack of assistance from Hizbollah for its most needy constituents. Al-Tufayli won several seats in 1998, prompting Hizbollah to adopt more populist policies to regain the support of the poorest of its constituents.⁷⁴

Before 2005, Hizbollah's political participation at the national level was restricted to parliament, as the group demurred from joining an executive cabinet over concerns that doing so would diminish its credentials as an opposition movement and signal its acceptance of Lebanon's confessional system.⁷⁵ However, Gleis and Berti noted that the group eventually joined the cabinet in Fouad Siniora's government over concerns that Syria's control over Lebanon was slipping away in the wake of international condemnation over Syria's suspected role in the 2005 assassination of Rafik Hariri, which led Hizbollah to fear that its political enemies would seek the disarmament of the group.⁷⁶

The group would soon constitute one of the key partners in a political formation known as the March 8 Alliance, whose name derives from the date in 2005 of a pro-Syria rally held in Beirut. The coalition ruled Lebanon from June 2011 until March 2013. Interestingly, the group shared power with other powerful coalition members who did not necessarily share Hizbollah's political, economic, or religious agendas. Hizbollah's Christian ally Michel Aoun, leader of the Free Patriotic Movement, failed to fully split the vote of his coreligionists in the June 2009 election, as many Christians remained with the opposing March 14 alliance.⁷⁷ This failure prevented Hizbollah from expanding on previous electoral gains, as the support of the Shia population alone could not propel Hizbollah to a parliamentary majority.

A second factor preventing Hizbollah from gaining full control of the government is the electoral rules regarding the allotment of both parliamentary seats and cabinet positions. The result of these rules has been an intensely divided government often paralyzed by gridlock. This division came to a head in November 2006, when Hizbollah and its allies left their cabinet posts in protest over the efforts by the March 14-led government to establish an international tribunal to investigate the assassination of Hariri, and the departure of the opposition members of the cabinet morphed into a long-running boycott that paralyzed the central government.⁷⁸ In May 2008 this standoff escalated into armed confrontation, as the government sought to shut down Hizbollah's communication network, which was operated separately from the rest of the country. This latest outburst of violence featured confrontations among different sectarian groups and saw Hizbollah deploy gunmen to seize areas of west Beirut.⁷⁹

More recently, Hizbollah repeated the tactic of resigning from the government in January 2011, this time causing the collapse of the government of Saad Hariri (Rafik's son) over disagreements with the March 14-led government regarding Lebanon's cooperation with the United Nations Special Tribunal for Lebanon. This tribunal, which was responsible for investigating Rafik's assassination, was rumored to be on the verge of issuing indictments against members of Hizbollah.^{80,m}

Methods of Warfare

The majority of Hizbollah's military activities centered on its guerrilla campaign against the IDF in southern Lebanon (1982–2000). The campaign focused on low-intensity attacks targeting a small number of IDF soldiers. Although it was not overwhelmingly successful from a

^m In June 2011 the Special Tribunal wound up issuing indictments and arrest warrants for four members of Hizbollah.

tactical point of view, the campaign did achieve the group's strategic objectives, forcing Israel to increase the number of forces deployed to the area, to build additional military installations, and to spend large sums of money to supply the South Lebanese Army (SLA). Attacks on individual IDF soldiers were not designed to capture land but were an end in themselves; they constituted the core of the group's psychological operations aimed at demoralizing the Israeli occupation forces and their SLA collaborators.⁸¹ These operations drove Israeli decision makers to abandon their original vision, which focused on building up an indigenous SLA force that would police the security belt on Israel's behalf.ⁿ Overall, the extended guerrilla campaign was credited with ultimately forcing Israel's unilateral withdrawal from the south.

Hizbollah fighters were also strategic in identifying suitable targets, often choosing them on the basis of their political impact rather than how they would affect battlefield operations. Early attacks often targeted reservists (as opposed to regular army members) in an effort to undermine public support for the occupation. Because Israel conscripts all citizens into military service, the public response to the loss of reservists, who are less seasoned than their regular counterparts, was particularly acute.⁸³ This eventually forced the Israeli government to change its policy to declare that only members of the regular army would be stationed in Lebanon. The close-knit character of Israeli society and its history of ransoming prisoners of war made this an especially effective strategy for Hizbollah. To this end, Hizbollah also targeted officers (as opposed to rank-and-file soldiers) and planted mines as close to the Israeli border as possible to increase the visibility of such attacks among the Israeli public.⁸⁴

Hizbollah also took revenge on those Lebanese it accused of collaborating with Israel, often using family connections to put pressure on soldiers serving in the SLA.^o In addition to producing much of the high-quality intelligence that played a key role in the success of Hizbollah's military operations, it also exacerbated the SLA's already low morale.⁸⁵ Hizbollah's ability to collect intelligence was also facilitated by the SLA's high command, which treated rank-and-file recruits (especially Shia recruits) poorly. In addition, the commitment of SLA fighters was also eroded by the popular perception that the SLA served as "Israel's sandbags" because SLA troops manned the frontline outposts

ⁿ The SLA was originally a Christian militia formed to defend specific Christian villages against attack by Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) forces and their Lebanese allies. The vast majority of their weapons and training came from the IDF, which saw the SLA as a useful source of indigenous manpower.⁸²

^o SLA members were mostly Maronite Christians but still included a significant minority of Muslim and Druze soldiers that Hizbollah could target.

while the Israeli soldiers operated from the better-protected positions in the rear.^{86,p}

Although Hizbollah's successful exploitation of suicide attacks contributed to the popular association of militant Islam with suicide missions, the vast majority (81 percent) of suicide attacks during the Israeli occupation (1982–1986) were carried out by Christians or affiliates of secular or leftist parties,⁸⁹ and only twelve of Hizbollah's attacks involved the intentional death of a party operative.⁹⁰ Hizbollah was credited with inspiring the use of similar attacks by other ethno-nationalist groups because its 1983 attacks precipitated the withdrawal of both French and American forces.^q The number of suicide attacks dropped off precipitously after the Israeli withdrawal to the "security zone" in 1985, and attacks on Western targets largely ended with the civil war in 1991.^r These early tactics of kidnapping Westerners, initiating suicide attacks, and bombing high-profile targets were increasingly set aside as the dynamics of the conflict shifted. Subsequent attacks largely concentrated on Israeli military targets in the south of Lebanon and Katyusha rocket attacks on residential areas in northern Israel.

Mounting losses of Israeli soldiers eroded public support for the occupation, and in 1999 Ehud Barak, who was a candidate for prime minister at the time, promised to bring the troops home if he was elected. Barak won the election, and the IDF withdrew from many of its forward military outposts. Hizbollah simultaneously ramped up the intensity of attacks (including the assassination of an SLA commander), and on the eve of Israel's May 2000 withdrawal, many of the SLA's brigades abandoned their posts and fled across the border into Israel.^s Others turned themselves over to Hizbollah or the Lebanese police, and many were later tried in military courts on charges of treason.

From 2000 until the onset of the Israel–Lebanon war in 2006, military activities between IDF and Hizbollah forces were restricted in

^p The SLA often imprisoned the family members of would-be recruits who initially refused to join, holding them as collateral against defection.⁸⁷ Like other parties to the conflict, the SLA committed a wide range of atrocities, including the systematic torture of civilians; it also captured militants and detained women and children, primarily at Khiam prison. The compensation provided to SLA soldiers was also extremely low, making it easy for Hizbollah to provide a superior financial incentive to those willing to defect.⁸⁸

^q These attacks killed 241 Americans and 58 French nationals.

^r A US State Department report on terrorism issued in 2001 stated that Hizbollah had not attacked any US interests in Lebanon since the conclusion of the civil war ten years before.

^s Although some SLA members (mostly low-level recruits who had been press-ganged into the SLA ranks or joined out of economic necessity) returned to Lebanon after Hizbollah promised them amnesty, about 2,400 remained in Israel, where they received compensation packages (an \$8,800 minimum, with bonuses for number of years served) and citizenship.⁹¹

their intensity and were characterized mostly by tit-for-tat exchanges with few casualties.^{92,†} Hizbollah's military tactics were primarily rocket and mortar attacks targeting northern Israel, as well as cross-border raids and kidnappings of Israeli soldiers. The International Committee of the Red Cross was generally denied access to kidnapped soldiers, and Hizbollah party leaders routinely refused to confirm the fate of the soldiers.⁹³

Israeli tactics consisted primarily of artillery fire and air strikes in southern Lebanon. Israeli forces occasionally targeted large electrical and industrial infrastructure or waged strikes against Syrian targets (such as radar stations) inside Lebanon. In addition, the IDF allegedly assassinated several high-profile militants and Islamist spiritual leaders.[‡] During this period (and after the 2006 war) the IDF remained in control of the disputed territory known as the Shebaa Farms, which lies along the border between Lebanon and Syria's occupied Golan Heights. The year 2000 also marked the beginning of the second Palestinian intifada (uprising), which saw Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon reassert control over occupied West Bank territory that the previous Israeli government had forfeited as part of the Oslo Accords.[§] Because the timing of the second intifada largely coincided with Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon, it is difficult to determine what Hizbollah's behavior after the withdrawal might have been in the absence of what many party members considered a direct provocation. Hizbollah intensified its attacks (launching daily rockets against IDF targets) after Israel launched Operation Defensive Shield—its largest military incursion into the West Bank since 1967. The operation, in retaliation for suicide bombings that killed roughly four hundred Israelis over the previous eighteen months (Israeli countermeasures produced roughly twelve hundred Palestinian casualties during the same period), trapped Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) leader Yasser Arafat in his Ramallah compound and laid siege to much of the West Bank.

[†] Gleis and Berti noted that the military confrontation between the two sides was limited as well during the 1990s, as the conflict was governed by an initially informal and unofficial understanding (since 1993) that under no circumstances would civilians be attacked, nor would civilian areas be used to launch attacks. This understanding was put in writing in 1996, although the rules of engagement comprising this understanding were not always observed (by both sides).

[‡] Important examples include Ghalib Awali, a Hizbollah military commander who was killed in a car bombing in 2004; Sheikh Ahmad Yassin (the quadriplegic Hamas founder and an important spiritual figure for many Hizbollah members) who was killed, along with his bodyguard and nine bystanders, by a missile fired from an Israeli gunship in 2004; and Mahmoud Al-Majzoub (leader of Palestinian Islamic Jihad), who was killed by a car bomb in Sidon, Lebanon, in 2005.

[§] In addition to Hizbollah's attacks on Israeli targets, several other Arab governments also ramped up hostilities, including oil embargoes and downgrading of diplomatic relations, in response to Israel's policies in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Despite the intensification of artillery attacks, Hizbollah stopped short of a large-scale mobilization, which party secretary Hassan Nasrallah claimed must be preserved for retaliation in the event that the Israeli government attempted to expel the Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza.⁹⁴

The 2006 Lebanon war, although nominally fought between Hizbollah and Israel, extended well beyond the traditional battleground of south Lebanon. During the conflict, Hizbollah used primarily conventional tactics in the context of a war of attrition, presuming that Israeli society would not tolerate massive casualties.⁹⁵ This strategy necessitated the maintenance of a constant barrage of rocket fire (averaging 150–200 rockets per day) to reinforce the perception that the Israeli campaign was ineffective at weakening the group's offensive capabilities.⁹⁶ Hizbollah's arsenal consisted primarily of Katyusha rockets, known for their distinctive screeching noise. Because these rockets lacked a guidance system and could be outfitted with only relatively small warheads, they were most effective when launched in highly concentrated numbers.^{97,w} Hizbollah launched approximately four thousand rockets into Israel during the fighting in 2006, with roughly 25 percent of them landing in populated areas, killing forty-three civilians.⁹⁹

To facilitate these operations, Hizbollah ensured that each unit was self-sufficient and prestocked with adequate supplies, making any Israeli attack on supply routes or large weapons depots irrelevant.¹⁰⁰ However, this approach also resulted in the isolation of each unit, which, because of the ubiquitous Israeli air presence, prevented fighters from communicating with or supporting nearby units.¹⁰¹ To provide fortified cover and clear lines of sight, Hizbollah located bunkers and launch sites, whose size and complexity surprised even IDF intelligence, in and around villages (traditionally situated on hilltops in south Lebanon).¹⁰² These underground stations, which launched both short- and medium-range rockets, used pneumatic lifts to bring launchers up from underground and were often so well camouflaged that they were able to function from behind IDF lines as ground troops advanced through the south.

^w Subsequent press reports and internal IDF investigations demonstrate that most Israeli military planners dismissed the import of these rockets, and although few of the rockets produced any civilian casualties, many urban centers and infrastructure sites in northern Israel were paralyzed during the thirty-four-day conflict.⁹⁸ Although Katyushas have a maximum range of only twenty-five kilometers, Hizbollah most likely also possessed several longer-range models, including the Iranian-built Fajr-3, Fajr-5, and Zilzal rockets, with ranges of 45, 75, and 125–210 kilometers, respectively. Even though many of the group's long-range launchers were hit in the first few hours of the war, it was able to extend its reach into northern Israel, reaching as far as Haifa.

In areas where villages or population centers were sparse, Hizbollah constructed extensive fighting positions with large and sophisticated bunker systems that included electrical wiring and ample provisions, often very close to IDF and United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) positions.¹⁰³ Hizbollah's concentration on rocket launching sites and underground bunkers, as opposed to infantry or mobile anti-tank capabilities, suggested that the group anticipated an Israeli response composed primarily of air strikes rather than ground attacks.¹⁰⁴ Although the conventional Israeli plan for an attack in southern Lebanon focused on a ground invasion force of four army divisions, the military's chief of staff (the first air force general to be in that position) instead emphasized a combination of air power and special forces troops, hoping that strikes on major infrastructure targets would erode Hizbollah's support among the Christian and Sunni population.^{105,x} Because the sites were underground, however, Israeli pilots were unable to spot them from the air, and pilots lacked the ground intelligence necessary to pinpoint the locations of the sites.¹⁰⁷

Popular Support for the Resistance Movement or Insurgency

Hizbollah draws its support from the Shia community. Originating in the civil war as a militia designed to fight the Israeli occupation and to protect the Shia from both Israel and other Lebanese militias, Hizbollah has a uniquely sectarian identity. Among the Shia, Hizbollah competes with Amal for support but also cooperates with Amal on many issues on the national stage in order to represent the Shia population.

Among the other confessional groups, support has ebbed and flowed over time. After the Israeli withdrawal from the buffer zone in south Lebanon in 2000, Hizbollah was widely viewed as a national liberation force and was widely popular across sectarian divides. The withdrawal minimized conflict between Hizbollah and Israel, but some fighting did continue, albeit at a lower level. Although some thought Hizbollah's continued militancy was necessary to keep Israel in check, many within the other confessional groups in Lebanon feared that Hizbollah's activities could bring Israel back into Lebanon. In 2006 this fear became a reality, and although Hizbollah's military performance against the IDF distinguished it among some Lebanese, the group lost support among others.¹⁰⁸ More recently, Hizbollah's popularity has weakened considerably since the involvement of the group in the Syrian civil war, as its assistance of the Assad government in its fight

^x A report commissioned by the US Air Force concluded that, although air power remains the most flexible means for targeting irregular armies, Israel's indiscriminate and excessive bombing of civilian infrastructure sites was counterproductive.¹⁰⁶

against the Sunni opposition has stoked sectarian tensions in Lebanon and dampened the ability of the group to reach across the sectarian divide and appeal to Sunnis within Lebanon.^y

NOTES

- 1 “The Hizbollah Program: An Open Letter [to the Downtrodden in Lebanon and the World],” February 16, 1985, <http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/open-letter-hizballah-program/p30967>.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbollah* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 32.
- 4 Ibid., 32–33.
- 5 Ibid., 28.
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- 7 Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 36–37.
- 8 Ibid., 37.
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- 10 Joshua L. Gleis and Benedetta Berti, *Hezbollah and Hamas: A Comparative Study* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 51.
- 11 Ibid., 57–58.
- 12 Ibid., 58.
- 13 Ibid., 53–54, 59.
- 14 Quoted in Gleis and Berti, *Hezbollah and Hamas: A Comparative Study*, 55.
- 15 Quoted in Gleis and Berti, *Hezbollah and Hamas: A Comparative Study*, 58.
- 16 Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1974), 21.
- 17 Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 614.
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- 19 David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, “Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization,” *International Social Movement Research* 1 (1998): 198.
- 20 William A. Gamson, *Talking Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 111.
- 21 Benford and Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements,” 615.
- 22 Ibid., 616–617.
- 23 Emmanuel Karagiannis, “Hezbollah as a Social Movement Organization: A Framing Approach,” *Mediterranean Politics Journal* 14, no. 3 (2009): 370.
- 24 Ibid., 370–371.

^y The aggravation of sectarian tensions caused by the war in Syria and the advances of the Islamic State next door in Iraq has also had an impact on Iran’s actions in the region, given the latter’s desire to be seen as leader of the *umma*. As one Iranian analyst recently noted, “We are in a dilemma. We are a Shiite country, but trying to be the leaders of the entire Muslim world. As a result, we can’t even act in our own backyard.”¹⁰⁹

- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Ibid., 372.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Ibid., 373.
- 29 Ibid., 374.
- 30 Ibid., 375.
- 31 Ibid., 376.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Ibid., 377.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah*, 44–79.
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CHAPTER 5.
EXTERNAL SUPPORT

TYPE OF ACTOR PROVIDING SUPPORT

Chapter 2 detailed how Iranian clerics were eager to export the revolution once they assumed power in 1979. Which organizations did they establish to effectuate the revolution's export? As a foundation for the rest of this chapter, this section begins by detailing the main bureaucratic machinery established by the new regime that, at one time or another, played an important role in exporting the revolution and, in particular, midwifing the establishment and rise of Hizbollah. Also presented are some examples of the Iranian clerics' collaboration with Hizbollah, which will be expanded on later in this chapter.

To start, perhaps the most influential Iranian actor^a on matters related to Hizbollah is the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), which was established shortly after the revolution, and of note is the Qods Force, which is the unit within the IRGC with the responsibility for exporting the revolution and, in particular, with responsibility for the Hizbollah portfolio. Today the Qods Force is led by Major General Qassem Suleimani, a man of legendary status who was recently described as "the single most powerful operative in the Middle East today."^b It has separate units focused on intelligence, sabotage, special operations, politics, and finance, with a total membership between ten and twenty thousand members and with a base at the former US embassy in Tehran.³ The Qods Force was also organized geographically, with the First Corps focused on Iraq, the Second Corps focused on Pakistan and Iran's border provinces, the Third Corps devoted to Turkey and Kurdish groups, and the Fourth Corps focused on Afghanistan and Central Asia.^c Additionally, the IRGC maintains a level of autonomy

^a Bar¹ noted that there is no single Iranian organization that has overall authority over the Hizbollah account. He identified the IRGC, the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS), and the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Propagation (each of which is discussed in this section) as the main bodies involved in collaborating with Hizbollah.

^b Filkins² noted that Suleimani and the Qods Force have played a hands-on role in directing Syrian government forces in that country's civil war. Suleimani works from a nondescript building in a heavily fortified command post, where he oversees the heads of the Syrian military, a Hizbollah commander, and a coordinator of Iraqi Shiite militias that were brought into the fight. Additionally, officers from the Qods Force trained militias, coordinated attacks, and set up a system to monitor rebel communications. The number of Qods Force members in Syria and Iraqi Shia militia members recruited by the Qods Force to fight for Assad is estimated to be in the thousands.

^c Levitt⁴ noted that this depiction addressed just the first four regional commands set up by the Qods Force. Kahlili⁵ noted that by the early to mid-1980s the IRGC had set up separate departments for each region of the world and that it had infiltrated countries in the Persian Gulf, Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America.

within the Iranian political system, as the elite within the organization are selected by, and therefore answerable to, the supreme leader.⁶

As detailed in Chapter 2, the IRGC spearheaded the initial deployment into Lebanon after the 1982 Israeli invasion. A first wave of eight hundred personnel was deployed to Baalbeck, and another seven hundred were subsequently sent to Baalbeck and to other small villages in the eastern Bekaa Valley, including Nabisheet and Brital. These units provided military training and religious indoctrination to units that eventually made up the sections of the Special Security Apparatus (SSA), Hizbollah's external operations wing.⁷

Additionally, the IRGC played an important role in building up Hizbollah to fight Israel once the Lebanese civil war ended in 1990. For instance, IRGC personnel in mobile training camps in the Bekaa Valley provided operational advice to members of Hizbollah's military wing, the Islamic Resistance, as it engaged in a guerrilla campaign against Israel and the South Lebanese Army (SLA). This training was carried out by twenty training officers from the IRGC who were specialists in various guerrilla warfare techniques. Specifically, Hizbollah fighters were trained in ambush techniques, the concealment and detonation of roadside bombs, mortar attacks, advanced reconnaissance and intelligence, infiltration techniques, and psychological warfare.⁸ Interestingly, this training was supervised by a senior commander of the Islamic Resistance.⁹ This apparent reversal of roles in the sponsor-proxy relationship, with members of the proxy force overseeing the activity of personnel from the state sponsor, is perhaps one of the features that makes this case of a sponsor-proxy relationship distinctive.

Another distinctive form of collaboration that developed between the IRGC and Hizbollah is that the IRGC came to rely on Hizbollah to enhance an asymmetric military capability, specifically an enhanced terrorist capability against Israel facilitated by inroads made by Hizbollah with Palestinian groups in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. As noted by Levitt, by the late 1990s Hizbollah began to develop a terrorist infrastructure within the West Bank and attempted to infiltrate operatives into Israel to gather intelligence and undertake terrorist attacks.¹⁰ This effort was organized by Unit 1800 within Hizbollah and led by

Imad Mugniyah,^d who reportedly received orders from Tehran to work with Hamas^{13,e}

Another communication from Iran, this time directed toward Palestinian groups, is also quite telling. As detailed in an October 2001 Palestinian intelligence document, officials from Hizbollah, Hamas, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad met in Damascus “in an attempt to increase the joint activity inside [i.e., in Gaza, the West Bank, and Israel] with financial aid from Iran.” This meeting was prompted by an “Iranian message which had been transferred to the Hamas and Islamic Jihad leaderships, according to which they must not allow a calming down [of the situation on the ground] at this period.” The report went on to add that Iranian funds were to be transferred to the Palestinian groups through Hizbollah.^{15,f}

Chapter 2 also noted the existence of an Iranian government body known as the Office of Islamic Liberation Movements, which helped provide the framework under which Hizbollah’s initial charter and constitution were developed. The Office of Islamic Liberation Movements was originally supervised by Ayatollah Husayn Ali Montazeri and led by Mehdi Hashemi, a relative, and the organization started out as a formal unit of the IRGC before becoming a semi-independent institution.¹⁷ In

^d Mugniyah would come to attain legendary status within Hizbollah, and he was a notoriously difficult individual to pin down. Katz and Hendel¹¹ noted that he was Hizbollah’s liaison to the IRGC, and head of Unit 1800, the IRGC’s liaison with Hamas and Islamic Jihad. He also led Hizbollah’s military wing in addition to commanding the group’s international infrastructure and terror cells. However, Bergman noted that Israeli intelligence was never able to determine who his Iranian handler was (if indeed he had one). He was killed by a car bomb in January 2008 in Damascus, allegedly by the Israelis. Mugniyah was respected and feared by his enemies. David Barkai, a commander in Israeli Military Intelligence, in speaking of Mugniyah, noted that “In another time, another place or another nation, Imad Mugniyah would have been a start-up entrepreneur...his is one of the most creative and brilliant minds I have ever come across. He is a man with deep understanding, an excellent technical grasp and leadership ability. Unfortunately, a mixture of personal and geopolitical circumstances led him to channel his outstanding talents into the path of blood and destruction and to make him into such a dangerous enemy.”¹²

^e Iran also used Hizbollah to impart bomb-making expertise and technology to Palestinian groups. In the early 1990s Israel deported 415 important Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists, who made their way to the Marj al-Zuhur camp in Lebanon, which was established with help from the IRGC. At the camp the 415 activists were taught how to construct car bombs and other explosive devices, and the graduates from this camp unleashed a suicide bombing campaign in Israel during the mid-1990s.¹⁴

^f Levitt¹⁶ noted that Iran and Hizbollah teamed up to work with other Islamist groups, including various Sunni groups. For instance, in the early 1990s Iran and Hizbollah maintained links with al-Qaeda in Sudan, and this relationship led to al-Qaeda operatives and trainers receiving training in explosives in Iran and training in intelligence, explosives, and security procedures in Hizbollah camps in Lebanon. Representatives from Iran and Hizbollah also met with operatives from Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ). Reportedly, Mugniyah and Osama bin Laden held a meeting, where it was agreed that Hizbollah would provide explosives training to al-Qaeda and EIJ, and Iran was to supply EIJ with weapons.

1986 it was transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and its chief role was to implement policy directives pertaining to Hizbollah decided by the Supreme National Security Council. In turn it delegated tasks to the embassies in Damascus and Beirut and also to the IRGC itself.¹⁸

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as particular embassies, especially those in Lebanon and Syria, played an important role in Hizbollah's operations conducted jointly with Iran. It has already been noted that Iran's ambassadors in Damascus and Beirut have sat on Hizbollah's Shura Council and that Mohtashemi, the Iranian ambassador to Syria in the early 1980s, played a fundamental role in establishing Hizbollah. In fact, the Iranian embassy in Damascus functioned as a nerve center at this time, as Mohtashemi oversaw a monthly budget in the tens of millions of dollars¹⁹ and, along with Ahmad Vahidi, at the time the chief intelligence officer of the IRGC, and Mostafa Mohammad-Najjar, the commander of the IRGC, was responsible for expanding the activities of the IRGC in Lebanon.²⁰

Additionally, in the 1980s various personnel in these embassies played important roles in coordinating Hizbollah and IRGC activity and facilitating the supply of the insurgent group. For instance, in carrying out abductions ordered by the SSA, Hizbollah's external operations wing, operational personnel maintained close contact with Iran's embassies in Beirut^g and Damascus as well as with IRGC officials.²² In general, to facilitate Hizbollah operations at this time, Iranian diplomatic staff provided intelligence on potential targets while the IRGC provided weapons and training.²³ Also, Iran's military attaché in Damascus coordinated activities between the IRGC in Baalbeck and IRGC headquarters in the Syrian border village of Zebdani.²⁴ Meanwhile, the Iranian military attaché in Beirut was active in supplying members of the SSA with training and military equipment and also played a role in hostage taking, particularly in the initial acquisition of, interrogation of, and housing of foreign hostages.²⁵

Iranian officials also had a role in ordering Shia militant groups to engage in terrorism, with IRGC officials playing a supporting role. An intercepted message recorded Iranian intelligence officials in Tehran telling Mohtashemi to contact Hussein Musawi, the leader of Islamic Amal, and instructed him "to take spectacular action against the United States," a message that, according to US intelligence, culminated with the 1983 attack on the US Marine barracks in Beirut.²⁶ This attack was supported by the IRGC contingent

^g Bergman²¹ noted that the embassy in Beirut operated the Center for Culture and Islamic Studies, which provided Hebrew lessons for Hizbollah fighters. Thus trained, Hizbollah personnel were also trained to monitor Israeli communications networks, pagers, and telephones.

in Lebanon, which had a role in planning and supervising the attack.²⁷ Additionally, Bergman noted that Mohtashemi ordered Mugnyiah to get Hizbollah more involved in kidnapping, and between late 1982 and June 1986, Hizbollah kidnapped fifty-one foreign citizens.²⁸ As will be discussed later in this chapter, the involvement of Iranian diplomats and facilities to enable terrorist activities by Hizbollah was repeated in the 1990s, particularly in Argentina.

Iranian diplomatic facilities were also used to provide cover to Hizbollah and IRGC officials. Ranstorp noted that Mugnyiah was believed to travel with an Iranian diplomatic passport and that he operated under cover at the Iranian embassies in Beirut and Damascus. Additionally, around the time of the July 2006 war with Israel, Mugnyiah's deputy traveled to the Iranian embassy in Damascus to receive satellite imagery of Israel from the Syrians.²⁹ More generally, Kahlili noted that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs assigned members of the IRGC to various Iranian consulates and embassies,^{30,h} and at one point in time the director of Arab affairs at the embassy, Hussien Sheikh al-Islam, coordinated the effort to place IRGC personnel in diplomatic facilities abroad.³³

Another important actor is the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, which has worked with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to establish "cultural centers" in Iranian embassies.³⁴ One such center played an important role in providing cover to operatives who organized the bombing of the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA) center in Buenos Aires in July 1994. One of the responsibilities of this ministry is "informing the world community about the basis and aspirations of the Islamic Revolution," and it controls the Culture and Islamic Communication Organization, the Islamic Republic News Agency, and the Hajj and Pilgrimage Organization. In 2009 it was led by a former IRGC general, and the cultural center in the Iranian embassy in Beirut sought to gain followers for Hojjat al-Islam Sayyid 'Ali Khameneh 'i, the current supreme leader of Iran.³⁵

The Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) played a fundamental role in providing intelligence assistance to Hizbollah. MOIS was established in 1984, and by 1997 it was one of the largest intelligence services in the Middle East, with thirty thousand employees and fifteen departments.³⁶ MOIS is suspected of providing training

^h Iranian officials were also clever in how they used diplomatic facilities to facilitate cover. Kahlili³¹ noted that the limousines owned by the Iranian consulate in Dubai were used to transport firearms and explosives, as Iranian officials knew that vehicles displaying Iranian flags and consulate license plates would never be stopped. Levitt³² also noted the Iranian consulate in Dubai was used as a regional intelligence hub and that it sent suitcases containing millions of dollars to Hizbollah.

to senior SSA members in camps within Iran, and it has also helped SSA members avoid detection while traveling and provided aid in the procurement of weapons, identities, and funding, as well as local liaison assistance through identifying recruits among the Lebanese diaspora.³⁷ Ranstorp noted that a formal liaison relationship and command structure was established between senior SSA members and Iranian intelligence, with personnel in Beirut and Damascus receiving instructions from MOIS personnel in Tehran, and with the relationship being brokered by the intelligence officer of the IRGC force in Baalbeck.³⁸ MOIS also worked with the SSA in foreign operations. Specifically, MOIS, along with Hizbollah personnel and officials from the Iranian embassy in France, coordinated a 1986 bombing campaign in Paris.^{39,i}

Additionally, Levitt noted that MOIS and Hizbollah collaborated in other operations abroad, such as in Hizbollah's failed 1994 truck bombing of the Israeli embassy in Bangkok. One Hizbollah operative, Pandu Yudhawinata, of Indonesian descent, worked for Iranian intelligence in Malaysia, and his case was managed for several years by the MOIS station in Malaysia before he was turned over to Hizbollah.⁴¹ Pandu went on to serve as a procurer of documents and recruiter for the group, and he also played a role in the failed 1994 bombing.⁴² Furthermore, the group and MOIS reportedly collaborated in establishing a base on the Iranian shore of the Caspian Sea for the training of Hizbollah personnel in operations similar to those performed by US Navy Seals.⁴³

Lastly, other important Iranian actors in the relationship with Hizbollah are the Martyrs Foundation and the Foundation of the Oppressed. Both provided assistance to the families of those killed during the 1979 revolution and to poorer families in need, and they also channeled Iranian financing to Hizbollah to fund a variety of social services for the Shia community, including hospitals, religious schools, agricultural cooperatives, and construction projects.⁴⁴ More detail regarding the assistance provided by these organizations in Lebanon, particularly the Martyrs Foundation, is provided later in this chapter.

Iranian financing also supported the activities of a number of committees within Jihad al-Bina' (Holy Reconstruction Organ), which functions as the main institution coordinating the social and financial needs of Hizbollah members and the broader Shia community. For instance, Iranian financing enabled the Islamic Health Committee to establish major hospitals in Baalbeck and in Beirut's southern suburbs in 1986, as well as various other medical centers and pharmacies

ⁱ Tensions emerged between Iran and France in the mid-1980s over Iran's demands that France repay a \$1 billion loan made in 1974 by the Shah's government to the French Atomic Energy Commission for a uranium separation plant, and for French arms shipments, including the Mirage 2000 aircraft, to Iraq and Persian Gulf states.⁴⁰

throughout Lebanon.⁴⁵ Additionally, in collaboration with the Martyrs Foundation, the Financial Aid Committee disbursed \$90 million during 1982–1986 to the families of Hizbollah members who had died or were wounded, and the committee also extended loans for business ventures, marriages, and school expenses.⁴⁶ Furthermore, as discussed later in this chapter, Iranian aid has come to play a prominent role in helping various regions in Lebanon recover after damage caused by recent fighting between Israel and Hizbollah.

MOTIVATIONS FOR EXTERNAL SUPPORT

Chapter 2 noted in detail the varied ideological and balance-of-power motivations for Iranian sponsorship of Hizbollah. Sponsorship enabled Iran to leapfrog the wall of containment imposed by war with Iraq (which was receiving assistance from other Arab regimes fearful of the spread of the Islamic revolution), which in turn presented Iran with an opportunity to spread the revolution to a potentially fertile territory. Additionally, the IRGC's presence in Lebanon allowed Iran to lead the Islamic resistance against Israel and Zionism, thereby supporting claims that it, rather than Saudi Arabia, was the rightful ruler of the *umma*. Finally, it allowed Iran to project itself into Arabic and Middle Eastern politics and thereby influence developments in the region and perhaps expand its overall regional influence (as well as potentially enhance the popularity of its Islamic form of government).

However, the relationship between sponsor and proxy was mediated by a third party, Syria, which also had its own interests that were at times inconsistent with those of the sponsor or proxy. Third-party involvement was also a crucial factor in prior examples of relationships between sponsors and proxies, as in the case of American sponsorship of the Afghan Mujahideen during the 1980s to oust the Soviet Union from Afghanistan. American involvement in this case was mediated by Pakistan, and in particular by Pakistan's powerful Inter-Services Intelligence agency. Future state sponsorship of proxies may also involve the participation of other parties, whether state or non-state, and so it may be useful to examine how Iran's support for Hizbollah was influenced by the presence of an influential third party that in effect had a vote regarding the modalities of the relationship between sponsor and proxy.

Although in the context of the current civil war in Syria it is commonly accepted that the two countries are natural allies,^j in the

^j Filkins⁴⁷ notes that Iranian elites have come to view the civil war in Syria in existential terms. He notes that one Iranian cleric stated, "If we lose Syria, we cannot keep Tehran." This sentiment is shared by Hizbollah, as Filkins indicated that one Hizbollah commander stated, "If Bashar [al-Assad] goes down, we're next."⁴⁸

early 1980s Iran and Syria were considered strange bedfellows. As a secular Baathist dictatorship, Syria was resolutely opposed to radical Islam, having brutally suppressed the (Sunni) Muslim Brotherhood in the town of Hama in 1982, and it was equally opposed to the establishment of an Islamic state, whether of Sunni or Shia orientation, in Lebanon, a country that many Syrian elites never regarded as a distinct entity. For its part, Iran found itself in an alliance with one Baathist regime hostile to Islamism while it denounced the other (Iraq) as an imperialist stooge.^k Yet mutual antipathy in the early 1980s toward Iraq, Israel, and Western influence in the Levant convinced both of these countries to toss aside ideology in favor of pursuit of an alliance,^l that advanced the interests of both states.

Syrian outreach to Iran's clerics actually preceded the revolution, as Syria's frustration with the Shah's close relationship with Israel and friendly relations with pro-Western Arab states hostile to Syria prompted it to establish relations with various Iranian opposition groups, including the emerging Shia movement led by Khomeini.⁵¹ An important development was Syria's cultivation of a relationship with Musa al-Sadr, who legitimized the Alawite regime in Damascus by issuing a fatwa (religious ruling) in 1973 recognizing Alawites as Shia Muslims. This ruling enhanced Syria's position within the Lebanese Shia community and led to the development of strong links between Syria and Amal. Amal became Syria's proxy in Lebanon, and links between Syria and Iran's clerical leadership were facilitated by Syria's close relationship with al-Sadr and by the training imparted by Amal to various Iranian opposition figures.⁵²

^k When Israel invaded Lebanon in June 1982, Saddam Hussein urged Iran to combine its forces with Iraq and the Arabs to fight Israel in Lebanon. This followed a May cease-fire offer by Hussein when his troops were under pressure. Khomeini responded to the June offer by equating Iraq's war with Iran with the Israeli attack on Lebanon. He referred to Israel and Iraq as the "two illegitimate offsprings" of the United States, and he saw the Israeli attack on Lebanon as a tactic by the Americans to divert Iran's attention from Iraq when it seemed to be winning the war.⁴⁹

^l It is also important to mention the impact of alliances and regional alignments in the early 1980s on the decisions by Iran and Syria to broaden their partnership. The regional order was upended in the late 1970s with the Camp David Accords, which removed Egypt from the Arab nationalist core it composed along with Syria and Iraq. Egypt's defection, along with tensions with Iraq, left Syria isolated as a frontline state against Israel, and so it welcomed the Iranian revolution because it generated a new anti-Western power as Iran delinked from its alignment with the West and conservative Arab forces. Additionally, Syria cautiously welcomed Iranian involvement in Lebanon given Syria's security concerns after Israel's 1982 invasion. In addition to giving Iran a foothold in Lebanon, the alliance with Syria allowed Iran to prevent Iraq from depicting the war as a struggle between Arabs and Persians. Furthermore, Syria's closure of an oil pipeline deprived Iraq of half its oil export capacity, and its massing of troops on Iraq's border forced Saddam to withdraw troops from the Iranian front. Syria also acted as a conduit to the Soviet Union, thereby allowing Iran to import arms from the Eastern bloc.⁵⁰

How has Syria facilitated Iran's sponsorship of Hizbollah? Or, to put it differently, how did Syria interpose itself within the sponsor-proxy relationship? To begin with, Syria functioned as a land bridge through which Iran sent supplies to Hizbollah and IRGC personnel to Lebanon. Arms shipments, including those containing sophisticated weapons, were transported by air from Iran to Syria (Hafez al-Assad did not permit the Iranians to fly directly to Beirut),⁵³ where they were unloaded at the airport in Damascus or at military-controlled airfields and were then shipped over land over the Syrian-Lebanese border. Once in Lebanon they were distributed to protected and hidden arms depots managed by Hizbollah.⁵⁴ Additionally, Syria controlled the IRGC's access to the Bekaa Valley, as it determined the number and frequency of IRGC visits to this region.⁵⁵

There are other examples of the important role Syria played in the Iran-Hizbollah relationship. Kahlili noted that Syrian diplomatic facilities were used to cloak the movement of Iranian arms and personnel. For instance, IRGC convoys received Syrian diplomatic license plates, which enabled them to operate without interference in Lebanon, while at other times IRGC personnel were transported by Syrian diplomatic vehicles.⁵⁶ Syrian intelligence personnel also played an important role. For instance, an important contact for Mohtashemi, the Iranian ambassador to Syria in the early 1980s, was Brigadier General Ghazi Kan'an, the head of Syrian military intelligence in Lebanon.⁵⁷ Kan'an also managed the relationship with the SSA, as Syrian military intelligence actively participated in planning Hizbollah operations before the pull-out of multinational forces from Beirut in 1984.⁵⁸ Additionally, Syrian control of the Bekaa Valley at this time enabled Syrian military intelligence to facilitate the transfer of hostages to Beirut, as well as their release.^{59,m}

Syria's control of the flow of Iranian personnel and arms to Hizbollah highlights an important aspect of the potential impact of third parties on the dynamics of the relationship between sponsors and proxies. Specifically, Syria's role as a critical intermediary between Iran and Hizbollah provided it with leverage through which to influence the relationship, to ensure that both the sponsor and proxy were behaving

^m An important Hizbollah liaison with Syrian military intelligence was Mustafa al-Dirani, the former head of Amal's security service who, in late 1998, defected from Amal and joined Hizbollah. Interestingly, he coordinated Hizbollah's security actions against Syria when tensions emerged between the two parties.

in ways that were consistent with Syria's interests.⁵¹ Although Syria welcomed Iran's intervention in Lebanon in 1982 to blunt the impact of the Israeli invasion, and assisted with hostage taking before the departure of international forces in 1984, there were limits on the degree to which Syria would facilitate the achievement of Iranian foreign policy goals. Specifically, Baathist Syria would never have allowed the establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon guided by *velayat-e faqih*. Such an end-state clashed with the overriding Syrian desire for hegemony in Lebanon. Additionally, Syria was not interested in a holy war against Israel to "liberate" Jerusalem and eliminate the "Zionist entity." Unlike Iran, which was far removed from a potential battlefield with Israel, Syria did not have the luxury to entertain such fantasies, as it would undoubtedly pay a high price for a total war against Israel. Rather, Syria was interested in using calibrated and controlled violence against Israel to achieve specific aims (such as the return of the Golan Heights), and so ultimately it was interested, literally, in controlling the shooting directed at Israel, rather than seeking Israel's elimination (a desired but ultimately impractical outcome, from the Syrian perspective).

Furthermore, Syria's support for hostage taking and other forms of terrorism ended with the departure of foreign forces in 1984, and subsequently Syria developed an interest in stability in Lebanon, both as a sign of its hegemony over the country and to mend its relationship with the West (which grew in importance as sponsorship from its Soviet patron declined in the late 1980s). Nor did it wish to see Hizbollah grow too powerful relative to Amal, its proxy. Hence, Syria's control of Iranian access to Hizbollah provided it with access points to influence the sponsor-proxy relationship, and in meetings with Iranian officials Syrian government representatives were not averse to hinting that the IRGC was in Lebanon at Syria's sufferance, and that Iran's support for Hizbollah against Israel and its efforts to use the conflict to spread the revolution and build influence in the Arab and Muslim world could be terminated by Syria.⁶²

Through the 1989 Taif agreement and the May 1991 Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination between Syria and Lebanon,

⁵¹ One of the levers at Syria's disposal was the ability to restrict the movement of IRGC forces by confining them to the Bekaa Valley area. This took place after a June 1987 abduction of an American, which was likely a joint effort by Iran and Hizbollah. As noted by Ranstorp, the abduction was considered a reaction by Iran to the American effort to reflag Kuwaiti tankers in the Persian Gulf. Syria, by this time, viewed hostage taking as a challenge to its dominant position in Lebanon, and such actions also hampered its efforts to build better relations with the West. It should also be noted that Syrian approval was required for the deployment of Hizbollah fighters to south Lebanon to take on Israel, as well as for the establishment of IRGC command posts in southern Lebanon.⁶⁰ Another form of leverage is a reduction in the flow of weapons through Syria, which, as Bergman⁶¹ noted, was used by Hafez al-Assad at one point when he engaged in secret talks with Israel.

Iran ultimately acceded to Syria's demand for hegemony in Lebanon by forgoing the goal of establishing an Islamic state in Lebanon and agreeing to focus on the conflict with Israel. The broader point is that although the involvement of a third party may be necessary to effectuate a sponsor-proxy relationship, any initial overlap of interests among all three parties may dissipate as a result of regional and international developments. Any resulting clash of interests that emerges between, on the one hand, the sponsor and proxy and, on the other, the third party, must be managed and may result in the abandonment of certain interests (e.g., an Islamic state in Lebanon) so that groups may pursue arguably more vital interests (e.g., a military effort against Israel) that all parties can agree on.

Another interesting lesson of the current example is that proxies that arise through outside sponsorship may, as is the case with most organizations, develop an interest in their continued existence and propagation, which may clash with the desires of outside sponsors or third parties to curtail the activities and interests of the proxy. In the current case, Hizbollah opposed the Taif agreement not only because it entailed abandoning the establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon but also because it called for the comprehensive disarmament of all militias.⁶³ Additionally, Hizbollah was wary of Syrian sponsorship of Amal because it was interested in being seen as the main representative of Lebanon's Shia community. And indeed in the late 1980s Lebanon witnessed intra-Shiite clashes between Hizbollah and Amal, and even clashes between Hizbollah and Syria.^o

Hizbollah was ultimately permitted to keep its arms^p but Syrian and Iranian collaboration at this time offers one more interesting takeaway from the current case. Specifically, in the case of the presence of a third party, if the interests of the third party and the sponsor coincide,

^o Hizbollah first clashed with Amal in 1985 when it appeared that Nabih Berri was ready to make an agreement with the Israelis regarding southern Lebanon.⁶⁴ Hizbollah clashes in the late 1980s with Amal and Syria were sometimes precipitated by Syrian anger over abductions carried out by Hizbollah, which, as already indicated, challenged Syrian hegemony in Lebanon and obstructed Syrian efforts to mend relations with the West. For instance, Syrian forces clashed with Hizbollah fighters after a series of abductions of Westerners in January 1987, with the confrontation leading to Hizbollah's abduction of fourteen Syrian soldiers in the Beirut suburb of al-Basta. These tensions resulted in Syrian efforts to restrict Hizbollah's activities in Beirut as well as to Amal-Hizbollah clashes. Clashes also emerged between the two militias after Hizbollah abducted Lt. Col. William Higgins in February 1988, a move that was interpreted as an affront to Amal's control in southern Lebanon and to disapproval of the presence of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).⁶⁵

^p Syria decided to allow Hizbollah to remain armed while other militant groups were disarmed by April 1991, and IRGC units were permitted to stay in Lebanon in violation of the Taif agreement. These measures were taken by Syria to reduce tensions with Iran and to find a resolution to the hostage crisis.⁶⁶

both can collaborate to control the proxy. By the late 1980s, a relatively more pragmatic political leadership emerged in Iran under Rafsanjani, who sought to curtail some of the ideological excesses of previous Iranian foreign policy. Additionally, he sought to end the war with Iraq and improve Iran's shattered economy, which required foreign investment and better relations with the West. This desire dovetailed with the Syrian desire to improve its standing in Western capitals, and so both actors (with Syria threatening military actions) compelled Hizbollah to accept a political and military agreement with Amal in January 1989, whereby security control of Beirut was granted to Syria and that of south Lebanon to Amal. Additional Iranian pressure in the form of reduced funding (prompted by the group's continued warfare with Amal and its refusal to release foreign hostages) and the 1989 removal of Mohtashemi,⁹ one of Hizbollah's chief backers, from the position of interior minister helped convince the movement to accept the Taif agreement and thereby abandon the goal of an Islamic state in the Levant and concentrate instead on evicting the Israelis from southern Lebanon.⁶⁸

FORMS AND METHODS USED TO PROVIDE SUPPORT

The preceding two sections discussed in some detail both the forms of support provided by Iran to Hizbollah, such as military training and intelligence collaboration, and the methods used to provide such support, such as the use of Iranian and Syrian diplomatic facilities and personnel to transmit sensitive information and coordinate Hizbollah and IRGC actions and supplies provided to the insurgent group. In this section these themes are expanded, and in particular more detail is provided regarding the provision of Iranian financial and military aid and training to Hizbollah. After this discussion we discuss the collaboration

⁹ Another interesting lesson from this period is that factionalism within the sponsoring state, and in this case, clerical factionalism, can potentially undermine sponsor control of the proxy. The Iranian political system at this time featured hard-liners such as Mohtashemi committed to a revolutionary foreign policy and (relatively) more moderate pragmatists such as Rafsanjani willing to tone down the ideological content of Iran's foreign policy to pursue more concrete and conventional interests, such as encouraging foreign investment to revive a devastated economy. This in turn implies better relations with the West and, as a consequence, an end to the hostage crisis. Interestingly, Ranstorp⁶⁷ noted that Mohtashemi established an outside institution to support Hizbollah, while Sheikh Subhi al-Tufayli, Hizbollah's first secretary general, was more inclined to work with more radical elements within Iran's political system and clerical establishment, rather than with Rafsanjani. Not surprisingly, the presence of a relatively more moderate leadership in Iran combined with a more radical leadership atop Hizbollah led the sponsor to take actions to compel the proxy to agree to policies in line with the sponsor's interests.

between the two parties in carrying out 1994 AMIA bombing. Argentine officials have pieced together a rich report on the attacks,^r and their detailed findings provide an invaluable glimpse into the nature of the collaboration between the two parties and the type of support offered by the various Iranian government institutions charged with exporting the revolution.

Iranian financial aid has played a fundamental role in enabling Hizbollah to provide social services to the Shia community and the broader population in Lebanon, and such aid proved vital in some communities given the collapse of the Lebanese state by the end of the civil war. Some estimates suggest that Iran funds Hizbollah to the tune of \$100 million per year,⁷¹ while other estimates place this figure as high as \$350 million,⁷² and a sizeable portion of this total funds various public goods provided by Hizbollah to the Lebanese population. One important Iranian contributor to Lebanon's social development has been the Imam Khomeini Assistance Committee. This organization opened in Beirut in 1982 and also opened offices in Sidon, Tyre, and Baalbeck. As of 2006 it had granted 130,000 scholarships and provided interest-free loans, and it has helped 135,000 families in need.⁷³

A noteworthy contribution to social welfare made possible by funding from the Martyrs Foundation was the construction by Jihad al-Bina' of four-thousand-liter water reservoirs in each district of Beirut's heavily Shia southern suburbs.⁷⁴ Each reservoir was filled five times a day from continuously circulating tanker trucks and, in the absence of state-provided electricity in this area until 1990, generators mounted on lorries went to different buildings to provide the electricity required to pump water from private cisterns. As of 2006, Jihad al-Bina' served as the main source of drinking water for five hundred thousand people.⁷⁵

^r The October 2006 report was compiled by Marcelo Martinez Burgos and Alberto Nisman of the Investigations Unit of the Office of the Attorney General, Buenos Aires, Argentina.⁶⁹ For years after the attacks the investigation led by Argentine authorities floundered, leading Argentina's former president Néstor Kirchner to label the government's handling of the case "a national disgrace." In 2004 he nominated Nisman to resuscitate the investigation, which led to the extensive report by Burgos and Nisman and the indictment of a number of leading Iranian and Hezbollah officials, including Rafsanjani and Mugniyah. In 2007, Interpol issued "red notices" for five Iranian officials, which essentially prevented their international travel, for their suspected roles in the bombing. Yet in a tragic turn of events, Nisman was found dead of a gunshot wound to the head in his Buenos Aires apartment in January 2015 shortly before he was to testify before the Argentine congress alleging that the Argentine government, in an effort to expand bilateral relations with Iran, sought to derail his investigation into the bombing to ensure that Iran was not blamed. Officials investigating Nisman's death suspect either murder or "induced" suicide carried out by either pro- or anti-government elements in Argentina, and many believe that the mystery of Nisman's death will never be solved. Interestingly, Filkins⁷⁰ also noted that American officials believe that Venezuela's late president, Hugo Chávez, granted safe haven to IRGC and Hezbollah personnel and that he allowed Iran and Hezbollah to use Venezuela as a base for a money-laundering and drug-trafficking network.

Another service provided by Jihad al-Bina' is public refuse collection for the half-million residents of Dahiya, a southern suburb of Beirut.⁷⁶

The Martyrs Foundation has also made an important contribution to the provision of health care services in Lebanon, principally with the construction of the al-Rasul al-Azam hospital in Dahiya.⁷⁷ All medical expenses of injured Hizbollah fighters are paid for at this facility, while 70 percent of expenses are covered for injured civilians. Interestingly, during elections patients and staff at this facility are transported to and from the polls by Hizbollah volunteers.⁷⁸ Another service provided by the foundation is the establishment, in Beirut and the Bekaa Valley, of vocational schools for the daughters of fallen Hizbollah fighters and the funding of subsidized workshops to employ them.⁷⁹

Jihad al-Bina' also finances the all-important reconstruction of homes destroyed in combat with Israel. Reportedly, one month after the 1996 Israeli military campaign Grapes of Wrath, Jihad al-Bina' rehabilitated more than 2,800 structures damaged by Israel in 106 locations in south Lebanon,⁸⁰ and overall between 1993 and 2006 the organization is estimated to have rebuilt nearly 15,000 homes.⁸¹ Hizbollah has collaborated with the Martyrs Foundation on reconstruction, with the insurgent group determining the validity of families' housing needs and, if necessary, arranging for the required property transactions. Financing provided by the Martyrs Foundation is used to acquire land, with Jihad al-Bina' subsequently developing plans and building the finalized structures.⁸² Recent press reports indicate that Iran has spent \$400 million to rebuild Dahiya after the July 2006 war with Israel.⁸³

Another important component of Iranian assistance is training and military aid. The provision of arms by Iran in the 1990s appears to have been designed to transition Hizbollah from a group primarily carrying out terrorist acts and abductions into a force capable of taking on the Israelis. Bergman pointed out that one US Central Intelligence Agency report from 1999 noted that Iranian shipments to Hizbollah included Zilzal rockets, with ranges of 125–210 kilometers; Fajr-3 and Fajr-5 rockets, with ranges up to 75 kilometers; Nazaat rockets, with ranges of 80–140 kilometers; anti-tank missiles produced in Iran; land-sea missiles (802 C class) made in China; Ababil drones developed by Iran's domestic aircraft industry; Russian SA-7 and SA-14 anti-aircraft missiles; and 250 advanced night-vision kits sent by Britain to Iran in 2003 as part of a joint effort to stop drug smuggling.⁸⁴

The IRGC has also reportedly helped build underground installations for Hizbollah, including command-and-control bunkers operated by both Hizbollah and IRGC officials.⁸⁵ The IRGC also built underground storage areas eight meters deep in the Bekaa Valley that are used to store missiles and ammunition.⁸⁶ The Bekaa Valley also houses

a central operations room operated by four personnel each from the IRGC and Hizbollah.⁸⁷

As discussed, IRGC personnel provided training to Hizbollah fighters in Lebanon. Training was also undertaken in Iran itself. The two main camps used by the Qods Force to train foreign militants are the Imam Ali base in Tehran and the Bahonar base in Karaj, north of Tehran.⁸⁸ Additionally, Hizbollah personnel participated in special training courses at IRGC bases in Tehran, Isfahan, Mashad, and Ahvaz, and Hizbollah missile units, including two hundred technicians and experts, received training in Iran.^{89,s} Furthermore, Katz and Hendel noted that Israeli intelligence believes that at a base near Tehran, the IRGC trains militants from Hizbollah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other groups in explosives, shooting, communications, reconnaissance, mortar firing, and psychological warfare.⁹¹

Let us now turn to a discussion of Iran and Hizbollah's collaboration in carrying out the July 1994 AMIA attack in Buenos Aires.^t As already indicated, a fairly detailed report has been made available by Argentine authorities and, based on what is known about this operation, what is apparent is that the preparations undertaken by Hizbollah and Iranian officials appear to have proceeded on separate tracks, with a select number of officials serving as touch points between the two parties.

The decision to carry out the attack was apparently made by Iran's Supreme National Security Council during a meeting held by a subgroup, the Committee for Special Operations. Participants in this meeting included the Supreme Leader of Iran Sayyid 'Ali Khameneh'i, President Rafsanjani, Minister of Intelligence Ali Fallahian, and Foreign Minister Ali Velayati. Also present were Ahmad Asghari, a suspected IRGC official at the Iranian embassy in Buenos Aires (and whose real name was Mohsen Randjbaran), and Mohsen Rabbani, the attack's lead Iranian organizer in Argentina. Once the committee agreed on the operation, Khameneh'i issued a fatwa legitimizing the operation, with Fallahian instructing Mugniyah to form an operational group to take charge of the attack. Rabbani was made responsible for the logistics of the attack, including purchasing and arming the van to be used in the bombing, and with liaising with Hizbollah operatives in Buenos

^s One captured Hizbollah fighter noted that to conceal the fact that he and other militants underwent training in Iran, their passports were not stamped in either Syria or Iran.⁹⁰

^t The information presented on this operation is based on the careful review of the report by Argentine authorities presented in Chapter 4 of *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of the Party of God*.⁹²

Aires and in the somewhat lawless tri-border region where Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay meet.

Mohsen Rabbani arrived in Argentina in 1983 to head the al-Tauhid mosque in Buenos Aires and to allegedly work for the Iranian Ministry of Agriculture, which was responsible for testing meat exported to Iran. Rabbani soon developed a network of informers that collected information for Iran. One such individual was Mohammad Reza Javadi-Nia, an intelligence agent who was provided cover through the Ministry of Islamic Culture and Guidance. To get a better lay of the land, Javadi-Nia (as well as other informers) worked as a taxi driver in Argentina. He also served as the cultural attaché in the embassy from 1988 to 1993, a position that was assumed by Rabbani in 1994. Rabbani himself was named an official Iranian diplomat (entailing diplomatic immunity) several months before the attack.

Hizbollah began planting agents and establishing cells in the tri-border area during the peak years of the civil war,^u and by mid-2000 there were an estimated several hundred Hizbollah operatives in the tri-border region. Rabbani dealt extensively with Piloto Turismo, a travel agency in the tri-border area that was actually started with Hizbollah funds and in fact served as a front company.^v Piloto Turismo also provided a number of illicit services, such as obtaining fake passports and residency documents, useful for placing operatives in the tri-border region and in Argentina. One of the co-owners of Piloto Turismo, Mohammad Youssef Abdallah, served as the primary leader of Hizbollah in the region, while the other co-owner, Farouk Abdul Omairi, was the regional coordinator for Hizbollah. Hizbollah members in the tri-border region played an important coordinating role in the attack; investigators eventually uncovered phone calls between the Iranian embassy in Buenos Aires and suspected Hizbollah personnel operating out of a travel agency and a mosque in the region.

Activity by Iranian ministers and regional ambassadors picked up in the month or so before the attack. Ahmad Alamolhoda, the director of the Cultural Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, arrived in

^u The first wave of Lebanese immigration to South America, especially Brazil and Argentina, occurred in the 1880s during the Ottoman era. Eighty thousand immigrants from Arab-speaking countries settled in Argentina between 1882 and 1925, and the period of the Lebanese civil war (1975–1990) also saw a wave of Lebanese immigration to South America.⁹³

^v Another front company used by Hizbollah was Casa Apollo, a wholesale electronics store located in a shopping center in Ciudad del Este, in the Paraguay portion of the tri-border area. Casa Apollo engaged in fundraising for Hizbollah and helped transfer information to and from Hizbollah operatives. Additionally, the Galeria Page shopping center where Casa Apollo was located served as Hizbollah's central headquarters in the tri-border region, according to Argentine and American officials.⁹⁴

Argentina in June but departed a few days later for Madrid, where MOIS maintained a regional office that oversaw activities in Latin America. Iran's ambassador to Uruguay, a suspected MOIS operative, and at least four other Iranian officials visited Argentina in June. Interestingly, a number of regional Iranian ambassadors, including the ambassadors to Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay, all left the region in late June and early July, while Hizbollah operatives entered the region.

Iran used both official and unofficial cover to carry out this operation. The official cover was used for a Hizbollah operative in the tri-border region, Sheikh Bilal Mohsen Wehbi, a close contact of Mugniyah who reported to the Iranian Cultural Affairs Ministry. Regarding unofficial cover, one Iranian operative in Argentina was assigned to the Iranian government-owned Government Trade Corporation, which served as a front for Iranian intelligence. Once in Buenos Aires, this operative placed calls to the Ministry of Reconstruction, which itself was a front for the Qods Force.^w

While Rabbani handled logistics in Buenos Aires, a Colombian-born Hizbollah member, Samuel el-Reda, coordinated Hizbollah operations in Buenos Aires, including arranging the arrival of the Hizbollah operational team in the country before the attack and the logistics of their stay as well as overseeing their departure on a flight to the tri-border region two hours before the attack. Meanwhile he kept coordinators in the tri-border region informed of the progress of the Hizbollah team in Buenos Aires. Rabbani also coordinated with Hizbollah operatives in the tri-border region, including with Piloto Turismo personnel. The travel agency would also place calls to Iran, and Nasrallah himself instructed Omairi to provide Hizbollah operatives everything they needed to carry out the attack. In turn Omairi provided operatives with forged passports and identity cards, money, maps of Buenos Aires, and information on persons to contact in the Argentine capital, including at least one individual at the Iranian embassy.

The bombing itself was carried out by Ibrahim Berro, a Lebanese citizen who entered Argentina through the tri-border region using a fake European passport. The C4 explosive used in the bombing was smuggled into the country through an Iranian diplomatic pouch, and it was assembled into a bomb in the tri-border region before being sent to Buenos Aires. Overall it appears that the AMIA bombing was a meticulously planned and coordinated operation, with Rabbani and

^w Levitt⁹⁵ also noted that Iran established what it thought was a secure network to facilitate communication between agents at diplomatic posts and MOIS in Tehran. Calls from the Iranian embassy in Buenos Aires were transmitted to Department 240, a separate organization established to liaise with the Iranian Foreign Ministry and MOIS. Their communication was run through an Iranian military switchboard to avoid detection.

perhaps a few others serving as the key touch points in parallel tracks of activity performed by Iran and Hizbollah.

NOTES

- ¹ Shmuel Bar, "Iranian Terrorist Policy and 'Export of Revolution,'" (working paper presented at the 9th Annual Herzliya Conference on the Balance of Israel's National Security and Resilience, Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy, Interdisciplinary Center [IDC] Herzliya, February 2–4, 2009), 17, <http://www.herzliyaconference.org/Uploads/2903Iranian.pdf>.
- ² Dexter Filkins, "The Shadow Commander: A Reporter at Large," *The New Yorker*, September 30, 2013.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Matthew Levitt, *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of the Party of God* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013), 292.
- ⁵ Reza Kahlili, *A Time to Betray* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2010), 175, 242.
- ⁶ Bar, "Iranian Terrorist Policy and 'Export of Revolution,'" 13.
- ⁷ Magnus Ranstorp, "The Hizbollah Training Camps of Lebanon," in *The Making of a Terrorist: Recruitment, Training and Root Causes*, ed. James J. F. Forest, vol. 2 (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2005), 244.
- ⁸ Ibid., 246, 255.
- ⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰ Levitt, *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of the Party of God*, 208.
- ¹¹ Yaakov Katz and Yoaz Hendel, *Israel vs. Iran: The Shadow War* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2012), 32.
- ¹² Ronen Bergman, *The Secret War with Iran* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 66–67, 96.
- ¹³ Levitt, *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of the Party of God*, 209.
- ¹⁴ Bergman, *The Secret War with Iran*, 248–250.
- ¹⁵ Levitt, *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of the Party of God*, 208.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., 269–271.
- ¹⁷ Magnus Ranstorp, *Hizbollah in Lebanon: The Politics of the Western Hostage Crisis* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 80–81.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., 85.
- ¹⁹ Bergman, *The Secret War with Iran*, 70.
- ²⁰ Kahlili, *A Time to Betray*, 160.
- ²¹ Bergman, *The Secret War with Iran*, 258.
- ²² Ranstorp, *Hizbollah in Lebanon*, 70.
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Ranstorp, "The Hizbollah Training Camps of Lebanon," 248.
- ²⁷ Ranstorp, *Hizbollah in Lebanon*, 70.
- ²⁸ Bergman, *The Secret War with Iran*, 91, 93.
- ²⁹ Ibid., 374–375.
- ³⁰ Kahlili, *A Time to Betray*, 164.
- ³¹ Ibid., 174.

- ³² Levitt, *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of the Party of God*, 288.
- ³³ Ranstorp, *Hezbollah in Lebanon*, 82.
- ³⁴ Bar, “Iranian Terrorist Policy and ‘Export of Revolution,’” 14.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*
- ³⁶ William Buchta, “Iran’s Security Sector: An Overview.” Working Paper No. 146, Geneva Center for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, Geneva, 2004, 13.
- ³⁷ Ranstorp, “The Hizballah Training Camps of Lebanon,” 246, 253.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 253.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁰ Ranstorp, *Hezbollah in Lebanon*, 119.
- ⁴¹ Levitt, *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of the Party of God*, 119, 123.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, 121.
- ⁴³ Jeffrey Goldberg, “In the Party of God: Hezbollah Sets up Operations in South America and the United States,” *The New Yorker*, October 28, 2002.
- ⁴⁴ Ranstorp, *Hezbollah in Lebanon*, 82.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 83.
- ⁴⁷ Filkins, “The Shadow Commander.”
- ⁴⁸ Dexter Filkins, “After Syria: A Reporter at Large,” *The New Yorker*, February 25, 2013.
- ⁴⁹ H. E. Chehabi, “Iran and Lebanon in the Revolutionary Decade,” in *Distant Relations: Iran and Lebanon in the Last 500 Years*, ed. H. E. Chehabi (London: I. B. Taurus & Co., 2006), 213.
- ⁵⁰ Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Raymond A. Hinnebusch, *Syria and Iran: Middle Powers in a Penetrated Regional System* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 88–95.
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- ⁵² *Ibid.*, 111–112.
- ⁵³ Bergman, *The Secret War with Iran*, 255.
- ⁵⁴ Ranstorp, “The Hizballah Training Camps of Lebanon,” 254.
- ⁵⁵ Ranstorp, *Hezbollah in Lebanon*, 115.
- ⁵⁶ Kahlili, *A Time to Betray*, 126.
- ⁵⁷ Abbas William Samii, “A Stable Structure on Shifting Sands: Assessing the Hizballah-Iran-Syria Relationship,” *Middle East Journal* 62, no. 1 (2008): 38.
- ⁵⁸ Ranstorp, *Hezbollah in Lebanon*, 71.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 121, 122.
- ⁶¹ Bergman, *The Secret War with Iran*, 255.
- ⁶² Robert Baer, *The Devil We Know: Dealing with the New Iranian Superpower* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2008), 186–190.
- ⁶³ Ranstorp, *Hezbollah in Lebanon*, 127.
- ⁶⁴ Judith Harik, “Hezbollah’s Public and Social Services and Iran,” in *Distant Relations: Iran and Lebanon in the Last 500 Years*, ed. H. E. Chehabi (London: I. B. Taurus & Co., 2006), 271.
- ⁶⁵ Ranstorp, *Hezbollah in Lebanon*, 121, 124.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 128.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 81, 126.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 126–127.

- ⁶⁹ Marcelo Martinez Burgos and Alberto Nisman, (Buenos Aires: Investigations Unit of the Office of the Attorney General, 2006), <http://www.peaceandtolerance.org/2015/02/04/apr-releases-alberto-nisman-report-iranian-bombing/>.
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- ⁷² Levitt, *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of the Party of God*, 12.
- ⁷³ Harik, "Hizballah's Public and Social Services and Iran," 273.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid., 275.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid., 275–276.
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- ⁸¹ Marc R. DeVore, "Exploring the Iran-Hezbollah Relationship: A Case Study of How State Sponsorship Affects Terrorist Group Decision-Making," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 6, no. 4–5 (2012): 94.
- ⁸² Harik, "Hizballah's Public and Social Services and Iran," 282.
- ⁸³ "Hezbollah Heartlands Recover with Iran's Help," *BBC News*, June 12, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-22878198>.
- ⁸⁴ Bergman, *The Secret War with Iran*, 255.
- ⁸⁵ Ibid., 257.
- ⁸⁶ Ibid.
- ⁸⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid., 256.
- ⁸⁹ Ibid., 256–257.
- ⁹⁰ Ibid., 256.
- ⁹¹ Katz and Hendel, *Israel vs. Iran: The Shadow War*, 129.
- ⁹² Levitt, *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of the Party of God*, 75–116.
- ⁹³ Ibid., 78–79.
- ⁹⁴ Ibid., 82, 85.
- ⁹⁵ Ibid., 92.

CHAPTER 6.
CONCLUSION

Has Iran's sponsorship of Hizbollah been successful ever since the enterprise commenced in 1982? Clearly, as the quote by Khameneh'i in the introduction attests, the partnership has been successful in terms of forcing Israel from Lebanon and in enhancing the credibility of Iran's deterrent capability against both Israel and the United States. Furthermore, one can perhaps claim that Hizbollah in some sense has "graduated," since Iran used the group to train Iraqi militias after the deposing of Saddam Hussein in 2003. In fact, Hizbollah developed a dedicated division for this purpose, Unit 3800, and Levitt noted that in addition to offering a basic training course covering paramilitary skills and basic weapons training, Hizbollah, along with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), also offered a master trainer program and an elite Special Forces course for elite Iraqi recruits.¹ This is a far cry from the 1980s, when the IRGC managed Hizbollah's intelligence planning section.² Indeed, Iran appeared to be using Hizbollah in Iraq as part of an effort to repeat the success it had in Lebanon, since in October 2003 Israeli intelligence noted that Hizbollah intended to replicate itself in Iraqi soil by attempting (at Iranian instruction) to build up an organization in its own image.³

As noted in the report, a key factor underlying the success of the partnership is the high degree of ideological affinity between the two parties, as evidenced by Hizbollah's acceptance of the notion of *velayat-e faqih*. This ideological closeness has even led to close collaboration between the two in enhancing Hizbollah's soft power abroad, as an October 2010 study commissioned by the United States military noted that Iran has offered scholarships to African students as part of a "greater diplomatic effort to simultaneously promote the broader Hizbollah agenda in Africa and undermine Western influence and credibility across the continent."⁴

Nonetheless, despite the close ties facilitated by a common ideology, the relationship has at times experienced various "principal-agent" issues. Recall that this type of relationship is one in which one actor, the principal (in this case Iran), delegates a task to another actor, the agent (i.e., Hizbollah), which is given some authority by the principal to act on its behalf. The task delegated by Iran to Hizbollah was to challenge Israeli and American interests in the Middle East and raise Iran's profile among Arab countries in the region. Additionally, it sought to achieve these goals while maintaining plausible deniability. One 1996 report by Israeli military intelligence noted that "Iran uses terror against Israel rarely and rationally, out of an awareness of the grave diplomatic damage which it could cause itself if its role were to be exposed," and that it usually attacked Israel indirectly, through Imad Mugnyiah (and, by extension, Hizbollah).⁵

Iran certainly collaborated quite closely with Mugnyiah. As one Israeli military intelligence document from 1995 noted:

Iran is aided by Hizballah's operational infrastructure abroad, which is based mainly on Shi'ite expatriates through the Islamic Jihad apparatus of Imad Mugnyiah, for the purpose of attacks. It is to be noted that recently links have been tightened between Iranian intelligence and Mugnyiah's apparatus, which helps Iran locate candidates from Islamic and Palestinian organizations for training in Iran or Lebanon. It appears that Imad Mugnyiah has a role in the organization of this training.⁶

But tensions in the relationship between sponsor and proxy centered on the status of Mugnyiah, as there are indications that the Iranians believed that Mugnyiah wielded too much power, which led them to divide his responsibilities among several individuals after his death.⁷ This power was evident during the later stages of the hostage crisis, as the US Central Intelligence Agency concluded that the Iranians had to bargain with Mugnyiah to secure the release of certain hostages.⁸ Additionally, Baer indicated that the Iranians were frustrated with Mugnyiah's penchant for "freelancing," or conducting operations without prior approval from Tehran.⁹ This frustration appears to have been mutual, as Levitt noted that Mugnyiah sought to establish a degree of independence from Iran and that one Israeli intelligence official noted in mid-2008 (after the death of Mugnyiah) that "Hezbollah does not always do what Iran wants."¹⁰

At other times Iran has been frustrated with Nasrallah. Katz and Hendel noted Iranian discontent with Nasrallah after the 2006 war with Israel, which led Iran to make a number of (unspecified) structural changes to the group, after which Nasrallah had to seek Iranian permission to undertake certain operations.¹¹ This frustration appears to have been related to Hizbollah's overreliance on Iranian-supplied missiles in the 2006 war, which led to the depletion of Hizbollah's stock of missiles and to a greater Iranian desire to determine how its weapons are used by the group (to avoid the depletion of the arsenal) (Dr. Matthew Levitt, personal communication). The changes instituted by Iran appear to have restricted the group's room to maneuver, as one Israel Defense Forces official in 2009 noted that "Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah's authority is somewhat restricted, and whenever he pops his head out

of a bunker he sees an Iranian on top of him...nowadays, most of the control over the group is from Iran.”^{12,a}

Another manifestation of principal-agent issues is the reported failures of the two parties to deconflict operations. Levitt noted that as Hizbollah operatives were preparing for a bombing in Bangkok in late 2011 and early 2012, they were not aware that the Qods Force was preparing an operation there, and the latter was apparently unaware that Hizbollah was using the Thai capital as an explosives distribution hub.¹⁴ Additionally, the Iranians were apparently unaware that Hizbollah was planning to carry out an attack, which was ultimately successful, against Israeli tourists in Bulgaria in July 2012, with Suleimani reportedly asking his subordinates “Does anyone know about this?”¹⁵ to which the answer was no.

Interestingly, the choice to attack Israeli tourists in Bulgaria appears to have been the outcome of a reevaluation of Hizbollah’s role in Iran’s shadow war against Israeli, American, British, and Gulf interests and a strategic overhaul of Hizbollah’s external operations wing in early 2010 after a string of failed international operations by the group.¹⁶ Juxtaposed against successful Israeli efforts to disrupt Iran’s nuclear program at this time (which included successful cyber attacks and assassinations of Iranian scientists involved in Iran’s nuclear program), Iranian officials concluded that Hizbollah needed to reinvigorate its external operations wing (which had been deemphasized after the September 11 attacks to avoid being targeted by the United States),¹⁷ with the group being assigned the role of attacking soft targets, specifically Israeli tourists, while the Qods Force was assigned the task of attacking American, Israeli, British, and Gulf states’ interests.¹⁸

Undoubtedly, the assignment of more difficult targets to the Qods Force is an indication that, despite Hizbollah’s noticeable progression since its founding, the recent string of failures (such as botched efforts in Turkey in September 2009 and Jordan in 2010) has consigned the group to a secondary role in the partnership, at least until the group restores the capability of its international operations wing. These changes are likely to have motivated the comments of the US Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, who indicated in February 2012 that the partnership between Iran and Hizbollah was “a partnership arrangement...with the Iranians as the senior partner.”¹⁹

^a Iran has always had a measure of control over Hizbollah’s targeting and the launching of operations. Quoting a US Federal Bureau of Investigation official who served as the chief of the agency’s Iran-Hizbollah unit, Levitt noted that Hizbollah attacks abroad have to be sanctioned, ordered, and approved by Tehran. Additionally, Levitt noted that Mugnyah had to seek Iranian approval to attack US interests.¹³

Overall, from an Iranian perspective Hizbollah has clearly had a positive impact, as it enhances Iran's ability to credibly deter Israel through actions that fall short of a critical threshold that would draw a conventional response from Israel. Yet one must be careful in drawing conclusions regarding the utility of sponsoring proxy groups. Success must be judged relative to the goals for which groups are established. While Hizbollah's deterrence of Israel is notable and its success in evicting the Israelis from Lebanon is noteworthy, both of these achievements represent goals that are, relatively speaking, achievable. As the Soviets in Afghanistan, the Americans in Vietnam, and the Indians in Sri Lanka came to realize, conducting a counterinsurgency campaign in a foreign land is a very difficult undertaking and often leads to failure. In retrospect, such conflicts (particularly the first two) arguably did not involve truly vital national interests that reached the level of, say, existential concerns.

However, the existence of Israel is at stake to the extent to which Hizbollah, with Iranian backing, does indeed attempt to "liberate" Palestine and march on Jerusalem. Similarly, within a domestic context, the secular nature of the Lebanese political system was at stake to the degree to which Hizbollah sought to overthrow the existing political order and establish a clerical regime in Lebanon. Hence, the sponsorship of proxy groups may be less successful in terms of achieving desired outcomes if the goals of the partnership necessarily infringe upon the vital interests of opposing parties, such as the existence of targeted groups and countries or the very nature of political and social systems.

NOTES

- ¹ Matthew Levitt, *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of the Party of God* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013), 302.
- ² *Ibid.*, 30.
- ³ *Ibid.*, 298.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, 266.
- ⁵ Ronen Bergman, *The Secret War with Iran* (New York: Free Press, 2007), 67.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 241.
- ⁷ Yaakov Katz and Yoaz Hendel, *Israel vs. Iran: The Shadow War* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2012), 32.
- ⁸ Levitt, *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of the Party of God*, 35.
- ⁹ Robert Baer, *The Devil We Know: Dealing with the New Iranian Superpower* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2008), 162.
- ¹⁰ Matthew Levitt, "Hizballah and the Qods Force in Iran's Shadow War with the West," *Policy Focus* 123 (January 2013), 2.
- ¹¹ Katz and Hendel, *Israel vs. Iran: The Shadow War*, 31.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 31–32.

¹³ Levitt, *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of the Party of God*, 30, 188.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 368.

¹⁵ Dexter Filkins, “The Shadow Commander: A Reporter at Large,” *The New Yorker*, September 30, 2013.

¹⁶ Levitt, *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of the Party of God*, 360–361.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 359.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 361.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

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