



# **IRAN, HIZBULLAH, HAMAS AND THE GLOBAL JIHAD**

**A NEW CONFLICT PARADIGM FOR THE WEST**

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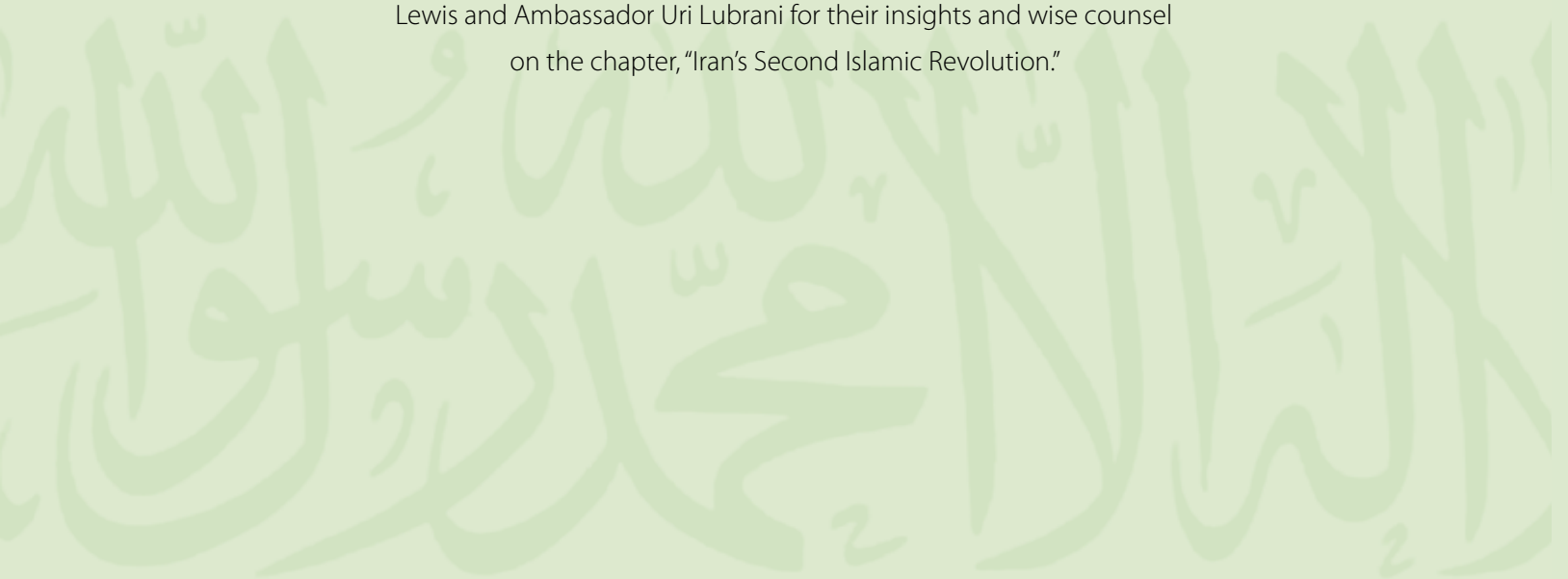
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*Hizbullah supporter with poster of Hizbullah leader Sheik Hassan Nasrallah (right), Syrian President Bashar Assad (center), and Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (left), during "Victory over Israel" rally, in Beirut, September 22, 2006.*

# Introduction

## Dr. Dore Gold

The Second Lebanon War of July 2006 represented a major turning-point in the Middle East, redefining the issues and interests of the states across the region. Up until this time, the conventional wisdom throughout much of the Western alliance had been that Israel's territorial conflicts along its disputed boundaries are one of the principal sources of Middle Eastern instability. This was the message that U.S. and European diplomats constantly heard from their counterparts in the Arab world. As a consequence, Western policy-makers, particularly in Europe, stressed the urgency of settling the Palestinian issue, while playing down the need to confront, even diplomatically, the challenge posed by Iran.

There are important circles in America that have suggested adopting this line of policy as well. It was indeed one of the principal conclusions of the December 2006 Baker-Hamilton report which asserted that "The United States will not be able to achieve its goals in the Middle East unless the United States deals directly with the Arab-Israeli Conflict."<sup>1</sup> At the same time that the report detailed possible Israeli concessions, it proposed that the U.S. and its allies "should actively engage Iran."<sup>2</sup>

This combination of Israeli territorial withdrawals with a policy of accommodation with some of its most dangerous adversaries encapsulated an old policy paradigm for the Middle East which Baker-Hamilton essentially tried to rejuvenate. But reality had changed across the region. The Second Lebanon War – and its

southern front in the Gaza Strip – was launched precisely from territories from which Israel had withdrawn unilaterally (Lebanon in 2000 and Gaza in 2005).

It could be argued that the Palestinians' territorial grievance against Israel had not been fully addressed by the Gaza disengagement, as the West Bank was still under Israeli control. But if, indeed, the territorial issue had been uppermost in the minds of the Hamas leadership that came to power in early 2006, then one might have expected it to transfer its conflict with Israel to the West Bank, while leaving post-disengagement Gaza completely quiet. Clearly, the Palestinian leadership did not adopt that logic and instead used the Gaza Strip as a launching pad for constant rocket barrages into southern Israel.

Hamas did not seek a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but rather sought an Islamic state to replace Israel and take over territories more broadly in much of the Levant. What was driving Hizbullah and Hamas were not local considerations alone, but chiefly the strategic ambitions of their primary state sponsor, the Islamic Republic of Iran. Flush with a steady increase in its oil revenues that rose from \$32 billion in 2004 to \$45.6 billion in 2005, and expectations for 2006 of \$60 billion in earnings, Iran is making a bid for regional hegemony across the Middle East.<sup>3</sup>

For that reason, the implications of the Second Lebanon War went far beyond Israel and its immediate neighbors. In truth, the war has probably been misnamed

and should be called the First Israeli-Iranian War. As such it was only a small subset of a much larger effort on the part of the Iranian regime to seek regional domination through Arab Shiite communities that it hoped to penetrate and incite, through groups like Hizbullah and Tehran's own Revolutionary Guards.

This has led to a major transformation in the threat perceptions of Israel's neighbors. It was King Abdullah II of Jordan who first sounded the alarm in December 2004 when he spoke of an emerging "Shiite crescent" that would encircle the Sunni Arab world, beginning in Iran, moving through the newly empowered Shiite majority in Iraq, then to Syria whose ruling minority Alawi elites are viewed as true Muslims by some Shiite clerics, and finally reaching Lebanon whose Shiite proportion of the population is growing.<sup>4</sup>

But this is only part of the threat the Arab world perceives. The Arab Gulf states themselves have substantial Shiite communities, as in Kuwait, where they account for 30 percent of the population.<sup>5</sup> The United Arab Emirates has a 16 percent Shiite component.<sup>6</sup> Bahrain has an absolute Shiite majority which has been

estimated to reach 75 percent of its population.<sup>7</sup> In Saudi Arabia, the three million Shiites are a minority, but they are close to constituting a majority in the strategically sensitive Eastern Province where most of the kingdom's oil resources are concentrated. There is also a substantial Shiite population in Yemen which while following the "fiver" tradition of succession from Ali as opposed to the "twelver Shiism" of Iran, nonetheless, has been a target of Iranian political-military activism.

Most Shiites are not ready to overthrow Sunni regimes. But if Iran is undertaking a second Islamic Revolution and is seeking to radically expand its influence through the radicalization of these communities, the stakes for the Middle East and the West are enormous. President Husni Mubarak further fueled the speculation about a growing Sunni-Shiite rift across the Arab world in April 2006 when he remarked on the Dubai-based al-Arabiya television network: "The Shiites are always loyal to Iran. Most of them are loyal to Iran and not to the countries in which they live."<sup>8</sup>

It can be safely assumed that if Arab states were once concerned with the destabilizing effects of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, then today their focus has completely changed and is oriented instead towards Iran. This shift is also one of the by-products of the 2003 Iraq War, which exacerbated tensions between Sunnis and Shiites within Iraq as they attacked one another's mosques, and across the entire Middle East and South Asia, as well.

This Sunni-Shiite rift, according to recent experience, can move in very different directions. There are indeed signs of a widening split in the Islamic world with increased tensions between the two communities, not only in Iraq but also in Lebanon. In fact, there are recent reports that Sunni Muslim clerics in Saudi Arabia have been charging Shiites with seeking to convert Sunnis to



*Hizbullah rocket launcher photographed by Israeli air force during the Second Lebanon War, July 23, 2006.*



Shiite Islam. Similar concerns have been voiced in Egypt and Jordan. Given this charged environment, it is easy to understand how some Sunni leaders have become preoccupied with Shiite assertiveness as a new existential threat.

Yet Iran has also demonstrated for many years its ability to work with Sunni Islamists. Its relations with Palestinian Sunni groups like Islamic Jihad and Hamas are only one example. Its Lebanese proxy, Hizbullah, reached out to Sudan's Hasan Turabi in the 1990s. During the Second Lebanon War, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood gave full public backing to Hizbullah, even while Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi clerics condemned the Shiite group.

Finally, as the 9/11 Commission Report disclosed, this Iranian cooperation with Sunni radicals included al-Qaeda: "Iran facilitated the transit of al-Qaeda members into and out of Afghanistan before 9/11, and...some of these were future 9/11 hijackers."<sup>9</sup> The report adds that "al-Qaeda members received advice and training from Hizbullah."<sup>10</sup> After U.S. forces vanquished the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, many in the al-Qaeda network obtained refuge and assistance in Iran.

It was ironic that Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who would later head al-Qaeda in Iraq and slaughter hundreds of Iraqi Shiites, was one of those who benefited from Iranian assistance after 2001. In short, those who assert that in the world of international terrorism, organizations cannot cooperate if they come from widely different religions and ideological backgrounds, are simply wrong. Militant Sunni and Shiite groups may compete and even kill each other's operatives, but their potential cooperation should not be ruled out by analysts.

There is an additional new factor affecting regional considerations in Israel and the Sunni Arab world. The prospect that renewed Iranian adventurism will be launched under a future nuclear umbrella poses a fright-

ening challenge to these states, for Iranian sponsorship of international terrorism has not only affected Lebanon. The 1996 Khobar Towers attack in Saudi Arabia that killed 19 U.S. Air Force servicemen was executed by "Saudi Hizbullah" under Iranian direction.

These changes in both the Israeli-Palestinian and wider regional arenas are nothing short of revolutionary for future developments in the Middle East. The whole paradigm of diplomacy that has informed U.S., European and Israeli diplomats since the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference requires serious rethinking; it certainly does not need to be uncritically reasserted.

This kind of reassessment is particularly necessary, even regardless of Iran, for each of the past peace process strategies failed miserably. Israel tried the Oslo process for a decade and received suicide bombings in the heart of its cities. Then it tried Gaza disengagement and received a heavily rearmed Islamist presence that exploited the opening of the Philadelphia route along the Egyptian border to re-arm on a scale not previously witnessed. The West, which had enthusiastically backed Gaza disengagement, received a new sanctuary for al-Qaeda in return.

The essays in this monograph expand on these developments and also seek to chart new courses of action. What is clear is that the policies that did not bring peace in 1993 or in 2005 could seriously undermine regional stability if they are blindly repeated in 2007. Israeli pullbacks at the present time in the West Bank will fuel jihadism among the Palestinians rather than reduce its intensity.

Moreover, additional withdrawals will not reduce the aggressive hostility of the present Iranian leadership, but only reinforce its sense of inner conviction that history is behind it. Should Iranian strategy in Lebanon succeed, there are plenty of other Middle Eastern countries that could provide a useful sanctuary for the militant activities of other Hizbullah offshoots.

The lessons of past errors point to several necessary components of policy for the future which must be briefly noted:

### **1. The Vital Importance of Defensible Borders**

Were the West to press Israel to relinquish its control of the strategic Jordan Valley, then the very same weaponry that is pouring into the Gaza Strip at present, and has reached southern Lebanon in the past, would find its way to the hills of the West Bank. This would enable a large concentration of short-range rockets and shoulder-fired, surface-to-air missiles to be deployed at the outskirts of Israel's major cities. It would also stimulate the efforts of global terrorist networks to base themselves in Jordan, which they would try to transform into a logistics center like the one they have built in Sinai to service Gaza.

One clear-cut result of this development would be an enhanced threat to the internal stability of Jordan itself. With the growth of Sunni jihadism in western Iraq, al-Qaeda offshoots have already tried to transplant themselves to Jordanian soil in cities like Irbid. An Israeli vacuum in the Jordan Valley would undeniably acceler-



*Israeli woman stands in her living room in the southern Israeli city of Sderot after her home was hit by a rocket fired by Palestinians in Gaza, November 26, 2006.*

ate this trend, critically undermining the security of a key Arab state that has been an important Western ally in the war on terrorism. For this reason, Israel must continue to insist on its right to defensible borders in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 242 and the April 14, 2004 letter from President George W. Bush to former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

### **2. Preparing for an Eventual Western Withdrawal from Iraq**

At some point in the near future, the U.S. and its coalition partners will disengage from Iraq. Despite the enormous efforts the U.S. and its allies have made to stabilize the country, there are multiple forces at work today that will seek to exploit a U.S. withdrawal to serve their political agendas. Sunni jihadists will present a Western pullout as their own victory and will seek to deepen their influence in western Iraq. A process of transferring their military efforts to neighboring Sunni-dominated countries, which already began in 2006, is likely to accelerate. This had been proposed by bin Laden's deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, in a message to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi that was intercepted by U.S. intelligence in 2005.

There is also an Iranian side to any Western pullout from Iraq. Tehran will seek to build up its influence with the Shiite-dominated government in Baghdad, Arab Shiite and Persian Shiite differences notwithstanding. Using its newfound status in Iraq, Iran will be well placed to build up a combined Iranian-Iraqi coalition against other Middle Eastern states and project its power against Israel from the east, using Hizbullah-like units. Iran can be expected to reinforce Hamas in Syria for operations against Jordan, as well. How these developments unfold will depend on whether the Western disengagement from Iraq is precipitous or occurs only after the country is for the most part stabilized.

### **3. The Failure of the UN and International Security Mechanisms**

What stood out in 2006 was how the UN was totally incapable of halting the regional deterioration that afflicted the Middle East. The UN Security Council, neutralized by the lack of consensus among the Permanent Five members, would not confront Iran directly over its violation of the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, despite the findings of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

While adopting UN Security Council Resolution 1559 in September 2004, that called for “the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias,” the UN subsequently took no measures against Hizbullah and its Iranian backers, thereby contributing to the outbreak of the Second Lebanon War in July 2006. Resolution 1701 of August 2006, prohibiting the re-supply of Hizbullah after the war, has been grossly violated by Syria and Iran by December 2006, but the UN took no action in response.

### **4. The Changed Circumstances for Arab-Israeli Diplomacy**

It is notable that, in anticipation of a U.S. pullout from Iraq, Saudi Arabia has begun erecting a new security fence along the long Iraqi-Saudi border. Israel and many of the Arab states will find that they share many mutual threats and can even increase their security cooperation. This should be a quiet exercise without any high profile ceremonies in Washington. Too much has been made of joint Israeli-Saudi interests after the Second Lebanon War that could lead to a breakthrough in the peace process. It should be remembered that both countries have sharp differences over the future of Jerusalem, Palestinian borders, and the issue of Hamas. Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states certainly do not need Israeli territorial concessions in order to decide to defend themselves against threats of Iranian aggression.

Nevertheless, both Israel and Saudi Arabia share a common interest in a stable Jordan that does not become a springboard for radical Sunni or Shiite groups seeking to infiltrate their borders. These shared interests and others should be communicated between the two countries. A new Middle East security process could also bring about a revolution in Jordanian-Palestinian relations, particularly in a post-Hamas West Bank. For Jordan, in the past, the primary internal threat came from its large Palestinian population. Presently, Jordan has to cope with radical Islamic movements that have penetrated populations that have been the bedrock of the Hashemite regime, like the Transjordanian Bedouin (Abu Musab al-Zarqawi’s group).

If Palestinians reached out to Jordan to form a security community against the mutual threats they face, then such a development would have implications for the kind of political structures they might choose to share, once the renewal of an Arab-Israeli negotiating process becomes possible. But a Middle East security process must precede any future peace process for these kinds of alliances to occur. Any Israeli-Palestinian understandings that are brokered under present circumstances will be completely undermined while the wave of Iranian destabilization efforts is still underway across the Middle East.

Much of the same analysis can be applied to the Syrian front. A decade ago when Western diplomats considered how to stabilize Lebanon, they often looked to Syria as the key for halting military deterioration between Israel and Hizbullah. Indeed, after Operation Grapes of Wrath in April 1996, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher brokered an Israeli-Lebanese cease-fire through Damascus. But today, Iran has replaced Syria as the dominant external power in Lebanon. Even if Israel and Syria reached a territorial settlement over the Golan Heights, Damascus could not guarantee the dismantling

of Hezbollah in Lebanon or the stabilization of the Israeli-Lebanese border. Iran has become too powerful a factor in the regional politics of the Middle East.

## 5. Countering Iran's Quest for Hegemony

This new situation represents an enormous challenge for the Western alliance. During the last century, the U.S. defined its national interest as preventing the emergence of a hegemonial power that would dominate the continent of Europe. This provided the geo-strategic underpinning for U.S. involvement in the First World War, the Second World War and the Cold War. It was the strategic logic behind the emergence of NATO. Today, Europe

has been for the most part stabilized and the primary threats to international peace and security emanate from the Middle East, in general, and the hegemonial ambitions of Iran, in particular. But the West lacks a strategic consensus in this regard.

What is evident, in any case, is that the transformation of the Middle East represented by the Second Lebanon War requires totally new political thinking. Strategies that did not work in the 1990s have even less of a chance of producing positive results today. Diplomacy will only work if the emergence of a new regional paradigm is recognized and worked into the future policies proposed for stabilizing the Middle East.



*Hizbullah supporter with poster of Hizbullah leader Sheik Hassan Nasrallah (right), Syrian President Bashar Assad (center), and Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (left) during "Victory over Israel" rally in Beirut, September 22, 2006.*

## Notes

1. James A. Baker and Lee H. Hamilton, Co-Chairs, *The Iraq Study Group* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), p. 54.
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7. Vali Nasr, "When the Shiites Rise," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2006, p. 65.
8. Egyptian President Husni Mubarak: Shiites Are More Loyal to Iran Than to Their Own Countries," MEMRI-TV, April 8, 2006.
9. *9/11 Commission Report* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), p. 241.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 240.



An Iranian girl shouts slogans to support Iran's nuclear program at a speech by President Ahmadinejad in Robotkarim, Iran, October 11, 2006.



*Rescue workers evacuate a seriously wounded man from a building directly hit by a rocket fired from Lebanon in the northern Israeli city of Haifa, July 17, 2006.*

# The Second Lebanon War: From Territory to Ideology

## Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Moshe Yaalon

### Introduction

If there remains doubt over the underlying reasons for the ongoing violence in the Middle East, the Second Lebanon War is one of the clearest illustrations in many years that “the Middle East conflict” does not stem from Israel’s “occupation of Arab or Palestinian lands.” This long-standing “root cause” argument has been popular in many international circles and even among some quarters in Israel. The strategic assumption has been that, since 1967, the Middle East’s myriad problems can be traced to Israel’s “occupation” of lands from which the Jewish state was attacked: the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon.

But the summer 2006 wars – that included 4,228<sup>1</sup> Iranian- and Syrian-sponsored rocket assaults against Israel’s home front and the kidnapping of one IDF soldier by Hamas and two IDF soldiers by Hizbullah – is perhaps the most recent evidence that this argument continues to be fundamentally flawed.<sup>2</sup> The two-front war opened against Israel in 2006 – first by Hamas from Gaza on June 26, 2006, and then by Hizbullah across Israel’s northern border on July 12, 2006 – was launched from lands that are not under Israeli occupation. Israel had withdrawn unilaterally in both cases, from Gaza in September 2005 and previously from southern Lebanon in May 2000. Furthermore, the assessment that Hizbullah’s assaults stemmed from unresolved border disputes over the Shaba Farms is unfounded. Lebanon’s Hizbullah as well as Syrian claim-

ants deny Israel’s existence as a Jewish sovereign state within any borders.<sup>3</sup>

In fact, the summer 2006 assaults against Israel are not remarkable in their lacking any clear territorial pretext. Since the 1920s there has been an unrelenting Arab Muslim rejection of any Jewish sovereign entity in the Middle East region, despite the international popularity of the notion in recent years that ending Israel’s presence in the West Bank and Gaza and solving Palestinian refugee and border conflicts would spawn regional peace and stability. Quite remarkably, on September 19, 2006, only a month after the UN-brokered cease-fire ended Iran’s two-front proxy assault against Israel via radical Islamic groups (Hamas and Hizbullah), UN Secretary General Kofi Annan told the General Assembly at the opening of its 61st session: “As long as the Security Council is unable to resolve the nearly 40-year (Israeli) occupation and confiscation of Arab land, so long will the UN’s efforts to resolve other conflicts be resisted including those in Iraq and Afghanistan.”<sup>4</sup>

Notwithstanding Annan’s fundamental misassessment, there are clearly different “root causes” that have been and currently are the main obstacles to Middle East peace and stability – namely, a regional Jihad led by Iran, enabled by Syria and the radical Islamists that both states sponsor. In fact, according to Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and Iran’s Syrian partners, the Second Lebanon War launched by Iran’s Hizbullah proxy was a hostile

probe of U.S. reflexes via the engagement of Israel, which for Iran and Syria is a direct extension of Washington's power and influence in the Middle East.<sup>5</sup> To be sure, the Second Lebanon War was not launched against Israel for any specific national grievance.<sup>6</sup>

In fact, Iran's goals in the Lebanon theatre go well beyond destroying Israel. Iran and Syria have for years used Hizbullah as a terrorist arm of their respective foreign policies against Western regional interests. Hizbullah's 1983 suicide attack that killed 241 U.S. Marines near Beirut is one example. Its 1985 hijacking in Beirut of TWA Flight 847 and murder of a U.S. Navy diver is another.<sup>7</sup> The 1996 attack by Hizbullah's Saudi branch, *Hizbullah al-Hejaz*, on behalf of the Iranians that killed 19 U.S. Army personnel at Saudi Arabia's Khobar Towers is yet another case.<sup>8</sup>

The Iran-Syrian-Hizbullah axis then is a partnership whose fundamental objective is to project Iranian power and influence across the region from Tehran, through Baghdad, via Damascus into Lebanon in order to achieve regional hegemony. Iran's offensive on two fronts, against both U.S. and Iraqi government forces in Iraq as well as against Israel, a key U.S. ally, reflects Tehran's strategic interest in neutering America's regional influence as a prelude to defeating the West. Syria, Iran's Arab ally and regional facilitator, has hitched its future to Ahmadinejad's strategy of becoming the region's hegemonic power under the protection of a nuclear umbrella as it marches toward a possible nuclear confrontation with the U.S. and the West.

The more the United States and its allies hesitate to confront Iran's current regional threat under a possible nuclear umbrella, the more emboldened Jihadi confidence becomes. The December 6, 2006, Iraq Study Group (Baker-Hamilton) Report proposal recommend-

ing a "softer" diplomatic approach via a U.S.-led diplomatic engagement of Iran and Syria, and Israel's reengagement of the Assad regime and the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority, may paradoxically accelerate the process to military confrontation with Iran. Rather, full diplomatic and economic isolation, and, if necessary, military defeat of Iran and

Syria, would pave a more secure road for the Middle East and the international state system.

**According to Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and Iran's Syrian partners, the Second Lebanon War was launched by Hizbullah – Iran's proxy – as a hostile probe of U.S. reflexes via the engagement of Israel, which for Iran and Syria is a direct extension of Washington in the Middle East.**

### **The New Islamist War**

The root cause of the Second Lebanon War was neither the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 nor the Israeli "occupation" of the disputed territories of the West Bank and Gaza following Israel's defensive war in 1967. Rather, it can be traced to 1979 when Iranian revolutionaries began to inspire and later to actively direct and finance Islamic radicals throughout the world. They galvanized the leaders of Hizbullah and Hamas, and inspired other Jihadis, including PLO leader Yasser Arafat, who was one of the first Arab leaders to visit the newly triumphant Ayatollah Khomeini soon after the 1979 Iranian takeover of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran.<sup>9</sup>

Today, despite the deployment of thousands of UNIFIL and Lebanese forces following Hizbullah's reluc-



tant agreement to yield to UN Security Council Resolution 1701, southern Lebanon is still essentially a Hizbullah-ruled province of Iran. Hizbullah has maintained its weapons caches and continues to receive truckloads of short- and long-range missiles and anti-tank weaponry from Syria. IDF Intelligence Assessment Chief Brig. Gen. Yossi Baidatz noted in October 2006 that the army also has proof that the smuggling of weapons from Syria to Lebanon continues with the knowledge of Damascus.<sup>10</sup> Hizbullah's underground networks of tunnels and bunkers are still operating despite the presence of UNIFIL and Lebanese armed forces south of the Litani River. Hiz-

bullah is not hiding its postwar intentions. On October 12, 2006, Nabi Beri, Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, leader of the Shiite Amal party, and a Hizbullah interlocutor, said, "Hizbullah will remain armed and fully operational in southern Lebanon, despite the newly deployed UN forces. The UNIFIL presence will not hinder Hizbullah defensive operations. The resistance doesn't need to fly its flags high to operate. It's a guerrilla movement; it operates among the people."<sup>11</sup>

For its part, Iran invested some one to two hundred million dollars per year in Hizbullah war preparations for a total of between one and two billion dollars as of July 2006.<sup>12</sup> Iran also maintains a representative office in Lebanon for nearly every one of its major government ministries including intelligence, social welfare, housing, transportation, and infrastructure.<sup>13</sup>

Iran's financial and operational assistance and training of Hizbullah terrorists peaked in recent years. That

was evident during the summer 2006 war against Israel. Hizbullah was very well equipped with a wide variety of short, medium and long-range Syrian and Iranian rockets, and highly sophisticated weaponry including a generous supply of anti-tank ordinance.<sup>14</sup> Up to 250 of

the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' (IRGC) best trainers were on the ground in Lebanon assisting Hizbullah units.<sup>15</sup> According to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), the Iranian C802 radar-guided missile that hit an Israeli warship during the first week of the war was launched from Lebanon by members of the IRGC. Iran has also trained up to 3,000 Hizbullah fighters in Tehran since 2004, including nearly all mid- and

senior-level Hizbullah officers.<sup>16</sup>

Further south, Iran also offers financial and operational support to the Hamas-led government in Palestinian-controlled Gaza. Palestinian terrorists have received Iranian weapons, technological know-how, and money, as evidenced by the \$50-100 million commitment Iran made at the end of a terror summit in Tehran on April 14-17, 2006.

Moreover, between August and October 2006, nearly twenty tons of weaponry including anti-tank and anti-aircraft rockets was smuggled from Egyptian Sinai, under the noses of the Egyptian authorities, into the Gaza Strip.<sup>17</sup> Numerous reported meetings between Hamas political bureau leader Khaled Mashaal and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, both during and in advance of the recent Lebanon war and immediately following the January 2006 Hamas victory in the Palestinian elections, were previews of this dangerous alliance.

**Iran's offensive on two fronts, against both U.S. and Iraqi government forces in Iraq as well as against Israel, a key U.S. ally, reflects Tehran's strategic interest in neutering American regional influence as a prelude to defeating the West.**

Concerns over the relationship between Iran and Hamas are well-founded. On December 11, 2006, Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyah, known as more moderate than Mashaal, said following a visit with President Ahmadinejad in Tehran that Iran had stepped up its commitment to the Hamas-led PA, pledging \$250 million. Iran even committed to pay the salaries of 100,000 Palestinian Authority employees for six months.<sup>18</sup> The Haniyah-Ahmadinejad meeting carries additional significance. Previously, Hamas' relationship with Iran had been brokered exclusively by the Damascus-based Mashaal. Israeli military intelligence expressed concern that the Haniyah-Ahmadinejad meeting reflected an upgraded strategic relationship between Iran and Hamas.<sup>19</sup> Haniyah confirmed Israel's assessment when he said, immediately following his return from Tehran in December 2006, that "Iran has provided Palestinians strategic depth."<sup>20</sup> Upon Haniyah's return, he was found to be carrying \$35 million in cash in several suitcases.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the longstanding and violent sectarian conflict between Sunnis and Shiites that is being played



*Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad welcomes Syrian President Bashar Assad in Tehran, August 7, 2005.*

out today in Iraq, Iranian-led radical Shiites and their Sunni adversaries share a common commitment to destroying the State of Israel on the way to defeating the West as a whole.

Syria, Iran's junior partner, continues to host Hamas and other Jihadi leaders, allowing them to order terrorist attacks against Israeli targets from the safety of Damascus. Syria may not be an Islamist state, but its leader, Bashar Assad, clings to power through the manipulation of anti-Western sentiment and pro-Iranian Shiite loyalty. The ruling Alawites were given the blessing of Iranian Shiite cleric Musa Sadr in 1973, a move that fomented enmity among Syria's Sunni majority and placed the Syrian regime squarely inside the Iranian Shiite camp.

### **New Jihadi Threats to the Regional Order and International State System**

The Second Lebanon War also represents the development of several new types of strategic threats to the regional state system. First, rogue states such as Iran and Syria have become architects of what can be called the "terror state within a state" model. Hezbollah and Hamas, both leading Iranian proxies, are examples of sub-state and quasi-state organizations, respectively, that have essentially "kidnapped" their weak host governments – Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority, respectively – from which they have operated with impunity. The same kind of terror blackmail relationship between al-Qaeda and its Saudi Arabian hosts has existed since the late 1980s. This model has also taken root in such weak states as Yemen and Afghanistan. The Taliban Mujahideen regime had simply cannibalized the Afghan government, until the U.S. invasion that followed the al-Qaeda attacks on New York and Washington on September 11, 2001.

In Lebanon, Hezbollah has become a "state within a state" due to massive political and military backing from

Syria and Iran. Prior to the summer 2006 war the Lebanese government had allowed Hizbullah to operate from its sovereign soil as a *quid pro quo* for Hizbullah leader Hassan Nasrallah's agreement not to attack targets in Lebanon. This blackmail relationship resulted in Hizbullah's "protection" of the Lebanese central government. However, this unstable relationship unraveled in November 2006 when Hizbullah's two government ministers resigned as part of an Iranian- and Syrian-backed effort to topple the Seniora government, dissolve the parliament, and assert Hizbullah control over all of Lebanon.

Aside from its broad political influence in Lebanon, Hizbullah's fighting capabilities have raised its stature well beyond that of a terror organization. It should be more accurately characterized as a heavily armed and highly disciplined military force that operates with sophisticated Syrian and Iranian weaponry, and high quality command and control assistance and training by the IRGC.

Hizbullah, therefore, via its political and military infrastructures, benefits from a *de facto* status as a full state actor, without the commensurate responsibility and accountability to the international state system. That fact was well reflected in its decision on July 12, 2006, to attack Israel without the permission of, or notice to, its democratically elected Lebanese host government. In short, Hizbullah exploits the international state system by agreeing to cease-fire negotiations opposite Israel, but does not bear any of the legal, political and diplomatic accountability as does its sovereign Lebanese host.

Another type of threat to the regional state system

has arisen in the Palestinian Authority, a weak quasi-state actor.<sup>22</sup> Since January 2006, Syrian- and Iranian-backed Hamas has taken control. Ironically, however, Hamas' official policy of refusing to recognize Israel and its engaging in terror against the Jewish state has strengthened Palestinian Chairman Mahmoud Abbas' case for international sympathy and support. His claims that he is too weak to enforce law and order and turn

back Hamas' terror policy without external support may or may not be true. Various PA security forces have a combined strength of nearly 50,000 men. However, Abbas was described recently by a senior Fatah PA security official as

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someone who "could not move a tea cup from one side of a table to the other without expressing the fear that the cup might tip over."<sup>23</sup>

Whether Abbas lacks the required power or simply the political will to neutralize local Islamic terror groups and stabilize the Palestinian areas, his professed weakness opposite Hamas and other Jihadi militias, particularly in Gaza, has helped him maintain broad international support. For example, Abbas has parlayed his policy of weakness into a source of political strength with the Bush administration. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice lavished praise on Abbas on October 11, 2006, before a leading Palestinian-American group, reiterating her "personal commitment" to his leadership and his efforts to establish a Palestinian state.<sup>24</sup>

Abbas is not alone in his using this strategic option. Former PA leader Yasser Arafat also employed this strategy effectively during the Oslo years from 1993 to 2000. Arafat had consistently argued that he lacked the

ability to rein in Hamas. Abbas also discovered that it pays for him to avoid risking all out confrontation and possible civil war with Hamas. Abbas' declared weakness also protects him in the international community, which continues to concede to Jihadi groups by demonstrating patience, tolerance and understanding for weak states such as Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority. These states do not prevent terror activity from being planned and executed from within their borders, and then reject the basic standards of international accountability to which they must be held, but from which they continue to be excused.

Lebanon's Prime Minister Fuad Seniora also won the same type of international sympathy for his inability to disarm Hizbullah. Instead of holding Seniora accountable for allowing an Iranian proxy group to operate from within sovereign Lebanon, the international community actively engaged Lebanon and Hizbullah in frantic UN-sponsored diplomacy to end hostilities, broker a cease-fire and deploy 15,000 UN forces in southern Lebanon. This was a strategic error by the West. The international community should have established collective "red lines" and demonstrated unified political determination with respect to Hizbullah, as it did when it lent its full backing and international legal force to the Seniora government to expel the Syrian army from Lebanon in 2005. Had it succeeded this time around, the international community could have impressed upon Seniora and the Lebanese government that it would have no alternative but to summon the same political and military will to disarm Hizbullah as it did in evicting Syrian troops from Lebanon.

The same lesson applies to the PA's Abbas. International aid to the Palestinians should have been conditioned on Hamas disarming before the Palestinian elections in January 2006. If the international community establishes an international code of conduct and mobilizes

to enforce it, weak host countries could well discover previously unrealized political and military strength in the interest of national self-preservation.

## **The Spread of Iranian and Syrian Regional Control**

Iran's regional strategy is to project its power and assert control across the entire Middle East via proxies – including Muktada al-Sadr's Shiite Mahdi army in Iraq, Hamas in Jordan, the Alawite regime in Syria, Hizbullah in Lebanon and Gaza, and Islamic Jihad, Hamas and other radical Palestinian groups in the West Bank and Gaza. Iran avoids getting its hands dirty by working through proxies, thereby creating maximum instability with minimum responsibility. Aside from Iran's operational support and financial sponsorship of Hizbullah and Hamas, Iran's financial backing and training of Shiite insurgency groups in Iraq has been well documented by U.S. defense and intelligence officials. Gen. Michael Hayden, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, told the Senate Armed Services Committee in November 2006 that "the Iranian hand is stoking violence in Iraq and supporting even competing Shia factions."<sup>25</sup> This assessment was shared by Lt. Gen. Michael Maples, Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, in congressional testimony.<sup>26</sup> Iran has also supplied direct support to Shiite militias in Iraq including explosives and trigger devices for roadside bombs, in addition to terror militia training in Iran conducted by the IRGC and the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security.<sup>27</sup>

Senior U.S. intelligence officials have also said that Iran's Hizbullah proxy had used bases in Lebanon to train up to 2,000 members of the Iraqi Shiite Mahdi army. Iran reportedly facilitated the link between Hizbullah and the Shiite militias in Iraq.<sup>28</sup>

Iran's Syrian ally hosts terror proxies, too, who live in, and operate with impunity from, Damascus. Syria's

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long arm of terror has been extended via Palestinian groups such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, without bloodying Syrian hands, thanks to deniability. Aside from hosting Palestinian terror groups, Syria has allowed its border with neighboring Iraq to remain porous, serving as a pipeline for financing Iraqi Sunni insurgent groups, a fact noted by the Baker-Hamilton Report.<sup>29</sup> Since 2003, Bashar al-Assad has sanctioned the smuggling of weapons and ammunition, and has ignored the infiltration of terror operatives from Syria to Iraq.<sup>30</sup> Beginning in March 2003, eye-witnesses in Aleppo, Syria, reported seeing busloads of Mujahideen heading into neighboring Iraq as Syrian border police waved them through.<sup>31</sup> Since 2003, U.S. forces have reported killing and capturing Syrian nationals and Syrian-sponsored Jihadis involved in insurgency terror actions.<sup>32</sup>

Iran's use of Syria as a bridgehead to the Arab world, together with Tehran's sponsorship of terror proxies to assert regional control, is a powerful model that has succeeded in destabilizing the region without the UN or any other major international organization stopping it. As a

result, Iran and Syria, as well as North Korea, are able to defy the international community without paying a steep price.

Iran's ultimate objective is to leverage its recalibrated, more muscular, regional control and, under the umbrella of a rapidly advancing nuclear program, destabilize and ultimately subvert the international state system. From a historical perspective, Ahmadinejad and his allies have reason to believe that their objective to destroy Israel and defeat the West is on track. Islamists take credit for pushing the United States out of Lebanon in 1984, the Soviets out of Afghanistan in 1989, the Israelis out of Lebanon in 2000, the Spanish out of Iraq in 2004, and the Israelis out of Gaza in 2005. Now they believe they are close to pushing the Americans out of Iraq as well. Iran has paid no price for its transgressions: the 1983 bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Lebanon, the 1992 bombing of the Israeli Embassy and the 1994 bombing of a Jewish community center in Argentina; the torture and imprisonment of thousands of dissidents; the continuous violation of international understandings related to its nuclear program. These "successes" have only emboldened Islamists worldwide, fueling a perception among radicals that the West is simply afraid to confront them.

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Like Iran's mullahs and its apocalyptic President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Syria's Bashar Assad has paid no penalty for his sins, from the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in Lebanon, involvement in the November 2006 assassination of Lebanese Christian Cabinet Minister Pierre Gemayel, the ruthless suppression of Syrian dissidents, the use of Syrian soil as a safe haven for terrorist operations against coalition forces in Iraq, and the sheltering of leaders of terrorist groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

Despite President Bush's veiled threats against Syria and Iran following the Gemayel and Hariri murders to destabilize Lebanon,<sup>33</sup> Assad's regime has been so confident of its immunity from American or Israeli attack that it allowed Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal to hold a press conference in Damascus celebrating the June 2006 kidnapping of Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, even as local Hamas leaders in the Palestinian Authority distanced themselves from the abduction. On July 12, 2006, the day of the Hizbullah kidnapping of two more IDF soldiers in northern Israel, Ali Larijani, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National



*Iranian President Ahmadinejad meets with Damascus-based Hamas political leader Khaled Mashaal in Tehran shortly after Hamas victory in Palestinian Authority elections, February 20, 2006.*

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Security Council (SNSC), was in Damascus to discuss strategic issues with Mashaal and officials of Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other Palestinian terrorist groups. According to reports, Larijani was also to have met with senior Hizbullah officials, who were unable to cross over from Lebanon that day.<sup>34</sup>

### **Western Passivity Magnifies the Jihadi Threat**

The international community is weak and split over how to proceed in Iraq and against Iran. This may in part be a result of the fact that many European countries do not understand that the West is in the middle of a world war, a clash of civilizations and cultures with radical Islam. Ahmadinejad has been clearer on this point. He reportedly received one of 1,000 pirated copies of Professor Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* that had been translated into Persian and trucked in to Tehran by the IRGC in the mid-1990s.<sup>35</sup>

Washington also appears to have lost its post-9/11 footing. The Iraq Study Group (Baker-Hamilton) Report seems to underscore a growing preference among many

in Washington for appeasing and negotiating over confronting and isolating the radical Islamists, particularly in Iran.<sup>36</sup> The report's central recommendations that the Bush administration open diplomatic dialogue with Syria and Iran and actively pursue comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace negotiations – including Israel's return of the Golan Heights to Syria<sup>37</sup> – represents a 180-degree-turn away from President Bush's policy since the September 11, 2001, attacks. Bush had declared in his 2002 State of the Union address that "some governments will be timid in the face of terror. And make no mistake about it: If they do not act, America will....If we stop now – leaving terror camps intact and terror states unchecked – our sense of security would be false and temporary."<sup>38</sup>

Another example of the West's traditional preference for diplomacy and Israeli concessions over confrontation with radical Islam occurred in late 2001. Joschka Fischer, then Foreign Minister of Germany, stated on at least one occasion that Israel's unilateral and precipitous withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000 served as a trigger for the subsequent Palestinian Authority war of terror that Arafat launched four months later. But while Fischer acknowledged the problem and even sounded like "an Israeli security hawk," according to a senior British foreign policy analyst present, he did not recant the pressure he placed on Israel for territorial concessions.<sup>39</sup>

Aside from the Second Lebanon War, Israel has been hesitant

to confront Iran and Syria. It had been much easier for Israelis to first confront and then negotiate with secular Arab states such as Egypt and Jordan, and reach bilateral peace treaties on the basis of the "land for peace" formula. However, in the case of Iran and its Jihadi proxies, Israel faces uncompromising enemies. This requires the Jewish state to confront the Jihadi threat and act with uncompromising political will.

Hizbullah is not nearly as dangerous a fighting force as Egypt or Syria. However, the fundamentalist group's blind hatred of the West and its irrepressible political will to destroy Israel and export terror renders it largely immune from embracing what moderate and reform-minded Arab regimes and the West consider overriding national considerations such as economic interests. Iran and its proxies are not primarily motivated by the same national calculations characteristic of the West, but rather by religiously driven, apocalyptic dedication to vanquish Western democracies such as the United States and Israel. Therefore, conventional deterrence strategies such

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as "mutually assured destruction" that the United States employed opposite the former Soviet Union are not relevant opposite the Islamic Republic of Iran. Ahmadinejad appears more than prepared for Iran to suffer massive human losses to reach his objective of annihilating Israel and reaching a nuclear showdown with the United States.

Nonetheless, the passive posture of the

United States, Europe, and even Israel, with regard to Iran, Syria, and their proxies has bolstered Jihadi confidence and has magnified their growing threat to the international state system. The West's interest in maintaining the current international order and avoiding a clash with radical Islamic leaderships has also enhanced Sunni and Shiite Jihadi appeal throughout the region, from Iraq to Jordan, in Lebanon, Gaza, Egypt and the West Bank.

### **Security Implications for Israel: Establishing Defensible Borders**

The Second Lebanon War underscores the importance of strategic depth for Israel's survival. During the war, 90 to 95 percent of the more than four thousand rockets fired by Hizbullah at Israeli cities were short-range, 122 mm rockets launched from distances of between six and twenty-two kilometers. These short-range rockets directly threatened nearly two million Israelis, a third of Israel's population. Nearly a million people temporarily fled the north, while more than a million remain-



*Israeli police inspect the site of a rocket attack by Hizbullah terrorists that killed eight and wounded seven others at the central train station in the northern Israeli city of Haifa during the Second Lebanon War, July 16, 2006.*

ing citizens were forced to take cover in bomb shelters. Twelve thousand buildings were hit and estimates of overall damage reached well over \$2.5 billion.<sup>40</sup> However, had Israel's ground operation been executed in the first week of the war and a security zone created up to Lebanon's Litani River – approximately twenty kilometers from Israel's northern border – nearly 95 percent of Hizbullah's rockets would have landed in southern Lebanon and not northern Israel.

The conclusion is clear: land is essential to Israel's defense and national security, *particularly* in the face of short-range rocket attacks that, notwithstanding the separate issue of long-range missiles, continue to be a strategic threat to the Jewish state.

Therefore, Israel's security requirements for strategic depth have far-reaching consequences for the future of the West Bank. Had Hizbullah rockets been launched from the hills of the West Bank under Hamas control, Israel would face an unprecedented existential threat as 70 percent of its civilian population and 80 percent of its industrial capacity is situated below these hilltops along Israel's coastline. Unfortunately, Hamas' control of the Palestinian areas, particularly in the West Bank, could easily result in weapons flowing to Hamas from Iraq and Hizbullah in Lebanon, creating a strategic threat from Israel's eastern front. Given the unstable strategic situation in Lebanon and to Israel's east in Iraq, Syria and the West Bank, Israel must have *defensible borders* in the West Bank.

It must be emphasized that the West Bank security fence is not a strategic solution to the full range of Palestinian Jihadi terror actions. The fence is only meant to be a tactical measure that has largely succeeded in preventing Palestinian suicide bombers from reaching Israel's major population centers. However, the IDF's anti-terror operations on the ground in the West Bank and against



Hamas in Gaza continue to be the major preventative measure against Palestinian terror assaults on Israeli towns and cities. Accordingly, Israel must protect its interests eastward in the Jordan Valley, as well as in the areas surrounding Jerusalem and to the east of Ben-Gurion Airport. Israel must also control territory to the east of the security fence where it is crucial that the IDF's operational strength be preserved in order to protect Israeli population centers along the coast.

Hamas will not reach a territorial compromise with Israel. Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyah has little control. Hamas political bureau chief Khaled Mashaal determines policy from Damascus in cooperation with Syria and Iran, which offer financial backing. Moreover, Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas is unable to rein in radical Islamists in Gaza who are attacking Israel with Kassam rockets, and Palestinian security forces have failed to stabilize the Palestinian areas of the West Bank.

Therefore, a resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is not within sight and neither a two-state solution nor further territorial concessions in the West Bank are relevant for the foreseeable future. Israel took substantial risks to achieve a two-state solution, especially since the signing of the 1993 Oslo Accords with Yasser Arafat and the PLO. Unfortunately, Israel's bilateral peace process ex-

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periment resulted in nearly 1,400 Israelis dead and thousands more wounded. It is imperative, then, that Israel and the West learn the lessons of the political and diplomatic failures opposite the Palestinians.

While Israel's political leadership and public continue to demonstrate willingness for territorial compromise with the Palestinians, Israel's unilateral disengagement from Gaza was a strategic mistake of the first order. The Gaza withdrawal helped bring about Hamas' victory. It emboldened radical Islamic terror groups, from Hizbullah in Lebanon to radical insurgent groups in Iraq. It strengthened the assessment of the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Qaeda and the Iranians that Israel can be beaten.

But of even greater consequence, Israel's Gaza pullback and the summer 2006 war with Hizbullah have harmed America's strategic war on terror in the region. The United States and Europe had praised Israel's unilateral withdrawal from both Lebanon in 2000 and the Gaza Strip in September 2005, thus ending Israel's occupation of those areas. According to the international view, Israel's

pullbacks edged the region closer to peace and stability. However, fundamentalist Islam interprets Israel's moves differently from the way Western actors read them. Muslim extremists believe that they have defeated Israel, once in Gaza and twice

in Lebanon. Now following the summer 2006 war, they are confident that they can defeat Israel in Tel Aviv. They sense that they have destabilized a superpower, and will destabilize the West by defeating Israel.

The free world, then, undermines its own regional interests by pressuring Israel to increase its vulnerability by withdrawing from additional territories in the West Bank, most of which are unpopulated and essential for Israel's defense and national security. Simply stated, Israeli concessions are viewed by radical Islam as the West's weakness.

There is even greater reason for concern today. A second "southern Lebanon" is sprouting up under Israel's feet in both Gaza and the West Bank.<sup>41</sup> Hizbullah has strengthened its financial and operational influence in both arenas. Since Israel's unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in September 2005, Gaza has become a hotbed of Jihadi terror activity by al-Qaeda, Hizbullah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad groups. Hizbullah established a forward headquarters in Gaza that activates suicide terrorists there and in the West Bank. While Hizbullah's headquarters has been based in Beirut, since the IDF's destruction of substantial Hizbullah infrastructure in southern Lebanon and in the Dahiya neighborhood in Beirut, Hizbullah operations from

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Iran is also exploiting the Palestinian arena as a platform for the subversion of regimes that are connected to the West, especially in Egypt and Jordan.<sup>44</sup> Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia led unprecedented Arab public criticism of Hizbullah after the first week of the war, blasting Nasrallah for "adventurism." They accused Hizbullah of attempting to drag the entire region into a military confrontation with Israel.<sup>45</sup>

Hamas is also seeking to produce or import longer-range rockets that are more lethal and more accurate. These missiles will have a greater range and will be capable of hitting Israel's southern city of Ashkelon as well as more northern coastal cities. Hamas is also im-

porting shoulder-fired, anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles, weapons that Iran and Syria supplied to Hizbullah in Lebanon. Gaza have become a more effective strategy. It is not surprising that Palestinian terrorist tactics after mid-2006 increasingly resembled those adopted by Hizbullah.<sup>42</sup> In fact, a large majority of Palestinians polled after the Lebanon war reported that the tactics employed by Hizbullah against Israel provide an "attractive model" for Palestinian armed resistance.<sup>43</sup>

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The Karine-A weapons ship that the Iranians sent to Gaza in

**Muslim extremists believe they defeated the Soviets in Afghanistan, and Israel both in Gaza and twice in Lebanon. And following the summer war, they are confident of defeating Israel in Tel Aviv.**

2002, in coordination with PA leader Yasser Arafat, demonstrated more than simply an Iranian interest in supporting the Palestinian Authority's terrorist war with Iranian weapons. The Iranians have been working through Hizbullah and Hamas in Gaza to create a model similar to Hizbullah's Lebanon model, called "*Jihad Il Binaya*." In the Lebanese model, the same system that supports civil affairs – such as construction, education, health care and welfare – also creates a civilian infrastructure for terror. Through this paradigm, Hizbullah has deepened its connection to the local population. In fact, Hamas police units traveled to Iran for military training following the cease-fire in Lebanon.<sup>46</sup> This unprecedented, direct Iranian penetration into the Palestinian arena may increase the likelihood of a Palestinian civil war and accelerate the deterioration in Gaza and the West Bank.

## **Conclusion**

The deployment of thousands of international forces in Lebanon, in addition to 15,000 Lebanese troops, will encourage Iran to continue to penetrate the Palestinian Authority, where its increased influence will act as an enhanced terror lever against Israel and the West as Tehran pursues its nuclear ambitions.

Iran will also exploit its influence via Hizbullah and Hamas in the West Bank and Gaza to encourage terror activities against conservative, pro-Western Sunni regimes in Egypt, Jordan and the PA's current Fatah leadership.

**The Iranians have been working to create a model in Gaza via Hamas that is similar to Hizbullah's southern Lebanon model. In the Lebanese model, the same system that supports civil affairs – such as construction, education, health care, and welfare – also creates a civilian infrastructure for terror.**

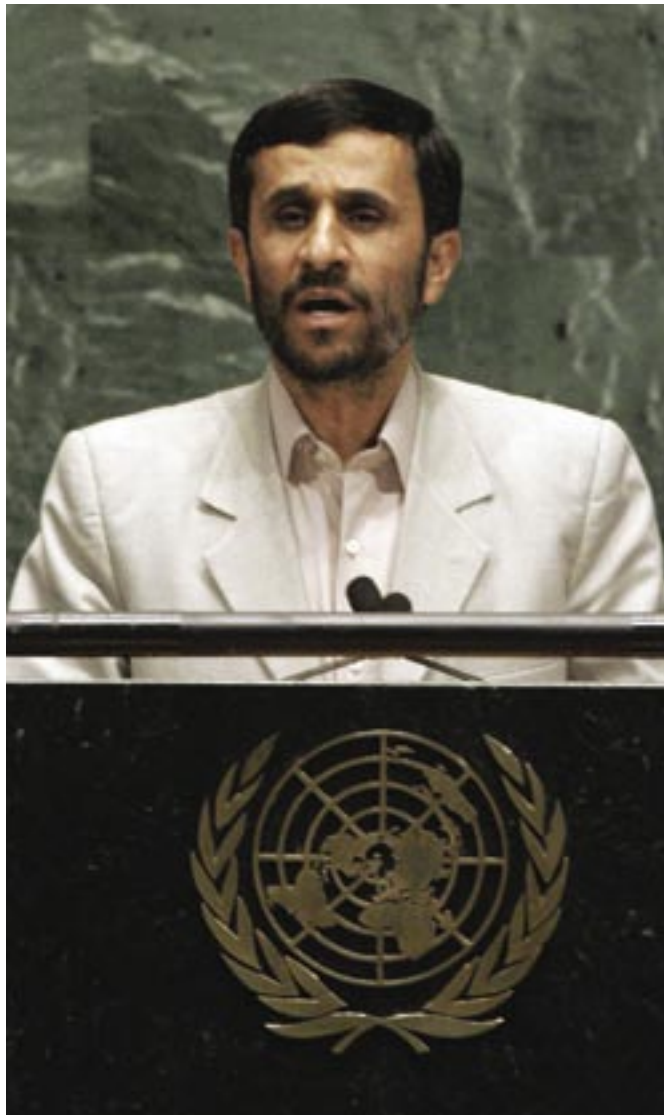
But threats against these regimes, stemming from both Iranian- and al-Qaeda-backed radical Islamic groups in Gaza and the West Bank, may also signal an important opportunity for new regional alliances to manage the destabilizing Jihadi threats. Egypt should now consider playing a much larger role in helping to stabilize Gaza's future, while the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan may, under certain conditions, help Abbas and

other moderate leaders secure the West Bank from its current control by Jihadi groups, local warlords and armed militias. The two sides might also discuss deeper cooperation and even mutually acceptable future political arrangements.

Despite the temptation, the international community must be careful not to interpret every "smile" from the Hamas leadership as a sign of moderation and compromise. Hamas' diplomatic shrewdness indicates that it can and will exhibit tactical flexibility, which is part of its deception of negotiating a national unity government with Fatah and keeping its terror activities in temporary check while pursuing its long-term goal – the destruction of the State of Israel and the establishment of an Islamic state from "the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River." In the short term, Hamas will likely continue to receive support from Iran and other Jihadis in targeting Americans in the region due to fury over the U.S. boycott of the radical Palestinian government.<sup>47</sup> Despite the interest by some in international circles to try and "tame" or moderate Hamas, those same actors who failed to tame Arafat will not be

able to transform Hamas into a viable peace partner and a constructive force for regional stability.

The international community should not fear the collapse of the PA. The experience of Israel's security op-



*Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad addresses the 61st session of the UN General Assembly, September 19, 2006.*

erations in recent years shows that Palestinian society will not collapse – as the word is commonly interpreted – even under extreme conditions. Palestinian municipalities, for example, continued to operate and provide services even at the height of Israeli military actions against the PA following the Palestinian war of terror and particularly during Operation Defensive Shield in 2002.

Iran is clearly the most ominous issue for the West. Operating under a nuclear umbrella, the Iranian regime's upgraded use of its international terror networks via Hizbullah and Palestinian Jihadi groups could threaten the region with "dirty," non-conventional weapons and more blatantly dare to attack Western targets. That is why Israel must maintain defensible borders in the West Bank and remind its Western allies that diplomatic pressure on Israel to withdraw to the indefensible 1949 armistice lines or to approximate borders would leave Israel's major cities and infrastructure vulnerable to rocket and mortar attacks from West Bank hilltops.

Israel is clearly not the only country on Iran's target list. There is no arguing the fact that Iran also threatens Europe. Hopefully, the United States and the international community will act determinedly against Iran, first by political and financial sanctions, and if necessary by decisive military action.

As U.S. Senator John McCain has said, there is only one option that is worse than using military force against Iran. That option is allowing Iran to achieve regional hegemony, and ultimately global power, under a nuclear umbrella. Only when Iran, Syria and their terrorist proxies are squarely defeated can both the Middle East and the West hope to achieve a more peaceful and stable future.

## Notes

- 1 According to Israeli Police Statistics as cited in Uzi Rubin, "Hizbullah's Rocket Campaign against Northern Israel: A Preliminary Report," Jerusalem Issue Brief, August 31, 2006, <http://www.jcpa.org/brief/brief006-10.htm>. The Israeli Foreign Ministry website quoted Israel Police figures of 3,970 rockets, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Terrorism-+Obstacle+to+Peace/Terrorism+from+Lebanon+Hizbullah/Hizbullah+attack+in+northern+Israel+and+Israels+response+12-Jul-2006.htm>?
- 2 Assessments that solving the Palestinian issue is the key to Middle East peace have also been widely embraced since the 1967 Six-Day War by Arab, Muslim, Third World, and European leaders. It has been convenient and even comforting for many to point to the Palestinian issue to simplify the complex root causes of the Middle East's many ongoing crises. However, the summer 2006 Iran-sponsored Hizbullah attacks across Israel's northern border and the stepped up assaults on Israel from Gaza following its September 2005 withdrawal, by Hamas and other local Jihadi groups, suggest that Israeli occupation of disputed lands is not the central issue for the future of the Middle East. Rather, any Jewish Israeli presence in the Middle East is seen by radical Islam as a violation of its rightful inheritance. See also Professor Martin Kramer, "The Islamist War," [http://www.geocities.com/martinkramer.org/2006\\_09\\_13.htm](http://www.geocities.com/martinkramer.org/2006_09_13.htm).
- 3 Martin Kramer lays out the historical rejection of Israel in his September 2006 analysis, "The Islamist War." He argues that the world is witnessing the third, Islamist stage of the Muslim Arab war against Israel. In the first stage, from Israel's creation in 1948 through 1973, rejection of Israel dressed itself as pan-Arab nationalism. In the classic Arab-Israeli conflict, Arab states formed alliances in the name of Arab unity, with the aim of isolating Israel and building an Arab coalition that could wage war on two or more fronts. In the second stage, the Palestine Liberation Organization used a mix of politics and "armed struggle" to open up new fronts against Israel – in Jordan and Lebanon in the heyday of the *fedayeen*, in the West Bank and Gaza in the first intifada, and in Israel in the second. In the third and present stage, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been superseded by the Israeli-Islamist conflict. See [http://www.geocities.com/martinkramer.org/2006\\_09\\_13.htm](http://www.geocities.com/martinkramer.org/2006_09_13.htm).
- 4 UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's Address to the UN General Assembly, New York, September 19, 2006.
- 5 <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP124206>. For Syria's view that the Second Lebanon War is a U.S. attempt to control the Middle East, see <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP124906>.
- 6 Hizbullah claimed that its attack came in view of Israel's occupation of the disputed Shaba Farms and its holding of Lebanese prisoners. However, this claim is unfounded. The Shaba Farms are officially recognized by the international community as a part of former Syrian territories captured by Israel in the 1967 war. The dispute with Israel is to be resolved by direct negotiations between Damascus and Jerusalem in accordance with UNSC Resolution 242 of November 22, 1967.
- 7 Three members of Hizbullah, 'Imad Mughniyah, Hasan Izz-al-Din, and Ali Atwa, are on the FBI's list of 22 Most Wanted Terrorists for the 1985 hijacking of TWA Flight 847 during which a U.S. Navy diver was murdered. See <http://www.fbi.gov/wanted/terrorists/termughniyah.htm>, <http://www.fbi.gov/wanted/terrorists/terizzaldin.htm>, and <http://www.fbi.gov/wanted/terrorists/teratwa.htm>.
- 8 See <http://www.fbi.gov/pressrel/pressrel01/khobar.htm>.
- 9 Pinchas Inbari, *Triangle on the Jordan*, as cited in Dan Diker and Pinchas Inbari, "A West Bank Palestinian Reengagement?" *Middle East Quarterly*, vol. viii, no. 2 (Spring 2006). Despite Arafat's longtime reputation in the West as an Arab secular nationalist terrorist turned Nobel Prize-winning statesman, Arafat has always been an Islamist revolutionary. His fifty-five-year career as an activist and Palestinian leader was profoundly inspired by the ideas of radical Islam, particularly the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. His *nom de guerre* was Abu Amar – "the command of God." Even following the 1993 Oslo peace accords, Arafat frequently invoked Jihad and other Islamic themes and terminology found in the Koran when addressing Arab audiences in Arabic. Arafat also launched the Al Aksa Intifada in the name of Jerusalem's Al Aksa Mosque. See Barry Rubin, "Is There an Alternative to Arafat's Leadership?" *Jerusalem Issue Brief*, <http://www.jcpa.org/brief/brief3-13.htm>. Also see Arafat biographer Said Abu Riche, *Arafat, from Defender to Dictator* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 1999), p. 18.
- 10 Amos Harel and Gideon Alon, "IDF: Hamas Trying to Create Balance of Terror with Israel," *Ha'aretz*, October 16, 2006, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/objects/pages/PrintArticleEn.jhtml?itemNo=775039>.
- 11 Clancey Chassay, "Israel Warned: Lebanon War Could Start Again," *Guardian Online*, October 11, 2006, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/print/0,,329597720-111416,00.html>, [http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition\\_id=1&categ\\_id=2&article\\_id=76090](http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=1&categ_id=2&article_id=76090).
- 12 Address by Maj.-Gen. Yaakov Amidror, former Chief of Assessment, IDF, at the Institute for Contemporary Affairs, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, September 6, 2006.
- 13 Mehdi Khalaji, "Iranian President Ahmadinezhad's Relations with Supreme Leader Khamenei," Washington Institute for Near East Policy, September 12, 2006, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2514>.
- 14 Rubin, "Hizbullah's Rocket Campaign Against Northern Israel."
- 15 "Iranian Assistance to Hizbullah. Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps Officer: Hizbullah Has Iran-Trained Diver and Naval Command Units, Has Constructed Command Rooms for Hizbullah," Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) Special Dispatch Series No. 1220, July 31, 2006.
- 16 According to IDF Intelligence. Also see *Asharq Al-Awsat*, July 16, 2006, [www.aawsat.com/details.asp?sectionfiltered=1&issue=10092&article=373285](http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?sectionfiltered=1&issue=10092&article=373285).
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- 40 Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs noted that \$1.4 billion in damages is derived from loss of business and tourist revenue, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Terrorism--Obstacle+to+Peace/Terrorism+from+Lebanon--Hizbullah/Hizbullah+attack+in+northern+Israel+and+Israels+response+12-Jul-2006.htm?DisplayMode=print>. Amnesty International also assessed direct damages at an additional \$1.14 billion, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGMDE020252006>.
- 41 Israel Security Agency Chief Yuval Diskin told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on August 30, 2006, that Hizbullah has sent millions of dollars in financing to Fatah-associated groups and the Islamic Jihad in the West Bank. Diskin said that Gaza could turn into another southern Lebanon within 36 months.
- 42 Former IDF Intelligence Officer Miri Eisen, now a senior advisor to Prime Minister Olmert, noted on October 16, 2006, that weapons are coming from Iran and "other countries that sell them." She expressed concern that Palestinian militants are learning "how to use the new weapons, and especially how the Palestinians can fight against Israel the way that Hizbullah fought in Lebanon." Amos Harel and Gideon Alon, "IDF: Hamas Trying to Create Balance of Terror with Israel."
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- 47 *TIME Magazine*, October 13, 2006, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1546101,00.html>. According to the article, in furtive, underground meetings held in the West Bank and Gaza, a growing number of Hamas commanders say they are running out of patience with the U.S. and want to strike back in response to charges that the Bush administration is hostile toward Hamas.



*Followers of Iranian-backed Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr in the southern Iraqi city of Basra, August 9, 2004.*



*Iranian President Mohammad Khatami at a ceremony to commemorate Iran's revolutionary founder, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, June 3, 2005.*



# Iran's Second Islamic Revolution: Strategic Implications for the West

**Brig. Gen. (Ret.) Dr. Shimon Shapira and Daniel Diker**

In the months since the August 2006 UN-brokered cease-fire between Israel and Iranian-sponsored Hizbullah, Iran has continued its proxy war against the United States, the West and the Jewish state. In Iraq, Tehran continues to finance, arm and train the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq's Badr Brigade, Muqtada al-Sadr's Imam Mahdi army and other Shiite militias.<sup>1</sup> The Islamic regime has also taken a leading role in rehabilitating and rearming its Hizbullah proxy in southern Lebanon. U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton accused Iran and Syria of destabilizing Lebanon's central government and violating the UN-monitored arms embargo from Syria.<sup>2</sup> According to Israeli intelligence estimates, Iranian-sponsored Hizbullah has about 20,000 rockets of all ranges, a bit more than they had before July 12, 2006.<sup>3</sup> White House Spokesman Tony Snow labeled Iran the "nexus of global terror" on November 11, 2006.<sup>4</sup>

**The Iranian regime is dedicated to overturning the political status-quo in the Middle East in order to realize a revolutionary agenda that has been a part of the ideology of the Islamic Republic since 1979, and has been re-energized since the 2005 election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.**

In Gaza, Iran has injected \$120 million into Hamas coffers,<sup>5</sup> while shuttling Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad terror operatives to Tehran for training.<sup>6</sup> Israel Security Agency Chief Yuval Diskin told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that, since late 2005, the northern West Bank has become "Palestinian Islamic Jihad-land," established, financed, and commanded by Iran.<sup>7</sup> Underlying all these regional activities is one central fact frequently missed in the public discourse on Iran: that the Iranian regime is dedicated to overturning the political status-quo in the Middle East in order to realize a revolutionary agenda that has been a part of the ideology of the Islamic Republic since 1979. This agenda has been re-energized since the 2005 election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Understanding the revolutionary motivations of the Islamic Republic's leadership is key to assessing why Tehran is moving rapidly to destabilize the Middle East,

**The real crisis is much broader than nuclear weapons, it's about Iran's determination to reshape the Middle East in its own image – a deliberate clash of civilizations with the United States.**

through its Syrian Arab ally and through various terror proxies, in order to pull the region into its orbit of control. The analysis presented here runs counter to the assumption that Iran can somehow be converted into a force for stability in Iraq, Lebanon and other points of tension in the Middle East. A careful assessment of current trends in the regional policies of the Iranian regime, and especially the shifts in its ideological orientation, in fact, point to the very opposite conclusion. As explained below, Iranian policy has deliberately sought to spread chaos in Iraq and in every country where it seeks to undermine current ruling governments.



*Militant Muslims chanting outside the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, November 8, 1979.*

Iranian President Ahmadinejad and his Revolutionary Guard leadership have thrust Iran into the throes of what has been called a “second Islamic revolution.”<sup>8</sup> It is a return to the principles of former Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini’s 1979 Islamic revolution that is based on:

1. Exporting the Islamic revolution against “apostates” in the region and forcing a clash of civilizations with the “infidel” West.<sup>9</sup>
2. Hegemonic control of the Islamic and Arab world, particularly in the oil-rich Persian Gulf.
3. A commitment to destroy Israel, “the Little Satan,” as a symbol of the United States, “the Great Satan.”

Of greater concern, perhaps, Ahmadinejad’s embrace of Shiite messianic tradition has radicalized the current regime even beyond its return to elements of Khomeini’s Islamic revolution. Ahmadinejad’s spiritual fealty to the ultra-fundamentalist Ayatollah Mohammad Mesbah Yazdi – and his apocalyptic dedication to triggering the return of the Mahdi, the vanished Shiite Messiah, via Gog and Magog events such as “destruction, pestilence, and wars” – have propelled the regime’s revolution toward a cataclysmic confrontation with the West.<sup>10</sup>

The danger of Iran’s second Islamic revolution is compounded by the advanced stage of its nuclear program, as well as its conventional missile capacity that not only places Israel and the Persian Gulf states within target range, but threatens Russia and parts of Europe as well. But despite the prominence that Western analysts and media place on Iran’s missile threat and nuclear program, as Amir Taheri notes, “the real crisis is much broader than nuclear weapons, its about Iran’s determination to reshape the Middle East in its own image – a deliberate clash of civilizations with the United States.”<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, Iran’s ability to destabilize the region, as it did against Israel during and following the summer 2006

war via Hizbullah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza, even before achieving nuclear capability, has left Sunni Arab states no less worried than Israel. Governments amenable to the West, such as Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and “moderate” leaders in the Palestinian Authority, have voiced unprecedented concern over what they see as Iran’s imperial Shiite drive for regional hegemony.<sup>12</sup>

### **Iran’s Second Islamic Revolution**

Iran’s nuclear aspirations and its revolutionary drive for hegemony in the Middle East – its threats to Israel, destabilization of Iraq, Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza, and its unprecedented influence over Syria to confront the West – comes as no surprise for observers of the Iranian president. Ahmadinejad is not just a charismatic political actor with a taste for brinkmanship on the world stage. He is an ideologue who is both committed to the ideals of the Iranian revolution and dedicated to an apocalyptic interpretation of radical Shiite doctrine. Ahmadinejad said recently that the Middle East conflict “has become the locus of the final war between Muslims and the infidel West.”<sup>13</sup>

While Ahmadinejad’s presidency underscores the immediacy of the regime’s threat to the Middle East and the West, his activism in seeking to export the Islamic revolution is not unique in the recent history of Iran. It reflects the regime’s foreign policy goals, particularly in the aftermath of the 1979 Islamic revolution. It was Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini who first advocated exporting the Islamic revolution when he came to power. This was implemented through Ayatollah Hasayn Ali Montazeri, who in the early 1980s established a special organ for supporting Islamic liberation movements in the Arab world.

Iran provided money and advice to radical Shiite groups in Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, where it backed Shiite uprisings in the oil-rich Eastern Province in

1979 and 1980.<sup>14</sup> Iran was suspected of being involved in coup plots in Bahrain (1981) and Qatar (1983).<sup>15</sup> Besides founding Hizbullah in Lebanon in 1982, it established Hizbullah branches for the Hijaz (in Saudi Arabia) and Turkey. However, by the late 1980s Montazeri had been replaced and efforts to export the Iranian revolution lost steam, with several important exceptions such as its intervention in Bosnia. Lebanon was its main success story, where it hoped to establish the foundation of an eventual Islamic state.

Subsequent Iranian leaders have continued to be associated with activist terror policies on behalf of the Iranian regime. For example, in September 1992, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards were involved in the murder of four Iranian Kurdish leaders at the Café Mikonos in Berlin, an action that has been associated with senior members of the Iranian leadership. Former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani is currently being sought for extradition by Argentina’s Attorney General’s office for the 1994 Hizbullah terrorist attack that destroyed the Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires, killing 85 persons and wounding 151.<sup>16</sup> In 2001, a U.S. federal grand jury issued an indictment for the 1996 bombing attack on Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia that killed nineteen U.S. servicemen. The indictment specifically identified “a high Iranian official” who was involved in its preparations going back to 1994. In short, Iran remained fully involved in the planning and execution of international terrorism during the 1990s.

Both Rafsanjani and former Iranian President Muhammad Khatami, who was considered even more pragmatic by the West, worked to advance Iran’s nuclear agenda since 1991. They nonetheless balanced Iran’s atomic interests with a desire for relations with the West, even taking periodic respites from nuclear development over the past fifteen years. During this period, Iran tried to project itself as a *status quo* power, joining the U.S., Russia,

and other states bordering Afghanistan for talks at the UN about the Taliban. Prior to Ahmadinejad, Tehran had also been more cautious in its anti-Western rhetoric and had avoided fiery public declarations calling for the destruction of Israel as the regime's top priority.

Ahmadinejad's apocalyptic language and new revolutionary drive constitute a break from previous Iranian regimes and must be taken seriously.<sup>17</sup> He has repeatedly announced Iran's plans to upgrade its regional status and become the leading force in the Arab and Muslim world.

He calls for Iran to annihilate the Jewish state and to achieve nuclear power to deter any attempt to attack or topple the regime. Immediately after his election, he announced Islam's intention to conquer the world via martyrdom operations.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, Ahmadinejad's renewed Islamic revolutionary momentum is not just rhetorical. Unlike earlier efforts to export the Islamic revolution, Ahmadinejad is depending on the use of an Iranian nuclear umbrella, the achievement of which he has made into Iran's number one national project.

Iran's Islamic revolution has also been energized by the radical cleric Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, who views himself as the "Khomeini" of this generation. Yazdi, once a peripheral figure, had been cited in 2006 as a possible successor to replace Iran's ailing supreme leader Ali Khomeini.<sup>19</sup> Yazdi ended up with poorer than expected results in the December 2006 elections for the ruling "Assembly of Experts." However, the election illustrates that, despite competitive centers of power among Iran's ruling clerical leadership, they share a fundamental anti-Western orientation and have been involved in authorizing international terrorist operations.

Yazdi inspired Ahmadinejad to make the destruction of Israel a publicly declared, key strategic goal, one that has been put at the top of the Iranian agenda. In contrast, the less transparent, quieter approaches of the previous and more pragmatic "reformist" leaders Khatami and Rafsanjani, who exercised "soft power," sought above all to appeal to Iran's youth and to ensure the survival of the Islamic Republic as a system.<sup>20</sup> For example, in 1998, Khatami was even prepared to enter into a mini-

Yalta accord with the Clinton administration that would demarcate respective zones of influence.<sup>21</sup>

Yazdi, who has nurtured Ahmadinejad's

dedication to trigger the reappearance of the Mahdi – Shiite Islam's 12th vanished messianic figure – has also issued public calls for volunteers for an Iranian martyrs organization, Zeitun, to carry out suicide operations abroad. Zeitun was reportedly established by Elias Naderan, a conservative faction leader of the Iranian Parliament, a former intelligence officer in the Revolutionary Guard, and an ally of Ahmadinejad.<sup>22</sup> According to reports, Zeitun already has upwards of 40,000 male and female volunteers for martyrdom operations, especially against U.S., British and Israeli forces.<sup>23</sup>

But Ahmadinejad's fundamentalist regime has again underscored the idea that Tehran acts as the spearhead of a revolutionary cause, not a state.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, it is a revolution that distinguishes itself from the original Islamic revolution in three important ways: (1) Iran is not only using Middle Eastern Shiite communities to spread subversion, it actively seeks to reach out to the Sunni Muslim world, especially by activating the Arab street over the heads of current Arab governments. (2) It seeks to obtain

**Ahmadinejad's fundamentalist regime has again underscored the idea that Tehran acts as the spearhead of a revolutionary cause, not a state.**

broader support from non-Muslim Third World leaders like President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela. (3) Unlike the first Islamic revolution, the new revolution led by Ahmadinejad assumes that Iran's strategy will be able to depend on its acquisition of a nuclear capability in the very near future. The clarity and transparency of Ahmadinejad's regional and global intentions has led senior Israel security officials to conclude that the only possibility of the West's preventing the Iranians from acquiring nuclear weapons is to physically stop them.<sup>25</sup>

Ahmadinejad today maintains muscular control over the regime largely through a cadre of younger, ideologically committed officers of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), or *Pasdaran* – the most religiously extreme elements of the Iranian governing establishment. Since late 2005, Ahmadinejad has replaced at least eight of twenty-two government ministers with senior members of the Revolutionary Guards. They now control nearly 40 percent of Iran's key cabinet posts in the wake of their electoral success in the Majlis (parliament), in which they forced the resignation of nearly 120 parliament members connected to "reformists" such as old-guard Iranian leaders Khatami and Rafsanjani.

Similarly, since late 2005, Revolutionary Guard factions have conducted a major purge of the military, security apparatus, civil service, state-owned corporations, and media.<sup>26</sup> Senior commanders of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards control the armed forces. Defense Minister Mustafa Mohammed Najar and Foreign Minister

Manouchher Mottaki were both senior Pasdaran commanders,<sup>27</sup> Supreme National Security Council head Ali Larijani was also a central figure in the Revolutionary Guards during the 1980s.

The IRGC, state intelligence apparatus, and foreign ministry play active roles in exporting Iranian terror. Declassified Western intelligence reports reveal that Iranian diplomats have been engaged in intelligence-gathering and surveillance of targets for future attacks.<sup>28</sup> It was an

ominous sign in early 2006 when the foreign ministry replaced nearly sixty ambassadors, particularly in Western capitals including London, Paris and Berlin, despite Tehran's insistence that the move was part of a regular diplomatic rotation.<sup>29</sup>

Elements of the Revolutionary Guard's

external division – the Quds Force – have led operations against coalition forces in Iraq.<sup>30</sup> The force serves as an elite unit responsible for terror operations beyond the boundaries of Iran. It has been reported that the Quds Force has provided logistical support to the al-Qaeda network in Iraq. Published reports also reveal cooperation between Iran and al-Qaeda just prior to September 11, 2001.<sup>31</sup> The Revolutionary Guards have also played a substantial role in providing financing, training and weapons to Palestinian terror groups including Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, the Al Aksa Martyrs' Brigade, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Furthermore, it has been reported that Revolutionary Guard officers are assisting Hamas commanders to establish, arm and train the

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Murabitun, a new *jihadi* army in Gaza modeled on the Revolutionary Guards.<sup>32</sup>

IRGC senior commander Mohammed Reza Jaafari has opened offices in major Iranian cities for the recruitment of volunteers for “martyrdom-seeking operations” against Western targets. Jaafari told the Iranian weekly *Parto Sokhan* that “America and Israel should know, each of our suicide bombers equals a nuclear bomb.” Jaafari added that “Ahmadinejad should

**It has been reported that Revolutionary Guard officers are assisting Hamas commanders to establish, arm, and train the Murabitun, a new *jihadi* army in Gaza modeled on the Revolutionary Guards.**

be a role model for Iranian officials.”<sup>33</sup>

Iranian Parliament member Hamid Reza Haji Babal told Al-Arabia Television that “the oppressive, inhuman and undemocratic American

behavior in recent years has led to the creation of martyrdom-seeking operations everywhere.”<sup>34</sup> Ahmadinejad has said that young Westerners are frightened of death and recoil from the armed struggle that millions of young Iranians embrace. Islam also possesses 80 percent of the world’s oil and gas reserves, which the Iranians see as the key to controlling the lives of what they consider the pleasure- and comfort-seeking West.

Ahmadinejad was little known in Western circles prior to his election as president. However, he has been a soldier of the Islamic revolution since its inception in 1979 when he participated in the student takeover of the American Embassy in Tehran. Then-Iranian President Abolhassan Bani-Sadr admitted, in an October 2006 interview, that Ahmadinejad was not only present in the occupied American compound, but served as liaison between the hostage-takers and Ali Khamenei, currently Iran’s Supreme Leader and at the time one of the most important Friday preachers in Tehran.<sup>35</sup> Ahmadinejad was also a senior commander in the Revolutionary Guards’ Quds Force. During the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, Ahmadinejad served as an instructor in the Basij Mostazafin, the volunteer militia that was part of Khomeini’s “mobilization of the oppressed.”

The Basij’s radical indoctrination claimed the lives of tens of thousands of Iranian youth, many no more than twelve years old. These “child martyrs” were given plastic keys to wear around their necks assuring them of certain



*Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei warns that if the U.S. attacks Iran, its interests around the world would be harmed, April 26, 2006.*

entry to heaven after they sacrificed themselves in wave after wave as human minesweepers to clear a path for IRGC special forces.<sup>36</sup> In 1980, former Iranian Supreme Leader Khomeini explained, “the Basij must understand that he is a soldier of God for whom it is not so much the outcome of

the conflict as the mere participation in it that provides fulfillment and gratification.”<sup>37</sup> As author Matthias Küntzel noted, “According to Khomeini, life is worthless and death is the beginning of genuine existence.” “The natural world,” he explained in October 1980, “is the lowest element, the scum of creation. What is decisive is the beyond: The divine world, that is eternal.” This latter world is accessible to martyrs. Their death is no death, but merely the transition from this world to the world beyond, where they will live on eternally and in splendor.”<sup>38</sup>

Ahmadinejad is today still closely allied with the Basij, regularly appearing in public with a black-and-white Basiji scarf, and frequently praising the power of the Basiji culture and ethos in his speeches. The Basij, too, have grown in numbers and influence. They have served as a vice squad to enforce Islamic Sharia law, and were used as a paramilitary force to suppress anti-government forces and student riots in 1999 and 2003. The Basij also

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**Eight years ago, Ahmadinejad, then a reserve officer in Iran’s Revolutionary Guards, received one of 1,000 pirated copies of Professor Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* that had been translated into Persian and trucked in to Tehran by the Revolutionary Guards.**

constituted a core part of Ahmadinejad’s voter base and stormed the Ministry of Interior during the first round of balloting, a virtual putsch that, according to many local observers, explains how Ahmadinejad advanced with only 12 percent public support to the second round of voting that led

him to power.<sup>39</sup> It is no coincidence that eight years ago Ahmadinejad, then a reserve officer in Iran’s Revolutionary Guards, received one of 1,000 pirated copies of Professor Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* that had been translated into Persian and trucked in to Tehran by the Revolutionary Guards.<sup>40</sup>

### **Destroying Israel as a Symbol of the West**

Iran’s financial sponsorship, direction and involvement in the command and control of Hizbullah and Hamas attacks against Israel in the Second Lebanon War was one of the latest illustrations of Iran’s ongoing Islamic revolution against the United States and the West. Israel represented the West in microcosm, fighting Hizbullah and Hamas that attacked Israel as extensions of Iranian power. In the middle of the war, a Syrian cabinet minister wrote in the pan-Arab daily *Asharq Alawsat* that the conflict in Lebanon “is between the forces

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of Islam and America with Israel acting as an American proxy.”<sup>41</sup> Amir Taheri, former executive editor of *Khayan*, Iran’s largest daily newspaper, noted that Israel’s role as an American proxy is better understood in the Middle East than in the West.<sup>42</sup>

Iran’s targeting Israel as part of its war against the West is emphasized by Ahmadinejad, who told Iran’s national news channel on July 26, 2006, “Lebanon is a historic test which will determine the future of humanity...(America) is the one who started this fire. They have collected a bunch of people (the Jews) and put them in the occupied lands to serve as their shield, so they can realize their (American) colonialist domineering goals.”<sup>43</sup> In the second week of the Second Lebanon

War, Gholam Ali Adel, Iran’s parliament speaker, declared in a nationally televised speech in Tehran, “England, then America, wished to have control over the Islamic world, to prevent Muslim unity, and to have control of the oil resources in the Middle East. Therefore...they established an artificial, false and fictitious entity called Israel.”<sup>44</sup>

The Iranian daily *Jomhour-e Eslami*, affiliated with the Islamic seminaries of Qom, reiterated in a July 17, 2006, editorial: “America’s collaboration with the Zionists in murdering the Palestinian people, destroying Lebanon, and [hurling] baseless accusations against Iran [regarding] nuclear activity – which is now coming to a head – is a new phase in America’s crusade against the Muslims.”

Thus, Iran’s financial, military, ideological and strategic backing of Hizbullah and Hamas in the summer war against Israel indicated that Ahmadinejad was making good on the public promise he made soon after taking office. In October 2005, Ahmadinejad first promised Hamas and Islamic Jihad members at a conference on “A World without Zionism” that Iran would wipe Israel off the map as the first step in defeating the West,<sup>45</sup> which he labeled as the world of arrogance. In that same speech,

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*Iranian female paramilitary militias (Basij) at a Tehran rally to support Iran’s nuclear program, November 26, 2005.*



Ahmadinejad stated that “a world without Americans and Zionists is attainable.” In short, Iran is dedicated to conflict with the U.S. as much as with Israel. A top Iranian military commander, Maj. Gen. Ataollah Saleh, essentially made the same point, stating that a clash between the Islamic Republic and the U.S. is inevitable.<sup>46</sup>

Despite postwar assessments by Israeli intelligence that Iran’s control of the Levant was set back in the summer war due to Israel’s substantial destruction of Hizbullah troops and terror infrastructure in Beirut and near Israel’s northern border, Tehran has remained undeterred.<sup>47</sup> Editorials in Iran’s *Kayhan* and *Resalat* newspapers trumpeted Ahmadinejad’s Jerusalem Day speech in Tehran: “It

must not be forgotten that the great war is ahead of us [and it will break out] perhaps tomorrow, or in another few days, or in a few months, or even in a few years. The nation of Muslims must prepare for the great war so as to completely wipe out the Zionist regime and remove this cancerous growth. Like the Imam [Ayatollah] Khomeini said: ‘Israel must collapse.’”<sup>48</sup> In October 2006, Ahmadinejad told the Union of Iranian Engineers, “I have a connection with God and God said to me that no strategy will help the apostates against the believers. There is only one step left in achieving nuclear capability and then the West will not dare attack us.”<sup>49</sup>

Iran’s targeting of Israel and the West today is consistent with its approach since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the father of the revolution, viewed the world’s superpowers as the cause of world cor-

ruption. In this context, he labeled the United States “the Great Satan,” Iran’s number one enemy, while America’s ally, Israel, was defined as “the Little Satan.”<sup>50</sup> Khomeini’s focus on purifying the Middle East from Western Satanic influence manifested itself in a string of terror events beginning with the 1979 takeover of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and the kidnapping of 55 U.S. embassy officials for 444 days. This was followed by a series of Iranian-

sponsored terror assaults against U.S. installations.

The majority of terror attacks against foreign targets – American and British – were ordered and planned on Iranian soil. A milestone in Iranian involvement in terror was the arrival of the Revolutionary Guards forces in Lebanon in 1982 and the inclusion

of local Shiites in terror activity inside Lebanon against Western targets and Israel. In 1980, Khomeini ordered the capture of U.S. hostages in Beirut. In 1983 a Hizbullah suicide bombing of a U.S. military barracks in Beirut killed nearly 300 Americans, including 241 U.S. Marines. The 1985 hijacking in Beirut of TWA Flight 847 and the subsequent murder of a U.S. Navy diver are other examples,<sup>51</sup> as was Hizbullah’s 1985 murder of Beirut CIA station chief William Buckley. The 1996 attack by Hizbullah’s Saudi branch, Hizbullah al-Hejaz, on behalf of the Iranians, that killed 19 U.S. Air Force personnel at Saudi Arabia’s Khobar Towers, is yet another example.<sup>52</sup>

Since the withdrawal from Lebanon of American, French and Italian forces in the 1980s, following a series of major Iranian-sponsored suicide operations, Iran and Syrian backed Hizbullah have targeted Israel from

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Lebanon, as a continuation of Tehran's war against Washington. Ahmadinejad military advisor, Maj. Gen. Ataollah Saleh noted in 2005 that, "the Americans will run away, leaving their illegitimate child, [Israel] behind, and then Muslims will know what to do."<sup>53</sup> From Iran's point of view, there is no possibility of compromise with Israel. Ahmadinejad has declared, "We are in the process of an historic war

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between the world of arrogance [i.e., the West] and the Islamic world, and this war has been going on for hundreds of years."<sup>54</sup> For Ahmadinejad, Israel is the bridgehead of the "arrogant powers." Moreover, Ahmadinejad has publicly threatened Arab regimes for any recognition of Israel, saying that those who recognize the Zionist regime "will burn in the fire of the Islamic *Umma*."<sup>55</sup>



*Iranian female paramilitary militias (Basij) parade in front of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khomeini, August 24, 2005. In the background are anti-American and anti-Israeli paintings.*

## **Winning the Arab Street: Seeking Leadership and Hegemony in the Arab and Muslim World**

While many Arab leaders have of late abandoned the “destroy Israel” banner, Ahmadinejad was not deterred from hosting the annual “World Jerusalem Day” conference in Tehran on October 20, 2006. It was an opportunity to portray himself and his Shiite regime as the vanguard of the Sunni Palestinian cause, thereby positioning himself and the regime as “more Palestinian than the Arabs and more Muslim than the Sunnis.”<sup>56</sup> His goal has been to win regional leadership in the Middle East for his Shiite theocracy.<sup>57</sup>

In the aftermath of the Second Lebanon War, Ahmadinejad and other senior Iranian leaders exploited the conference as an anti-Western platform to advance the regime’s own regional hegemonic goals. Ahmadinejad even issued an ultimatum to the Western powers not to aid Israel, saying that “the Middle East would produce a hurricane that would spill over into the countries supporting Israel.” He added that the “Western powers should not complain that they were not forewarned.”<sup>58</sup> Qassem Suleimani, Commander of the Quds (Jerusalem) Force of the Revolutionary Guard whose units were deployed with Hizbullah in Lebanon, said, “Hizbullah’s victory in Lebanon has created a new Middle East, not one of America but of Islam.”<sup>59</sup>

If Ahmadinejad and his regime have set the pace for Arab and Muslim rhetoric to wipe out Israel and defeat the West, Iran’s strategy of asserting leadership via its Syrian partner, its multifaceted sponsorship of regional

terror armies, and its a nuclear program have already made Tehran one of the region’s leading actors.

Following its July 2006 war with Israel, Hizbullah enjoyed a surge in popularity across the Arab world, notwithstanding anti-Hizbullah resentment among much of the Lebanese public, including some Shiites. Israel, the West and regional Sunni powers had been put on the defensive. The Arab masses thrill every time Israel bleeds;

and Hizbullah and Iran, along with Syria, were able to do what conservative Sunni Arab regimes have failed to do. They kept much of the Israeli home front pinned down from July 15 to August 14, 2006, with a barrage of 4,228 rockets that would have continued except for UN Security Council intervention. Thus, Iran’s “Hizbullah”

**Hizbullah and Iran, along with Syria, were able to do what conservative Sunni Arab regimes have failed to do: They kept much of the Israeli home front pinned down from July 15 to August 14, 2006, with a barrage of 4,228 rockets that would have continued except for UN Security Council intervention.**

war has driven a wedge, however temporarily, between the conservative regimes – especially Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia – and their own populations. Insofar as Iran means to roll back the Arabs and achieve hegemony in the Gulf and the region at large, Hizbullah has enabled its Iranian sponsor to co-opt and contain Sunni Arab interests. Hizbullah’s war with Israel is not only an aspect of the global *jihad*, it is also one of Iran’s instruments to secure its regional leadership status.

Iran also demonstrated its ability to wage *jihad* simultaneously within neighboring Iraq and against Israel, whose borders lie far from those of the Islamic Republic. Iran was considered the loser in the war by some Israeli military assessments, due to the destruction of much of Hizbullah’s infrastructure installations in

southern Lebanon and the loss of much of Iran's billion dollar investment in war preparations.<sup>60</sup> However Hizbullah emerged as the winner to other radical Islamic terror groups, such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and al-Qaeda. Some Sunni ideological bodies – such as the Lebanese and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood – announced support for Hizbullah after the war broke out, once they perceived that Hizbullah was winning.<sup>61</sup>

Hizbullah is not an independent actor. Despite the presence of nearly 15,000 UN forces, southern Lebanon today is still considered "Hizbullahstan" by Israeli intelligence and nothing less than an Iranian colony.<sup>62</sup> Walid Jumblatt, the Lebanese Druze leader, shares this perspective, saying in July 2006, "The war is no longer Lebanon's...it is an Iranian war." Iran's Revolutionary Guards provide the majority of Hizbullah's financing, instruction, and strategic command

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and control. Much of Hizbullah's terrorist weaponry are manufactured in Iran and exported to Lebanon via the Damascus International Airport. Weaponry and materiel are then openly transported by truck convoys to Hizbullah in Lebanon. Hundreds of the Hizbullah fighters that fought Israeli forces in the summer 2006 war took part in special training courses in Tehran. Iranian news agencies also reported that Iran recruited 2,500 suicide fighters who were ready for deployment in Lebanon by Supreme Commander Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. On July 18, 2006, two

groups of volunteer Iranian fighters, who were trained militarily and ideologically by the IRGC, were sent to Lebanon for martyrdom operations. Only 27 were chosen of the 55,000 who signed up.<sup>63</sup> Iranian Revolu-

tionary Guards were directly involved in Hizbullah's firing of an Iranian version of a Chinese C-802 Kowthar missile at an Israeli warship in July 2006, killing four crew members. These rockets have been in the Revolutionary Guard arsenal for four or five years.

Syria is Tehran's one real Arab ally at this stage, the two regimes having signed a joint defense-pact in June 2006. Damascus has extremely close ties with Hizbullah and increasingly so with Hamas, ensuring that both Islamist organizations continue their war against Israel and serve other regional ambitions. If it seems strange that an Arab state would be so closely tied to a Shiite theocracy, the fact is that Syria's Sunni majority has been ruled by a minority Alawite regime since the late 1960s. The Syrian Constitution demands that the president be a Muslim, and since *both* Sunnis and Shiites have historically regarded Alawites as heretics, the ruling cadre lacked legitimacy until the presidency of Hafez al-Assad.



*An Iraqi man cries out next to a destroyed car at the site of a bomb explosion in Kufa, Iraq, after the execution of former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein on December 30, 2006.*

## **In 1973, Assad reached out to the head of the Higher Shiite Council in Lebanon, the Iranian-born cleric Moussa al-Sadr, who confirmed that Alawites were genuine Shiite Muslims.**

In 1973, Assad reached out to the head of the Higher Shiite Council in Lebanon, the Iranian-born cleric Moussa al-Sadr, who confirmed that Alawites were genuine Shiite Muslims, a gesture that consolidated several interests at once. Not only did Sadr shore up the religious status of the Assad regime, he also won Lebanon's Shiite community a powerful patron in Damascus, and set the groundwork for Syria's alliance with the revolutionary Shiite regime in Tehran.

### **Iran's Hamas Proxy in the Palestinian Authority**

While Israel was fighting Hizbullah on its northern border, Iran was guiding and financing its Hamas proxy in its war against Israel in the south, from Gaza. Although Hamas is Sunni, since 1979 Ayatollah Khomeini sought to transcend doctrinal differences between Sunnis and Shiites and create a coherent revolutionary Islamic force of a "billion Muslims."<sup>64</sup> In fact, Iran has exerted much greater influence over Hamas, particularly since Ahmadinejad's election. Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal was in Tehran for "consultations" thirty days prior to Hamas' victory in January 2006. Immediately following the Palestinian elections, Mashaal visited Ahmadinejad and the Iranian mullahs in Tehran as one of Hamas' first ports of call – calling the Iranians his "key allies."<sup>65</sup> Mashaal said at Tehran University that "the famous sentence by the late founder of the Islamic revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini,

still resonates in our ears: Israel is a tumor which needs to be removed."<sup>66</sup>

Western defense officials have suggested that Iran was centrally involved in Hamas' kidnapping of IDF soldier Gilad Shalit as well as Hizbullah's kidnapping two weeks later of two IDF reservists on the Lebanese border. A Western defense official with expertise on Iran said, "I have no doubt that Hamas' Damascus-based political bureau chief Khaled Mashaal is coordinated with Hizbullah, and that this summer's actions in both Gaza and northern Israel can be traced to the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and Ahmadinejad."<sup>67</sup> It can most probably be assumed that the meeting in Damascus on July 12, 2006, between Iranian leader Larijani and Hamas, Hizbullah and Syrian officials was not by chance.

Iran played an even more central role following the cessation of U.S. and European economic assistance to the Palestinians in mid-2006. Since the summer war, Iran has poured \$120 million into Hamas coffers, trained Hamas operatives in Gaza and Tehran, and provided weapons and additional funding via Hizbullah to Islamic Jihad and the Fatah-affiliated Al-Aksa Martyrs Brigade in the West Bank.

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**Ahmadinejad's overall message to the Palestinians is simple: Palestine is not part of a two-state solution. It is an inseparable part of the lands of Islam, and there is no need to sacrifice one inch of it. Since the Palestinian cause is supported by the entire Muslim world, especially Iran, which will soon have nuclear weapons, there is no need to compromise.**

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But Hamas' agenda, like Iran's, is larger than bringing Israel to its knees. It is one component of a larger Islamic mandate to "establish a great Muslim state with Palestine as a part of it."<sup>69</sup> As Mashaal told a Damascus mosque in 2006, "America will be defeated in Iraq. Wherever the Islamic nation is targeted, it will be defeated, Allah willing. The nation of Muhammad is gaining victory in Palestine, the nation of Muhammad is gaining victory in Iraq, and it will be victorious in all Arab and Muslim lands."<sup>70</sup>

### **Exporting the Revolution: Subversive Operations in the Sunni Arab World**

Iran's Shiite revolution has also laid bare Muslim sectarian strife, represented in the 1,400-year-old violent and often bloody argument between Sunnis and Shiites.

Presently we are witness to a potentially historic upheaval that may overturn the established regional order and have great consequences for both the West and Israel. The threat comes from the current rapid ascendancy of Iranian-led Shiite power, or the realization of what Jordan's King Abdullah II labeled the "Shiite crescent." Perhaps better referred to as the Iranian crescent, it is an arc of influence originating in Tehran, spreading through majority-Shiite Iraq and the Alawite regime in Syria, and reaching west to the Mediterranean to Hizbullah in Lebanon and the Palestinian terror organizations Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Gaza. Iran's direct involvement together with its Syrian ally in the destabilization of the Lebanese central government is a good example of Iran's export of its revolution via its Syrian partner to Lebanon. Meanwhile, in Jordan, government spokesman Nasser Judeh also accused Hamas of recruiting members in Jordan and seeking to send them for training in Syria and Iran.<sup>71</sup>

Palestinian leader Hani al-Hasan, head of Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah party, told the authors on November 17, 2006, that Iranian imperial interests that are transforming the entire region into a radical Islamic trust threaten the

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Palestinian Authority no less than it threatens Israel. Palestinian human rights leader Bassem Eid said in November 2006 that “ Hamas now represents Iranian interests, not Palestinian interests. Iran’s goal is to destroy Israel and they are forcing the Palestinians to do the job through Hamas.”<sup>72</sup> Reuven Berko, former Islamic Affairs Advisor to the Israel Police, noted, “ It is clear now to all the players in the region that the United States, Israel and the Arab states are on one side; and Iran, Syria, Hizbullah and Hamas are on the other.”<sup>73</sup>

Never before has the Sunni mainstream establishment perceived the Shiites to be so daunting a threat. While the Shiite ascendancy began in earnest in 1979 with Iran’s Islamic revolution, it stalled for some years during Iran’s decade-long war with Iraq. It started to gather momentum again with Israel’s unilateral withdrawal from southern Lebanon in May 2000, when Hizbullah took credit for being the first Arab military force to defeat Israel. Shiite prestige was further, if perhaps unintentionally, enhanced with the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 that imposed a new order that would at last

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empower the country’s Shiite majority. It is worthwhile recalling that over the last several hundred years of Iraqi history, Sunni ascendancy has been a constant – except for a brief interlude by the Safavid that began in 1393. That pattern has now been broken.

In this context it was no surprise that both the Lebanese government under Prime Minister Fuad Siniora and the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt leveled sharp criticism at Hizbullah for “ dragging the entire region into a war with Israel.”<sup>74</sup> Lebanese commentator Joseph Bishara, writing in the Saudi-owned *Elaph* website, said that “ Syria and Iran are the real enemies of Lebanon.”<sup>75</sup> This was an unprecedented development in the region – Muslim leaders blaming Hizbullah, Iran and Syria, rather than Israel, for causing the war.

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The Sunnis’ reasoning is not dissimilar to the thought-process that brought Anwar al-Sadat to Jerusalem in 1978 to make peace with Israel. Following the 1973 war with Israel, Sadat had positioned himself under the American umbrella and sidelined Moscow. Sadat had become increasingly concerned about Soviet influence in Egypt, and there were sections of Cairo that contained Soviet military bases that were off-limits even to top Egyptian officials. Sadat’s concerns led him to order Soviet military advisors out of the country in 1972, and to abrogate the 1971 Soviet-Egyptian Friendship Treaty in 1976.<sup>76</sup>

According to the Egyptian president's best estimate of Israel's strength, and the worst estimate of its intentions, he reckoned Israel to be less dangerous than the USSR. The analogy to today is apt, because the Iranian revolution, like the Russian revolution, is a real one and "it has now reached the Stalinist phase," as Bernard Lewis has noted.<sup>77</sup> Accordingly, the Sunni leadership is worried.

In a Sunni state like Egypt, where there are virtually no Shiites, the concern is less a matter of sectarianism than it is a function of regional power politics. Iran is the most powerful Middle Eastern state. It is well-armed, has alliances and networks throughout the region, and is well on its way to acquiring nuclear weapons. Thus it is hardly surprising that Cairo was the first Arab capital to state publicly that it intended to renew its plans to pursue a nuclear program.

The sectarian element is a passionate concern in states where Sunni and Shiite live together, as in Iraq,

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Lebanon, Bahrain, Kuwait, the UAE, Qatar, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia. The Sunnis are accustomed to regarding the Shiites as inferior, and the Sunnis see them as a threat to the established order. Moreover, this particular Iranian leadership is in an apocalyptic state of mind, a Shiite apocalypse in which the hidden imam or Mahdi emerges from hiding. The Sunnis, of course, have their own Mahdi,

but their political endgame is tied more explicitly, as bin Laden hopes, to the restoration of the caliphate. Shiite Mahdism, expressed in Ahmadinejad's speeches, means to over-

throw the established order.

In other words, it is clear that the major issue in the region for the foreseeable future is a clash between Sunnis and Shiites. That could mean the Israel-Arab issue will be marginalized, and that Sunni and Shiite extremists may show less interest in targeting U.S. troops in Iraq and more in killing fellow Muslims.

### **Ahmadinejad's Apocalyptic World View**

Ahmadinejad's unshakable belief in Shiite messianism has propelled the second Islamic revolution even beyond the point to which Khomeini had led it.

Even in contrast to Khomeini, Ahmadinejad is motivated by a divinely inspired mission to *accelerate* the reappearance of the Shiite Mahdi or the twelfth lost imam, and recover the ideal of Islamic justice in the world.<sup>78</sup> His commitment to "Mahdism" is arguably one of Ahmadinejad's most threatening personality traits. Ahmadinejad is a member of a semi-secret religious group called the "Hojathia" headed by the radical cleric Ayatollah Mesbakh Yazdi, Ahmadinejad's spiritual mentor. Yazdi and his faithful Hojathia followers believe it is a duty to



*A follower of Iranian-backed Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr holds the helmet of an American soldier during clashes between the al-Mahdi army and U.S. and Iraqi forces in Najaf, Iraq, August 10, 2004.*



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create the conditions for the Mahdi's return, including the occurrence of global disasters that trigger "grief and sorrow", a phenomenon similar to the biblical concept of "Gog and Magog."<sup>79</sup> According to this messianic belief, the hidden imam will reemerge to save the Muslims during their obligatory and final confrontation with the stronger power, the "Great Satan" – the United States. Khomeini had prohibited Mahdi groups, but Ahmadinejad is committed to their apocalyptic dedication to forcing a clash with the West.

Ahmadinejad's messianic world view is transparent. He told a packed UN General Assembly on September 19, 2006, "I emphatically declare that today's world, more than ever before, longs for...the perfect righteous human being and real savior who has been promised to all peoples and who will establish justice, peace and brotherhood on the planet. Almighty God...make us among his followers and among those who strive for his return and his cause."<sup>80</sup>

When he addressed the United Nations in September 2005, Ahmadinejad first dumbfounded the General Assembly and other world leaders by concluding his remarks with a special prayer for the Mahdi's reappearance.<sup>81</sup> When he returned to Tehran, he report-

edly told friends that he knew there was a halo around his head as he spoke at the UN, and that he knew what to say because the disappeared imam whispered in his ear.<sup>82</sup>

As Mayor of Tehran, Ahmadinejad reportedly ordered the city council to build a major boulevard to prepare for the return of the twelfth imam. In addition, he has said that it was after a secret meeting with the Mahdi that he announced his candidacy for president, an office he claims he received to advance a clash of civilizations with the West.<sup>83</sup> After becoming Iran's president, he appropriated \$17 million for the Jam Karan mosque, which is associated with the *mahdaviat*, referring to the faithful who believe in and prepare for the Mahdi's return.<sup>84</sup> There are reports of the government building a direct train link from Tehran to the elegant blue-tiled mosque, which lies 65 miles south of the capital, east of the Shiite religious center of Qom.<sup>85</sup>

Shiite messianism fundamentally shapes Ahmadinejad's political thinking. If he believes the Mahdi is destined to reappear shortly, there is nothing to be gained by his compromising with the infidel forces of the West. From Iran's point of view, it is fruitless for international leaders to avoid confrontation with Tehran; rather, it is the role of the Mahdi to usher in a "utopian" age. The Sunnis, too, understand that Shiite "Mahdiism" is a critique of the estab-

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lished order, and hence the anxiety expressed by various Sunni Arab leaders, from King Abdullah II of Jordan to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. The West also needs to recognize the implications of Ahmadinejad's ideology that is remaking the Islamic revolution and overturning the established order in the process.

Ahmadinejad is not alone in his fidelity to this messianic mandate. The heads of eight government ministries, personally appointed by Ahmadinejad, are also loyal to the rulings of Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, including the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Intelligence, Interior, Defense, Culture and Islamic Guidance. The Hojathia secret society also claims close friends who direct the conservative *Kayhan* daily and others in the Tehran municipality.<sup>86</sup>

There is a major difference between the apocalyptic world view of the Islamic Republic of Iran and other governments in the international community that have acquired nuclear weapons. Would fear of mutually-assured destruction really restrain a nuclear-armed Iran from using such weapons against the U.S. or Israel? Radical Islam's religious justification of the slaughter of innocent Muslims is expressed in the phrase "Allah will know His own," meaning, as historian Bernard Lewis has

pointed out, "that while infidel (i.e., non-Muslim) victims will go to a well-deserved punishment in Hell, Muslims will be sent straight to Heaven."<sup>87</sup> This view indicates that bombers are doing their victims a favor by helping them get to heaven quickly to enjoy the delights of heaven without the struggles of martyrdom. Lewis notes that Iranian school textbooks tell young Iranians to prepare for a final global struggle against an evil enemy, the United States, and to prepare themselves for the privilege of martyrdom.<sup>88</sup>

## **Conclusion**

Iran's dedication to becoming the regional hegemonic power and a global nuclear force is the fulfillment of the 1979 Iranian Revolution. While Ahmadinejad is committed to elements of Khomeinism, his spiritual drive and religious loyalty to Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi has charged the revolution with an additional energy to hasten the arrival of the Mahdi and the accompanying clash of civilizations with the West. But Ahmadinejad's regional goals have endangered neighboring Arab states – most of them apostates, in his view, that are no less worthy of destruction than Western "infidels" such as the United States and Israel.

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Ironically perhaps, it appears that the Iranian threat in 2007 represents – for both the Sunni Arab states, Israel, the United States, Britain and the West – a type of regional and perhaps global danger that might bear certain similarities to Hitler's Germany until its defeat in 1945, or the former Soviet Union until its collapse in 1991. However, Iran's apocalyptically mandated willingness for mass self-destruction as part of a "necessary" nuclear showdown with the West upgrades the urgency of the present crisis over the previous two major threats to the international order. Since Iran's second Islamic revolution is a non-negotiable process, pursuing diplomatic solutions with Tehran may well only increase the regime's appetite to destroy Israel, to defeat the U.S. and the West and to achieve uncompromising global dominance.

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- 10 According to an IDF military intelligence analyst, in a meeting with the authors, November 10, 2006. See also analysis by the Iranian Bahai, "The Return of the Hojatieh," December 14, 2005, www.bahairants.com/the-return-of-the-hojatieh-81.html. See also Amir Taheri, "Getting Serious about Iran," *Commentary*, November 2006. Khomeini outlawed apocalyptic Hojatiah Mahdi groups, a secret society established to speed the return of the Mahdi, Shiite Islam's vanished messianic figure.
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*Behind a poster of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei reading: "Missile maneuver of the Great Prophet," Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards test the long-range Shahab 3 missile in a central desert area of Iran, November 2, 2006.*



# The Global Range of Iran's Ballistic Missile Program

**Uzi Rubin**

## **Iran is Seeking to Deter the United States**

What is the rationale behind the Iranian missile program? Prior to 1991 and the first Gulf War, the main threat to Iran was Saddam Hussein's Iraq. The Iranians began developing their missile program at the height of the Iran-Iraq war, directly under fire, so to speak, after Saddam Hussein began launching missiles at Iran and the Iranians had nothing to respond with except for a few Scud-Bs they received from Libya, the only country that supported Iran.

Since 1991, the United States has replaced Iraq as the number one threat in Iran's perception. The Iranian reference threat scenario is a massive U.S. military action against Iran aided by U.S. allies in the region, including the Gulf States and Israel, which they see as an outpost of the United States.

The Iranians are realists. They don't aim to win a set-piece battle against the United States. They know that is impossible. Their policy is to deter the United States and its allies by threatening a war of attrition that will exact such a high price that this option will become unacceptable to the United States. With this in mind, they are focusing their efforts not on the renovation of their substantial arsenal of conventional arms, but rather on specific new weapon classes. Very shrewdly they are investing in deterrence enhancers and force multipliers. Replacing obsolete equipment seems to be assigned a lower priority.

This could be seen, for example, in the April 2005 fly-by of the Iranian Air Force in the course of the annual Army Day parade. The majority of the airplanes involved – F5s, F4 "Phantoms," and F14 "Tomcats" – were U.S.-made combat aircraft bought during the time of the Shah. A formation of F4s, F5s, F14s and an air tanker converted by Israel from a Boeing 707 – all predating the 1978 revolution and still flying 27 years later in the skies over Tehran. Looking at Iranian ground forces, one sees a lot of M113 APCs, some M60 tanks and some Russian and Chinese tanks bought during the Iran-Iraq war. There has been no massive renovation.

## **What Armaments Does Iran Invest In?**

What does Iran invest in? Precision-strike munitions, naval anti-ship weapons, ballistic missiles, space programs, and a military nuclear program. Iran invests extensively in anti-ship weapons like the Chinese C802 that hit the Israeli Navy ship Hanit during the recent war in Lebanon. Of more strategic significance is the 350-km.-range Ra'ad (Thunder) anti-ship missile. The purpose of this weapon is to control the Persian Gulf, which they see as the corridor through which the United States would launch an invasion. It is interesting to note the weapons tested by Iran during a recent large-scale naval exercise. Iranian media announced the use of the Misaq shoulder-launched, anti-aircraft missile, which strongly resembles the old Soviet "Strella" Manpad; the Kosar shore defense

**The 350-km.-range Ra'ad ("Thunder") anti-ship missile is of great strategic significance. The purpose of this weapon is to control the Persian Gulf, which they see as the corridor through which the United States would launch an invasion.**

anti-ship missile, which is very similar to a Chinese anti-ship missile; the "Fajer 3 radar-evading" missile (probably



*Iran's Revolutionary Guards test missiles including the long-range Shahab-3 during maneuvers, November 2, 2006*

the Shahab 2 [Scud C]); and the Ajdar "super-fast" underwater missile, which most probably is the not-too-successful Russian Shkval underwater rocket. The overall impression is of an arsenal that is designed with a defensive mindset, but which is carefully calculated to cause the maximum damage and casualties to any aggressor – in short, an arsenal designed for battles of attrition and defenses in depth.

This arsenal is displayed, exhibited and paraded again and again, with a view to deterring the U.S. and at the same time infusing self-confidence in the Iranian public. Nothing contributes toward those two goals better than Iran's ballistic missiles.

### **Ballistic Missiles in the Iranian Arsenal**

The Iranians are engaged in the most intensive missile program in the Third World, with constantly increasing ranges. Iran's missile arsenal comprises both short-range, heavy tactical rockets of the Zalzal (Earthquake) family and continental-range ballistic missiles like the newly acquired BM25 that can reach all the way to Central Europe.<sup>1</sup>

The Zalzal 2 heavy rocket with a 200-km. range and a 500–600 kg. explosive warhead is designed to attack troop concentrations deploying for an invasion of Iran's own territory. Iran supplied a quantity of Zalzal rockets to Hizbullah, which threatened to launch them at Tel Aviv during the latest round of fighting in Lebanon. This did not happen, probably due to the fact that the Israel Air Force succeeded in preempting and destroying the rockets in their depots deep inside Lebanon. The Iranians used the Zalzal to good psychological effect during their November 2006 military exercises, firing a salvo of six of the heavy rockets in front of television cameras, to the alarm of their neighbors across the Persian Gulf.



**The newer Shahab 3ER missile (based on the North Korean No Dong), with a reach of 2,000 km., can threaten Ankara or Alexandria, giving Iran leverage over the entire Middle East.**

An unguided rocket like the Zalzal has a problem with accuracy. To solve this, the Iranians are developing the Fatah 110 – a guided version of the Zalzal 2 and a true battlefield short-range ballistic missile.

During the Iran-Iraq war, between 1980 and 1988, Iran received and purchased 300-km.-range Scud B missiles which were dubbed Shahab (Comet). Some were fired at Baghdad during the war, while most of the remaining ones were fired during the 1990s at Iranian opposition camps located in Saddam's Iraq. Later, Iran purchased a production line from North Korea for the 600-km.-range Huasong 5 (Scud C), dubbing it Shahab 2. These missiles are still in service, and are frequently displayed and tested.

While the Shahab 1 and 2 were acquired to deal with close-in threats, Iran's next missile purchase indicated regional aspirations. The Shahab 3, originally the North Korean No Dong, has a range of 1,300 km. and can reach Israel and the heartland of Saudi Arabia. Iran purchased a production line for these missiles in the early 1990s and is now manufacturing them at a rapid rate. The missile was declared operational and introduced into the service of the Pasadaran (Iran's Revolutionary Guards) in July 2003. In 2004, Iran revealed a more advanced version of this missile, the Shahab 3ER, with a range of 2,000 km.

This spectrum of Shahab-type missiles allows Iran to project its power over the entire Middle East. The Shahab 3 can threaten either Tel Aviv or Riyadh from the same

launch point. The newer Shahab 3ER, with its 2,000-km. range, can reach Ankara in Turkey, Alexandria in Egypt, or Sanaa in Yemen from a single launch point deep within Iran. Thus, Iran does not have to move its launchers to hit key points in the region. Basing the missiles in fixed, reinforced shelters renders the missiles more survivable.

Iran's strategic missiles are not controlled by the Iranian Army but by the Revolutionary Guard, which has its own air force, ground force and navy, and which reports to Iran's spiritual leader. As for their basing mode, the Iranians have displayed a variety of mobile launchers, but there are indications that they are now digging fixed silo-like hardened sites to make their missiles even more survivable.

The number of tests of the Shahab 3 has been relatively small (with some recent acceleration in the rate of testing) and there are indications that as many as one-half have failed. What is intriguing is that Pakistan has a parallel program of an almost identical missile that is tested more frequently and is almost always successful. This does not mean that the Shahab missiles are not operational. While Western practice does not accept a new weapon for service unless it achieves repeated successes in the test range, the Iranians apparently think that if it worked once, it's operational.

Somewhat mysteriously, Iran has managed to acquire eighteen BM25 land-mobile missiles together with their launchers from North Korea, missiles that can

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strike targets in Europe. Their progenitor, the Soviet SSN6 SLBM, had several versions with ranges varying from 2,500 to 3,500 km. Obviously, the BM25's range makes it a threat far beyond Iran's nearest neighbors. It now appears that the Iranians are seeking to project power beyond their own region. Interestingly enough, and in sharp contrast to Iran's policy of transparency regarding the Shahab program, the purchase of the BM25 has been denied by Iran.

Ever since Iran set up its own missile industry, it has been trying to cover expenses by exporting. The



*Iranian President Ahmadinejad reviews Iran's Shahab 3 missile, capable of carrying a nuclear warhead and reaching Europe, Israel, and U.S. forces in the Middle East, September 22, 2005.*

Iranians attempted to sell Scud-Bs to Zaire. They signed a \$12 billion deal with Kaddafi to set up an entire missile industry in Libya; and they were very upset when Kaddafi reversed his policy and abandoned his missile aspirations. Iran has also provided heavy rockets to Hizbullah: the Zalzal (see above), the Fajer 3 with a range of 45 km., and the Fajer 5 with a 75 km. range. Recently, a high-ranking Iranian official declared that his country is ready to supply missiles to friendly nations. An unsubstantiated report from South America talks about selling Iranian Shahab missiles to Venezuela.

Iran has declared that it is developing a new line of large, solid-propellant, two-stage ballistic missiles. Back in 1998, the U.S. Commission to Assess the Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States judged that Iran had "the technical capability and resources to demonstrate an ICBM-range ballistic missile...within five years of a decision to proceed" (Rumsfeld Commission Report, July 15, 1998).

In addition, well-substantiated reports indicate that the Iranians managed to steal and smuggle out of the Ukraine several strategic cruise missiles, probably not for deployment – the number is too small – but for emulation and copying. Thus, we can expect an Iranian cruise missile program too, loosely based on the Russian Kh55 land attack cruise missile, the Soviet equivalent of the U.S. Tomahawk.

**Iran's Space Program Could Extend Its Global Reach**

Iran announced a space program in 1998, concurrently with the first flight test of the Shahab 3 ballistic missile. Iranian disclosures refer to several satellites, some locally made, as well as an indigenous space launcher. Ultimately, their space program aims to orbit spy satellites similar to Israel's Ofek, satellites, using an Iranian satellite launcher within Iranian territory. A spy satellite of rea-

sonable performance should weigh at least 300 kg. Once Iran learns how to put 300 kg. into earth orbit, it could adapt the satellite launcher into an ICBM that could drop more than 300 kg. anywhere in the world, for instance, on Washington, D.C. The Iranians could be clever enough not to actually develop a specific ICBM. It would be enough for them to orbit a satellite in a trajectory that traverses U.S. territory. Every time the Iranian satellite passes above the U.S., it would remind America of Iran's potential to strike it. The impact on the U.S. when the Soviet Union launched its first Sputnik satellite comes to mind.

Iran's short-term goal is to deter the United States and gain freedom of action to become a nuclear power. Its long-term goal is clearly to project power beyond Iran, over Europe and over the United States. Iran is already projecting power over the entire Middle East. With its space program, Iran is bound to project power on a global scale.

Obviously, the Iranians are overstating their capabilities as part of their psychological warfare. But behind this overstatement is a real capability – not as much as they claim, but not insignificant either. They definitely have some real capability, they are investing a lot of money in it, and it is growing with time.

Since the ascendance of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as Iran's president in 2005, Iranian political aspirations seem to have shifted from self-preservation to global power projection. At a recent conference in Berlin, one of the deputies to Iran's foreign minister called upon the world to recognize that Islam comprises 25 percent of humanity and that it should occupy its rightful place in decision-

**Once Iran learns how to put 300 kg. into earth orbit, it could adapt the satellite launcher into an ICBM that could drop more than 300 kg. anywhere in the world, for instance, on Washington, D.C.**

making in world affairs and in the allocation of the world's resources. Such statements indicate a mindset which is more aggressive than defensive. Accordingly, it should not be surprising if the Iranians embark upon massive armament programs with modern offensive

weapon systems in the near future.

Ahmadinejad has declared that Islam should now roll back 300 years of Western superiority. He was speaking in the name of Islam rather than of Iran, but he clearly viewed Iran as the spearhead of Islam in its struggle against Western civilization. Other Iranians stress the historic greatness of Iran with its 6,000-year-old civilization. The Iranians are trying to retrieve the old glory of the empire and at the same time become a world power and the leaders of world Islam. The development of long-range missiles and space launchers is a key element in building up Iran's power to assume such a leadership position in global affairs.

**Note**

1 There is no agreed convention in the literature on how to distinguish between guided and unguided ballistic missiles. For our purposes, unguided missiles (those that are free flying and have no onboard guidance and control systems) are "rockets." Missiles which have onboard guidance systems and hence better accuracy are "ballistic missiles."

Thousands of Hamas supporters at a rally in Gaza City, April 8, 2005.



# Hamas: “Glocal” Islamism

## Martin Kramer

Since the Palestinian elections, a curious mix of Palestinian propagandists, Israeli “peace processors,” and Hamas apologists have run parallel campaigns of obfuscation, meant to convince us that nothing has changed. They argue that despite the electoral victory of a Palestinian party opposed to peace with Israel on principle, there are still opportunities for progress toward a negotiated agreement and even a final settlement. Indeed, some argue that the opportunities have never been greater. How is it possible to entertain this argument, which might charitably be called counter-intuitive?

It becomes possible when one wishes it to be so. Among its most ideological proponents, the “peace process” is understood as a systematic effort to reach a fixed point in the firmament – a point of perfect convergence between the needs of Israel and the Palestinians. This point is “the solution,” and it is usually defined as two states, Israeli and Palestinian, living side by side in mutual recognition and agreed borders, largely along the June 4, 1967 lines.

The location of such a fixed point was in doubt even earlier, when Yasir Arafat turned his back on a two-state solution along precisely these lines, at failed negotiations in Camp David in 2000. The election of Hamas would seem to have disproved the point’s very existence. But within days of the election, the “peace process” pundits were quick to reassure all and sundry that the point remained fixed in the firmament. True, the cloud of Hamas rhetoric

conceals it; but it is perfectly visible if we don special lens with powerful filters. If you cannot see it even then, you have been blinded by excessively focusing your gaze on the past of Hamas. Now that Hamas is in power, that history – so we are told – is entirely irrelevant. How can this be, when Islamist movements across the Middle East demonstrate repeatedly that their past is the best predictor of their future? The answer: the Palestinians, in this as all else, are exceptions.

### Palestinian Exceptionalism

In a critique of Middle Eastern studies that I published a few years ago, I analyzed the myth of Palestinian exceptionalism – the notion disseminated by Palestinian intellectuals that the Palestinians are different (and somehow superior) to all other Arabs. Lacking a state of their own, they compensated by acquiring education, setting them above all other Arabs. (How often is it claimed that they are “the most educated” of all Arabs?) We were told that national solidarity was reflected in the integration of non-Muslim Palestinians into the leadership of the Palestinian cause – a secular cause, immune to religious radicalism. (Think Hanan Ashrawi, a nominal Christian and a woman to boot, or Edward Said.) The absence of a strong Palestinian government, we were told, made possible the development of a broad-based civil society, resting on political pluralism and democratic principles.

The misrule of Yasir Arafat shattered most of these myths. The Palestinians looked less like exceptions and more like a variation on a familiar theme. The Palestinian patterns of government and society seemed to parallel, if not duplicate, those of the Arab world generally.

Now comes a new myth to replace the old, and it is this: although the Palestinians have an Islamic movement,



*Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh of Hamas with Iranian President Ahmadinejad in Tehran, December 9, 2006. Haniyeh returned to Gaza with \$35 million in cash stuffed into several suitcases.*

Hamas, it differs from all the other Islamic movements. Hamas, we are told, is national more than it is Islamic. In fact, it is none other than the Palestinian national movement in Islamic garb. Islam is simply another language for expression of the Palestinian national desire for independence – a language that is more authentic than the old language of secular nationalism, but that otherwise conveys precisely the same meaning. Since Hamas is more nationalist than it is Islamist, it has the well being of the Palestinians at the top of its priorities. It is bound to show ideological flexibility in pursuit of real-world results. Hamas should not be feared, we are reassured; indeed, it should be avidly courted.

Generally speaking, there is a structural tendency in our interpretation of Middle Eastern politics to downplay the salience of Islam. Twenty-seven years after the Iranian revolution, we are still surprised when Islamists act in accord with their stated values. The murder of Egyptian president Anwar Sadat by Islamist extremists in 1981; Ayatollah Khomeini's call for the death of novelist Salman Rushdie in 1989; the terror attacks of September 11, 2001; the statements of Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad urging the elimination of Israel and denying the Holocaust; the blow-up over the Danish cartoons – again and again, we are surprised and even shocked when the core values of Islam drive the actions of any Muslim.

This is due only partly to wishful thinking, but rather reflects a very peculiar understanding of motive. We ascribe preponderant weight to what seem to us rational motives. For example, it appears axiomatic to us that if we starve Hamas for funds, Hamas will capitulate. We dismiss contrary statements from Hamas leaders (“we will subsist on thyme and olives”) as mere posturing and bravado. In the end, this approach is itself entirely irrational, since it effectively dismisses the direct evidence of experience.

## Pan-Islamic Hamas

The inter-Islamic linkages of Hamas belong to the category of evidence that is usually dismissed. To do so, of course, one has to exclude a great corpus of evidence, both visual and verbal. One visual example is a Hamas collage that figures on its various Internet websites. The collage assembles the portraits of three people in a pyramid – one on top and two on the bottom. On the bottom there are pictures of Sheik Ahmad Yassin and Abd al-Aziz Rantisi, two Palestinian Hamas leaders who were eliminated by Israel in targeted assassination. The third person, positioned at the top of the pyramid, is Hasan al-Banna, the Egyptian teacher who founded the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928. Al-Banna was the “guide” (*murshid*) of the movement until his murder by the Egyptian secret police in 1949.

This is a visual demonstration of a fact known to anyone familiar with Hamas texts. Hamas draws its legitimacy from its connection to the Muslim Brotherhood. Article Two of the Hamas covenant (1988) defines Hamas as a dependency of the Brotherhood: “The Islamic Resistance Movement [Hamas] is one of the wings of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine. The Muslim Brotherhood movement is a global organization and is the largest of the Islamic movements in modern times.” Article Seven speaks to the “universality” of Hamas: “Muslims who adopt the way of the Islamic Resistance Movement are found in all countries of the world, and act to support [the movement], to adopt its positions and to reinforce its jihad. Therefore, it is a world movement.”

At this point the covenant offers a pre-history of the Hamas tie to the Muslim Brotherhood. Phases include the 1936 uprising of the Palestinian Sheikh Izz ad-Din al-Qassam “and his brethren the jihad fighters of the Muslim Brotherhood.” These are followed by “efforts and *jihad* of the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1948 war, and the *jihad* operations of the Muslim Brotherhood in 1968 and afterwards.”

**Hamas itself has no authoritative religious leaders. It depends on a number of non-Palestinian religious persons who reside abroad, and who issue rulings of Islamic law that bind Hamas in its operations**

The Muslim Brotherhood movement, then, is presented as the mother movement of Hamas, and as a *jihad* movement involved at three points in time in practically assisting the *jihad* against the Zionists. The mention of Palestinian

*jihad* in 1936, 1948, and 1968, accompanied by emphasis on the link with the Muslim Brotherhood, are hardly accidental. They give Hamas a longer history than Fatah, and cast Hamas as part of a global movement. Hamas traces its link with the Muslim Brotherhood back to the father figure of political Islam, Hasan al-Banna. It was his son-in-law, the Egyptian Said Ramadan, who in the 1940s had direct authority over the activities of the Brotherhood in Palestine. After Nasser’s 1952 revolution and the suppression of the Brotherhood in Egypt, Ramadan escaped to Jordan, where he spent a few years trying to recruit general Islamic support for another round with Israel.

This dependence on the Muslim Brotherhood continues to day, quite obviously in the case of moral leadership. Hamas itself has no authoritative religious leaders. It depends on a number of non-Palestinian religious persons who reside abroad, and who issue rulings of Islamic law that bind Hamas in its operations. One of them is Sheik

## **Article Fourteen of the Hamas covenant identifies three circles that must be mobilized to liberate Palestine: the Palestinian, the Arab, and the Muslim.**

Yusuf al-Qaradawi, an Egyptian who resides in Qatar and who has a popular television show on the Al-Jazeera satellite channel. Qaradawi is the paramount source of the Islamic rulings that have governed the Hamas use of suicide bombings. For example, it was Qaradawi who permitted women to carry out suicide missions, and allowed them to approach their target unveiled and alone, without the usual accompanying male required of believing women who venture out in public.

Hamas also solicits donations from wealthy Arabs in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf. Article Fourteen of the Hamas covenant identifies three circles that must be mobilized to liberate Palestine: the Palestinian, the Arab and the Muslim. It would be an ignorant mistake, the covenant



*PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas (center right), Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh (center left), Foreign Minister Mahmoud Zahar (second from right), and Interior Minister Said Siyam (second from left) at the swearing-in ceremony of the new Palestinian government in Gaza City, March 29, 2006.*

admonishes, to neglect the furthest of these circles, especially since Palestine is a Muslim country, the first direction of Muslim prayer, and seat of the third most important mosque after Mecca and Medina. The article states that liberating Palestine is obligatory for every Muslim wherever he might be, and that this is a duty that can be met by extending financial support for the cause. This is precisely the message that Hamas broadcasts to

## **The very same people who financed jihads in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Chechnya are the ones who now fill suitcases with cash that are smuggled into Gaza by Hamas leaders.**

the very same people who financed jihads in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya. They are the ones who now fill suitcases with cash that are smuggled into Gaza by Hamas leaders.

Article Twenty-Eight of the covenant urges the countries surrounding Israel to “open their borders to *jihad* fighters from among the Arab and Islamic peoples,” and demands of other Arab and Islamic countries that they “facilitate the passage of the *jihad* fighters into them and out of them – that is the very least [they can do].” At the time the covenant was compiled, Hamas apparently believed that there would be a need to import foreign *mujahidin*, as in Afghanistan, Bosnia, Chechnya, and now Iraq. In practice, Hamas recruited locally, and the tight control of Israel’s borders did not allow the import of foreign fighters.

In fact, the flow has been in reverse: Palestinians have played a not-inconsiderable role in the global *jihad*. The most famous was Abdullah Azzam, a Pales-



tinian from the Jenin area, who studied Islamic law in Jordan, Syria, and Egypt, and who later taught in Saudi Arabia where he met Osama bin Laden. It was Azzam who organized training camps in Afghanistan for Arab volunteers, until he was killed in 1989. There have been a few other Palestinians in the higher echelons of al-Qaeda, like Abu Zubaida, alongside the more famous Saudis, Egyptians and Jordanians.

In the past Hamas has imbibed from the same ideological springs as the global *jihadi* movements. The Hamas website page that provides religious justifications for suicide operations features the legal opinions of a number of Saudi religious radicals, such as Sheikh Safar al-Hawali and Sheikh Salman al-Awda. The site also includes rulings from Sheikh Hamud bin Uqla al-Shuaibi and Sheikh Sulayman al-Ulwan, both of whom have served as al-Qaeda clerics. Several of al-Qaeda's key members and leading commanders came out of the Muslim Brotherhood, the parent organization of Hamas. This is not only true of Abdullah Azzam, mentioned above, but also 9/11 mastermind Khaled Sheikh Muhammad, who joined the Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait. Thus al-Qaeda and Hamas might be best described as two branches of the same tree.

Nonetheless, declaratively, Hamas has tended to keep a distance from the global *jihadists*, who are arch-enemies of the very Saudis who patronize Hamas. But the rise of Hamas to power has made it a sought-after

partner for Islamists everywhere. This is certainly the case for the Muslim Brotherhood, of which Hamas is a branch. Hamas has achieved something that the Brotherhood in the neighboring countries has never achieved – control over territory – and the Brotherhood is already mobilizing internationally to sustain Hamas through difficult times. Hamas in power could offer refuge and a base for other Brotherhood movements.

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There is a perfect example of this, from a decade ago. In Sudan, the Muslim Brotherhood rose to power under the leadership of the charismatic Hasan at-Turabi. Turabi then was presented much like Hamas "prime minister" Ismail Haniya is presented today: as a model of moderation. Yet Turabi opened the gates of Sudan to the most radical of the Islamists. Osama bin Laden spent a few years there, extremist summit conferences met in

Khartoum, and Hamas opened an office in the Sudanese capital. Sudan became a transit point for Fathi Shikaki of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, for Tunisian Islamist Rashid al-Ghannushi, for representatives of the Algerian FIS, the Lebanese Hizbullah, and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood.

Since the fall of Turabi from power, there is no locus for this kind of networking. If Hamas succeeds in holding on to power, it is not impossible that it will attempt to play the same role played by Turabi, as a mediator and bridge. At some point, this could involve liaisons with the

global *jihad*. The global *jihad* is highly mobile and completely opportunistic. It moves from void to void – from Afghanistan to Bosnia, from Bosnia to Chechnya, from Chechnya to Iraq. If the United States succeeds in driving al-Qaeda out of Iraq, or if it is marginalized by Iraq's own Sunni tribes, al-Qaeda could move westwards. It already has an infrastructure in Jordan, and its extension into the Palestinian arena might complement the strategy of Hamas in some future scenario.

In conclusion, Hamas is not simply a local Palestinian movement. It is a movement with a regional Islamic profile, even if it limits its operations to the Palestinian arena. A new word has come into being in English:

"glocal." It refers to the combination of global and local, and is used to characterize companies, movements and organizations. The Hamas movement is a decidedly glocal movement, that draws its strength both from the Palestinian struggle and from the global ascent of Islamist movements. Hamas has affinities and loyalties to groups and people outside of the Palestinian area that seek to transform the existing world order from its very foundation. The evidence is overwhelming, but this will not prevent it from being ignored. And when Hamas does suddenly act in ways that are more pan-Islamic than Palestinian, the analysts will be surprised – again.



*Iranian President Ahmadinejad , left, shakes hands with Khaled Mashaal, exiled political leader of Hamas, at the start of their meeting in Tehran, Iran, February 20, 2006.*

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*A man stands between portraits of the late Iranian revolutionary founder Ayatollah Khomeini (left), Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (far right), and Iranian President Ahmadinejad in Karaj, Iran, September 28, 2006.*

Supporters of al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden hold his poster at an anti-U.S. rally on September 23, 2001.



# The Palestinian Hamas Government: Between Al-Qaeda Jihadism and Tactical Pragmatism

**Lt. Col. (Res.) Jonathan D. Halevi**

Hamas' ongoing terror war against the State of Israel continues to be driven by the fundamentalist group's political and ideological mission to be the vanguard of the worldwide Islamic revolution that is today being led by its parent-movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Hamas' kidnapping of an Israeli soldier and its rocket assaults against southern Israel in June 2006 triggered, in part, Hizbullah's kidnapping of two IDF soldiers, followed by rocket barrages from southern Lebanon in July, which triggered the Second Lebanon War. In fact, Hamas' victory in the January 2006 Palestinian elections and the violence it has since spawned against its Israeli neighbor has inspired Islamic move-

ments all over the world, motivating them to emulate Hamas' tactical participation in a democratic process in order to win greater governmental control in their own countries, especially in Jordan.

Hamas' approach is consistent with Iran's strategy of seeding Islamic revolution in Sunni Arab countries, which is intended to create the necessary conditions

for the emergence of a modern superpower caliphate to spearhead a holy *jihad* against the West. The current leader of the international Muslim Brotherhood, Mahdi 'Akef, issued a new strategy on March 30, 2006, calling on all member organizations to serve its global agenda of defeating the West. He called on individual members of the Muslim Brotherhood worldwide

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not only to join the “resistance” to the U.S. financially, but also through active participation.

Hamas Interior Minister Said Sayyam, who is responsible for the Palestinian security forces, announced on March 24, 2006, that he would refrain from ordering the arrests of *jihadi* operatives who carry out terror attacks. In light of al-Qaeda’s growing interest since August 2005 in developing a presence in the West Bank and Gaza, Sayyam’s declaration is an open invitation to terrorists of all stripes to seek refuge in Gaza and use it as a convenient base for launching terror assaults against Israel. It should come as little surprise then that the Palestinian Authority under Hamas rule has become a safe haven for al-Qaeda and other Islamic terror organizations. Al-Qaeda rejects any element of Western influence and employs terror as the most effective means to overthrow “infidel” regimes, spread Muslim teachings, and establish Islamic rule. Hamas, however, for tactical reasons, is prepared to make a pretense of going along with Western democratic rules and thereby exploit them to remove the infidel regimes,



*Masked Hamas militants in Gaza march in front of a model of Jerusalem’s Dome of the Rock shrine with a banner showing Damascus-based Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal in the background, April 8, 2005.*

## **Hamas’ approach is consistent with Iran’s strategy of seeding Islamic revolution in Sunni Arab countries, which is intended to create the necessary conditions for the emergence of the modern superpower caliphate spearheading the holy *jihad* against the West.**

propagate Islam, and install Islamic rule that will eliminate democracy. However, its ultimate long-term goals are no different from al-Qaeda’s. In March 2006, high-level Hamas officials attended events in Pakistan and Yemen where members of the al-Qaeda network were present and in one case offered monetary support for the new Hamas government. *Al-Hayat* reported on April 4, 2006, “a definite presence” of al-Qaeda operatives in the Gaza Strip who had just infiltrated from several Arab countries.

The acute domestic crisis in the Palestinian Authority, following the international political and economic boycott imposed on the PA since February 2006, forced the Hamas leadership to cooperate with intermediary efforts, led primarily by Egypt and Qatar, to establish a national unity government with an amended platform.

### **Hamas’ Non-Negotiable Strategic Goals**

The Hamas government’s negotiations since September 2006 over the formation of a national unity government, with more moderate elements led by PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas, does not indicate any breakthrough or moderating strategic shift in Hamas policy. The changes are solely semantic, aimed primarily at legitimizing Hamas politically. Hamas remains committed to its basic principles, from which it has not deviated. These include:

- Fidelity to the Hamas Charter, which calls for *jihad* as the only means of liberating the entire territory of Palestine – meaning the State of Israel.<sup>1</sup> Hamas has made clear that the movement’s policy at the present historical stage, until Israel’s withdrawal from the West Bank is attained, does not contravene the ultimate, long-term goals of the Hamas Charter.
- Refusal to recognize Israel’s right to exist under any circumstances. The Hamas government’s guidelines do not mention Israel’s name and do not discuss the possibility of a settlement with it in the future.
- Rejection of any possibility of negotiations with Israel. At most, Hamas is prepared to discuss the question of negotiations only after a full Israeli withdrawal to the borders of June 4, 1967, and after Israeli agreement on a mechanism for the return of millions of Palestinian refugees to the State of Israel. Clause 2 of the new government’s guidelines states: “Adherence to the Palestinian refugees’ right of return to their homes and property is a private and collective right that cannot be conceded.”
- Adherence to “resistance,” which means all forms of struggle including suicide bombings, as the only way to achieve political goals. Clause 4 of the government’s guidelines states that “resistance in its different forms is a legitimate right of the Palestinian people for the purpose of putting an end to the occupation and restoring national rights.”
- The uncompromising aim of the “liberation of all of Palestine from the (Mediterranean) sea to the (Jordan) river.”
- Establishment of an Islamic government in Palestine that will apply Sharia (Islamic law) and will eliminate democracy. The Islamic ruling that legitimized Hamas’ participation in the elections stated explicitly that Hamas strives to acquire political power to attain

the goals of the Islamic nation. It views Islamic law as superior to the PA laws and constitution.<sup>2</sup>

Hamas’ assessment of its struggle in the aftermath of the Second Lebanon War reflects increasing confidence in the Arabs’ ability to defeat Israel militarily. The Hamas leadership sees the balance of power gradually turning against Israel,

which it believes is finding it difficult to confront the challenge of a determined, highly motivated, and well-trained armed resistance. Hamas political leader Khaled Mashaal said: “Israel is currently in its most severe situation. Israel lost its great leaders and all the Zionists (leaders) today are minor. America is defeated in Afghanistan and Iraq and does not know how to deal with the Iranian nuclear file....We should not lose this golden opportunity. We can enforce our will if we want to. In light of this situation, the Arabs should cooperate with each other and with their friends in the world and think of ways to change the balance of power and improve their conditions.”<sup>3</sup>

To this end, the Hamas movement maintains its military wing, the Iz a-Din al-Kassam Brigades, as an independent organization that will not submit to the Palestin-

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ian establishment or be assimilated into a national Palestinian army. A senior leader of the Hamas military wing, identified as Abu Huzaifa, said that, since Israel's 2005 disengagement from Gaza, Hamas has set up training bases in all of the Palestinian towns in Gaza for training new cadres of *jihad* warriors.<sup>4</sup>

At these bases, initial training lasts more than a month and advanced training takes three months. Training includes combat skills, physical fitness, rifle practice, firing rockets and warfare tactics. The instructors are Hamas operatives who were trained abroad, many of them in Iran.<sup>5</sup> According to Abu Huzaifa, Hamas units working on military production are developing new and advanced rockets and explosives. Hamas is also working hard to turn the al-Kassam Brigades into a standing army under Hamas command "until the total liberation of all Palestinian land."<sup>6</sup> On November 8, 2006, senior IDF officers reported that Hamas had overcome technological barriers and can now manufacture and store massive quantities of rockets that will allow it to initiate and sustain a major bombardment of southern Israeli cities similar to Hizbullah's rocket assaults against Israel's northern cities in the summer 2006 war.<sup>7</sup>

Hamas Interior Minister Said Sayyam, who has supported suicide bombings against civilians,<sup>8</sup> said he does not intend to maintain any security coordination with Israel and he suggests Hamas will seek to coordinate military activity against Israel.<sup>9</sup> His early appointment of a prominent Al-Aqsa Brigades (Fatah) commander as his ministry's spokesperson implied his future intentions.<sup>10</sup>

Sayyam has established a new, strong security force, which is intended to strengthen the power of the Hamas government against its political adversaries and to serve as a basis for the future Islamic army of Palestine. The Hamas-dominated security force, comprising 5,600 combatants in the Gaza Strip, has been used by the Hamas

government to disperse Fatah-backed popular protests over unpaid salaries. The Palestinian government plans to build up a similar force in the West Bank which would include 1,500 operatives in the first phase.<sup>11</sup>

The importance Hamas attributes to this force was demonstrated during Sayyam's visit to Iran and Syria in October 2006, when he received generous pledges of financial and military aid to improve the force's operational level. Jamal Isma'il Daud Abdallah (also known as Abu Ubaida Al-Jarrah), the commander of the security force, disclosed that Iran agreed to train Palestinian operatives in its police training camps.<sup>12</sup> In addition, Hamas has doubled its efforts to smuggle in advanced weapons and munitions via the Sinai Peninsula. According to Israeli intelligence reports, these weapons included anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles.<sup>13</sup>

### **Hamas and Al-Qaeda: Partners in Global Jihad**

Hamas Foreign Minister Mahmoud al-Zahar met in Pakistan in June 2006 with Jamaat-e-Islami leader Qazi Hussain Ahmed, who had close contacts with bin Laden during the 1990s. The *jihadi* wing of Jamaat-e-Islami has been cooperating with al-Qaeda and providing it with financing.<sup>14</sup>

On March 2, 2006, PA Chairman Abbas told *Al-Hayat* (UK) that he had received intelligence information indicating the presence of al-Qaeda operatives in the West Bank and Gaza,<sup>15</sup> just two days after Israel publicized the arrest of two al-Qaeda operatives in Nablus. Azzam Abu al-Ads and Bilal Hafnawy were indicted for recruiting operatives to carry out terror attacks for al-Qaeda and planning a combined terror attack in Jerusalem with a suicide bomber and a car bomb. Members of the gang who were recruited by al-Qaeda's infrastructure in Irbid, Jordan, were arrested by Israeli security forces at the Allenby Bridge on December 10, 2005, when returning from Jordan.<sup>16</sup>



Yet on March 15, 2006, Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal called Abbas' warning about an al-Qaeda infrastructure in the PA "unfortunate," adding that "we don't understand the logic behind these statements." He emphasized that "al-Qaeda has no presence on Palestinian soil."<sup>17</sup> On April 4, 2006, *Al-Hayat* reported "a definite presence" of al-Qaeda operatives in the Gaza Strip, who had infiltrated from several Arab countries including Egypt, Sudan, and Yemen.

Al-Qaeda operatives have been present in the Palestinian Authority for some time. In August 2000, Israel's security services uncovered a terror network linked to al-Qaeda and headed by Nabil Okal, a Hamas operative from Gaza who underwent military training in bin Laden camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan in 1997-1998.<sup>18</sup> In July 2005,

al-Qaeda gangs fired Kassam rockets at the Israeli town of Neve Dekalim in Gush Katif, and disseminated a video documenting their activities.<sup>19</sup> On October 7, 2005, the Palestinian news agency Ma'an published a declaration circulated in Khan Yunis in which al-Qaeda announced the establishment of a branch in Gaza. The declaration, signed with the name "Qaedat Aljihad in Palestine," listed the group's main goals as: implementing Sharia (Islamic law), setting up a Sharia state, reviving the idea of the caliphate in the hearts of Muslims, and working to create a worldwide Islamic caliphate.<sup>20</sup>

On March 26, 2006, a senior Hamas figure, Muhammad Sayyam, met in Peshawar, Pakistan, with Sayyid Salah al-Din, leader of the Kashmiri terror organization Hezb ul-Mujahidin,<sup>21</sup> which had training camps in Afghanistan until the Taliban's fall from power and

functioned as an al-Qaeda affiliate.<sup>22</sup> Sayyam heads the Yemeni branch of the Palestine Scholars Association, which advocates uncompromising *jihad* against the infidels and legally sanctions suicide bombings against civilians in Israel. He sees the role of Muslim religious sages as spiritual guides whose task is to motivate the masses to struggle against Islam's enemies and attack them with suicide bombings.<sup>23</sup>

In honor of a visit to Yemen by Khaled Mashaal on March 20, 2006, the Hamas office in Yemen organized a conference to recruit financial aid for the new Hamas

government. Sheikh Abd al-Majid al-Zindani (leader of the Islah party) also took part in the conference, meeting with Mashaal, calling on participants to assist the Hamas regime, and setting a personal example by contributing 200,000 rials.<sup>24</sup> All

Zindani, whom the U.S. has labeled a "specially designated global terrorist," stressed that "the support we can provide at present is *money* [emphasis added]," hinting at other forms of support for Hamas in the future.

On February 24, 2004, U.S. authorities designated al-Zindani as a terror supporter, "loyal to Osama bin Laden and a supporter of the al-Qaeda organization." The U.S. Treasury Department stated: "The U.S. has credible evidence that al-Zindani, a Yemeni national, supports designated terrorists and terrorist organizations" and "has a long history of working with bin Laden, notably serving as one of his spiritual leaders." Al-Zindani "support[ed] many terrorist causes, including actively recruiting for al-Qaeda training camps," and in 2004 "played a key role in the purchase of weapons on behalf of al-Qaeda and other terrorists."<sup>25</sup>

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Relations between al-Qaeda and Hamas go back to the early 1990s. In April 1991, Sudanese leader Hasan Turabi hosted a “Popular Arab and Islamic Conference” in Khartoum that brought together for the first time Islamists from the Middle East, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. In addition to Hamas, Osama bin Laden also attended, and in subsequent years turned Sudan into his main base of operations. Turabi continued to host this *jihadist* gathering in 1993 and 1995; and Hamas training camps in Sudan existed alongside those of al-Qaeda. Their solidarity could be inferred from bin Laden’s explicit reference to Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmad Yassin as one of the five *ulema* on which bin Laden based his August 1996 Declaration of Jihad Against the U.S.<sup>26</sup>

As noted in the case of al-Zindani, al-Qaeda and Hamas have long shared global funding mechanisms. On October 22, 2003, Richard A. Clarke, the former National Counterterrorism Coordinator on the U.S. National Security Council, acknowledged that Hamas and al-Qaeda had a common financial infrastructure: “the funding mechanisms for PIJ [Palestinian Islamic Jihad] and Hamas appear also to have been funding al-Qaeda.”<sup>27</sup>



*Mahmoud Abbas, also known as Abu Mazen, right, pauses as incoming Hamas Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh swears in for his post at Abbas’ headquarters in Gaza City, March 29, 2006.*

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Even though Hamas and al-Qaeda share a similar worldview that seeks to impose worldwide Islamic rule, some disagreements have surfaced over how to implement the Islamic revolution. In a taped missive on March 5, 2006, Ayman al-Zawahiri, bin Laden’s deputy, called on Hamas to continue its armed struggle and reject agreements signed between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Al-Zawahiri emphasized that “no Palestinian has the right to give up even a grain of Palestinian land,” and warned Hamas against “the new American game that is called a political process,” alluding to democratization. Khaled Mashaal responded by saying that Hamas did not need advice from al-Qaeda, and will continue to act in keeping with its worldview and the Palestinian interest.<sup>28</sup>

Mashaal’s reaction indicates a difference between Hamas’ agenda and al-Qaeda’s. Al-Qaeda totally rejects any element of Western influence and sees terror as the most effective means to overthrow the infidel regimes, spread Islam and establish Islamic rule. Hamas, however, is prepared to make a pretense of going along with the Western democratic rules of the game and thereby exploit them to remove the infidel regimes, spread Islam, and install Islamic rule that will eliminate democracy. Yet, in substance, Hamas has not rejected the heart of al-Za-

wahiri's advice: it still refuses to give up armed struggle or recognize past Israeli-Palestinian agreements, and it steadfastly refuses to state that it is prepared to make peace with Israel. In other words, Hamas is prepared to adopt a pragmatic tactic that does not violate its basic principles as a means of realizing its ultimate long-term goals, which are no different from al-Qaeda's.

### **Hamas' Governmental Control and Tactical Pragmatism**

Hamas' Damascus-based political bureau chief Khaled Mashaal said in Yemen on March 20, 2006, two months after the Hamas takeover of the PA, that "Hamas is capable of making a distinction between the [current] stage [of Hamas' strategy] and political tactics." In this context, Mashaal outlined the Hamas government's goals in the coming period by order of priority:

- Reorganizing the Palestinian house (parliament, government)
- Appealing to the Arab, regional and international arenas in order to dispel fears about the Islamic stream's accession to power
- Seeking to obtain material assistance and support for the Palestinian people
- Connecting the Palestinians to the Palestinian diaspora, and linking the latter to the Palestinians in Palestine, so that they will be included in the (Islamic) reforms
- Being open to the regional and international arenas, and conducting a dialogue on the basic issue of the rights of the Palestinian people and the honoring of its wishes<sup>29</sup>

An interim assessment points to initial Hamas achievements in fulfilling this plan of action. Hamas controls the Palestinian Authority parliament and set up an Islamic government (sworn in on March 29, 2006),

that also includes a Christian minister. In the first meeting of parliament, Hamas was able to mobilize the required eighty-eight votes and canceled a set of decisions taken by the outgoing parliament in its final session.

These included decisions that were supposed to enhance the powers of Mahmoud Abbas of Fatah, the head of the PA, vis-a-vis the parliament and the government, which are controlled by Hamas. The main law that was canceled had stipulated the establishment of a constitutional court to act as a supreme arbiter for disagreements between the chairman of the PA and the government and parliament. The law had determined that the PA chairman – Abbas – would have appointed the judges of the new court.<sup>30</sup>

Hamas is working carefully to gradually accustom the public to the change in the nature of the government. The Hamas chairman of the parliament, Abd al-Aziz Dweik, claimed in an interview that "no one in the Hamas movement has any intention to implement Sharia by force... but rather by persuasion and preaching in a good spirit."<sup>31</sup>

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One of the greatest Hamas political achievements was the invitation to its leadership for talks in Moscow in March 2006, where the Hamas delegation, led by Khaled Mashaal, met with the Russian foreign minister and senior ministry staff. For Hamas, the visit was an important breakthrough in its pursuit of international legitimacy.<sup>32</sup>

Hamas delegations have also visited Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Hamas received generous promises of assistance to its Islamic government in light of the reduction and stoppage of aid from Western countries. *Al-Hayat* reported on February 28, 2006, that Tehran promised Hamas aid totaling \$250 million as compensation for the Western boycott. Saudi Arabia also promised assistance to the Palestinian Authority, but demanded that Hamas accept the Arab peace initiative and, implicitly, that it sever itself from Iranian influence, which arouses great concern in the Arab world.<sup>33</sup>

In the Arab arena, an Arab summit in Sudan in March 2006 committed itself to assist the Hamas government politically and economically. The chairman of the Arab League has tried to open a political path for Hamas by urging that Hamas' implicit agreement to the Arab peace initiative would exempt it from the Israeli and American demand to explicitly recognize Israel's right to exist.<sup>34</sup> On the eve of the summit, Khaled Mashaal called on the leaders of the Arab states to support the Palestinian Authority under Hamas' leadership with a sum of \$170 million per month, which would enable it to run the PA and pay salaries.<sup>35</sup>

## **Hamas and the PLO**

In the internal arena, Hamas has succeeded in undermining the PLO's status as the sole representative of

the Palestinian people and in gravely damaging its authority to make decisions that obligate the entire Palestinian people. Hamas completely rejected the demands of Abbas and the PLO Executive Committee to alter the guidelines of its government, accept the PLO's (1988) Resolution of Independence, and indicate that the PLO is the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians. Hamas presented its government's guidelines to the parliament in blatant defiance of the PLO and its status as the supreme source of authority for the Palestinian Authority.<sup>36</sup>

The clash over this issue led Palestinian figures, including members of the Palestinian National Council, to declare that the PLO in its present composition no longer represents the Palestinian people, given the stagnation that occurred over the past decade and the PLO's decisions to change its national charter and approve the agreements with Israel. This meshes with Hamas' demand to carry out comprehensive reforms in the PLO, particularly, the holding of democratic elections in the Palestinian diaspora for PLO institutions in order to enhance the refugees' role in the future struggle to realize the "right of return."<sup>37</sup>

Hamas considers its governmental control as a shortcut to bypass the PLO, that had failed to carry out organizational reforms. The PA leadership and its chairman, Mahmoud Abbas, are accused of being collaborators with Israel and the U.S.<sup>38</sup> Osama Hamdan, Hamas' representative in Lebanon, demanded that Abbas resign, while Hamas Foreign Minister Mahmoud al-Zahar announced Hamas' intention to contest the next elections for the PA presidency.<sup>39</sup> When asked, Khaled Mashaal said he does not exclude the possibility of being the next Palestinian president.<sup>40</sup>

## The Impact of the Hamas Government on Jordan

Relations between Hamas and Jordan's Hashemite regime are more complicated, despite Jordan's official support for the Palestinian Islamic government. On March 22, 2006, Jordan publicly warned Hamas not to interfere in the kingdom's internal affairs through its connections with the Islamic Action Front, a front party for Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood movement. This warning was publicized after Zacki Bani Irshid, a figure considered close to Hamas, was elected as general secretary of the Islamic Action Front.<sup>41</sup>

Indeed, Hamas' victory in the Palestinian parliamentary elections caused shock waves in Jordan. Dr. Azaam al-Huneidi, head of the Islamic Action Front faction in the Jordanian Parliament, praised Hamas' achievement and saw it as an important signpost and model for the Islamic takeover of Arab regimes.

Al-Huneidi regards Hamas' victory as holding great significance for the awakening of Islam in the Arab world. The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan seeks to influence decision-making in the national arena, and is prepared, according to al-Huneidi, to take the reins of executive authority (i.e., government), in a way similar to Hamas. He expressed confidence that if elections were to be held in Jordan according to a fair election law, the Muslim Brotherhood would easily take power in a democratic process.

Al-Huneidi called upon the Jordanian government to implement the democratic rules of the game, and to refrain from trying to hinder the progress of the Muslim Brotherhood. He warned the government that the Jorda-

nian people and the Muslim Brotherhood, whose popularity and political power is constantly growing, "will not be quiet for long" in the face of continued neglect and contempt for the will of the people and the absence of genuine democratic reform.<sup>42</sup> Emboldened by the Hamas victory, politicians in the Islamic Action Front have begun to break the "gentlemen's rules" of Jordanian politics, according to which opposition parties do not directly criticize the Hashemite monarchy.<sup>43</sup> Jordan's growing Islamist movement is convinced that the same democratic process used by the Palestinians would lead to an Islamic Republic in Jordan, as well.<sup>44</sup>

Moreover, the likely transfer of the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan to Hamas control would give the

movement great political power vis-a-vis the Jordanian regime and a key to the stability of the Hashemite kingdom. The link-up between the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan (with whom many Pales-

**Jordan's growing Islamist movement is convinced that the same democratic process used by the Palestinians would lead to an Islamic Republic in Jordan, as well.**

tinians in the kingdom identify) and a Hamas-led Palestinian state could throw Jordan into a phase of instability and threaten the continued existence of the royal house. Unlike the Hashemite kingdom, which has not succeeded in creating a Jordanian identity that unites Jordanians and Palestinians, the Muslim Brotherhood offers an outlook that could unite Muslims under the flag of Islam without regard to ethnic origin.

Jordan is playing hardball with Hamas, arresting its members and accusing it of plotting attacks inside the country. Behind the crackdown is the fear that the kingdom is threatened by a rising tide of radical Islam it sees originating from Iran and encompassing its Arab neighbors.

Jordanian security services arrested more than 20 Hamas members after a weapon cache was discovered on April 18, 2006, and accused them of being in the “final phase” of plotting armed attacks on Jordanian institutions and officials. Hamas has denied the allegations. Although Syria and Iran were not directly implicated in the Hamas plot, their names kept surfacing as the investigation unfolded. Three Hamas activists said in televised confessions that they acted on orders from exiled Hamas leaders in Syria, where they said the weapons had come from.

Jordanian government spokesman Nasser Judeh also accused Hamas of recruiting members in Jordan and the Palestinian territories and seeking to send them for military training in Syria and Iran.<sup>45</sup>



*Thousands of Hamas supporters in Gaza City celebrate Israel's unilateral Gaza withdrawal. Masked Hamas gunmen carrying rocket-propelled grenade launchers and assault rifles led the march.*

## **Hamas and the West**

The leader of the international Muslim Brotherhood, Mahdi 'Akef, told *Asharq al-Awsat* on December 11, 2005, that the Brotherhood is a global movement whose members everywhere share a similar religious dedication to spreading Islam until it takes over the whole world.

'Akef has been fiercely anti-American, calling the U.S. “a Satan that abuses the religion.” “I expect America to collapse soon,” he asserted.

**Muslim Brotherhood leader Mahdi 'Akef calls the U.S. “a Satan that abuses the religion.” “I expect America to collapse soon,” he asserted. “I have complete faith that Islam will invade Europe and America.”**

“I have complete faith that Islam will invade Europe and America.”<sup>46</sup> While U.S. observers sometimes view the Muslim Brotherhood (and even Hamas) as a more moderate alternative to al-Qaeda for Islamists, the Brotherhood has a

history of actively supporting global *jihadi* efforts. Prior to the U.S.-led attack on the Taliban regime, the Muslim Brotherhood had its own training camps in Afghanistan where it worked with Kashmiri militants and sought to expand its influence in Central Asian states, especially Tajikistan.<sup>47</sup>

“The entire Muslim Brotherhood in the global arena acts according to a written platform<sup>48</sup> (in which *jihad* is the way to attain our ends);” Akef continues. “We have the largest organization in the world. A (Muslim) person who is in the global arena and believes in the Muslim Brotherhood’s path is considered part of us and we are part of him.”<sup>49</sup> The Brotherhood portrayed Hamas’ triumph as “a victory of the Islamic nation in its entirety,” rather than as a local victory.<sup>50</sup> From the Brotherhood’s perspective, Hamas members are expected to serve its global agenda and not their local interests alone. 'Akef more recently declared a new strategy, which has been adopted by the

Brotherhood, to confront Western imperialism and the "satanic alliance" between the U.S. and Israel based on supporting the "resistance" in any Muslim country under foreign occupation, including Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan. He also called on the Brotherhood to grant not only financial and material support but to join the resistance to achieve freedom for the Muslim nation.<sup>51</sup>

The Hamas leadership shares this view of the overarching struggle between the Islamist movement and the West. In August 2005, Mahmud al-Zahar, today the Hamas foreign minister, had expressed the hope that Hamas' victory against Israel, as expressed by the Gaza disengagement, would empower the *mujahideen* in Iraq and Afghanistan. Khaled Mashaal warned in February 2006: "We say to this West, which does not act reasonably and does not learn its lessons: By Allah, you will be defeated!"<sup>52</sup> He added: "Tomorrow, our nation will sit on the throne of the world." Mashaal also lashed out at the West for helping the Christian population of East Timor and for opposing Khartoum's operations against the population of Darfur, which the U.S. has categorized as genocide.<sup>53</sup>

Thus, Hamas does not confine itself to the Palestinian issue. It truly sees itself as the vanguard of a global movement led by its parent-movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, and by Iran, with which it has a strategic alliance. Hamas' policy is consistent with Iran's strategy to spur Islamic revolution in Arab countries in order to create the necessary conditions for the emergence of a modern superpower caliphate to spearhead the holy *jihad* against the West.<sup>54</sup>

## Implications for the Future

Hamas has reaped the fruits of the "Green Revolution" that it led in recent years to win many local authority elections, obtain a stable majority in the Palestinian parliament, and take decisive control of executive authority. Hamas' tactical agreement to play by the democratic rules was a Trojan horse that enabled the movement to participate in the elections as a legitimate political force. It exploited the fragmentation of Fatah and the weakness of the Palestinian Authority to achieve political dominance as a first stage toward establishing Islamic rule that will implement Islamic law and lead, in fact, to the eradication of democracy.

The Muslim Brotherhood, which has a loyal and dedicated international organizational infrastructure, views Hamas' political and military achievements as a platform from which to advance its offensive against the West.

The duty to participate in *jihad* is seen to apply to all Muslims everywhere. This means that Muslim Brotherhood activists in Islamic centers in Europe and North America are also called upon to contribute to the campaign against the West, to continue financial assistance to the Islamic organizations fighting the United States and its allies, and to dispatch fighters to the arenas of battle.

The Muslim Brotherhood's transition to a frontal battle poses a complex intelligence challenge to Western democracies that requires increased surveillance both of radical Islamic actors suspected of involvement in terror, and of money transfers from the West to organizations that are linked to the Muslim Brotherhood and active in the arenas of battle.

**Hamas does not confine itself to the Palestinian issue. It truly sees itself as the vanguard of a global movement led by its parent-movement, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Iran, with which it has a strategic alliance.**

Hamas' attempt to create an impression of political pragmatism is primarily aimed at helping it gain international legitimacy for Islamic government according to Muslim Brotherhood doctrine. Hamas has no intention of reaching a settlement with Israel based on mutual recognition. Instead, it seeks to mobilize the international community to support Palestinian positions based on the principle of "historical justice," including the "restoration" of Palestinian rights, which mainly means the absorption of millions of Palestinian refugees into the State of Israel, which will then inevitably cease to be a Jewish state. In Hamas' view, this is not the time for any Palestinian concessions. An

**In Hamas' view, this is not the time for any Palestinian concessions. An unconditional Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders, as Hamas demands, is seen as serving the Palestinian interest by forcing Israel into a position of strategic inferiority and thereby increasing the threat to its existence.**

unconditional Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders, as Hamas demands, is seen as serving the Palestinian interest by forcing Israel into a position of strategic inferiority and thereby increasing the threat to its existence.

In the Israeli context, the threat is now many times greater because of its proximity to the urban population concentrations in the center of the country and to

strategic targets such as power plants and airports. Hamas' agreement to any truce only helps it improve its equipment and deployment for the next round of military confrontation. Meanwhile, Hamas is giving other Palestinian terror organizations a free hand to perpetrate attacks against Israel.



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# About the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs

**Websites: English - [www.jcpa.org](http://www.jcpa.org)**

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The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs is an independent, non-profit institute for policy research founded in 1976. Since then, the Center has produced hundreds of studies by leading experts on a wide range of international topics. Dr. Dore Gold, Israel's former ambassador to the UN, has headed the Center since 2000.

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  - **The Israeli Economy and Privatization** – This comprehensive, 10-year project has studied the application and impact of privatization policy in Israel. Sponsored by the Milken Institute, the project includes nine published volumes in Hebrew and English.
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  - **Israel Campus Beat** and **Israel HighWay** – Weekly information bulletins for college and high school students.
  - **Post-Holocaust and Anti-Semitism** – A monthly publication examining anti-Semitism after the Holocaust.
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إِنَّمَا إِلَهُ الْإِنسَانِ فَاعْبُدْهُ  
فَسَوْفَ يَكْفُرَ بِالْإِلَهِ الْغَافِلِينَ

