



IRAN'S RACE **FOR REGIONAL SUPREMACY**

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS FOR THE MIDDLE EAST



Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs



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ISBN : 978-965-218-064-3

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Photos Credit: AP Photo



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Acknowledgments

The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs
expresses its profound thanks and appreciation to Dr. Roy H. Stern and Steven E. Stern
for their vision and generosity in making this monograph possible.

The editor expresses his deep appreciation
to Professor Bernard Lewis and Ambassador Uri Lubrani
for their insights and wise counsel on the chapter, "Iran's Second Islamic Revolution."



FOREWORD

IRAN'S RACE FOR REGIONAL SUPREMACY

Lt.-Gen. (ret.) Moshe Yaalon

A gunman holds his AK-47 as he stands in a Sunni street in front of a big poster showing portraits of Shiite cleric Imam Moussa al-Sadr (top), leader of the Shiite Amal movement and Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabi Beri (left), and Hizbullah leader Sheik Hassan Nasrallah (right), during the Hizbullah-led attack on Beirut that left scores dead and wounded, May 9, 2008.

The publication of this updated and newly titled edition of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs' 2007 policy monograph, *Iran, Hizbullah, Hamas and the Global Jihad: a New Conflict Paradigm for the West*, comes at a critical moment. Since the first edition was published in the aftermath of the 2006 Second Lebanon War, regional events have only vindicated the study's thesis: that Iran's use of terror proxies in its race for regional supremacy is the primary cause of instability in the Middle East, not the Israeli-Palestinian dispute.

Since the 2006 war with Hizbullah, Iran has sponsored terror operations in the Middle East states amenable to the West, including Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Gulf states, in the service of destabilizing the governments of those states. It has escalated its direct attacks through organizations it backs – with money, training and weaponry – like the Hamas military takeover of Gaza from the Palestinian Authority leader, Mahmoud Abbas, in June 2007 and Hizbullah's near coup d'état in Beirut in May 2008 against Prime Minister Fouad Seniora's government.

In this context, Teheran has also expanded its alliances with numerous Palestinian terror groups and employed them to step up attacks against Israel. Thus, Palestinian Gaza and parts of Judea and Samaria – the West Bank – that are controlled by the Palestinian Authority have become new "theaters" for the spread of Iranian influence and control. With its continuing drive for strategic weapons, Iran not only poses a regional threat, but even a global challenge affecting the security of the Western alliance as a whole.

- Collectively, the articles in this updated monograph, titled *Iran's Race for Regional Supremacy*, address an essential question:

Have the Western powers exaggerated the importance of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict while derogating the importance of the new Iranian role in the region?

This new edition provides the necessary context to consider this question wisely, especially in light of the dramatic developments throughout the region that have transpired since the publication of the first edition in January 2007.

Iran and Al-Qaeda: Regional Moves

Iran has accelerated its quest for regional supremacy via its mobilization of both Shiite and Sunni terror proxies, including Hizbullah in Lebanon, Shiite militias in Iraq and in the Gulf, the Taliban in Afghanistan, and Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the Al Aksa Martyrs' Brigades in the Palestinian territories.

Since the Second Lebanon War, Iran has spent more than a billion dollars rebuilding Southern Lebanon and bolstering Hizbullah there.¹ Despite the serious blow the IDF inflicted on Hizbullah during the war, Iran and Syria have increased Hizbullah's pre-war rocket arsenals by almost a third, to at least 30,000 rockets. Defense Minister Ehud Barak told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee in February 2008 that Hizbullah "now possesses three times as many rockets as it did prior to the Second Lebanon War," suggesting that Hizbullah may have acquired as many as 60,000 rockets.²

Hizbullah's Iranian-supplied land-to-sea missile inventory has also likely tripled.³ The IDF believes that Iran is arming Hizbullah with long-range missiles capable of striking targets 300 km. away and other advanced weaponry. Some of this ordinance has been disguised as civilian cargo and smuggled overland across Turkey into Syria and then to Hizbullah in Lebanon. In May 2007, for example, Turkish authorities intercepted a train traveling from Iran to Syria carrying Hizbullah weaponry.⁴



الخصم تشرق عليه وضوءكم أبداً إن بقيتم
معاً قاتلنا ..
معاً حاربنا ..
معاً نعيشنا ..

الجهاد



Palestinians pass by the destroyed part of the Egyptian-Gaza border in Rafah, southern Gaza Strip, Jan. 31, 2008. Hundreds of thousands poured across the breached border.

Hizbullah has placed hundreds of rocket installations south of the Litani River, under heavy civilian cover in Shiite villages and rural areas.

Since the 2006 war, Hizbullah’s freedom of movement in Southern Lebanon has been limited by the presence of nearly 14,000 UNIFIL troops and at least 10,000 Lebanese government forces. However, Hizbullah has still managed to place hundreds of rocket installations south of the Litani River, under heavy civilian cover in Shiite villages and rural areas. In a tacit agreement with Hizbullah, UNIFIL and Lebanese troops have avoided operating in many areas in Southern Lebanon. On occasion, the Lebanese army and UNIFIL have even coordinated their actions with Hizbullah.⁵ In short, the Lebanese army and UNIFIL have not enforced the security measures stipulated by UN Security Council Resolution 1701.⁶

Under Iran’s auspices, it is little surprise that Hizbullah and Syria have continued their political subversion of Lebanon. Hizbullah boycotted the Lebanese parliament in 2007 in order to topple the pro-Western prime minister, Fouad Seniora. Hizbullah also works to facilitate Syria’s hold over Lebanon, having prevented the election of a pro-Western president on at least 19 occasions as of May 13, 2008.⁷ In short, Hizbullah has continued expending a great deal of energy to transform Lebanon into a tightly woven piece of Iran’s regional revolutionary fabric.

Lebanon was also the battleground for the activities of the radical Sunni Islamic group Fatah al-Islam, which is an al-Qaeda affiliate backed by Syria and Iran. Fatah al-Islam’s bloody battles in 2007 against Lebanese security forces in and around Palestinian refugee camps illustrate the growing complicity

of Sunni and Shiite groups in destabilizing pro-Western governments, whether in Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, or against Western-oriented leaders of the Palestinian Authority.

In June 2007, Hamas’ violent takeover of Gaza transformed the Strip into the region’s first “Islamic Arab Emirate.” This was an important achievement for Iran. It is also the region’s first example of the Muslim Brotherhood’s governmental control of a contiguous territory and its population. Iran’s direct backing of Hamas via Khaled Mashaal and the Damascus-based Hamas leadership has essentially transformed Gaza into a base from which to export Iranian terror against Israel and expand Teheran’s political control in the region. Iran now has an additional gateway, aside from Syria and Lebanon, to the Arab world – and one that poses a threat to Israel’s Arab neighbors, Egypt and Jordan.

The establishment of “Hamastan” in Gaza also radiates victory to the *jihadists* of many stripes, including those fighting the U.S.-led coalitions in Afghanistan and Iraq. More importantly, Hamastan has also signaled the weakness of the West’s political will in confronting and defeating Iran and its proxies militarily.

Iran remains one of the major destabilizing influences in Iraq and has continued, through its Qods Force operatives, to train, arm, and fund Iraqi Shiite militias,⁸ despite the U.S. capture of several senior members of the Qods Force in early 2007. The U.S. Coalition Forces Commander in Iraq, General David Petraeus, has noted in subsequent congressional testimony that, “it is increasingly apparent to both coalition and Iraqi leaders that Iran, through the use of the Qods Force, seeks to turn the Iraqi Special Groups into a Hizbullah-like force to serve its interests and fight a proxy war against the Iraqi state and coalition forces in Iraq.”⁹

Iran’s Nuclear Program

Perhaps the most vital component of Iran’s race for regional supremacy is the regime’s fast-developing nuclear weapons program, which has continued despite international diplomatic and economic antagonism. Unfortunately, the publication in November 2007 of the U.S. National Intelligence Estimate sent a misleading and even contradictory message on the state of Iran’s nuclear weapons program. The report’s opening sentence – “We judge with high confidence that in fall 2003, Teheran halted its nuclear weapons program” – appeared to vindicate Iranian denials.¹⁰

However, one of the report’s primary conclusions



is that Iran has continued to enrich uranium at an accelerated pace. And there is no debate in U.S. or Western circles over the fact that enriched uranium is equally necessary for both civilian and military nuclear programs. As former UN Ambassador John Bolton has suggested, the distinction between Iran's "military" and "civilian" programs is highly artificial.¹¹

Therefore, the NIE does not attest to a cessation of Teheran's military nuclear program; rather, the report provided Iran immediate relief from international pressure while helping Ahmadinejad calm dissent within the regime, if only temporarily. The NIE has also lowered the prospect of U.S.-led military action against Iranian nuclear facilities.

As a result of the Arab establishment's concern that the NIE represented a clear example of U.S. hesitation to confront the Iranian regime, the Gulf Cooperation Council, an alliance of Gulf states established 27 years ago to counter Iran, seems to have collapsed.¹² This was illustrated sharply when Qatar, shortly after the NIE's release and without consulting its fellow Gulf members, invited Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to deliver the keynote address at the 2008 GCC summit in Doha.

It was no coincidence that Ahmadinejad was invited to address the GCC on the eve of President George W. Bush's January 2008 Middle East visit. This was an example of the Sunni establishment signaling the U.S. that it was keeping its options open – that it was beginning to view Iran as the winning horse.

Al-Qaeda and its Affiliates

Sunni *jihadi* organizations linked to al-Qaeda refocused some of their activity during 2007 closer to Israel's borders with Syria, Lebanon, and Gaza.¹³ During President Bush's January 2008 visit to Israel, al-Qaeda affiliates launched a 107mm rocket from Southern Lebanon at the northern Israeli town of Shlomi.¹⁴ In June 2007, Fatah al-Islam, an al-Qaeda offshoot based in Lebanon, fired rockets at the northern Israeli town of Kiryat Shmona, hitting the city's industrial zone.¹⁵

The establishment of "Hamastan" in Gaza also radiates victory to the jihadists of many stripes, including those fighting the U.S.-led coalitions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

To Israel's south, Hamas' strategically planned destruction of the Gaza-Egypt border fence in January 2008 enabled *jihadi* groups such as al-Qaeda, which have already used Egyptian Sinai as a rear base, to reach Gaza more easily. Al-Qaeda-affiliated operatives, some of whom infiltrated from Egypt, Sudan, and Yemen, have been active in Gaza since 2006.

Over the past several years, al-Qaeda-affiliated organizations have also emerged in Gaza, including *Jaish al-Islam* (Army of Islam), which was responsible for the kidnapping of BBC journalist Alan Johnston. Other *jihadi* groups were also formed, such as *Jaish al-Umma* (Army of the Nation), Al-Qaeda in Palestine, and *Mujahidin Beit al-Makdes* (Holy Warriors of Jerusalem), which attacked the American International School in Gaza in January 2008.¹⁶

Iran and the Palestinian Authority

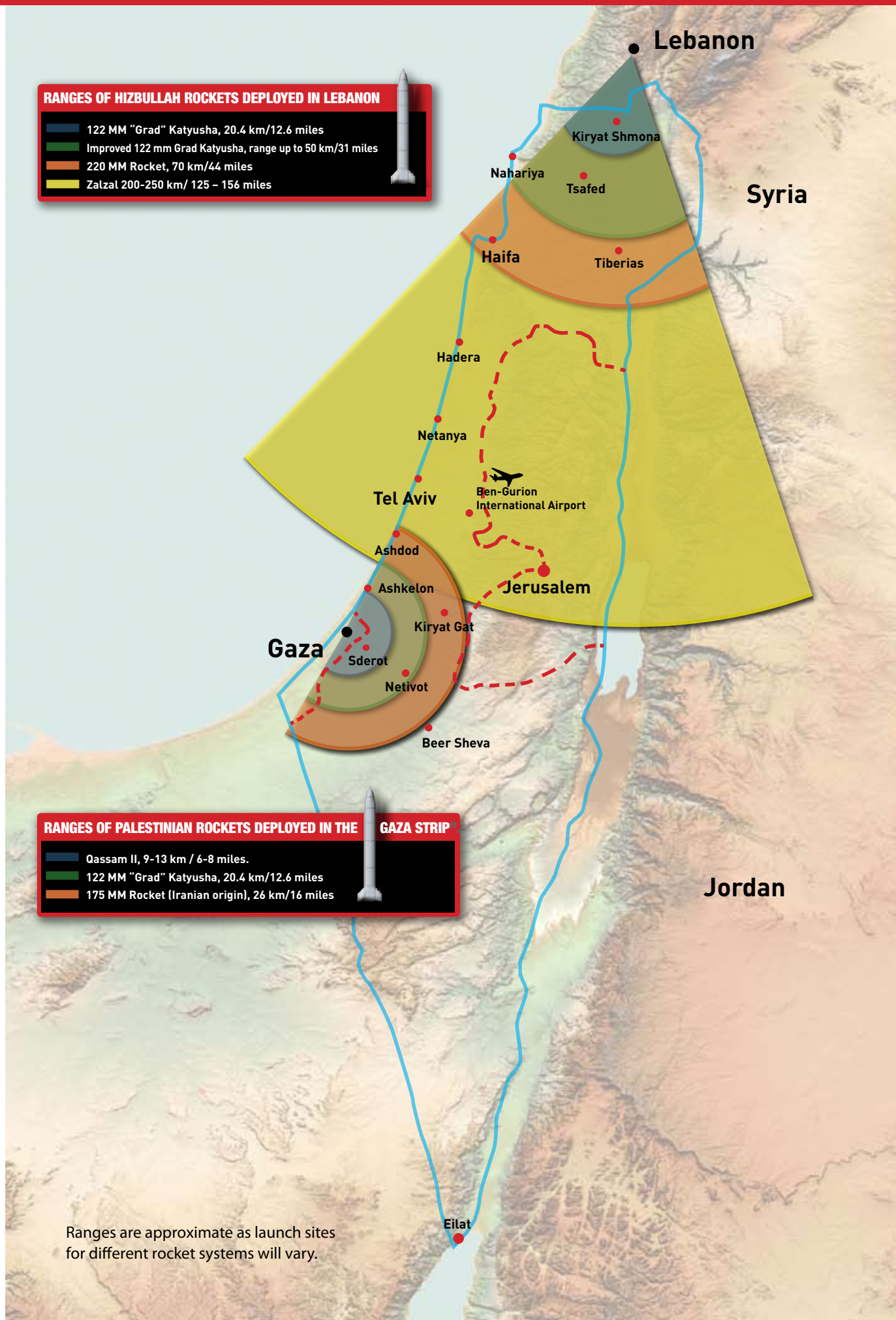
Hamas' takeover of the Gaza Strip was one of the most significant regional developments of 2007. Gaza is now the first Islamic Arab emirate in the Middle East, and represents a likely irrevocable victory of Islamists over the Palestinian and Arab nationalists.

Both Egypt and the Palestinian Authority reportedly pointed to Iran's major role in the Hamas takeover of Gaza. According to Tawfik Tirawi, head of PA intelligence, the Hamas takeover in Gaza "was coordinated with Iran which provided training and weapons and was informed of every step."¹⁷ Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmed Abu Gheit charged that Iran's intervention in Gaza and Iraq threatened Egypt's national security.¹⁸

Notwithstanding Gaza's transformation into a *de facto* sovereign Hamas state, Gaza's status as an Islamist platform began after Israel's 2005 disengagement from Gaza. Between 2005 and late 2007, some 230 tons of explosives, including scores of anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles, were smuggled into Gaza via underground tunnels from Egyptian Sinai into Gaza.¹⁹ Since January 2007 alone, more than 3,000 Palestinian rockets and mortars have been fired at Israel by Iranian-sponsored groups.²⁰

Since Hamas' breach of the Gaza-Egypt border in January 2008, tons of additional explosives have been transferred overland from Egypt to Gaza.²¹ The breach also enabled Hamas to bring back operatives who had left Gaza for training in Syria and Iran, including snipers, explosives experts, rocket experts, and engineers.²² In March 2008, Hamas officials admitted for the first time that hundreds of their top operatives have trained in

ROCKET THREATS TO ISRAEL EMANATING FROM LEBANON AND THE GAZA STRIP



Ranges are approximate as launch sites for different rocket systems will vary.



Syria and Iran under the aegis of Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC). Hamas officials noted that Iran's training of Hamas is similar to Iran's training of Hizbullah.²³

Massive Iranian financial support continued to flow into Hamas coffers in 2007, reaching between \$120 and \$200 million.²⁴ In December 2007 alone, some \$100 million was smuggled into Gaza by senior Hamas members returning from the annual *haj* pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia. Hundreds of millions of dollars have since likely crossed Gaza's broken border.²⁵

In March 2008, Hamas officials admitted for the first time that hundreds of their top operatives have trained in Syria and Iran under the aegis of Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC). Hamas officials noted that Iran's training of Hamas is similar to Iran's training of Hizbullah.

For its part, Hamas could likely take control of the West Bank, or at least create major disturbances, if the IDF security presence there was significantly relaxed or removed. One important conclusion is that the Palestinian Authority under the leadership of Mahmoud Abbas lacks the ability, political will, or both to create a secure, accountable entity in Gaza and the West Bank governed by the rule of law.

While Hamas influence in the West Bank is widespread and growing, Iran has used money, ideology, and training to help influence other Palestinian terror groups in the West Bank, such as the Al Aksa Martyrs' Brigades and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, despite the fact that they too are Sunni and not Shiite groups.

Syria

Syria has continued to call for peace negotiations with Israel as a tactic ostensibly aimed at regaining the Golan Heights. However, Damascus' real agenda is to ease international pressure on the regime. At the same time, Syria and Iran have deepened their strategic cooperation,²⁶ while Syria has continued its policy of destabilizing the region via:

- Dispatching thousands of *mujahadin* from Syria to Iraq.²⁷
- Arming Hizbullah in Lebanon in violation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1559 and 1701.
- Training and hosting Palestinian terror groups and Iranian Qods Force operatives in Damascus.
- Assassinating Lebanese political leaders, journalists, and opponents and directly interfering in Lebanon's political process in an effort to restore Syrian control.
- In an egregious violation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, building a nuclear reactor with North Korean help.
- Strengthening its political, security, and economic alliance with Iran.
- Upgrading its arsenal of surface-to-surface missiles, chemical weapons, and the doubling of its rocket inventory compared to 2006.²⁸

In view of these developments in Syria, the policies of United States, the Western alliance, and Israel are problematic and require urgent review.

Iran and the Western Alliance

The failure of the U.S.-led Western alliance to isolate Iran diplomatically and economically and the failure to make Iran pay a price for specific acts of aggression have emboldened the regime throughout the Middle East.

For example, Iran's successful "probes" of both Britain and the United States in separate confrontations in the Persian Gulf sent a clear message about the West's continued reluctance to confront the Iranian regime. In March 2007, Qods Force naval operatives kidnapped 15 British naval personnel and held them for nearly two weeks before releasing them "as a gift of the Iranians." In January and April 2008, IRGC speedboats charged U.S. naval warships in the Strait of Hormuz, nearly triggering armed confrontations. In these instances, neither British nor U.S. forces responded militarily to the direct provocations by the Iranians.

The Palestinian Authority, Israel, and the Western Alliance

The November 2007 Annapolis peace "meeting," the subsequent Paris Donor Conference, and President George W. Bush's follow-up visit to Jerusalem and Ramallah all reflect the strategic inertia of U.S., European, and some Israeli policymakers when it comes to the essence of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the inability to create better strategies to address the deep-rooted crisis – and to address the ways it has changed in recent years.

The U.S.-led effort insists on first solving the Israeli-Palestinian territorial dispute, which is still seen as a primary cause of the region's problems, rather than as a symptom of the actual cause – Islamic rejection of Israel. The takeover of Gaza by Iran's Hamas proxy and the manner in which Hamas set about attacking Israel should be all the evidence anyone needs that the conflict is "not over the size of the state of Israel, but rather its actual existence," as Bernard Lewis noted in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed the day before the Annapolis conference.²⁹

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A senior PA negotiator further clarified the existential nature of the conflict in the days leading up to Annapolis when he publicly refused to affirm that the State of Israel had the right to exist as a Jewish state.³⁰ However, international expectations of a Palestinian state in Gaza and the West Bank have continued unabated; for example, Israel has not been able to disconnect itself from Gaza due in large part to international expectations and pressure on Israel to continue to supply the territory with electricity, water, and commercial goods.

But Hamas' breach of the Gaza-Egypt border on January 23, 2008, created a new possibility.³¹ Egypt has demonstrated its ability to play a direct role in supplying materials, goods, and services to Gaza, thereby enabling Israel to complete its disengagement. However, unceasing efforts by both Western and Arab governments to break the international boycott on Gaza either by supporting a Fatah-Hamas unity government or by calling for cease-fire talks has placed Israel in a political and diplomatic bind – forcing it to remain committed to the diplomatic framework of a single Palestinian state in Gaza and the West Bank.

In order to avoid the same mistakes in the future, it is crucial that the Western alliance fully assimilate the dramatic lessons of Israel's 2005 disengagement from Gaza.

The failed experiment of the Gaza disengagement has tremendous implications for the future of the West Bank, particularly the Jordan Rift Valley and the

hills overlooking the greater Tel Aviv area and Ben-Gurion Airport. These areas are essential to Israel's security, yet Israel will be expected to withdraw from them completely in the context of a bilateral agreement with the Palestinians. The West Bank hills overlooking the coastal plain provide an ideal launching area for Palestinian rocket and mortar attacks against Israel's main population centers, roads, and national infrastructure, including Ben-Gurion Airport.

Aside from the current prohibitive strategic environment for a bilateral peace process, the Annapolis and Paris conferences have continued to emphasize the tactic of injecting billions of dollars in economic aid into Palestinian Authority coffers as a central tool for conflict resolution. For their part, Mahmoud Abbas and PA Prime Minister Salam Fayad reportedly intend to assign close to half of the \$8 billion pledged at the Paris donors conference as direct economic assistance to Gaza.³²

In effect, more than \$3 billion in Western financial support for the Palestinians will end up in Hamas hands, strengthening their control of Gaza instead of weakening them and forcing them to pay a price for their 2007 coup and the ongoing violence that Hamas provokes. The Annapolis and Paris conferences' approach to peacemaking also seems to overlook the fact that more than \$7 billion was lavished on the PA during the Oslo years from 1993 to 2006. That money was largely wasted or used for terrorism, while up to \$2 billion is suspected of having been pilfered by Yasser Arafat.

Despite these past failures and the current absence of Palestinian security, economic, and political reforms, not to mention the continued presence of incessant Islamic incitement against Israel's existence in Palestinian media, school books, and universities, and in PA-sponsored mosque sermons, the West has continued to provide the Palestinian Authority with massive economic, security, and political support.

President Bush seems to understand the stakes in the new Middle East, especially the manner in which so many sources of destabilization and violence today have a return address in Teheran. During his January 2008 visit to the UAE and Saudi Arabia, Bush said that Iran "undermines Lebanese hopes for peace by arming and aiding the terrorist group Hizbullah. It subverts the hopes for peace in other parts of the region by funding terrorist groups like Hamas and Palestine Islamic Jihad. It sends arms to the Taliban in Afghanistan and Shiite militias in Iraq. It intimidates its neighbors with ballistic missiles...and it defies the United Nations and destabilizes the region by refusing to be open and transparent about its nuclear programs and



ambitions. Iran's actions threaten the security of nations everywhere."

Clearly, Bush's security commitment to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf emirates is equally relevant to the State of Israel. A deep Israeli territorial withdrawal today or in the foreseeable future would only intensify Israel's strategic vulnerabilities to Iranian-sponsored terror groups and al-Qaeda. Thus, the current conceptual approach to peacemaking, that began at Oslo in 1993, was "reframed" in the 2002 Road Map, and then "crowned" at the Annapolis and Paris conferences in 2007, should now be tabled. Instead, a regional approach to Middle East security, diplomacy, and peacemaking should be pursued, based on the economic and diplomatic isolation of Iran and, if necessary, military action.

The West Bank hills overlooking the coastal plain provide an ideal launching area for Palestinian rocket and mortar attacks against Israel's main population centers, roads, and national infrastructure, including Ben-Gurion Airport.

Hamas control of Gaza has moved Egypt to consider playing a much larger role in helping to influence Gaza's future, while the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan may, under certain conditions, increase its assistance to Abbas and other "moderate" leaders in order to secure the West Bank from being overtaken by *jihadi* groups, local warlords, and armed militias. Only then, with the Iranian regime neutralized and the Palestinian areas stabilized with the help of its neighbors, can Palestinian institution-building be advanced via verifiable Palestinian reforms in the security, economic, educational, and political realms.

This two-stage approach will enable the Palestinians to build a secure, free, democratic society from the ground up, instead of the current inverted "top down" approach. Just as important, a new regional approach to Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking must also include the direct and open participation of the Palestinians' and Israel's Egyptian and Jordanian neighbors.



Notes

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INTRODUCTION

THE DIPLOMATIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE GROWING IRANIAN THREAT

Dr. Dore Gold

President Bush (center), flanked by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert (left), and Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas (right), listen as Abbas speaks during the opening session of the Mideast conference at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Md., Nov. 27, 2007.

Profound changes in the interests and concerns of states across the Middle East characterize the period beginning with the Second Lebanon War in July 2006, progressing through the November 2007 Annapolis conference, and reaching into the final months of the Bush administration. Today, Iran stands out as the most urgent threat to the stability of the region, given the pace of its nuclear weapons program, its project to foster subversion throughout the Middle East, and its desire to galvanize Islamist groups under its umbrella to join its renewed revolutionary struggle.

Iran's current race for regional supremacy is not a new phenomenon. However, after the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, it was largely overlooked. The conventional wisdom throughout much of the Western alliance had been that Israel's conflicts with its neighbors were one of the principal sources of regional instability. The Palestinian issue, in particular, was said to be a foremost "root cause" of the region's problems.¹ U.S. and European diplomats had constantly heard this message from their counterparts in the Arab world. As a consequence, Western policymakers, particularly in Europe, stressed the urgency of settling the Palestinian question – while downplaying the challenge posed by Iran.

Yet even at that time, there were and continue to be very compelling reasons for shifting this order of priorities. Already in August 2002, representatives of the Iranian opposition disclosed that Iran was secretly building two nuclear sites that could have military applications: the Natanz facility for uranium enrichment, and the Arak heavy-water production plant with a heavy-water nuclear reactor, both of which could eventually supply Iran with weapons-grade plutonium.

A year later the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reported that Iran was indeed planning on converting thirty-seven tons of "yellow cake" (U₃O₈) to uranium hexafluoride (UF₆) gas that was intended for the centrifuges at Natanz, where it

could be enriched to weapons-grade uranium.² Conversion was indeed started in August 2004. The IAEA also revealed in 2003 that its inspectors had already found in Natanz particles of highly-enriched uranium – up to 90 percent enriched – that were only appropriate for use in a nuclear weapon, and not in any civilian nuclear program.³ Despite the confusing language of the 2007 U.S. National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) that suggested Iran had halted the weaponization portion of its nuclear program back in 2003, Defense Secretary Robert Gates still asserted in April 2008 that Iran was "hell bent" on acquiring nuclear weapons.⁴

The steady progress of the Iranian nuclear weapons program was paralleled by Iran's development of ballistic missile technology and other long-range delivery systems. In 2004, Iran boasted that its missiles had a 1,250-mile range, putting parts of Europe within striking distance for the first time.⁵ In the late 1990s, Western intelligence agencies had discerned Iran's interest in old Soviet-era space-lift propulsion systems, which revealed something of its strategic intent to develop heavy booster rockets in the future. Indeed, Iranian officials did not hide their plans to acquire a domestic, multi-stage space-lift capability that could eventually enable Iran's missiles to reach North America. In October 2007, Lt. Gen. Henry Obering, chief of the U.S. missile defense program, predicted that Iranian missiles could threaten the U.S. sometime before 2015.⁶ Iran, in short, had become the most pressing issue on the international agenda that required decisive allied action.

However, even after Iran declared in August 2005 that it would unilaterally resume the uranium conversion and enrichment activities that it had frozen less than a year earlier as part of the Paris Agreement with the European Union, European officials nonetheless called for continuing diplomatic dialogue with Iran. For nearly four years EU officials blocked U.S. efforts to confront Iran by referring its nuclear file to the UN Security Council. Indeed, the EU foreign policy chief, Javier Solana,





Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (left), inaugurates a heavy-water nuclear facility in the central Iranian town of Arak, Aug. 26, 2006. The heavy-water production plant went into operation despite UN demands that Iran roll back its nuclear program.

stated explicitly in October 2006 that the European “dialogue” with Iran had to continue even if their nuclear talks failed.⁷

At the same time, the Europeans pressed Washington for further diplomatic progress on the Arab-Israeli peace process even while the PLO leader, Yasser Arafat, who was deeply implicated in the 2000-2004 terror war, was still in control. Ultimately, the Bush administration in 2003 acquiesced to the EU’s inclusion in a diplomatic “Quartet” for advancing Middle East peace, and to the promotion of a phased “Road Map” for creating a Palestinian state.⁸ The net effect of this dual track diplomacy would be destabilizing, for it would put Israel’s defensive capabilities on the negotiating table without adequately addressing the offensive capabilities of Iran across the region.

There were important circles in the United States that sought to adopt Europe’s priorities both for Middle East peacemaking and managing the Iranian issue. The need for a dual diplomatic approach was indeed one of the principal conclusions of the December 2006 Baker-Hamilton commission report, which asserted that “[T]he 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.”⁹ While the report detailed the need for Israeli concessions to advance Arab-Israeli peace, it also proposed that the U.S. and its allies “should actively engage Iran.”¹⁰ It was hard to believe its authors were fully cognizant of the

significant role nuclear weapons would play in empowering Iran to take bold action across the region and the likely chain reaction that an Iranian nuclear capability would set off, as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other states scrambled for nuclear programs of their own.

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This dual approach of Baker-Hamilton – advocating Israeli territorial withdrawals while accommodating Iran – articulated an old policy paradigm for the Middle East, which the report’s authors 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 already withdrawn. Neither Hizbullah nor Hamas were primarily motivated to wage war against Israel because of local territorial grievances. They acted in response to the wider considerations of their Iranian patron. It was Iran, and not the older territorial issue, that provided the root cause of a new Middle Eastern war in 2006.

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, one might have expected Hamas 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 rocket barrages into Israel.

For that reason, the implications of the Second Lebanon War go far beyond Israel and its immediate neighbors. Flush with oil revenues that rose from \$32 billion in 2004 to \$70 billion in 2007, Iran was making a bid for regional hegemony across the Middle East.¹¹ The summer 2006 war was only a small subset of a much larger effort on the part of the Iranian regime to achieve regional hegemony through Arab Shiite communities that it hoped to penetrate by using elements of its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The Second Lebanon War has probably been misnamed and might instead be called the First Iranian-Israeli War.



The Sunni “Awakening”

Sunni-Shiite violence that plagued Iraq in the years following the United States’ 2003 invasion was a harbinger of a new Middle Eastern reality that the Hizbullah-Israeli war, just three years later would confirm, and which has caused a major transformation in how Israel’s neighbors perceive the Iranian threat. It was King Abdullah II of Jordan who first sounded the alarm in December 2004 when he spoke of an emergent “Shiite crescent” that might encircle the Sunni Arab world, beginning in Iran, moving to the newly empowered Shiite majority in Iraq, on to Syria, whose ruling minority Alawis are viewed as true Muslims by some Lebanese Shiite clerics, and finally reaching Lebanon, whose Shiite population is growing in size and power.¹²

But this is only part of the threat the Arab world perceives. The Arab Gulf states are home to substantial Shiite communities, such as Kuwait, where Shiites account for 30 percent of the population.¹³ A ring of Iranian-supported Iraqi and Lebanese Shiites were involved in bombing attacks on foreign embassies in Kuwait in the 1980s as well as in an attempted assassination of the Kuwaiti emir. The United Arab Emirates has a 16 percent Shiite component,¹⁴ while Bahrain has an absolute Shiite majority which has been estimated to be as high as 75 percent of its population.¹⁵

Bahrain’s Shiite majority had engaged in fierce rioting in 1994-95; the Bahraini government provided Washington with evidence linking Bahraini Hizbullah, which the authorities argued was seeking to overthrow the Bahraini government, with the IRGC’s Qods force.¹⁶ New Shiite riots broke out in December 2007, at which demonstrators called for the death of the ruling al-Khalifa family. Bahrain is likely to remain a magnet for pro-Iranian subversion, especially since it became the headquarters for the U.S. Fifth Fleet in 1995.

Saudi Arabia’s 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. A Saudi branch of Hizbullah – known as *Hizbullah al-Hijaz* – was involved in the 1996 Khobar Towers attack, where 19 U.S. servicemen were killed. Saudi Hizbullah had been trained in IRGC camps in Iran and Lebanon and coordinated the 1996 attack from Syria.¹⁷

There is also a substantial Shiite population in Yemen, known as the Zaydi sect, which, though it follows the “fiver” tradition of succession from Ali, as opposed to the “twelver Shiism” of Iran, still has been a target of Iranian political-military activism.

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-Arabiyya* 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.”¹⁸

Most Shiites are not ready to overthrow Sunni regimes. Their clerics traditionally have adopted a “quietist” tradition towards political authorities, despite the discrimination they might have faced from Sunni rulers. But if Iran is undertaking a second Islamic Revolution, and is seeking to expand its influence through the radicalization of Shiite communities, as argued elsewhere in this monograph, the stakes for the Middle East and the West are enormous.

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

Considering the intensity of the fears among Sunni leaders of a potential Shiite encirclement led by Iran, the idea sometimes voiced in U.S. policy circles that Washington needs Israeli diplomatic concessions to be made to the Palestinians in order to cement a regional alliance of Sunni states against Iran does not have much credibility. Certainly, Saudi Arabia does not need Israel to concede territory in the West Bank in order to be convinced to defend itself from Iran’s quest for supremacy in the Persian Gulf.

Islamist Cooperation for Common Enemies

While Iran pursues a campaign of Shiite empowerment in its quest for regional control, Teheran also has 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 1991. Iranian regime ties were created with Egyptian and Algerian Islamists. In the mid-1990s, IRGC units intervened in Bosnia where they set up training camps.¹⁹ Iran even has reached out and assisted minority Sunni groups in Azerbaijan against its pro-

King Abdullah II of Jordan (right), receives Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak (left), on his arrival in Amman, Jordan, Sept. 26, 2007.



Western Shiite government.²⁰ 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.

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Finally, as the *9/11 Commission Report* disclosed, 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."²¹ The report adds that "al-Qaeda members received advice and training from Hizbullah."²² After U.S. forces vanquished the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, many in the al-Qaeda network obtained refuge and assistance in Iran.

More recently, U.S. intelligence agencies intercepted communications between al-Qaeda's leadership in Iran and the Saudi al-Qaeda cell that detonated three truck bombs in Riyadh on May 12, 2003.²³ In short, the conviction held by many that, in the world of international terrorism, organizations that represent different religious or

ideological factions cannot cooperate, is routinely disproved in practice. Militant Sunni and Shiite groups sometimes compete with, and even kill, one another; however, when facing a common enemy, they regularly collaborate.

Cooperation between radical Shiite and Sunni Islamists also encourages the prospect for understanding and cooperation between Israel and the Sunni Arab world. The prospect that Iranian adventurism will be launched under a nuclear umbrella poses a frightening challenge to Arab states, no less than it does to Israel, as Iranian sponsorship of international terrorism has not only affected Lebanon. It has also threatened the security of countries across the Middle East.

Reassessing Diplomatic Paradigms

These changes – in both the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and in the wider regional arena – are nothing short of revolutionary for future developments in the Middle East. A consensus in many quarters has emerged that Iran is the true "root cause" of instability in the region. Therefore, the paradigm characterized by the Israeli-Palestinian territorial dispute that has primarily informed U.S., European, and Israeli diplomacy since the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference requires rethinking; it certainly need not be uncritically reasserted, as it appeared to have been in the lead-up to the 2007 Annapolis Peace Conference and in its aftermath.

Setting aside the issue of Iran for a moment, this kind of paradigm reassessment is particularly necessary in view of the failure of past peace process strategies: Israel tried the Oslo process for a decade and received a wave of suicide bombings in return. Then it tried Gaza disengagement and received an Islamist presence that exploited the opening of the Philadelphia route along the Egypt-Gaza border to smuggle arms on a scale that had not been witnessed before. The Gaza disengagement completely backfired. The West, which had enthusiastically backed the Gaza disengagement, did not obtain the foundations for a stable Palestinian state as it had hoped, but rather a new sanctuary for al-Qaeda affiliates and a Mediterranean beachhead for Iranian influence, as well.

The Bush administration does not seem to have absorbed the magnitude of the transformation that has been occurring in the Middle East. In convening the November 2007 Annapolis Peace Conference, it appeared to be rejuvenating the ideas that informed much of the high-profile Middle East diplomacy of the 1990s. By inviting the Sunni Arab states to Annapolis, the U.S. assumed that the fact that Israel



and the Arab states both were contending with a mutual Iranian threat might cause the parties to be more prone to reach a peace accord. However, there were serious reasons to doubt whether this strategy would work.²⁴

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Annapolis did not produce any breakthrough in the relations between Israel and the Arab world. It did not break any new ground beyond what had been achieved in the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference and the multilateral negotiations that it generated more than a decade ago. In 2008, the Arab Gulf states were not interested in talking with U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice about how to normalize their ties with Israel; they wanted to know what the U.S. would do to block Iranian expansionism. Iran was their top priority – not the peace process. And when they failed to obtain the assurances they sought from Washington on Iran, several Sunni Arab states, including Egypt and Saudi Arabia, scrambled to upgrade their ties with Teheran. So the need to reassess Western diplomatic strategies in 2008 was even more urgent than in 2006.

What seems clear is that the policies that did not bring peace in 1993 or in 2005 could seriously undermine regional stability if they were blindly repeated in 2008. Israeli pullbacks at the present time in the West Bank will fuel *jihadism* among the Palestinians rather than reduce its intensity, and withdrawals will not reduce the aggressive hostility of the Iranian leadership, but only reinforce its conviction that its ideology and tactics are on the winning side of history. The lessons of past errors point to the importance of incorporating a number of critical new components into future policies:

1. The Vital Importance of Defensible Borders for Israel

Should Israel be pressured to relinquish control of the strategically vital Jordan Valley, the very same weaponry that has been pouring into the post-disengagement Gaza Strip would find its way to the hills of the West Bank. As a result, a large concentration of short-range rockets and surface-to-air missiles would likely be deployed within striking distance of Israel's major cities and its

largest airport situated near Tel Aviv. A West Bank penetrated by Islamist groups armed with short- and medium-range rockets would also create a compelling incentive for global terrorist networks to base themselves in Jordan, which they would try to transform into a logistics and staging area similar to the one they have built in Sinai to service Gaza.

One obvious result of such a course of events would be an upgraded threat to the internal stability of Jordan. With the growth of Sunni *jihadism* in western Iraq in the past, al-Qaeda offshoots have already tried to transplant themselves to Jordanian soil in cities like Irbid. An Israeli security vacuum in the Jordan Valley would undeniably restore and accelerate this trend, undermining the security of a key Arab state that has been an important Western ally in the war on terrorism. For this reason, among many others, 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 presented by President George W. Bush to former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

2. Preparing for an Eventual Western “Drawdown” from Iraq

It is reasonable to assume that the U.S. and its coalition partners will eventually reduce and ultimately withdraw their forces from Iraq. Regardless of the timetable of a Western pullout, the critical question affecting the future security environment of the Middle East is whether the U.S. is perceived as having accomplished its mission before any drawdown or whether it is seen as having been forced to withdraw prematurely.

Despite the accomplishments achieved in 2007 by U.S. forces under the command of General David Petraeus in stabilizing al-Anbar province and much of the Baghdad area, there are multiple forces at work today in Iraq that will seek to exploit a U.S. withdrawal to serve their political agendas. Sunni *jihadists* will present any Western pullout as their own victory and will seek to renew their influence in western Iraq after the U.S. leaves. A process of transferring *jihadi* military efforts to neighboring Sunni-dominated countries, which already began in 2006, is likely to accelerate under such conditions. This had been proposed by Osama 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 component to any potential coalition pullout from Iraq. Teheran 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



This image provided by the US Navy shows the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (background), and amphibious assault ship USS Bonhomme Richard (LHD 6) (center), transit alongside Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis (foreground), in the Gulf of Oman, May 22, 2007.

build up overtime a combined Iranian-Iraqi coalition against other Middle Eastern states and project its power against Israel from the east, using Hezbollah-like units. Iran can be expected to reinforce Hamas in Syria for operations against Jordan, as well. How these developments will actually unfold will depend on whether the Western disengagement from Iraq is precipitous or occurs only after the country is mostly stabilized.

3. A Greater Iranian Military Challenge

Since the end of its eight-year war with Iraq in 1988, Iran has concentrated its military buildup and focused its expenditures on its naval forces and its ballistic missile/non-conventional capabilities. Its regular conventional forces still possess mostly outdated weapons.²⁵ Despite its limited investments in Russian combat aircraft and air defense systems, Iran's numbers of front-line aircraft and tank forces are smaller than in the case of other Middle Eastern armies. Thus, besides its proven capabilities in regional subversion and support of terrorism, the Iranian challenge is likely to express itself in those areas where its military strength is more pronounced.

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In the context of an eventual U.S. disengagement from Iraq, such an Iranian military challenge may express itself in efforts to openly challenge U.S. forces. For example, in January 2008, Iranian speedboats belonging to the IRGC became involved in an incident with the U.S. Navy near the Straits of Hormuz. A U.S.-flagged cargo ship contracted by the U.S. Navy fired warning shots at two small Iranian boats in the central Persian Gulf in late April 2008. According to U.S. military sources, Iranian patrol boats have been equipped with Chinese C-802 anti-ship cruise missiles; an Iranian version of the C-802 was in fact used by Hizbullah against an Israeli Saar 5-class missile boat, the INS Hanit, during the Second Lebanon War. This same weaponry could be used by the IRGC against the U.S. Navy in the Persian Gulf.

Iran has a history of harassing and even confronting U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf going back to 1987, when Iran mined sea lanes in the area and a U.S. frigate, the USS Samuel B. Roberts, was almost blown in half. The U.S. delivered an overwhelming retaliatory strike against the Iranian Navy and the Revolutionary Guards.²⁶ Iran may also choose to test U.S. resolve by provoking America's Arab Gulf allies: Iran occupies islands belonging to the UAE and it dispatched fighter bombers during the 1980s in the direction of the Saudi oil facility at Ras Tanura. Circumstances have changed today, but there has been a proven radius of Iranian activities in the past at times of tension.

How the U.S. and its Western allies should confront the future Iranian challenge is a matter of dispute. European powers may believe that even if Iran obtains nuclear weapons, they can ultimately rely on deterrence like in the Cold War. Washington is far less certain. The applicability of Western deterrence models to a nuclear Iran is highly questionable, given that part of the revolutionary leadership believes that the imminent return of the Twelfth Imam – as the *Mahdi* – can and should be accelerated by triggering global chaos. At the lower end of the spectrum of conflict – subversion and terrorism – classical deterrence will be irrelevant. Unquestionably, Iran will be even more emboldened to engage in this activity should it cross the nuclear threshold and acquire an operational nuclear weapons capability.

4. The Ineffectiveness of the UN and International Security Mechanisms

The UN in 2007-2008 has been incapable of dealing resolutely with the Iranian nuclear program. The UN Security Council, immobilized by the lack of consensus among the Permanent Five members, repeatedly refused to confront Iran directly over its violation of the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation



Treaty. It took some four years, starting in 2002 when Iran's clandestine nuclear program was first revealed, for the UN Security Council to adopt Resolution 1696 that made a suspension of Iranian enrichment activities mandatory. The succession of UN resolutions that followed were so anemic that Iran knew it could defy the UN cost-free.

During the same period, the UN was ineffective in Lebanon as well. While adopting UN Security Council Resolution 1559 in September 2004, which called for "the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias," the UN subsequently took no measures against Hezbollah and its Iranian backers, thereby contributing to the outbreak of the Second Lebanon War. Resolution 1701 of August 2006, prohibiting the re-supply of Hezbollah after the war, has been grossly violated by Syria and Iran virtually since the day it was adopted, but again the UN has taken no action in response. Today, Hezbollah has more rockets in its arsenal than on the eve of the Second Lebanon War.

5. The Need for a Middle East Security Process

It is notable that, in anticipation of a U.S. pullout from Iraq, Saudi Arabia has begun erecting a security fence along its border with Iraq. Israel and many of the Arab states will find that they share mutual threats and thus should establish some modicum of security cooperation. Of course this should be a quiet exercise without any high-profile ceremonies in Washington. Too much has been made of the notion of joint Israeli-Saudi interests after the Second Lebanon War and the likelihood that these mutual interests might lead to a breakthrough in the peace process. Clearly, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states do not need Israeli territorial concessions to defend themselves against Iranian aggression.

Nevertheless, both Israel and Saudi Arabia share a common interest in a stable Jordan that does not become a staging ground for radical groups seeking to infiltrate their countries. These shared interests, among others, should be discussed quietly between the two countries' defense establishments. Both countries will also have an increasing interest in new U.S. security guarantees as Iran moves closer to an operational nuclear capability. Under such circumstances, models of extended deterrence that were applied to NATO Europe during the Cold War may have to be considered for the Middle East.

Generally, a new Middle East security process could also bring about an improvement in relations among the Sunni Arab regimes, including new patterns of cooperation in Jordanian-Palestinian



Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (left), shakes hands with United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon at UN headquarters on Sept. 24, 2007.

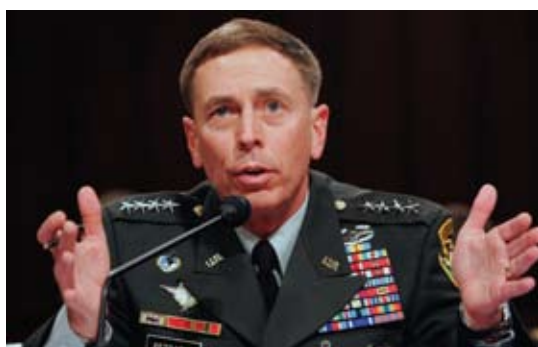
relations. In the past, Jordan's primary internal threat came from its large Palestinian population. Presently, Jordan has to cope with radical Islamic movements that have penetrated populations that have been the bedrock of the Hashemite regime, like the Transjordanian Bedouin (Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's group). Moreover, despite the influence of Hamas, both Jordanians and Palestinians are Sunnis and thus share (along with Saudi Arabia) a common interest in stemming radical Shiite activism coming from Iran. Should Shiite Iraq come to be dominated by Iran in the future, the Jordanian-Iraqi border will become a front line in the defense of the Sunni Arab states.

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 presented by President George W. Bush to former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

If moderate Palestinians collaborated with Jordan to form a security community to confront mutual enemies, then relations would be established that could be beneficial to 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 a peace process for these kinds of alliances to take shape, as any Israeli-Palestinian understandings



Gen. David Petraeus testifies on Capitol Hill on Sept. 11, 2007.



that are brokered under present circumstances will be undermined by Iranian destabilization efforts underway across the Middle East.

Conclusions

The fragile regional situation across the Middle East 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 hegemonic power that would dominate Europe. This provided the geo-strategic underpinning for U.S. involvement in the First World War, the Second World War, the Cold War, and for the emergence of NATO. Today, Europe is stable and the primary threats to international peace and security emanate from the Middle East, in general, and from Iran, in particular. But unlike the previous century, today the Western world lacks a strategic consensus on the need to confront Iran.

While Israeli-Palestinian diplomacy may have a value in its own right, it will not help stop the advance of Iranian power. Indeed, as the Gaza disengagement demonstrated, if the Israeli-Palestinian channel is mishandled, as it was in 2005, it can even facilitate Iranian expansion and that of its proxies. In contrast, neutralizing the Iranian threat, by weakening Iranian allies among the Palestinians, could very well help foster future Arab-Israeli peace accords.

As two noted American observers on the Middle East have commented: "It is not the Palestinian issue that will decide the balance of power in the Middle East, but the fate of the failing states of Afghanistan, Iraq, and Lebanon, where Iranian influence has found ample room to expand."²⁷ Former German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer has made the same point. He noted in May 2008 that the "most important change" in the Middle East has been "the shift in the region's political and military center of gravity." He explained this development as follows: "While Israel, Palestine, and Lebanon defined the most important hot spots in the old Middle East, regional power and politics in the wake of the Iraq War is now centered in the

Persian Gulf. The dominant conflict is no longer the Israeli-Palestinian struggle, but the threat of confrontation between Iran and Saudi Arabia for sub-regional supremacy and between Iran and the U.S. for regional hegemony."²⁸

The new regional transformation illustrated by the Second Lebanon War requires the acknowledgment of these new realities and demands new political thinking. Israeli-Palestinian peace strategies that did not work in the 1990s have even less of a chance of producing positive results today. Arab-Israeli diplomacy will only work if the emergence of a new regional paradigm is recognized by the West and incorporated into future policies proposed for confronting Iran and stabilizing the Middle East.





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THE SECOND LEBANON WAR: FROM TERRITORY TO IDEOLOGY

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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.

Introduction

The 2006 Israel-Hizbullah war, in which the northern third of Israel came under 34 days of fire by 4,228¹ Iranian and Syrian rockets, should be a clear illustration that the hostility and aggression that Israel faces in the Middle East does not arise from Israel's "occupation" of the West Bank, or from Palestinian statelessness. While this longstanding "root cause" argument remains popular in international circles and even in some quarters of opinion in Israel, Iran's ongoing proxy war against the Jewish state shows the claim to be fundamentally flawed.² The Iranian-backed abduction and rocket war against Israel – starting with Hamas on June 26, 2006, and spreading via Hizbullah across Israel's northern border on July 12, 2006 – were launched from lands that are not under Israeli "occupation," and by terror groups operating at the behest of states such as Iran and its Syrian ally which deny Israel's existence within any borders.³

Indeed, from the 1920s to the present day there has been an unrelenting ideological, religious, and cultural rejection of Jewish sovereignty in the Middle East on any territory, despite the current international fashionability of the notion that removing Israel's presence in the West Bank and Gaza and replacing it with a Palestinian state would inspire regional peace and stability.⁴

Exactly this conception – that Middle East wars are fought over Israel's borders, not its existence – was put on display on September 19, 2006, only a month after a UN-brokered cease-fire ended the Israel-Hizbullah war, when then-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."⁵

Yet, according to Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and Iran's Syrian partners, the Second Lebanon War was in fact a hostile probe of U.S. reflexes, as determined through Israel, a state that Iran and Syria consider to be a direct extension of American power in the Middle East.⁶ National Arab grievance against Israel thus was irrelevant.⁷

According to Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, the Second Lebanon War was in fact a hostile probe of U.S. reflexes, as determined through Israel, a state that Iran and Syria consider to be a direct extension of American power in the Middle East.

Because of the desire to push back against any U.S. presence in the Middle East, Iran's goals in the Lebanon theater reach well beyond the destruction of Israel. Since 1982, Iran and Syria have each used Hizbullah as a terrorist means of striking at Western regional interests, in order to both achieve specific strategic objectives and to continuously demonstrate the truth of one of the central Islamist beliefs – the weakness of Western states. Hizbullah's 1983 suicide attack that killed 241 U.S. Marines near Beirut is one example; so is Hizbullah's 1984 torture and murder of Beirut CIA Station Chief William Buckley, and the 1985 hijacking in Beirut of TWA Flight 847 and murder of U.S. Navy diver Robert Stethem.⁸ The 1996 attack by Hizbullah's Saudi branch, *Hizbullah al-Hejaz*, which killed 19 U.S. Army personnel at Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia, is still another example of anti-American terrorism with its origins in Teheran.⁹

The sporadic Iranian-backed terror attacks of previous decades have evolved in recent years – especially since Mahmoud Ahmadinejad came





A French UN peacekeeper's Leclerc tank passes a billboard showing Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (left), and Hizbullah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah (right), on the road in the village of Borj Qalaway, Lebanon, Sept. 19, 2006.

to power in 2005 – into a broader and more ambitious Iranian campaign that seeks to achieve regional supremacy. The tightened Iran-Syria-Hizbullah-Hamas axis serves the goal of Iranian power projection across the Middle East, from the Gulf States to Iraq, through Syria into Lebanon, and southward to Gaza. Israel now faces Iranian-backed military groups on two borders; meanwhile, Iran's deep involvement in the insurgency in Iraq, and its penetration of the Iraqi government, reflects Teheran's desire to bloody America and make its presence in the region as costly as possible, as a step toward destroying the prevailing international order that America enforces.

Nabi Beri, Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, leader of the Shiite Amal party, and a Hizbullah interlocutor, said that "Hizbullah will remain armed and fully operational in south Lebanon, despite the newly deployed UN forces."

The more the United States and its Western allies hesitate to confront Iran's increasingly aggressive posture, the more Teheran and its allies become convinced of the West's cowardice and ambivalence, and of their own eventual victory. Many of the proposals contained in the 2006 Iraq Study Group report are examples of U.S. hesitation opposite Teheran. Ironically, the report's recommendation of a "softer" diplomatic approach to Iran and Syria, and Israeli diplomatic engagement with the Assad regime and with a Palestinian national unity government including Hamas, may serve to

accelerate the confrontation as Teheran becomes emboldened by the belief that the U.S. wishes to steer clear of a fight.

The New Islamist War

The origins of the 2006 Second Lebanon War – and the larger Iranian effort today to expand its power in the Middle East – can be traced to the Islamic Revolution in 1979, during which the current Iranian regime took power, and in the following years, during which Iran co-opted organizations such as Hizbullah and inspired other *jihadis*, including PLO leader Yasser Arafat, who was one of the first Arab leaders to visit the newly triumphant Ayatollah Khomeini.¹⁰

In the years prior to the most recent Lebanon war, Iran invested some one to two hundred million dollars per year in Hizbullah's war preparations, for a total expenditure of between one and two billion dollars.¹¹ Iran also established representative offices in Lebanon for nearly every one of its major government ministries, including intelligence, social welfare, housing, transportation, and infrastructure.¹²

These massive levels of Iranian financial and operational assistance to Hizbullah were dramatically on display during the 2006 war. Hizbullah was well-equipped, with a wide variety of Syrian- and Iranian-made rockets. The group also employed sophisticated weaponry, including a generous supply of modern anti-tank ordinance.¹³ Up to 250 of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' (IRGC) best trainers were on the ground in Lebanon assisting Hizbullah units;¹⁴ the Iranians supplied and assisted Hizbullah in using armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) that were shot down by the IDF;¹⁵ and, according to the 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 Teheran since 2004, including nearly all mid- and senior-level Hizbullah officers.¹⁶

Today, despite the deployment of thousands of UNIFIL and Lebanese Army forces in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 1701, Southern Lebanon remains effectively a Hizbullah-ruled province of Iran. Hizbullah has reconstituted its weapons supplies and has continued to receive truckloads of Syrian short-range rockets, Iranian long-range rockets, and anti-tank weaponry via Damascus. Hizbullah's surviving networks of tunnels and bunkers are still operational, despite the combined presence of nearly 25,000 UNIFIL



and Lebanese armed forces south of the Litani River. Where the combined UNIFIL and Lebanese Army presence has suppressed Hizbullah's ability to operate openly, the group has simply shifted its infrastructure and re-supply project north of the Litani, where UNIFIL has no mandate and the Lebanese Army dares not intervene.

Hizbullah's ability since the end of the war to reconstitute itself in a largely unhindered fashion was the expected result of the irresolution of the war itself and the inadequate diplomatic stipulations of Resolution 1701. In October 2006, just weeks into the cease-fire, Israeli and Lebanese observers offered similar assessments of Hizbullah's ability to quickly rebuild its strength: The IDF's Intelligence Assessment Chief, Brig.-Gen. Yossi Baidatz, noted that the smuggling of weapons from Syria to Lebanon was continuing with the full knowledge and support of Damascus.¹⁷ Nabi Beri, Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, leader of the Shiite Amal party, and a Hizbullah interlocutor, said within the same week that "Hizbullah will remain armed and fully operational in south 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."¹⁸

To Israel's southwest, Iran also continues to provide significant financial backing, arms, training, and strategic guidance to the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip. Palestinian terrorist groups such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine have been brought into the Iranian fold and been given extensive support, as evidenced by the initial \$50-100 million commitment to Hamas Iran made at the end of a "pro-Palestinian" summit in Teheran in April 2006 in which Khaled Mashaal, the Damascus-based Hamas leader, and Ramadan Abdullah Shalah, head of Palestinian Islamic Jihad, were key participants.¹⁹ That summit came on the heels of extensive meetings between Mashaal and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad immediately following the January 2006 Hamas victory in the Palestinian elections.

Then, between August and October 2006 alone, nearly twenty tons of weaponry, including anti-tank and anti-aircraft rockets, was smuggled from Egyptian Sinai, often with the acquiescence of Egyptian authorities, into the Gaza Strip.²⁰ Numerous meetings between Mashaal and Ahmadinejad continued to take place in advance of and during the Israel-Hizbullah war.

Concerns at the time over the tightening relationship between Iran and Hamas were well-

A Hizbullah supporter waves a poster showing pictures of Hizbullah leader Sheik Hassan Nasrallah (right), Syria's President Bashar Assad (center), and Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (left), during a Hizbullah "Victory over Israel" rally, in Beirut's bombed-out suburbs, Sept. 22, 2006. Nasrallah said his guerrilla force would not give up its weapons until Lebanon was "strong," demanding changes in the government as he spoke at a rally of hundreds of thousands of supporters in a defiant challenge to Prime Minister Fouad Seniora.

Iranian-backed Hamas militants stand guard after their capture of the Preventive Security headquarters from Fatah loyalist security forces in Gaza City, June 14, 2007. Hamas fighters overran one of the rival Fatah movement's most important security installations in the Gaza Strip, and witnesses said the victors dragged vanquished gunmen from the building and executed them in the street. The capture of the Preventive Security headquarters was a major step forward in Hamas' attempts to complete its takeover of all of Gaza.



founded. On December 11, 2006, Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyah, known as more moderate than Hamas' Damascus-based leader, Khaled Mashaal, said following a visit with President Ahmadinejad in Teheran that Iran had stepped up its commitment to the Hamas-led PA and pledged \$250 million. Iran even committed to pay the salaries of 100,000 Palestinian Authority employees for six months.²¹ The Haniyah-Ahmadinejad meeting is also significant because previously, Hamas' relationship with Iran had been brokered exclusively by Mashaal; Israeli military intelligence indicated that the Haniyah-Ahmadinejad meeting reflected an upgraded strategic relationship between Iran and Hamas.²² Haniyah confirmed Israel's assessment when he said, upon his return from Teheran in December 2006, that "Iran has provided Palestinians strategic depth."²³ Crossing into Gaza, Haniyah was found to be carrying \$35 million in cash in several suitcases.²⁴

These alliances – with Hizbullah in Lebanon, Hamas in the Palestinian territories, and with the Assad regime in Syria – are individual components of the larger Iranian strategy to galvanize the region's radical forces to the Iranian cause.

It may seem strange that radical Shiite Iran has brought Sunni Arab Hamas into its orbit, especially in view of the longstanding and violent conflict between Sunnis and Shiites that manifests itself, among other places, today in Iraq. However, Iranian-led radical Shiites and their radical Sunni adversaries share a common commitment to destroying Israel and destabilizing Arab regimes allied to America. For now, Sunni and Shiite radical groups are allied by sharing a common enemy.

Syria's Assad regime is Iran's Arab partner and facilitator, and it continues to host Islamist terror groups within its borders, allowing them to organize terror attacks against Israel and direct the flow of insurgents into Iraq. 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. To mark the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's designation of Damascus as the 2008 "capital of Arab culture," Assad declared Damascus to be the "capital of resistance."²⁵

These alliances – with Hizbullah in Lebanon, Hamas in the Palestinian territories, and with the Assad regime in Syria – are individual components of the larger Iranian strategy to galvanize the region's radical forces to the Iranian cause. But as the 2006 Israel-Hizbullah conflict so clearly illustrated, these alliances also serve an important tactical purpose for Iran: they are the means by which the regime can bring terrorism and asymmetrical warfare to its two great enemies in the region – Israel and America.



Islamist Threats to the International State System

The Second Lebanon War also illustrated several new types of threats to the regional state system. First, the regimes in Iran and Syria have become architects of what can be called the “terror state within a state” model. Hizbullah and Hamas are examples of sub-state and quasi-state organizations, respectively, whose military power allows them to operate in defiance of their weak host governments. The same kind of terror blackmail relationship between al-Qaeda and its Saudi Arabian hosts has existed since the late 1980s, and exists today in other weak Arab and/or Muslim states, such as Yemen, Somalia, and Iraq.

In Lebanon, Hizbullah 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 allowed Hizbullah to operate from its soil as a *quid pro quo* for Hizbullah’s agreement not to attack targets in Lebanon. This mafia-style 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 destabilizing political influence in Lebanon, Hizbullah’s superior fighting capabilities have raised its stature well beyond that of a terror organization, or a “non-state actor,” as such groups are often benignly called. It should be more accurately characterized as a heavily armed and highly disciplined Iranian military force that operates under the guidance of the IRGC.

Hizbullah thus presents a unique challenge to a world order that is premised on the legitimacy of the nation-state as international actor – a challenge that is precisely, for Iran and Syria, the point. Hizbullah benefits from its status as a de facto state actor, but without being burdened by a commensurate responsibility and accountability to the international system. For example, Hizbullah’s decision to attack Israel in July 2006 was made without the permission of, or notice to, its democratically-elected Lebanese host government. Moreover, Hizbullah exploited the international state system by agreeing to cease-fire negotiations opposite Israel, but was not held accountable, politically or diplomatically, in contrast to its Lebanese host government which, like Israel, ended up bearing international obligations as the contracting parties to United Nations-brokered and monitored UN Security Council Resolution 1701.²⁶

Subverting Arab Governments

Hamas’ 2006 parliamentary victory over the Palestinian Fatah party – itself a weak quasi-state actor – and the Islamist group’s violent 2007 takeover of Gaza represent another threat to the regional state system.²⁷ Various Palestinian Authority security forces nominally under the control of Mahmoud Abbas, chairman of the PA, have a combined strength of at least 50,000 men – but these forces tend to be characterized by their disorganization, incompetence, and corruption.

The ineffectiveness of the PA security forces has ironically ended up being an important source of political and financial strength for Abbas: because of the precariousness of his rule, the PA has been lavished with unprecedented foreign aid and statements of support from the international community. For example, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice praised 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.²⁸ Subsequently, the United States has deposited tens of millions of dollars into PA coffers earmarked for security. The Bush Administration has also buoyed Abbas by supplying high-level security training and coordination with various senior U.S. security envoys who report to Secretary of State Rice and the White House.²⁹

Hizbullah benefits from its status as a de facto state actor, but without being burdened by a commensurate responsibility and accountability to the international system.

Abbas is not the first Palestinian leader to trade on his weakness for diplomatic gain with the West. Former PA leader Yasser Arafat exploited his declared weakness opposite Hamas to build broad international support during the Oslo years, from 1993 to 2000. Arafat consistently argued that he lacked the ability to reign in Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other terror groups, and thus simultaneously could not be held responsible for continued bloodshed, yet deserved more aid money. In the case of Abbas, the international community has demonstrated patience, tolerance, and understanding for the failure of his weak state to neutralize domestic terror groups.

Lebanon’s Prime Minister Fouad Seniora enjoys similar international sympathy for his inability



Rescue workers line up bodies beside a bomb-damaged passenger train at Atocha station following a number of explosions on trains in Madrid on March 11, 2004. The 10 blasts on the Madrid commuter rail network killed 191 people and wounded more than 1,500. Spain's worst terrorist attack was claimed by Muslim militants who said they had acted on behalf of al-Qaeda to avenge the presence of Spanish troops in Iraq.

to disarm Hizbullah. Instead of holding Seniora accountable for allowing the Iranian proxy group to operate from within sovereign Lebanon, the international community actively engaged Lebanon and Hizbullah in frantic UN-sponsored diplomacy to broker a cease-fire and deploy 15,000 UN forces to 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.

True, expelling or neutralizing Hizbullah as an armed force, even with the full backing of the international community's legal and financial muscle, poses a far greater, if not virtually impossible, challenge to the Seniora government. As a terror group, Hizbullah operates outside the boundaries of exactly the kind of state conduct which permitted the international community in 2005 to assist the Lebanese government in pressuring Syria to withdraw. However, it remains incumbent on the

international community to rise to the challenge, bolster Seniora militarily and perhaps financially, while impressing upon the Lebanese government that it will have no alternative but to summon even greater political and military will to bring Hizbullah to heel than it did in evicting Syrian troops from Lebanon in 2005.

The same lesson applies to the PA's Abbas. International aid to the Palestinian Authority should have always been conditional first on the PA's separating itself from terrorism. A not insubstantial part of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, from 2000-2004, was underwritten by international aid money that the PA itself diverted to terrorists. Second, aid should have been pegged to the PA's demonstrated willingness to wage an intra-Palestinian war on terrorism, and third, 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, the leaders of weak host countries may likely discover previously unrealized political and military strength, in the interests of national and political self-preservation.

Islamists take credit for pushing the United States out of Iran in 1979, Lebanon in 1984, and Somalia in 1993; the Soviets out of Afghanistan in 1989; the Israelis out of Lebanon in 2000 and Gaza in 2005; and the Spanish out of Iraq in 2004.

Iran and Syria have pursued a strategy in the Middle East that delegates a great deal of responsibility to "non-state actors," precisely because the international system is so ill-equipped to handle such groups. It is often correctly noted that these groups pursue a strategy of asymmetric warfare on the battlefield, but it is rarely noted that they pursue an equally asymmetric strategy in the international arena in an attempt to confound and thwart the international state system.

The Spread of Iranian and Syrian Regional Control

The Second Lebanon War embodied Iran's regional strategy in microcosm, which is to project its power and assert control across the Middle East by proxy. Proxies and allied groups include Moktada al-Sadr's Shiite Mahdi army in Iraq, Hamas in Jordan,



the Alawite regime in Syria, Hizbullah in Lebanon, as well as Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hamas, and other radical Palestinian groups in the West Bank and Gaza. Iran has also backed Zaydi Islamists in Northern Yemen and provided weapons and financing to Somali Islamists.³⁰ Iran works through proxies to avoid Iranian fingerprints, fomenting maximum instability with minimum responsibility. Aside from Iran's operational and financial support of Hizbullah and Hamas, Iran finances, arms, and trains Shiite insurgency groups in Iraq in such tactics as the operation of EFPs (explosively formed penetrators, a particularly deadly type of armor-piercing bomb). The clandestine Iranian Qods Force also provides terror and militia training in Iran, sponsored by the IRGC and the Ministry of Intelligence and Security.³¹ U.S. and Iraqi intelligence officials have also said that Hizbullah bases in Lebanon have been used to train up to 2,000 members of the Iraqi Shiite Mahdi army, while U.S. and Iraqi officials have quoted terror captives in Iraq who have admitted being trained by Hizbullah at Revolutionary Guard training camps in Iran.³²

These activities have been well-documented by senior 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 competing Shiite factions."³³ This assessment was shared by Lt.-Gen. Michael Maples, director of the Defense Intelligence Agency, in congressional testimony.³⁴ Gen. David Petraeus, commander of the multinational force in Iraq, has noted Iran's central destabilizing role in Iraq. In 2007 he testified to Congress of the U.S. capture of senior operatives of "Lebanese Hizbullah Department 2800, the organization created to support the training, arming, funding, and, in some cases, direction of the militia extremists by the Iranian Republican Guard Corps' Quds Force."³⁵

Iran's Syrian ally also hosts terror proxies, who live and operate with impunity from Damascus. Syria's 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 imposing any costs on the Assad regime greater than mild international rebuke. Syria has also allowed its territory to be used as a pipeline for transporting money and fighters to insurgent groups in Iraq. This was a fact noted by the 2006 Iraq Study Group (Baker-Hamilton) report.³⁶

Since 2003, Bashar al-Assad has sanctioned the smuggling of weapons, and has "ignored" the infiltration of terror operatives from Syria to Iraq.³⁷ Beginning in March 2003, eyewitnesses in Aleppo, Syria, reported seeing busloads of *mujahideen*

heading into neighboring Iraq as Syrian border police waved them through.³⁸ Since 2003, U.S. forces have reported killing and capturing Syrian nationals and Syrian-sponsored *jihadis* involved in the insurgency.³⁹

Iran's use of Syria as a bridgehead to the Arab world, together with Teheran'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, or even demonstrating an ability to adapt to the new challenge. As a result, Iran and Syria are able to expand their power and manipulate events in the region free from the constraints that they would confront through traditional state action.

Western Passivity Magnifies the Jihadi Threat

From an historical perspective, Ahmadinejad and his allies have reason to believe that their objective of destroying Israel and defeating the West is on track. Islamists take credit for pushing the United States out of Iran in 1979, Lebanon in 1984, and Somalia in 1993; the Soviets out of Afghanistan in 1989; the Israelis out of Lebanon in 2000 and Gaza in 2005; and the Spanish out of Iraq in 2004. According to this narrative, Western powers have been retreating in the face of Islamist resistance for decades – and now the Islamists believe they are close to pushing the Americans out of Iraq as well.

Ahmadinejad reportedly received one of 1,000 pirated copies of Professor Samuel Huntington's Clash of Civilizations that had been translated into Persian and trucked into Teheran by the IRGC in the mid-1990s.

Iran has paid no price for its many transgressions – the 1983 bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Lebanon; the 1992 fatal bombing of the Israeli embassy and the 1994 bombing of a Jewish community center in Argentina; the 1996 bombing of the Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia in which 19 U.S. servicemen perished; and the unrelenting torture and imprisonment of thousands of dissidents. Iran has also continuously violated international agreements related to its nuclear program. Iran's acts of successful regional subversion have emboldened Islamists worldwide,



fueling a perception among radicals that the West is simply afraid to confront them.

Syria's Bashar Assad has also paid no penalty for his regime's involvement in a similar campaign of violence, from the 2005 assassination of Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, 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 numerous terrorist groups.

Despite President Bush's veiled threats against Syria and Iran following the Gemayel and Hariri murders and for destabilizing Lebanon,⁴⁰ Assad's regime was 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 IDF soldiers in northern Israel, Ali Larijani, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC), was in Damascus to discuss strategic matters with Mashaal and other Palestinian terror groups. According to reports, Larijani was also to have met with senior Hizbullah officials, who were unable to cross over from Lebanon that day.⁴¹

Professor Bernard Lewis has noted that for Iran, "M.A.D. is not a deterrent but an inducement" that is part of Ahmadinejad's messianic objective of bringing the "end of days," annihilating Israel, and reaching a nuclear showdown with the United States.

The international community is weak and divided 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 believe that the West is in the middle of a world war and a clash of civilizations 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 into Teheran by the IRGC in the mid-1990s.⁴²

Washington also seems to have lost its post-9/11 footing in the aftermath of the Second Lebanon War. The Iraq Study Group report underscored the growing preference among many in Washington for appeasing and negotiating over confronting and isolating the radical Islamists, particularly when it comes to Iran.⁴³ 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 Syria⁴⁴ – represent an abandonment of President Bush's policy since the 9/11 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."⁴⁵

Aside from Israel's belated ground operation in the Second Lebanon War, it too has been hesitant to confront Iran and Syria. Historically, 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 with uncompromising political will.

From a military point of view, Hizbullah poses less of a danger than the armies of Egypt or Syria. However, the fundamentalist group's intense, religiously-based hatred of the West and its irrepressible political will to destroy Israel and export terror render 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 democracies such as the United States and Israel.

Thus, conventional deterrence strategies, such as "mutually assured destruction," which the United States employed opposite the former Soviet Union, are far less relevant as security strategies to deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Professor Bernard Lewis has noted that for Iran, "M.A.D. is not a deterrent but an inducement" that is part of Ahmadinejad's messianic objective of bringing the "end of days," annihilating Israel, and reaching a nuclear showdown with the United States.⁴⁶

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 magnified their growing threat to the international state system. The West's interest in maintaining the current international order and avoiding a clash with Islamists has also enhanced Sunni and Shiite *jihadi* appeal to the Arab masses throughout the region, who increasingly see Islamic radicalism as on the winning side of history.

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

Among the many lessons of the Second Lebanon War is a reinforcement of the importance for Israel of maintaining strategic depth to help ensure its survival. During the war, 90 to 95 percent of the more than four thousand rockets fired by Hizbullah at Israeli cities were short-range, 122mm rockets launched from distances of between six and twenty-two kilometers. These short-range rockets placed nearly two million Israelis, a third of Israel's population, under Hizbullah's rocket umbrella. Nearly a million Israelis were forced to flee, while more than a million remaining citizens were forced to live in underground bomb shelters. Twelve thousand buildings were hit and estimates of overall damage reached well over \$2.5 billion.⁴⁷ However, had Israel's ground operation

been executed in the first week of the war and a security zone established up to the Litani River – approximately twenty kilometers from Israel's northern border – nearly 95 percent of Hizbullah's rockets would have landed in Southern Lebanon instead of northern Israel, or they wouldn't have been fired in the first place.

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

Land is essential to Israel's self-defense and national security, particularly in the face of short-range rocket attacks by Islamist groups that continue to be a strategic threat to the Jewish state.

Israel's need for strategic depth in the face of short-range rockets has far-reaching consequences for the future of the West Bank. If Kassam rockets were launched from the hills of a Palestinian-controlled

A forensic officer walks next to the wreckage of a double decker bus with its top blown off and damaged cars scattered on the road at Tavistock Square in central London after a terrorist attack, July 7, 2005.



West Bank toward the Tel Aviv metropolitan area below, Israel would face an unprecedented threat: Seventy percent of the state's civilian population and 80 percent of its industrial capacity is situated along the coastline, below the hilltops of the West Bank. Given the current reality, Hamas or Fatah control of the West Bank could easily result in weapons flowing from Iraq and Lebanon to the West Bank, creating a grave threat from Israel's eastern border. Given the unstable 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 that has been built along the 1949 Armistice lines (the pre-1967 Green Line) does not provide a solution to the Palestinian terror threat.

It must be emphasized that the West Bank security fence that has been built along the 1949 Armistice lines (the pre-1967 Green Line) does not provide a solution to the Palestinian terror threat. The fence is only meant to be a tactical measure that has largely succeeded in blocking 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 means of prevention against Palestinian terror attacks on Israeli towns and cities. Accordingly, Israel must protect its vital security interests eastward in the Jordan Valley, as well as in the hilly areas surrounding Jerusalem and to the east of Ben-Gurion Airport. Israel must also maintain a security presence in the territory to the east of the security fence, where it is crucial that the IDF be able to protect Israeli population centers along the coast. One of the lessons of both the Lebanon withdrawal and the Gaza disengagement is the reality that territory abandoned by Israel will be seized by Iranian-backed terror groups. This reality extends to the West Bank, the relative peacefulness of which is sustained only by the IDF's ability to maintain security.

Iran's interest in Gaza goes well beyond supporting the Palestinian terror war against Israel with Iranian weapons. This rather more limited objective was in evidence as far back as 2002, when Hizbullah, under the command of its terror master, Imad Moughniyeh (who was killed in Damascus in February 2008), sailed the Karine A from the Iranian island of Kish to Gaza in 2002, in direct coordination

with PA leader Yasser Arafat. Israel intercepted the Karine A at sea and found it laden with a wide assortment of weapons and explosives. However, that did not dampen Iran's desire to transform Gaza into a platform to spread Iranian influence. Iran has been working with Hamas in Gaza to create a model similar to Hizbullah's Lebanon model, called "*Jihad al-Bina*," meaning "Construction Jihad."⁴⁸ In Gaza, similar to Southern Lebanon, the same system that supports civil affairs – such as construction, education, health care, and welfare – also creates a civilian infrastructure for terror.

A former senior U.S. Treasury official, Matthew Levitt, noted in 2005 congressional testimony that "according to U.S. officials, Iran offered the PA a substantial discount on the Karine A weapons in return for being allowed to run a hospital in Gaza and other social-welfare organizations in the Palestinian territories."⁴⁹ Outreach to the Palestinians in this fashion would follow efforts by Iran elsewhere to use humanitarian and diplomatic footholds as a cover for IRGC or Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS) operatives.⁵⁰

Hamas operatives also traveled to Iran for military training following the August 2006 cease-fire in Lebanon.⁵¹ This direct Iranian penetration of the Palestinian arena has already triggered violence between the Hamas government in Gaza and other Palestinian groups. It also increases the likelihood of a Palestinian civil war and accelerates the deterioration in Gaza and the West Bank.

Muslim extremists believe they defeated the Soviets in Afghanistan, and Israel in Gaza and twice in Lebanon. And following the summer 2006 war, they are confident of defeating Israel in Tel Aviv. They sense they have destabilized a superpower, and will destabilize the West partially by defeating Israel.

Hamas, an Islamic supremacist group that in many ways thinks and acts like Hizbullah, will not reach a territorial compromise with Israel. Mahmoud Abbas is unable to unseat the Hamas government or rein in radical Islamists in Gaza who are attacking Israel with Kassam and Katyusha rockets, while Palestinian security forces have failed to stabilize the Palestinian areas of the West Bank. Only Israel's security forces have maintained control there.



Therefore, a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian 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 experiment resulted in well over 1,100 Israelis dead and thousands more wounded.⁵² It is imperative, then, that Israel and its Western allies learn the lessons of the political and diplomatic failures opposite the Palestinians.

In this context, Israel's 2005 unilateral disengagement from Gaza was also a strategic mistake of the first order. The Gaza withdrawal helped bring about Hamas' victory. It emboldened and inspired terror groups, from Hizbullah in Lebanon to 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 subsequent 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 2005, believing that Israel's pullbacks would bring 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 they defeated the Soviets in Afghanistan, and Israel in Gaza and twice in Lebanon. And following the summer 2006 war, they are confident of defeating Israel in Tel Aviv. They sense they have destabilized a superpower, and will destabilize the West partially 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, some of which are unpopulated and essential for Israel's defense and national security. Simply stated, Israeli concessions are viewed by radical Islam as proof of the West's weakness.

Iran is also exploiting the Palestinian arena as a platform for the subversion of Arab states that are amenable to the West, especially Egypt and Jordan.⁵³ Their concerns over increasing Iranian supremacy have been palpable. Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia led unprecedented public Arab criticism of Hizbullah after the first week of the Second Lebanon War, blasting Nasrallah for "adventurism."⁵⁴ They accused Hizbullah of attempting to drag the entire region into a military confrontation with Israel.⁵⁵



Conclusion

The ambiguous resolution of the 2006 Israel-Hizbullah war – despite the deployment of 25,000 Lebanese and UN troops in Southern Lebanon – has demonstrated to Iran that the strategy and tactics that led to the war have been successful. Building on that perceived success, Iran and Syria have redoubled their expansionist efforts, and today their influence can be increasingly found on Israel's borders – in the rebuilding and re-supply effort in Lebanon, in regular saber-rattling from Syria, and especially in the Gaza Strip, where Iran's increased influence is designed to act as a terror lever against Israel and the West as Teheran pursues its nuclear ambitions.

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Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad addresses the 62nd session of the United Nations General Assembly, Sept. 25, 2007.



Despite the temptation, the international community must be careful not to interpret every “smile” from the Hamas leadership and every offer of a cease-fire to Israel as a sign of moderation and compromise. Hamas’ diplomatic shrewdness has and will manifest itself in tactical flexibility, which was on display, for example, in its fraudulent negotiation of a national unity government with Fatah and keeping its terror activities temporarily in check while pursuing a longer-term goal – the seizure of the Gaza Strip as a sovereign Hamas-ruled territory.

In the short term, Hamas will likely continue to receive support from Iran and other rogue states.⁵⁶ Despite the interest by some in international circles to attempt to “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.

Iran is clearly the most ominous threat today to the West. Operating under a nuclear umbrella, the Iranian regime’s upgraded use of its international terror networks via Hizbullah and Palestinian groups could threaten the region with “dirty,” non-conventional weapons, and terror attacks dramatically more deadly than what has been seen so far. 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.

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Israel is clearly not the only country on Iran’s target list. There is no arguing 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 the Iranian and Syrian regimes and the terrorists they nurture are squarely defeated can the Middle East and ultimately the West enjoy a more secure and peaceful 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. 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+att+ack+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 Israel-Hizbullah war and the stepped-up assaults on Israel from Gaza by Hamas and other local *jihadi* groups suggest that Israeli occupation of disputed land 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/martinkramerorg/2006_09_13.htm.
3. For the Hamas Charter, see <http://www.palestinecenter.org/cpap/documents/charter.html>.
4. Resolving the future of the Golan Heights that Israel captured from Syria in the 1967 war is also considered key to fostering peace in the Middle East. However the greatest urgency expressed by most in the international community lies in resolving the Palestinian Israeli dispute. 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 intifada. In the third and present stage, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been superseded by the Israeli-Islamist conflict. See http://www.geocities.com/martinkramerorg/2006_09_13.htm.
5. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan’s Address to the UN General Assembly, New York, September 19, 2006.
6. <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP124206>. For Syria’s view that the Second Lebanon War was a U.S. attempt to control the Middle East, see <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP124906>.
7. 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.
8. 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/termughniyah.htm>.



fbi.gov/wanted/terrorists/terizzaldin.htm, and <http://www.fbi.gov/wanted/terrorists/teratwa.htm>.

9. See <http://www.fbi.gov/pressrel/pressrel01/khobar.htm>.
10. 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 55-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.
11. 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.
12. 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>.
13. Rubin, "Hizbullah's Rocket Campaign Against Northern Israel."
14. "Iranian Assistance to Hizbullah. Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps Officer: Hizbullah Has Iran-Trained Diver and Naval Commando Units, Has Constructed Command Rooms for Hizbullah," Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), *Special Dispatch Series* No. 1220, July 31, 2006.
15. http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/iran_hezbollah_e1.pdf.
16. According to IDF Intelligence. Also see *Asharq Al-Awsat*, July 16, 2006, www.aawsat.com/details.asp?sectionfiltered=1&issue=10092&article=373285.
17. Amos Harel and Gideon Alon, "IDF: Hamas Trying to Create Balance of Terror with Israel," *Ha'aretz*, October 16, 2006.
18. Clancey Chassay, "Israel Warned: Lebanon War Could Start Again," *Guardian* (UK), October 11, 2006, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/print/0,329597720-111416,00.html>, http://www.dailystar.com.lb/article.asp?edition_id=1&catgeg_id=2&article_id=76090.
19. Nazila Fathi, "Iranian Leader Renews Attack on Israel at Palestinian Rally," *New York Times*, April 15, 2006.
20. These findings were corroborated by a report by Israel Security Agency Head Yuval Diskin to the Olmert Cabinet on September 27, 2006. Also cited in "News of the Israeli-Palestinian Confrontation, September 15 to 30, 2006," Center for Special Studies, Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center. On Egypt's failures, see also http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20060927/wl_mideast_afp/mideastisraelgaza_060927143119.
21. "Palestinian PM Says Iran Has Pledged \$250 Million in Aid to PA," Reuters report in *Ha'aretz*, December 11, 2006.
22. *Ha'aretz*, December 14, 2006.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Amos Harel and Akiva Eldar, *Ha'aretz*, December 14, 2006.
25. <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/946134.html>.
26. For the text of UNSC 1701, see <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8808.doc.htm>.
27. The Palestinian Authority is not considered a state actor by the international community, although it has attributes of sovereignty and maintains observer status at the United Nations.
28. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Keynote Address at the American Task Force on Palestine. Inaugural Gala, Washington, D.C., October 11, 2006, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2006/73895.htm>.
29. "Congress Okays \$59M in U.S. Funds for Abbas' Security Forces," *Ha'aretz*, April 10, 2007.
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32. Patrick Quinn, "Hezbollah Training Iraqi Shiite Extremists in Iran," *Associated Press*, May 6, 2008, <http://www.iranvajan.net/cgi-bin/news.pl?l=en&y=2008&m=05&d=06&a=3>.
33. Testimony of Gen. Michael Hayden, Director, CIA, before the Senate Armed Services Committee, November 15, 2006.
34. "The Current Situation in Iraq and Afghanistan," Testimony of Lt.-Gen. Michael Maples, Director, Defense Intelligence Agency, before the Senate Armed Services Committee, November 15, 2006. Also see the congressional testimony of Gen. David H. Petraeus, Commander, Multi-National Force in Iraq.
35. <http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/pdfs/Petraeus-Testimony20070910.pdf>.
36. See *Iraq Study Group Report*, http://www.usip.org/isg/iraq_study_group_report/report/1206/index.html.
37. Eyal Zisser, "Syrian Foreign Policy Under Bashar al-Assad," *Jerusalem Issue Brief*, vol. 4, no. 2, August 29, 2004.
38. Ghaith Abdul Ahad, "From Here to Eternity," *Guardian* (UK), June 8, 2005.
39. "Coalition Forces Capture Syrian Insurgents in Iraq," press release, Public Affairs Office, Multi-National Force-West, Camp Fallujah, Iraq, February 2, 2006.
40. Robin Wright, "Assassination Increases Tensions with Syria, Iran," *Washington Post*, November 22, 2006. "President Bush blasted Syria and Iran yesterday after the assassination of Christian cabinet minister Pierre Gemayel for trying to destabilize Lebanon, reflecting tensions between Washington and its two Middle Eastern rivals that are increasingly playing out in Lebanon as well as Iraq. While the president stopped short of blaming Syria for the killing, he warned that the United States remains 'fully committed' to supporting Lebanon's democracy despite attempts by Damascus, Tehran and their allies in Lebanon 'to foment instability and violence.'"
41. See Radio Free Europe report at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/07/541d7659-f99f-4559-8281-3949d4fa3af7.html>.
42. "Final War Between Muslims, West: Ahmadinejad," *Al Jazeera*, January 21, 2006, http://www.aljazeera.com/me.asp?service_ID=10517.
43. *Iraq Study Group Report*.
44. *Iraq Study Group Report*, p. 7. http://www.usip.org/isg/iraq_study_group_report/report/1206/index.html.
45. President Bush, State of the Union Address, January 29, 2002.
46. "Scholar: MAD Doctrine Does Not Apply to Iran," *World Tribune*, February 25, 2008.
47. 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>. Amnesty International also assessed direct damages at an additional \$1.14 billion, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGMD020252006>.
48. Matthew Levitt, "Shutting Hizbullah's Construction Jihad," *PolicyWatch* no. 1202, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, February, 20, 2007. Levitt, former deputy assistant secretary for intelligence and analysis at the U.S. Department of the Treasury, defines "*Jihad al-Bina*" as "construction for the sake of the Holy Struggle."
49. Testimony of Matthew Levitt, former deputy assistant secretary for intelligence and analysis at the U.S. Department of the Treasury, in testimony before the Committee on International Relations Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia, and the Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation, U.S. House of Representatives, February 16, 2005.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
51. Ehud Yaari, Israel Television Channel Two, October 12, 2006. See also Jonathan Halevi, "Hamas, Between Al-Qaeda Jihadism and Tactical Pragmatism," in *Iran, Hizbullah, Hamas and Global Jihad: A New Conflict Paradigm for the West*, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2007.
52. <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Terrorism-%20Obstacle%20to%20Peace/Palestinian%20terror%20since%202000/Victims%20of%20Palestinian%20Violence%20and%20Terrorism%20sinc>.
53. Jordan uncovered numerous Hamas weapons caches and foiled several terror plots since March 2006, including assassination attempts against top Jordanian officials. King Abdullah has also noted his concern of an Iranian-led Shiite terror axis extending from Teheran to Beirut, as cited in *Defensible Borders for a Lasting Peace*, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 2005, www.defensibleborders.org. According to the Levitt congressional testimony on February 16, 2005, cited above, King Abdullah highlighted another Iranian operation when he visited President Bush on February 1, 2002. The king reportedly presented the president with evidence that Iran had sponsored no fewer than seventeen attempts to launch rockets and mortars at Israeli targets from Jordanian soil. This was, according to the King, an Iranian plot aimed at undermining the Jordanian regime and opening a new front against Israel.
54. Khaled Abu Toameh, "Arab World Fed Up with Hizbullah," *Jerusalem Post*, July 17, 2006.
55. *Ibid.*
56. *TIME*, October 13, 2006, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1546101,00.html>. According to the article, in 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.

IRANIAN STRATEGIC VULNERABILITIES: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY OPTIONS TO HALT THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR PROGRAM

Maj.-Gen. (res.) Aharon Zeevi Farkash

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (center), walks with Vice President Gholamreza Aghazadeh, who also heads the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (right), during the inauguration ceremony of a heavy-water production plant, which went into operation despite UN demands that Iran roll back its nuclear program, in the central Iranian town of Arak Aug. 26, 2006.

Ayatollah Khomeini's heirs are breathing new life into the Islamic revolution that began in 1979 in the hopes of transforming Iran into a regional power. The Iranian revolution can only point to a single achievement in the Arab world: Hizbullah and its leader Hassan Nasrallah are keeping alive the revolutionary fervor in Lebanon. This base of exported revolution, in addition to the longstanding alliance with Syria, is central to Iran's political-diplomatic efforts to achieve a higher status in the region and in the wider world. Two additional foundations of Iranian power must be added to the above:

- The Iranian nuclear program, complete with delivery systems capable of reaching targets in the Middle East and Europe.
- Iran's relative economic independence since 2003 because of the dramatic rise in revenue from oil sales.

At the beginning of 2003, the Iranians were concentrating their efforts on the centrifuge program in Natanz, where they had managed to build a cascade with 164 centrifuges. Today, they have reached a capacity of 3,000 centrifuges.

The Iranian Nuclear Program

The Iranian nuclear weapons program is comprised of three key elements:

- A delivery system, requiring the development of surface-to-surface missiles.
- The accumulation of fissile material through uranium enrichment and plutonium production.

- Weaponization – preparing a warhead from the fissile material and fitting it to a missile.

In August 2002, Iran realized that the United States and the EU-3 (the UK, France, and Germany) had obtained hard information about the clandestine military nuclear program it was developing under civilian cover. This program was the responsibility of the Ministry of Defense, while the civilian program was the responsibility of Iran's atomic energy agency.

The European Union opened diplomatic negotiations with Iran in July 2003 to try to stop the nuclear program. By the end of that year, in the wake of the U.S. overthrow of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, Muammar Qaddafi decided to stop Libya's nuclear military program. It was this context – Western detection and the demise of Saddam Hussein – that led the Iranians to halt key elements of their nuclear program temporarily in 2003. Specifically, the cessation of Iran's nuclear weapons design and weaponization work was featured in the "Key Judgments" of the famous 2007 U.S. National Intelligence Estimate (NIE).

At the beginning of 2003, the Iranians were concentrating their efforts on the centrifuge program in Natanz, where they had managed to build a cascade with 164 centrifuges. Today, they have reached a capacity of 3,000 centrifuges. In 2005, Iran resumed its uranium conversion and enrichment programs, which were suspended while it was actively negotiating with the EU-3. If parts of the nuclear weapons program were restarted in 2005, there is every reason to believe that all the other parts were reactivated as well. Indeed, Iran's development of surface-to-surface missiles had never ceased, even when uranium enrichment had been temporarily halted.

At the same time, the Iranians were busy with procurement activities, with a focus on obtaining all the materials and components needed for uranium enrichment. At the beginning of 2004,





Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad visits the Natanz Uranium Enrichment Facility on April 8, 2008. Ahmadinejad announced major progress in Iran's push for nuclear power, saying that his nation was installing thousands of new uranium-enriching centrifuges and testing a much faster version of the device.

we know that Iran was attempting to procure fast high voltage switches suitable for a nuclear weapons system. The ministry of defense was also supervising the mining of uranium in southeast Iran's Kuchin mine.

Iran is continuing to develop even longer-range missiles that would be capable of traveling 3,500-5,000 km, allowing all of Europe to be targeted.

Interesting details about the continuation of the nuclear program were disclosed in the International Atomic Energy Agency report of February 2008. The report concludes that Iran conducted a series of simulations and experiments to test the use of explosives and warheads that would be suitable for nuclear weapons. As opposed to the NIE, the IAEA report notes that Iran continues to enrich uranium and build a plutonium reactor. For the first time, the report discloses details that previously were familiar only to a few intelligence bodies, which point to the continued activity of the weapons group.

The report enumerates the activities of Iranian bodies, noting:

- The Institute for Educational Research in Teheran conducts experiments, simulations and tests on assembling warheads and high powered detonators. These devices can be used in equipping missiles with a nuclear bomb.
- Uranium enrichment at Natanz continues and fast centrifuges have been installed.
- Progress on building a nuclear reactor in Arak for plutonium production continues.
- There are continuous efforts to mine and produce uranium in southeast Iran at Kuchin and Saghand.

Developing the Missiles to Deliver a Nuclear Payload

Together with developing a nuclear weapon, Iran has been developing an effective long-range delivery system. Its Shahab 3 missile can carry a warhead of approximately 700 kilograms over a distance of 1,300-1,500 km. These missiles are under the command of the Revolutionary Guards, not the Iranian military. The Revolutionary Guards report to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and are not under the authority of President Ahmadinejad. Iranian missile exercises showed that the missiles are aimed at both Tel Aviv and Riyadh.



In these circumstances it is important to emphasize that the years 2008-2009 are critical as a period of concentrated effort during which Iran will focus on enrichment efforts necessary to produce the fissile material for manufacturing 2-3 nuclear bombs.

Iran is continuing to develop even longer-range missiles that would be capable of traveling 3,500-5,000 km, allowing all of Europe to be targeted, while those with a range of 6,000-10,000 km could reach the east coast of the United States. The original missile technology was delivered to the Iranians by North Korea, and the Iranians have undertaken substantial efforts to improve their missile range. As we know, the Iranian ballistic missile program is part of the Iranian nuclear weapons program; Iran does not have a civilian space program and it is doubtful that it would develop ballistic missiles with a range of thousands of kilometers in order to carry only conventional warheads.

Iranian Policy as a Derivative of the Nuclear Program and Technological Developments

The sanctions imposed upon Iran and the pace of technological progress compels Iran to synchronize its diplomatic efforts to its nuclear efforts in order to safeguard the ability to persist in the nuclear program, despite the international effort to halt it.

Despite the image of great self-confidence that Iran displays, the regime is still susceptible to pressure from stern diplomatic measures and crippling sanctions.

In these circumstances it is important to emphasize that the years 2008-2009 are critical as a period of concentrated effort during which Iran will focus on enrichment efforts necessary to produce the fissile material for manufacturing 2-3 nuclear bombs from 2010 onwards. As Iran's capabilities improve, the regime must absorb and blunt the sanctions imposed upon it. The slow consolidation of the international

front against Iran and the positive results (from Iran's perspective) derived from the NIE provide Iran with a brief window of opportunity – perhaps a year and a half – in which to make technological progress and cross the necessary threshold of obtaining enough fissile material to manufacture a nuclear bomb. Subject to international pressures, the domestic response and its technological capabilities, Iran can complete building its deterrent posture as a regional power from the moment that it obtains the required fissile material.

Iranian Weak Points

Despite the image of great self-confidence that Iran displays, the regime is still susceptible to pressure from stern diplomatic measures and crippling sanctions that are backed by the credible threat of military force. There exist a number of prominent Iranian weak points:

- A domestic arena that yearns for an improvement in economic conditions and an economy that is particularly sensitive to sanctions.
- A genuine desire on the part of the regime to avoid a North Korea-level of international isolation. There is no doubt that Iran is monitoring North Korea's implementation of the Beijing agreements and the attitude of the international community toward North Korean intransigence. In this regard, the regime is aware of the permanent tension between a nuclear weapon as a tool for acquiring regional power and a nuclear weapon as a cause of international isolation.
- The very limited choice of retaliatory tools at Iran's disposal. For example, Iran frequently threatens to use the "oil weapon," but is aware of the difficulty in employing it, given the country's total economic dependence on oil exports. Likewise, Iran backed down from its threats to abandon the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, although it still brandishes this threat from time to time.

The Weak Points of the Iranian Economy

In order to focus the efforts of the international community and increase the possibility that Iran, upon its own initiative, will again suspend its nuclear program, it is important to identify the glaring weak points of the Iranian economy.

Reliance on foreign technology: In Iran, relative to other countries in the region, there are still oil,

gas, electricity, and communications infrastructures whose day-to-day operation and development depend on foreign technology and supervision.

Hence, the provision of heavy equipment and some of the raw materials for Iran's industry is predicated on imports from foreign countries. Some 90 percent of Iranian imports consist of industrial goods and physical capital items.

The inability to satisfy local demand for automobile fuel: The refineries in Iran are incapable of satisfying domestic demand. Teheran thus is compelled to import nearly 40 percent of the fuel consumed in the country. It does this at an annual cost of over \$10 billion (including the cost of subsidies).

The need for external finance: Development projects in the areas of oil, gas, and petrochemicals, among other fields, are critical for continued economic growth. Yet despite high income from oil exports, Iran does not have the resources to finance continued development at a desirable rate, estimated to be at least \$5 billion per year.

The export of crude petroleum represents a significant source not only of the country's foreign currency but also of government income: The export of crude petroleum constitutes 90 percent of Iranian exports and 70 percent of government income.

Tens of billions of dollars in Iranian-owned assets are deposited at any given moment in banks and financial institutions around the world.

To these weak points one should add three points that Iran shares in common with other economies throughout the world:

A dependence on the international financial system: The world of international commerce mandates the use of the accepted tools of the financial system such as ensuring external commerce and credit lines.

Maintaining some economic assets and economic bodies abroad: Tens of billions of dollars in Iranian-owned assets are deposited at any given moment in banks and financial institutions around the world. The estimate is that Iranian foreign currency assets totaling \$33 billion in 2005 are deposited in such a manner.

Dependence on international trade: Iran is part of the global system and does not constitute an autocratic economy or state. Some of the products (including various foodstuffs, medicines, and electrical goods) that are consumed daily in Iran originate in the international markets and have no domestic substitutes. Similarly, Iran is developing industries whose products are intended for export from its territory.

Diplomatic and Economic Pressures

There are a number of diplomatic and economic measures whose activation against Iran in the next year and a half will compel Iranian leaders to make difficult decisions regarding the continuation of their nuclear program.

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Preventing proliferation: Barring the export of dual-use equipment to Iran, preventing the passage of dual-use equipment, and preventing the use of the international financial system for conducting transactions in these areas. In tandem, preventing Iranians from participating in advanced studies, halting IAEA assistance in the nuclear field, and preventing the movement of people and assets involved in these areas.

Finance: An escalation of already-existing financial sanctions: a prohibition on granting loans to the Iranian banking system, a prohibition on opening credit lines, a freezing of Iranian assets abroad, and preventing money transfers from Iran within the international financial system.

Embargo advanced war materiel: A prohibition on concluding transactions with Iran (including those currently in progress), with an emphasis on those that have repercussions for Iran's military capabilities (anti-aircraft defenses, aircraft, etc.).



It is both possible and more judicious to create a situation where, in terms of costs versus benefits, the Iranian leadership will reach the conclusion that continuing its nuclear program more than anything else endangers the existence of the regime.

Restrictions on the acquisition of specific items: Here there should be an emphasis on the export of fuel and steel, which constitute essential items in current economic activity (construction, energy). At the same time it should be noted that we are dealing with restrictions that will have direct repercussions on the Iranian public, and this will encumber the formation of an international consensus for implementing these measures.

Restrictions on the export of advanced technology: Primarily in the gas, petroleum, nuclear, electric, and communications industries, with a view to limiting the development of the Iranian economy.

Summary

The proposals contained in this essay should illustrate how some joint action within the international system could lead to the imposition of a series of sanctions that will compel Iran to arrest its nuclear weapons program, even if temporarily – and avert war. These pressures represents an obligation by the international system to humanity in order to minimize the prospect that Iran will obtain nuclear weapons.

The Iranian nuclear program is the main anchor of its foreign policy. As Iran’s aspirations to become a regional power in the Middle Eastern and South Asia expand, it is highly doubtful that Iran can be restrained by anything but extreme and highly-coordinated international action. It is both possible and more judicious to create a situation where, in terms of costs versus benefits, the Iranian leadership will reach the conclusion that continuing its nuclear program more than anything else endangers the existence of the regime.





IRAN'S "SECOND" ISLAMIC REVOLUTION: ITS CHALLENGE TO THE WEST

Brig.-Gen. (ret.) Dr. Shimon Shapira and Daniel Diker

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad delivers a speech on the 18th anniversary of the death of the late revolutionary founder Ayatollah Khomeini, under his portrait, at his mausoleum just outside Teheran, Iran, June 3, 2007. Hard-line Ahmadinejad said the world would witness the destruction of Israel soon, the official Islamic Republic News Agency reported.

The ideological engine powering the Iranian regime's race for regional supremacy is among the more misunderstood – and ignored – aspects of Iran's political and military activity in the Middle East. Particularly since the election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to the presidency in 2005, Iran's revolutionary leadership has thrust the Islamic Republic into the throes of what has been called a "Second Islamic Revolution."¹ In its basic form, this revolution seeks a return to the principles of former Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's 1979 Islamic Revolution, which was based on: destroying Israel – "the Little Satan" – as a symbol of the United States, "the Great Satan;"² exporting the Islamic revolution domestically and against Arab "apostate" governments in the region, and forcing a clash of civilizations with the "infidel" West; and asserting leadership over the Arab Middle East, particularly in the oil-rich Gulf.

Understanding of the regime's revolutionary zeal may help shed light on its plans to defeat the West, achieve leadership of the Arab world, and assert control across the Middle East.

The current regime's desire to fulfill Khomeini's revolutionary plans for the Islamic Republic could have been understood without arguing that Iran is exporting a Second Islamic Revolution. However, the current regime – under the guidance of Khomeini's successor, Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad – is succeeding in exporting the revolution where Khomeini had stopped short. Ahmadinejad in particular has exceeded Khomeini's original revolutionary vision for Iran. His apocalyptic dedication to triggering the return of the Mahdi – the vanished Shiite messiah –

via what is known in the West as "Gog and Magog" events is driven by his spiritual fealty to the fundamentalist Ayatollah Mohammad Mesbah Yazdi and the messianic *Hojjatiyeh* organization. These religious convictions have propelled the regime toward an end-of-days scenario that Khomeini had sought to avoid.³

Iran's Second Islamic Revolution is distinguishing itself from the original Islamic Revolution in other important ways: Iran is not only spreading its power in the region by reaching out to Shiite communities such as in Iraq and Lebanon, the regime is also actively cooperating with Sunni terror groups in an effort to solicit support from the Sunni Arab street over the heads of established Arab governments. Second, Iran's leadership also seeks broader support from non-Muslim Third World leaders, such as President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela. Finally, the new revolution has factored in Iran's nearly completed nuclear weapons capability in order to challenge U.S. domination of both the Middle East and the prevailing international system. Understanding the revolutionary ideology to which many in the Iranian leadership are currently dedicated is key to understanding Teheran's ambitions in the Middle East.

Such an analysis runs counter to the assumption that the current Iranian regime can be transformed into a stabilizing and constructive presence in the region. Rather, an understanding of the regime's revolutionary zeal may help shed light on its plans to defeat the West, achieve leadership of the Arab world, and assert control across the Middle East.

Amir Taheri, the former editor of the Iranian daily newspaper *Kayan*, noted that the real Iranian strategy is "Iran's determination to reshape the Middle East in its own image – a deliberate 'clash of civilizations' with the United States."⁴





Militant Iranians chanting outside the U.S. Embassy in Teheran, November 8, 1979, a few days after their takeover of the American compound. A poster caricaturing President Jimmy Carter is in the background.

Amir Taheri, former editor of the Iranian daily newspaper Kayan, noted that the real Iranian strategy is “Iran’s determination to reshape the Middle East in its own image – a deliberate ‘clash of civilizations’ with the United States.”

Implementing Khomeini’s Revolution Against the “Infidel” West

The Iranian regime’s financing, arming, and training of Islamist groups across and beyond the Middle East is an extension of the regime’s approach since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. Ayatollah Khomeini, the “father” of the revolution, viewed the world’s superpowers as the source of world corruption. In this context, he labeled the United States “the Great Satan,” Iran’s number one enemy, while America’s ally, Israel, was “the Little Satan.”⁵ Khomeini argued that a billion “Muslims should unite and defeat America.”⁶

Ahmadinejad has been a loyal soldier in Khomeini’s revolution against the West since he participated, while still a student, in the 1979 takeover of the American Embassy in Teheran and the abduction of 66 hostages, of which 52 members of the embassy staff were held for 444 days. Then-Iranian President Abolhassan Bani-Sadr would admit 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 Teheran.⁷

Ahmadinejad and ruling clerics Khamenei, Khatami, and Ali Akbar Rafsanjani have continued in Khomeini’s path, exporting the Islamic Revolution and supporting international terrorism via the regime’s closely controlled Islamic Revolutionary Guards Force (IRGC) and, later, the establishment of the IRGC’s clandestine “Qods Force” that is mobilized for foreign operations. The IRGC was established in 1979 by Khomeini as a separate command structure whose loyalty to the revolution would not be in doubt.

The IRGC has operated as a parallel force to the regular Iranian military and has come to be entrusted with operating the regime’s most sensitive forces and weapons systems, including weapons of mass destruction, Iran’s ballistic missile program, and its foreign insurgency operations.⁸ Khamenei’s personal commitment to the IRGC began during the Iran-Iraq War when, as Iran’s president between 1981 and 1989, he was the regime’s senior political figure directly involved in the strategic directives of the IRGC and Qods Force.

Ahmadinejad: A Loyal Soldier of the Revolution

Ahmadinejad held senior roles in Khomeini’s revolutionary leadership in the 1980s. He served as a commander in the IRGC during the Iran-Iraq War and subsequently became a senior commander in the Qods Force.⁹ During the Iran-Iraq War, Ahmadinejad also served as an instructor in the Basij Mostazafin, the Revolutionary Guard-commanded 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 entry to heaven after they sacrificed themselves as human minesweepers to clear a path for IRGC forces.¹⁰

Ahmadinejad and his fellow Revolutionary Guard warriors wield “a more fervently ideological approach to politics than their predecessors. The children of the Revolution are now its leaders.”



In 1980, Khomeini explained that “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.”¹¹ “The natural world,” Khomeini explained in October 1980, “is the lowest element, the scum of creation. What is decisive is the beyond: The divine world, that is eternal.” In Khomeini’s view, death is only a corridor from this world to the world beyond, where martyrs live eternally and in splendor.¹²

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 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, who served as loyal Ahmadinejad campaign staffers, also constituted a core part of his voter base. They stormed the Ministry of Interior during the first round of balloting, a virtual putsch that, according to many local observers, explains how Ahmadinejad advanced to the second round of voting with only 12 percent public support.¹³

Ahmadinejad has noted on numerous occasions that the Middle East conflict “has become the locus of the final war between Muslims and the infidel West.”

Ahmadinejad’s presidency, then, coincides with a new generation of revolutionary leaders whose worldview emerged from the carnage of the Iran-Iraq War. Ahmadinejad and his fellow Revolutionary Guard warriors wield “a more fervently ideological approach to politics than their predecessors. The children of the Revolution are now its leaders.”¹⁴

Advancing the Regime’s Foreign Policy: Defeating the West

A good example of Ahmadinejad’s revolutionary agenda was on display in October 2005 at a regime-hosted conference entitled “A World without Zionism,” at which senior members of Iranian proxy groups such as Hizbullah, Hamas, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad figured prominently. Ahmadinejad, quoting Khomeini, remarked, “the Imam said: ‘This

regime that is occupying Qods [Jerusalem] must be eliminated from the pages of history.’”¹⁵ The Iranian president also called for defeating the United States, which he labeled “the world of arrogance.”¹⁶

The IRGC, Iranian cultural centers, economic legations, religious and charity institutions, the state intelligence apparatus, consulates, and embassies provide cover for Iran’s terror activity and international subversion.

Drawing international condemnation from the United Nations, the European Union, and the United States, Ahmadinejad further emphasized that “a world without Americans and Zionists” is “attainable.”¹⁷ Since then, Ahmadinejad and other regime officials have repeated these themes.¹⁸ Maj.-Gen. Ataollah Salehi, General Commander of the Iranian armed forces, warned just months before the outbreak of the 2006 Hizbullah war against Israel that a clash between the Islamic Republic and the U.S. is inevitable, saying, “the Americans will run away [from the Middle East] leaving their illegitimate child [Israel] behind, and then Muslims will know what to do.”¹⁹ Ahmadinejad has noted on numerous occasions that the Middle East conflict “has become the locus of the final war between Muslims and the infidel West.”²⁰

The IRGC, Iranian cultural centers, economic legations, religious and charity institutions, the state intelligence apparatus, consulates, and embassies provide cover for Iran’s terror activity and international subversion. Iran’s Bank Melli and Bank Sad-erat (the Export Bank of Iran) have provided significant terror financing for the regime.²¹

Declassified Western intelligence reports reveal that Iranian diplomats have been engaged in intelligence-gathering and surveillance of targets for future attacks.²² It was an ominous sign in early 2006 when the Foreign Ministry replaced nearly sixty ambassadors, particularly in Western capitals, despite Teheran’s insistence that the move was part of a regular diplomatic rotation.²³

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*, “Forces like these are established in other countries, and even in America, and in NATO countries. 50,000 volunteers have been registered and organized. The first



blow we strike at the enemy will be the final blow that will obliterate it."²⁴ "America and Israel should know, each of our suicide bombers equals a nuclear bomb." Jaafari added, "Ahmadinejad should be a role model for Iranian officials."²⁵

Ayatollah Mohammad Mesbah Yazdi, the hard-line Iranian cleric who is considered the major inspiration behind Ahmadinejad's dedication to trigger the reappearance of the Mahdi – Shiite Islam's 12th and "vanished" messianic figure – has also issued public calls for volunteers for an Iranian martyr's organization called *Zeitun*, to carry out suicide op-

erations abroad. *Zeitun* was reportedly established by Elias Naderan, a faction leader of the Iranian Parliament, a former intelligence officer in the Revolutionary Guard, and an ally of Ahmadinejad.²⁶ 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.²⁷



The Second Lebanon War and Teheran's Revolutionary Designs

It is in this context of the regime's dedication to the Islamic Revolution and its mandate to defeat the Western alliance and destroy Israel that the watershed 2006 Second Lebanon War should be assessed. Ahmadinejad told Iran's national news channel in July 2006, a week after the war broke out, that "Lebanon is an 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 colonialist domineering goals."²⁸ 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."²⁹

Actually, Iran, its Syrian ally, and Hizbullah proxy understood the Second Lebanon War to be the first round of an Iranian-U.S. war fought over Israel's bow. The Iranian regime and its allies have long viewed Israel as a veritable branch office for Washington's interests in the Middle East – a forward operating base of the "arrogant powers." 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 of Islam and America with Israel acting as an American proxy."³⁰ Iranian scholar Amir Taheri has noted that "Israel's role as an American proxy is better understood in the Middle East than in the West."³¹

The Qods Force alone provides substantial material support to the Taliban, Shiite militants in Iraq, Lebanese Hizbullah, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

During the 2006 war, Gholam Ali Adel, Iran's parliament speaker, declared in a nationally televised speech in Teheran that "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."³²

These differing perceptions between Iran and the West over the nature of the conflict are key to understanding Iran's revolutionary motivations and their implementation in the Second Lebanon War. Ahmadinejad's sanctioning of Iranian participation seemed to demonstrate the fulfillment of Khomeini's revolutionary vision to "rid the world of the cancerous tumor called Israel."³³ The revolutionary leadership's Qods Force, whose operatives are integrated into Hizbullah's command structure, were advising

Backdropped by an anti-Israeli and anti-American oversized banner, Iranian female paramilitary militiamen (Basij) parade in front of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in Teheran, Aug. 24, 2005.



Aug. 18, 2007. Major General Yahya Rahim Safavi, Commander-in-Chief of Iran's elite Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) (left), greets Sheikh Naim Qassem, Deputy Secretary General of Lebanon's Hizbullah, during a religious ceremony in Teheran, Iran.

and assisting in attacks on Israeli forces and in rocket assaults against Israeli cities.³⁴

High-ranking IDF sources note that the Qods Force, under the command of Brigadier General Qassem Suleimani (who is also an adviser to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei on Iraq), coordinated terror actions with Hizbullah.³⁵ Suleimani has been responsible for Iranian military activity in Syria and for directing Palestinian terrorist organizations in Syria and throughout the region. According to the U.S. Department of the Treasury, Iran's Bank Melli provides banking services to the IRGC and the Qods Force, which are engaged in overseas operations.³⁶ The Qods Force alone provides substantial material support to the Taliban, Shiite militants in Iraq, Lebanese Hizbullah, Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.³⁷ Iranian support for Hizbullah via the Qods Force has included some \$100-200 million annually, in addition to \$380 million dollars for postwar reconstruction.³⁸

Nasrallah's deputy, Sheik Naaim Qassem, told the Iranian Arabic-language TV station Al-Qawthar that Hizbullah requires permission for operations from Iran's supreme leadership.

Hizbullah, like the IRGC, does not operate primarily as an independent actor, but takes instructions from and reports to the Iranian leadership.³⁹ Hizbullah's representative in Iran, Abdallah Safiy Al-Din, told the Iranian daily *Kayhan*, in the middle of the Israel-Hizbullah war on August 7, 2006, "Everything we have, we [obtained] thanks to the Islamic Revolu-

tion [in Iran]."⁴⁰ The leader of Hizbullah, Hassan Nasrallah, acts as Khamenei's personal emissary in Lebanon. In March 2007, Nasrallah's deputy, Sheik Naaim Qassem, told the Iranian Arabic-language TV station *Al-Qawthar* that Hizbullah requires permission for operations from Iran's supreme leadership.⁴¹ Hizbullah's preeminent terrorist mastermind, Imad Mughniyeh, who was assassinated in Damascus in February 2008, maintained direct ties to Iranian military intelligence and was named by senior Israeli intelligence figures as a main interlocutor between Hizbullah and Iran during the 2006 war.⁴²

Mughniyeh's past role as an agent of the Iranian revolutionary leadership is well-documented. He carried out the 1994 bombing of the Argentinean Jewish Community Center under direct instructions from Ali Khamenei.⁴³ In 2002, he was instructed by Khamenei to purchase the *Karine A* to sail arms to the Gaza Strip – a journey that was intercepted by the IDF.⁴⁴ While the Iranian leadership had kept its relationship with Mughniyeh shrouded in secrecy, following his death he was celebrated as a national hero. A stamp featuring Mughniyeh was issued by Iran in commemoration.⁴⁵

During the 2006 war, Khamenei personally issued calls for 2,500 suicide fighters to be deployed to Lebanon.⁴⁶ According to Iranian news agencies, during the war two groups of IRGC-trained volunteer fighters were sent to Lebanon for martyrdom operations. The Second Lebanon War was one of the most recent demonstrations that the Iranian regime is attempting to make good on Ahmadinejad's 2005 post-election promise to destroy Israel as the first step towards defeating the West.

Washington's Recalibrated Assessments

Iran's participation in the Second Lebanon War also seemed to trigger recognition by some Bush Administration officials that Iran's goals were broader than simply supplying weapons and financing to its long-time Hizbullah client. U.S. Assistant Secretary of State David Welch noted to the *Washington Post* shortly after the war broke out that Iran's "hand" is in each of the conflicts in the region: Southern Lebanon, Gaza, and Iraq. Welch noted that the outbreak of the war "does cross a threshold because, as Hizbullah has now said, this action was planned. It was intended to escalate and widen the battleground."⁴⁷

Bolder U.S. assessments of Iran's behavior were offered by other U.S. officials at the time, including David Schenker, adviser on Syria and Lebanon to



Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and David Wurmser, Middle East Advisor to Vice President Dick Cheney. Schenker and Wurmser both noted that the Second Lebanon War reflected Teheran's regional intentions for a new phase of the Iranian Revolution.⁴⁸ Schenker emphasized that for Iran, the war broke out prematurely before its nuclear program was ready, which cost the Iranian leadership some of the valuable rocket deterrence it had built in Lebanon against Israel. However, Schenker also noted that Teheran's leading role in Hizbullah's massive post-war troop and arms build-up both north and south of the Litani River, and Iran's re-supply of tens of thousands of rockets, reflect Teheran's ongoing revolutionary and strategic designs on the region.⁴⁹

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It seems that Iran's revolutionary designs have also made a greater impression on U.S. officials and lawmakers in the years since the Second Lebanon War. In July 2007, Connecticut Senator Joseph Lieberman assessed in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed that "Iran is acting aggressively and consistently to undermine moderate regimes in the Middle East, establish itself as the dominant regional power and reshape the region in its own ideological image. The involvement of Hizbullah in Iraq...illustrates precisely how interconnected are the different threats and challenges we face in the region. The fanatical government of Iran is the common denominator that links them together."⁵⁰ The U.S. ambassador to Iraq, Ryan Crocker, told the *New York Times* in April 2008 that Iran is fighting a proxy war in Iraq.⁵¹

Iran's behavior has confirmed these assessments. Since November 2006, the regime has hosted 4,500 Hizbullah members for three-month training sessions led by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards.⁵² The objective has been to create a core of Iranian-trained fighters for the next round of war with Israel. Muhammad Ali Hussein, head of the Islamic Union in Lebanon, admitted to a Kuwaiti newspaper, "The training in Iran lies at the heart of our connections with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and this is known to all Lebanese people."⁵³ One Hizbullah fighter told the *Christian Science Monitor* in April 2008 that he had recently returned from Iran, his second trip in a year, where he was taught how to

fire antitank missiles. "The holy fighters are leaving universities, shops, places of work to go and train."⁵⁴

The head of the IDF's Southern Command, Major General Yoav Galant, and other senior Israeli security officials have noted Iran's penetration of Gaza and the West Bank, where Iran is attempting to replicate the regime's success with Hizbullah in Southern Lebanon.⁵⁵ Hamas has increasingly been transformed into an Iranian organization since Ahmadinejad's election.⁵⁶ Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal was in Teheran for "consultations" on the eve of Hamas' parliamentary victory in January 2006, and immediately following the elections, Hamas' Gaza-based leader, Ismail Haniyeh, visited Ahmadinejad and the mullahs in Teheran as one of his first post-election visits – and called the Iranians his "key allies."⁵⁷ Mashaal – a "frequent flier" to Teheran, according to Avi Dichter,⁵⁸ Israel's Minister of Internal Security – said at Teheran University that "the famous sentence by the late founder of the Islamic Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini, still resonates in our ears, that Israel is a tumor which needs to be removed."⁵⁹

The long and well-disguised arms of the Iranian regime may have struck Jerusalem in the March 2008 suicide terror shooting of eight teenagers in the library of a religious seminary. Iran's Hizbullah-operated "Unit 1800" in Lebanon has been tied to the attack,⁶⁰ although whether Iran ordered it directly is unclear. However, the extent of Iranian influence, especially in terms of ideology, was clear: Sheik Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah, Lebanon's most senior Shiite cleric, publicly praised the attack, thereby closing ranks with Iran and Hizbullah.⁶¹

It is no coincidence, then, that almost all of the major terror attacks of the past several years – including the Gaza-based rocket war – have been carried out by groups that are funded, armed, and trained by Iran."

The body of the terrorist, Alaa Abu Dheim, a resident of Jerusalem who had been previously arrested by Israeli security forces for ties to Hizbullah, was wrapped in a yellow Hizbullah flag, while his family's mourning tent also flew Hizbullah and Hamas flags.⁶² Palestinian assessments have claimed that Iran's agent in Bethlehem, Palestinian Islamic Jihad commander Mohammed Shahada, was behind the attack, despite IDF denials.⁶³ Shahada had converted to Shiism after his expulsion to Southern Leba-

non in 1992. Shahada and three of his associates were killed by the IDF a week after the Jerusalem attack; their bodies were also shrouded in Hizbullah flags.⁶⁴ At a minimum, it was clear that Iran had penetrated West Bank cities and neighborhoods adjacent to Israel's capital, Jerusalem, and that the regime's radical ideology had gained currency among some Palestinians.

Ayatollah Khomeini had first advocated exporting the Islamic Revolution across the Middle East when he came to power in 1979, calling for Islam's return to its "rightful path" from which the Rashidun, Ummayad and Abbasid Caliphs – the Sunnis – had deviated from 632 to 1258 CE.

Western media reports and other assessments have generally attributed terror attacks such as the Jerusalem massacre and other suicide operations against Israelis to Palestinian revenge for Israel's war with Hamas in Gaza. However, the Iranian leadership's view is broader. For Ahmadinejad, Israel is the bridgehead of the "arrogant powers," with which there is no possibility of compromise.⁶⁵ He has also declared on more than one occasion, "We are in the process of an historic war between the world of arrogance [i.e., the West] and the Islamic world, and this war has been going on for hundreds of years."⁶⁶ It is no coincidence, then, that almost all of the major terror attacks of the past several years – including the Gaza-based rocket war – have been carried out by groups that are funded, armed, and trained by Iran.

Exporting the Revolution to "Apostate" Arab States

Aside from the Iranian leadership's dedication to eliminating Israel en route to defeating the West, we are also currently witnessing another potentially historic upheaval that also derives from Iran's Second Islamic Revolution. This, too, is an assault on an established order, but it is an assault that is geographically and culturally much closer to home than the West.

The rapid growth of Iranian-led Shiite power across the Middle East, especially in Iraq and Lebanon,⁶⁷ has triggered fear in Sunni Arab states – Jordan,

Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf states – that Iran will soon be able to dramatically shift the cultural and geopolitical balance between Shiite and Sunni Muslims in the region.⁶⁸

A Return to Khomeini

Ayatollah Khomeini had first advocated exporting the Islamic Revolution across the Middle East when he came to power in 1979, calling for Islam's return to its "rightful path" from which the Rashidun, Ummayad and Abbasid Caliphs – the Sunnis – had deviated from 632 to 1258 CE. Initially, Khomeini exported the revolution through Ayatollah Hasayn Ali Montazeri, who in the early 1980s established a special organization called the Bureau of Relations for Islamic Movements that was established for supporting Islamic liberation movements in the Arab world.

In the past year alone, Iran accused the Sunni Gulf states of being "illegal regimes" that were established through the intervention of "arrogant Western imperialism."

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 1980.⁶⁹ Iran was suspected of being involved in coup plots in Bahrain in 1981 and Qatar in 1983.⁷⁰ Besides founding Hizbullah in Lebanon in 1982, Khomeini also established Hizbullah branches for the Hijaz (Saudi Arabia) and in Turkey. However, Iran's revolutionary evangelism stalled during the later years of its decade-long war with Iraq, so that by the 1990s Montazeri had been replaced and efforts to export the revolution lost much of their steam.

Israel's withdrawal from Southern Lebanon in May 2000 gave Iran new momentum, as Hizbullah was able to take credit for being the first Arab military force to defeat Israel. Shiite prestige was further, if unintentionally, enhanced by the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 that would at last empower the country's Shiite majority. In historical terms, this was perhaps a major sign that the time was ripe for Shiite ascendancy.



Sunni Concerns at Iran’s Ascendancy

Today, Ahmadinejad’s confident reassertion of Shi-ite power has become a grave concern in states where Sunnis and Shiites live together, such as Iraq, Lebanon, Bahrain, Kuwait, the UAE, Qatar, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia. The Sunnis are accustomed to regarding the Shiites as inferior, as second-class Muslims, and as a threat to the long-standing dominance of Sunni Arabs in the Middle East. Never before has the Sunni mainstream establishment perceived the Shiites to be so daunting a threat.

The Ahmadinejad era has been marked by the regime’s ability to forge alliances with groups that in decades past may have been improbable collaborators, such as the Sunni terror organizations Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Fatah’s Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade.

In the past year alone, Iran accused the Sunni Gulf states of being “illegal regimes” that were established through the intervention of “arrogant Western imperialism.”⁷¹ The Iranian threats to Arab regimes east of the Suez Canal go hand in hand with a strategy of reaching out to what Teheran sees as its rightful inheritance of the Shiite majorities in Iraq, Bahrain, Yemen, and Azerbaijan, as well as the large Shiite minorities in Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates and the three million Shiites in the oil-rich Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. The Iranian regime continues to claim sovereignty over three UAE islands: Greater and Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa. Hussein Shariatmadari, spiritual adviser to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, inflamed tensions with Gulf states in 2007 by repeating Iran’s implied threat to “liberate” Bahrain, which he labeled a “district of Iran” that should be annexed “to the motherland.”⁷²

Iran’s collaboration with Syria and Hezbollah in the destabilization of the Lebanese central government is a good example of Iran’s export of its revolution, as seen in Hezbollah’s May 2008 temporary hijacking of the government of Prime Minister Fouad Seniora. Jordan’s King Abdullah, recognized as Prophet Muhammad’s direct, 43rd-generation descendent, first sounded the alarm in 2004 when he warned that a “new crescent” of Shiites, stretching from Iran into Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon, could emerge and shift the traditional balance of power between the two main Islamic sects.⁷³



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He also noted that Iran’s flooding of Iraq with a million Iranians, mobilizing the Revolutionary Guard forces, and working to influence the outcome of elections could transform Iraq into another Islamic Republic.⁷⁴ Abdullah said, “It is in Iran’s vested interest to have an Islamic Republic of Iraq.”⁷⁵ Egypt’s

A Lebanese Hezbollah supporter waves a Hezbollah flag in front of a banner showing pictures of Hezbollah leader Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah (bottom), Shiite Muslim spiritual leader Imam Moussa Sadr who disappeared on a trip to Libya in 1978 (center), and Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei (top), in Kfar Kila, Lebanon, Sept. 21, 2006. Hundreds of Hezbollah supporters from across Southern Lebanon began marching on foot toward Beirut for a major rally to support Hezbollah in the aftermath of its war with Israel.

Hosni Mubarak followed suit in 2006 when he said during an interview on *Al-Arabiya* television, “Most of the Shiites are loyal to Iran, and not to the countries they are living in.”⁷⁶ Similarly, a former senior Kuwaiti government advisor, Sami al-Faraj, admitted to the Kuwaiti newspaper *Al-Siyassah* in March 2008 that Israel should attack Iranian nuclear installations. According to al-Faraj, “[Israel] would be achieving something of great strategic value for the GCC [Gulf Cooperation Council] by stopping Iran’s tendency for hegemony over the area.”⁷⁷

The Revolution’s New Sunni Allies

What is different, though, about the Second Iranian Revolution is that its success has not been limited to Shiite communities in the region or to the creation of proxy groups such as Hizbullah in Lebanon, the nurturing of Shiite militias such as the Badr Brigade and the Mahdi Army in Iraq, and the establishment in Afghanistan of the Sepah-e-Mohammed militia by Iran’s Revolutionary Guards.⁷⁸

Ahmadinejad’s message to the Palestinians is simple: Palestine should not participate in a two-state solution; it is an inseparable part of the land of Islam, and there is no need to sacrifice even an inch of it; and 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.

The Ahmadinejad era has been marked by the regime’s ability to forge alliances with groups that in decades past may have been improbable collaborators, such as the Sunni terror organizations Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Fatah’s Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade. Middle East scholar Fouad Ajami has noted, “We needn’t give credence to the idea of a vast ‘Shiite crescent’ stretching from Iran to Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon to appreciate the challenge posed by the Iranian theocrats to the order of that Greater Middle East....In its struggle for primacy in the habitat around it, Iran is not a Shiite power per se: It aids and abets a Shiite-armed movement in Lebanon and also works with the Sunni die-hards

of Hamas and Islamic Jihad in the Palestinian territories.”⁷⁹

If it seems strange that a secular Arab regime would be so closely tied to a Shiite theocracy, the fact is that majority-Sunni Syria 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. 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 Shiite regime in Teheran.

Iran’s collaboration with Syria and Hizbullah in the destabilization of the Lebanese central government is a good example of Iran’s export of its revolution, as seen in Hizbullah’s May 2008 temporary hijacking of the government of Prime Minister Fouad Seniora. Walid Jumblatt, the Lebanese Druze leader, has consistently shared this perspective, saying in July 2006, “The war is no longer Lebanon’s...it is an Iranian war.” In this context, it was no surprise that both the Lebanese government under Prime Minister Seniora and the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt leveled sharp criticism at Hizbullah and Syria for “dragging the entire region into a war with Israel.”⁸⁰ Seniora would also blast Syria on Lebanese Television during the April 2008 Arab League Summit in Damascus and excoriate Hizbullah a month later for its bloody takeover of Beirut.⁸¹

Blaming an Arab faction for a war between Arabs and Israel was an unprecedented development in the region that powerfully bespoke Sunni fears of Shiite expansionism. Meanwhile, in Jordan, government spokesman Nasser Judeh accused Hamas of recruiting Jordanians and seeking to send them for training in Syria and Iran.⁸²

Palestinian leader Hani al-Hasan, a senior adviser to PA leader Mahmoud Abbas and one of the founders of the Fatah party, noted that Iran’s imperial interest in transforming the entire region into an Islamist trust threatens the Palestinian Authority no less than it threatens Israel.⁸³ Palestinian human rights activist Bassem Eid, a leading proponent of democratic reform in the PA, has also noted, “Hamas now represents Iranian interests, not Palestinian interests.” He warned, “Iran’s goal



is to destroy both Israel and subvert any possibility of a Palestinian state governed by Mahmoud Abbas and other leaders amenable to the United States and the West, and they are doing the job through Hamas.”⁸⁴

Ahmadinejad’s message to the Palestinians is simple: Palestine should not participate in a two-state solution; it is an inseparable part of the land of Islam, and there is no need to sacrifice even an inch of it; and 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.⁸⁵ In this way, the current Iranian regime is fulfilling one of Ayatollah Khomeini’s original ambitions – to transcend doctrinal differences between Sunnis and Shiites and create a coherent revolutionary Islamic force of “a billion Muslims.”⁸⁶

Hamas’ destruction of the border fence between Gaza and Egypt in January 2008 was also strategically coordinated with the Iranian leadership and is a good example of Iran’s hegemonic plans, according to Egyptian and Palestinian officials.

Hamas’ destruction of the border fence between Gaza and Egypt in January 2008 was also strategically coordinated with the Iranian leadership and is a good example of Iran’s hegemonic plans, according to Egyptian and Palestinian officials.⁸⁷ Hosni Mubarak reportedly lamented to a European diplomat in early 2008 that Egypt now effectively shares a border with Iran⁸⁸ – an Iran that has not hidden its contempt for the Egyptian government, which signed a peace treaty with Israel and maintains a cold peace with the Jewish state. Ahmadinejad has publicly threatened such Arab regimes, saying, “those who recognize the Zionist regime will burn in the fire of the Islamic *umma*.”⁸⁹ In April 2008, Ahmadinejad even issued a thinly veiled threat to Iran’s Syrian ally, lest it consider “siding with the United States.”⁹⁰ Not coincidentally, Egypt has also been directly threatened by al-Qaeda, an example of radical Shiite and Sunni cooperation against what both radical Shiites and Sunnis consider apostate control of the Arab world.

While Iran’s Shiite revolution has laid bare Muslim sectarian strife, and has often sought to exacerbate such strife, the 1,400-year-old argument between Sunnis and Shiites still takes a back seat when it comes to cooperation between Islamist Shiite and



Sunni groups in attacking mutual enemies. For example, Hizbullah’s post-2006 military buildup has not been confined to Shiite Lebanese. Sunnis, Christians, and Druze also are being recruited into reserve units called *Saraya*, or battalions. For example, in the southern coastal town of Sidon, a Sunni Islamist militant group called the Fajr Forces, which battled the IDF in Southern Lebanon in the early 1980s, has been resurrected as a Hizbullah ally.⁹¹ The 9/11 Commission Report documented the fact that al-Qaeda received assistance from Teheran and was provided sanctuary in Iran before and after the September 11, 2001, attacks.⁹²

By 2008, however, it seemed clearer that the Bush administration had begun to understand the extent, danger, and regional implications of Iran’s project inside Iraq.⁹³ In the aftermath of battles with Iranian-backed Muqtada al-Sadr’s Mahdi army in Basra, Coalition Forces Commander General David Petraeus concluded, “Iran is playing a destructive role in funding, training, arming and directing the so-called ‘Special Groups’ that has generated concern about Iran in the minds of many Iraqi leaders. Unchecked, the ‘Special Groups’ pose the greatest long-term threat to the viability of a democratic Iraq.”⁹⁴

Today, the region’s Sunni governments are animated more by a rejection of Iran than they are by a rejection of Israel.

The U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, Ryan Crocker, also testified that “Iran continues to undermine the efforts of the Iraqi government to establish a stable, secure state.”⁹⁵ Crocker specifically referred to Iran’s arming and training of “lethal networks” via the Qods

Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei sits as Iran’s President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad speaks during a meeting with officials and ambassadors from Islamic countries to commemorate the birthday of Prophet Muhammad in Teheran, Iran, April, 16, 2006. A photo of Iran’s late leader Ayatollah Khomeini is in the background.

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (left) welcomes leader of the militant Palestinian group Hamas Khaled Mashaal in Teheran, March 6, 2007.



Force, the goal of which, he said, was the replication of a Hizbullah proxy force in Iraq that would act according to the interests and instructions of Teheran.⁹⁶ An April 8, 2008, *Washington Post* editorial noted, “The proxy war in Iraq is just one front in a much larger Iranian offensive,”⁹⁷ while Crocker had accused Iran of “meddling” in Afghanistan, Lebanon, and Gaza, in addition to Iraq.⁹⁸

Yazdi and his faithful believe it is a duty to 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.”

Sunni “Blowback”

It is fair to say that today, the region’s Sunni governments are animated more by a rejection of Iran than they are by a rejection of Israel. In historical terms, this situation is not dissimilar to the thinking that brought Anwar al-Sadat to Jerusalem in 1977 to make peace with Israel. Following the 1973 war with Israel, Sadat moved closer to America and sought to sideline 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 in 1976 the Soviet-Egyptian Friendship Treaty that he had signed in 1971.⁹⁹

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.

In the mid-1970s, the Egyptian president estimated Israel to be less dangerous than the Soviets. 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.¹⁰⁰ Arab fears of Iran’s revolutionary mood and apocalyptic appetite dominated the April 2008 Arab League Summit in Damascus. Ten of twenty-two heads of Arab League member states boycotted the summit as a gesture against Syria and Iran for meddling in Lebanon and destabilizing the region. The Israeli-Palestinian peace process was of little interest to the participants compared to discussions of Iran. For example, in the press conference at the end of the two-day summit, the subject of Israel came up only twice in the 90 minutes allotted for questions and answers, and the participating foreign ministers agreed that they would only review the progress of the peace process six months later.¹⁰¹

Beyond Khomeini: Ahmadinejad’s Apocalyptic World View

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s commitment to Shiite messianism has helped propel the Second Islamic Revolution even beyond the point to which Khomeini had brought it. Ahmadinejad is motivated by a divinely inspired mission to trigger the reappearance of the Shiite Mahdi, or the lost Twelfth Imam, and recover the ideal of Islamic justice in the world.¹⁰²

The Iranian president is a member of a semi-secret religious group, the *Hojjatiyeh*, headed by the radical cleric Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, who is Ahmadinejad’s spiritual mentor. Once a peripheral figure, Yazdi has grown in stature and in 2006 was



cited as a possible successor to replace Iran's ailing Supreme Leader Ali Khomeini.¹⁰³ Yazdi inspired Ahmadinejad to make the destruction of Israel a publicly declared strategic goal that sits near the top of the Iranian agenda. Yazdi garnered poorer than expected results in the December 2006 elections for the ruling Assembly of Experts. However, the cleric still holds sway over his presidential pupil.

Yazdi and his *Hojjatiyeh* faithful believe it is a duty to 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."¹⁰⁴ 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 United States.

Since late 2005, Ahmadinejad has replaced at least eight of twenty-two government ministers with senior members of the IRGC.

Ahmadinejad's fealty to Yazdi and the *Hojjatiyeh* represents a break from Khomeini's vision. The "father" of the revolution had prohibited Mahdi groups such as the *Hojjatiyeh* for their ideological refusal to support Khomeini's Islamic government.¹⁰⁵ According to Mehdi Khalaji, a scholar of Shiite theology, the very essence of Khomeini's revolutionary message was the rejection of the type of messianism that Ahmadinejad has embraced. Khomeini insisted that as the *Velayat e Faqih* (the Guardian Jurist), he served as the representative of the Mahdi in this world.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, as Khalaji notes, "religious government was a pre-requirement for the reemergence of the Shiite Messiah or the Mahdi and should be instituted in the present without waiting for the reappearance of the Hidden Imam."¹⁰⁷ Khomeini had even called the *Hojjatiyeh* "stupid," and in a major speech in the mid-1980s "implicitly stated that the *Hojjatiyeh's* belief in hastening the return of the hidden Imam would spread corruption through the country."¹⁰⁸

This is the ideological point at which Ahmadinejad and Khomeini part ways, and it is also where the Second Islamic Revolution could derive the energy necessary to fuel itself toward an apocalyptic climax.

Throughout his professional life, Ahmadinejad been an acolyte of the doctrine of Mahdism – the study of and belief in the Mahdi. As mayor of Teheran, 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.¹⁰⁹ Several weeks after his 2005 presidential victory, Ahmadinejad told journalists in Teheran that "the goal of my government is the people's satisfaction and I have no doubt that the people of the Islamic Republic are preparing for the return [of the Hidden Imam] and G-d willing in near future we will witness his appearance."¹¹⁰ In August 2005, Ahmadinejad 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.¹¹¹ There are reports of the government building a direct train link from Teheran to the elegant blue-tiled mosque, which lies 65 miles south of the capital, east of the Shiite religious center of Qom.¹¹²

Ahmadinejad's apocalyptic language and new revolutionary drive represent a break from previous Iranian regimes.¹¹³ Both Rafsanjani and former Iranian President Muhammad Khatami, who was considered even more pragmatic by the West, had also worked to advance Iran's nuclear program 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, Teheran 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.

Since late 2005, Revolutionary Guard factions have conducted a major purge of the military, security apparatus, civil service, state-owned corporations, and the media.

"Reformist" leaders such as Khatami and Rafsanjani had exercised "soft power," and sought to appeal to Iran's youth and ensure the survival of the Islamic Republic as a functional system.¹¹⁴ In 1998, for example, Khatami was prepared to enter into a mini-Yalta accord with the Clinton Administration that would demarcate respective zones of influence.¹¹⁵ Ahmadinejad, in contrast, has repeatedly announced Iran's plans to upgrade its regional status and become the leading force in the Arab and Mus-

lim world. He has continually announced Islam's intention to conquer the world via martyrdom operations, which assume a greater urgency when infused with a dedication to cause the Mahdi's necessary reappearance.¹¹⁶ He told the 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."¹¹⁷

While Ahmadinejad is committed to elements of Khomeinism, his spiritual drive and religious loyalty to Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi has charged the revolution with additional energy that seeks to hasten the arrival of the Mahdi and the accompanying clash of civilizations with the West.

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.¹¹⁸ When he returned to Teheran, he reportedly 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 disappearing imam whispered in his ear.¹¹⁹

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 compromising with the infidel forces of the West. From Iran's point of view, it is fruitless for international leaders to avoid confrontation with Teheran; rather, it is the role of the Mahdi to usher in a utopian age. In this way, Ahmadinejad's verbal declarations fit neatly into the premises of his religious ideology, and are not, as many observers contend, innocuous saber-rattling intended to frighten other nations.

Revolutionary Control at Home

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 element of the Iranian governing establishment. Since late 2005, Ahmadinejad has replaced at least eight of twenty-two government ministers with senior members of the IRGC. They now control nearly 40 percent of Iran's key cabinet posts in the wake of their electoral success in the Majlis (parliament), though a spate of Cabinet resignations nearly resulted in a parliamentary no confidence vote in May 2008. Nearly 120 parliament members, many of whom were connected to the so-called "reformists" that included old-guard Iranian leaders Khatami and Rafsanjani, were forced to resign in 2005.

Similarly, since late 2005, Revolutionary Guard factions have conducted a major purge of the military, security apparatus, civil service, state-owned corporations, and the media.¹²⁰ Senior commanders of the IRGC control the armed forces; Defense Minister Mustafa Mohammed Najjar and Foreign Minister Manouchher Mottaki were both senior Pasdaran commanders;¹²¹ and Supreme National Security Council head Ali Larijani was also a central figure in the IRGC during the 1980s. Ahmadinejad is not alone in his fidelity to this messianic mandate. The heads of eight government ministries were personally appointed by Ahmadinejad, and are also loyal to the rulings of Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi. These ministries include foreign affairs, intelligence, interior, defense, culture, and Islamic guidance. The *Hojjatiyeh* secret society also claims close friends who direct the conservative *Kayhan* daily and others in the Teheran municipality.¹²²

Since Iran's Second Islamic Revolution is a non-negotiable process, pursuing the diplomatic mirage with Teheran may well merely harden the regime's belief that its enemies in the West lack the will to fight and are on the losing side of history.



Conclusion

Iran's dedication to becoming the regional hegemonic power and a global nuclear force is the fulfillment of the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Yet while Ahmadinejad is committed to elements of Khomeinism, his spiritual drive and religious loyalty to Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi has charged the revolution with additional energy that seeks to hasten the arrival of the Mahdi and the accompanying clash of civilizations with the West. There is a major difference between the apocalyptic world view of the Islamic Republic of Iran and other governments in the international community that acquired nuclear weapons. Would the same fear of mutually-assured destruction restrain a nuclear-armed Iran from using such weapons against the U.S. or Israel?

Ironically, it appears that for the Sunni Arab states, Israel, the United States, Britain, and the West, the Iranian threat represents a type of threat that bears certain similarities to the threat from Hitler's Germany or the Soviet Union. In the case of Iran, however, an apocalyptically-minded willingness to accept mass destruction as part of what is viewed as a necessary show-down with the West increases the urgency of the present crisis over the two previous major threats to the international order. Since Iran's Second Islamic Revolution is a non-negotiable process, pursuing the diplomatic mirage with Teheran may well merely harden the regime's belief that its enemies in the West lack the will to fight and are on the losing side of history. Such a conviction will likely hasten confrontation with the Iranian regime, not delay it.



Notes

1. See "Iran's Second Islamic Revolution," *MEMRI Inquiry and Analysis Series*, no. 253, November 17, 2005.
2. "Iran as a State Sponsoring and Operating Terror," Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, April 2003.
3. Amir Taheri, "Getting Serious about Iran," *Commentary*, November 2006. Khomeini outlawed apocalyptic *Hojjatiyeh* Mahdi groups, a secret society established to speed the return of the Mahdi, Shiite Islam's vanished messianic figure. See also, "The Return of the *Hojatieh*," December 14, 2005, www.bahairants.com/the-return-of-the-hojatieh-81.html.
4. Amir Taheri, "A Clash of Civilizations," *Newsweek*, September 5, 2005. There is a view that the Iranian drive for regional supremacy is a hallmark of Iranian history. Thus, Ray Takeyh writes: "More than any other nation, Iran has always perceived itself as the national hegemon of its neighborhood," Ray Takeyh, *Hidden Iran: Paradox and Power in the Islamic Republic* (New York: Holt, 2006), p. 61. Another historical analysis of Iran's traditional drive for regional hegemony is explained by Patrick Clawson and Michael Rubin, who note that at Iran's height, Iran ruled Iraq, Afghanistan, parts of Central Asia and the Arabian coast of the Persian Gulf. This helps explain the Iranian view that these areas are part of its sphere of influence. Patrick Clawson and Michael Rubin, *Eternal Iran: Continuity and Chaos* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), pp. 12, 30.
5. "Iran as a State Sponsoring and Operating Terror."
6. *Ibid.*
7. Matthias Küntzel, "From Khomeini to Ahmadinejad," *Hoover Institution Policy Review*, December 2006-January 2007, <http://www.hoover.org/publications/policyreview/4884331.html>.
8. Assad Homayoun, "Iran – the Clerical Regime and International Terrorism," excerpts from a speech by the former Iranian ambassador to the United States, December 4, 2001, http://www.worldtribune.com/worldtribune/WTARC/2001/guest_homayoun_12_03.html. Also see Dan Diker, "President Bush and the Qods Force Controversy: Lessons Learned," *Jerusalem Issue Brief*, vol. 6, no. 22, March 6, 2007.
9. Mordechai Abir, "Iran's New Revolutionary Guards Regime: Anti-Americanism, Oil, and Rising International Tension," *Jerusalem Issue Brief*, vol. 5, no. 10, November 15, 2005, http://www.jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=443&PID=0&IID=536&TTL=Iran's_New_Revolutionary_Guards_Regime:_Anti-Americanism,_Oil,_and_Rising_International_Tension.
10. Matthias Küntzel, "Ahmadinejad's Demons: A Child of the Revolution Takes Over," *New Republic*, April 24, 2006.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. According to senior Western intelligence sources familiar with Iran, in a meeting with the author in Washington, D.C., September 17, 2006.
14. Küntzel, "Ahmadinejad's Demons."
15. "Iranian President at Teheran Conference: 'Very Soon, This Stain of Disgrace [Israel] Will Be Purged from the Center of the Islamic World – and This is Attainable,'" *MEMRI Special Dispatch Series*, no. 1013, October 28, 2005, <http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=countries&Area=iran&ID=SP101305>.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.* For international condemnation of Ahmadinejad's statements, see <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/10/27/AR2005102702221.html>.
18. http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=ia&D=IA38907#_ednref2
19. Amir Taheri, "Iran's New Anti-Israel Rage," *New York Post*, October 28, 2005.
20. "Final War between Muslims, West: Ahmadinejad," Al Jazeera.com, January 21, 2006, http://www.aljazeera.com/me.asp?service_ID=10517.
21. Shimon Shapira, "The Nexus Between Iranian National Banks and International Terrorist Financing," *Jerusalem Issue Brief*, vol. 7, no. 31, February 14, 2008. In September 2006, the U.S. Treasury disclosed that the Central Bank of Iran was sending money to Hizbullah through Bank Saderat, which was also providing financial services to Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas. U.S. Treasury officials also revealed that the Central Bank of Iran was in fact asking financial institutions around the world to hide any possible connection between their transactions and Iranian missile procurement, nuclear programs, and the financing of terrorism. Bank Melli and Bank Saderat had transferred millions of dollars through their European branches to both Hizbullah and Hamas. These Iranian



- banks are state-owned; they hence have no independence and serve the interests of the Iranian regime.
22. "Iran as a State Sponsoring and Operating Terror."
 23. "Iran: Replacement of 60 Ambassadors Just Routine," *AP/Jerusalem Post*, April 17, 2006.
 24. *MEMRI Special Dispatch Series*, no. 958, August 15, 2005.
 25. "Islamic Clerical Regime Opens Garrison to Recruit Suicide Bombers against West," *Iran Focus*, July 22, 2005, <http://www.iranfocus.com/modules/news/article.php?storyid=2944>.
 26. "Iran's New President Glorifies Martyrdom," *MEMRI Special Dispatch Series*, no. 945, July 29, 2005, <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP94505>.
 27. *Ibid.*
 28. "Ahmadinejad: Lebanon is the Scene of an Historic Test which will Determine the Future of Humanity," *MEMRI Special Dispatch Series*, no. 1212, July 26, 2006.
 29. "Iran and the Recent Escalation on Israel's Borders: Reactions in Iran, Lebanon, and Syria," *MEMRI Special Dispatch Series*, no. 1208, July 18, 2006.
 30. Amir Taheri, "This is Just the Start of a Showdown between the West and the Rest," *The Times* (London), August 2, 2006.
 31. *Ibid.*
 32. "Iranian Parliament Speaker: The Blood of Khomeini Rages in Nasrallah's Veins," *MEMRI Special Dispatch Series*, no. 1210, July 21, 2006.
 33. "Iranian President at Teheran Conference."
 34. "Using the Quds Force of the Revolutionary Guards as the Main Tool to Export the Revolution beyond the Borders of Iran," Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, April 2, 2007, http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/html/iran_e0307.htm.
 35. Dan Darling, "General Panic: Meet General Qassem Suleimani, Commander of Iran's Anti-American Quds Force," *Weekly Standard*, October 5, 2005. See also "Using the Quds Force of the Revolutionary Guards."
 36. Shimon Shapira, "The Nexus Between Iranian National Banks and International Terrorist Financing."
 37. *Ibid.*
 38. "Hizbullah as a Strategic Arm of Iran," Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, September 8, 2006, http://www.intelligence.org.il/eng/eng_n/html/iran_hezbollah_e1b.htm.
 39. According to senior Israeli intelligence and military sources intimately familiar with Iran, Hizbullah, and Hamas in meetings with the authors in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem between December 2006 and March 2008.
 40. "Iranian and Syrian Media Stepping Up Statements on the War," *MEMRI Special Dispatch Series*, no. 1239, August 9, 2006, <http://memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=archives&Area=sd&ID=SP123906>.
 41. Qassem used the term *al-Wali al Faqih*, or "the ruling jurisprudent," meaning permission comes from Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/malam_multimedia/English/eng_n/pdf/hezbollah_e0407.pdf.
 42. According to a senior IDF military intelligence source, in a conversation with the author, March 3, 2007.
 43. See Dan Diker, "President Bush and the Qods Force Controversy."
 44. According to a high-ranking IDF military official directly involved in the capture of the Karine A, in an interview with the author in Jerusalem, February 21, 2007. Also see testimony of former FBI counterterrorism analyst Matthew Levitt at a Joint Hearing of the Committee on International Relations, Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation, U.S. House of Representatives, February, 16, 2005, p. 9. Levitt testified, "Haj Bassem, Mughniyeh's deputy, personally commanded the ship that met the Karine A at the Iranian island of Kish and oversaw the ship-to-ship weapons transfer."
 45. "Iran Issues Mughniyeh Memorial Stamp," *Jerusalem Post*, March 10, 2008.
 46. "Iranian Assistance to Hizbullah," *MEMRI Special Dispatch Series*, no. 1220, July 31, 2006.
 47. Robin Wright, "Options for U.S. Limited as Mideast Crises Spread," *Washington Post*, July 13, 2006.
 48. Telephone interview with Dr. David Wurmser, former Middle East Affairs Advisor to Vice President Dick Cheney, on April 18, 2008. Wurmser also emphasized that, by spring 2006, several months before the conflict, officials in the vice president's office were warning other senior administration officials that Israel was headed toward conflict with Hizbullah and Hamas as part of Iran's proxy war against the United States, and suggested that the U.S. and Israel coordinate a response.
 49. Phone interview with David Schenker, former advisor on Syria and Lebanon to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, April 24, 2008. See also, Brig. Gen. (res.) Dr. Shimon Shapira, "Countdown to Conflict: Hizbullah's Military Buildup and the Need for Effective Disarmament," *Jerusalem Issue Brief*, vol. 6, no. 8, August 20, 2006.
 50. Senator Joseph Lieberman, "Iran's Proxy War," *Wall Street Journal*, July 6, 2007.
 51. Helene Cooper, "Iran Fighting Proxy War in Iraq, U.S. Envoy Says," *New York Times*, April 12, 2008.
 52. Robert Fisk, "Hizbullah Turns to Iran for New Weapons for War on Israel," *Independent* (UK), April 8, 2008.
 53. "20 Hizbullah Men Die in Iran Training," *Jerusalem Post*, April 10, 2008.
 54. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0414/p07s03-wome.htm>.
 55. Maj.-Gen. Yoav Galant, "The Strategic Challenge of Gaza," *Jerusalem Issue Brief*, vol. 6, no. 28, April 19, 2007. Galant noted that "Iranians also come to Gaza to inspect the situation and hold training exercises. The Iranians are using whatever they can in order to attack the West, and this is a major change in the situation in the region. Fatah's Al Aqsa Brigade is already an Iranian organization similar to Islamic Jihad. This has occurred because the Iranians understood that it was easy to connect with its members, even though they are Sunni and not radical (Shiite) Muslims. This is where money makes the difference. A few years ago, the Al Aqsa Brigade in Judea and Samaria (West Bank) was bought out by Iran and activated against Israel according to Iranian instructions.
 56. Unprecedented Iranian influence over Hamas has not resulted in "Shiification" of Hamas ideologically. Hamas is the Palestinian branch of the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood. However, Hamas is activated in many cases according to Iranian instructions and receives nearly all its budget, arms, training, and strategic support from Teheran. This explains why Hamas is today referred to as "an Iranian proxy" by Israeli defense and intelligence officials.
 57. "Hamas Chief Seeks Iran Support, Vows Resistance," *AFP/Daily Star* (Beirut), February 26, 2006.
 58. Minister of Internal Security Avi Dichter, "Components of Domestic Security in the Age of Global Jihadism," *Jerusalem Issue Brief*, vol. 7, no. 2, May 31, 2007.
 59. Hamas Chief Seeks Iran's Support, Vows Resistance," *AFP/Daily Star* (Beirut), February 26, 2006.
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 70. *Ibid.*, pp. 198-199.
 71. Lt.-Col. (res.) Jonathan Dahoah-Halevi, "Iran's Renewed Threats to Take Over the Gulf States," *Jerusalem Issue Brief*, vol. 7, no. 11, July 20, 2007, p. 2. The Iranian regime newspaper, *Kayhan*, whose editorial policy tracks the clerical leadership position, on July 15, 2007, attacked the rulers of the Gulf states who deny "the total Iranian sovereignty over parts of the recognized Iranian lands" and accused them of becoming spokesmen for the United States and its allies.
 72. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
 73. Robin Wright and Peter Baker, "Iraq, Jordan See Threat to Election from Iran."
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 75. *Ibid.*
 76. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, "Shiites Are Mostly Loyal to Iran Than to Their Own Countries," *MEMRI TV*, April 8 2006, <http://www.memritv.org/clip/en/0/0/0/0/303/1105.htm> Also see http://www.memritv.org/clip_transcript/en/1105.htm.
 77. "Kuwaiti Analyst: Best if Israel, Not U.S., Destroys Iranian Nukes," *Ha'aretz*, March 9, 2008.
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114. Darius Bazargan, "Iran: Politics, the Military and Gulf Security," *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, vol. 1, no. 3, September 1997.

115. Taheri, "Getting Serious About Iran."

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THE GLOBAL RANGE OF IRAN'S BALLISTIC MISSILE PROGRAM

Uzi Rubin

Behind a poster of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei reading: "Missile maneuver of the Great Prophet", Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards tests the long-range Shahab-3 missile, Nov. 2, 2006.

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 only thing the Iranians could use in response was a few Scud "B"s they had received from Libya, the only country that supported Iran.

Since the Gulf War, the Iranians have believed that the United States has replaced Iraq as their preeminent threat. The Iranian 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 the regime sees as an outpost of the United States.

Since the Gulf War, the Iranians have believed that the United States has replaced Iraq as their preeminent threat.

The Iranians are realists: They know victory in a set-piece battle against the United States is impossible. Instead, the regime hopes to deter the United States and its allies by threatening a war of attrition that will exact such a high price that the U.S. will choose not to fight in the first place. With this in mind, the regime is focusing its efforts not on the improvement of its substantial arsenal of conventional arms, but rather on new classes of weapons. Very shrewdly, Iran is 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 during the annual Army Day parade. The majority of the airplanes involved – F-5s, F-4s, and F-14s – 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 – were still flying 27 years later in the skies over Teheran. Looking at the Iranian ground forces, one can see a number of M113 armored personnel carriers, some M60 tanks, some Russian and Chinese tanks that were bought during the Iran-Iraq war – all of it, in sum, antiquated and evidence that Iran has undertaken no large-scale renovation of its conventional war machine.

What Armaments Does Iran Invest In?

What does Iran invest in? Precision-strike munitions, naval anti-ship weapons, ballistic missiles, space programs, and a nuclear weapons program. Iran invests extensively in anti-ship weapons, such as the Chinese C802 that hit the Israeli Navy ship "Hanit" during the 2006 war in Lebanon. Of more strategic significance is the 350-kilometer range Ra'ad ("Thunder") anti-ship missile. The purpose of this weapon is to control the Persian Gulf, which Iranian officials see as the corridor through which the United States would launch an invasion. In this regard, it is interesting to note the weapons Iran tested 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 anti-ship missile, which is very similar to a Chinese anti-ship missile; the Fajer 3 radar-evading missile (probably 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



Iranian missile drives past a photo of Iran's late leader Ayatollah Khomeini and a banner (right), reading: "Peaceful nuclear technology is an essential need of our country," in a ceremony to mark Army Day in Teheran, April 18, 2007.



to cause the maximum damage and casualties to any aggressor – in short, an arsenal designed for battles of attrition and defenses in depth.

The Iranians are engaged in the most intensive missile program in the Third World, with constantly increasing ranges.

This arsenal is displayed, exhibited, and paraded again and again with the intention of deterring the U.S. and at the same time infusing self-confidence in the Iranian public. Nothing contributes to 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 to central Europe.¹

The Zalzal-2 rocket, which features a 200-km range and carries a 500-600 kg warhead, is designed to attack troop concentrations staging for an invasion of Iran. Iran supplied a quantity of Zalzal rockets

to Hezbollah, which threatened to launch them at Tel Aviv during the 2006 Israel-Hizbullah war. This did not happen, probably due to the fact that the Israel Air Force succeeded in destroying the rockets in their depots deep inside Lebanon. Iran used the Zalzal to good psychological effect during its November 2006 military exercises, firing a salvo of six of the heavy rockets in front of television cameras, to the alarm of the Arab regimes across the Persian Gulf.

The main drawback of unguided rockets like the Zalzal is their inaccuracy. 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 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, Iran 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 inside 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 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 center of Saudi Arabia. Iran purchased a production line for these missiles in the early 1990s and is now manufacturing them rapidly. The missile was declared operational and



introduced into the service of the *Pasadaran* (the 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. In September 2007, a new variant of this missile, dubbed “Ghader 1,” was paraded in Teheran. There was no claim, however, of any range enhancement to this version.

This spectrum of Shahab and Ashura missiles allows Iran to project its power over the entire Middle East. The Shahab 3 can be launched at either Tel Aviv or Riyadh from the same launch point.

In what could be regarded as a quantum leap in technology and capability, Iran announced in November 2007 that it possessed a new multistage, solid propellant ballistic missile, the “Ashura” with a range of “more than 2000 km” as stated by Iran’s minister of defense. Various sources hint that the true range of this missile is 2,400 km, allowing it to attack Israel from sites deep in Iran’s eastern regions, or reach central Europe from western Iran. This spectrum of Shahab and Ashura missiles allows Iran to project its power over the entire Middle East. The Shahab 3 can be launched at 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 – allowing its missiles to be based in fixed, reinforced shelters that are significantly less vulnerable to attack than mobile launchers.

Iran’s strategic missiles are not controlled by the Iranian Army, but instead 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 constructing fixed silo-like hardened sites to make their missiles even more survivable.

There have been relatively few tests of the Shahab 3, although the rate of testing has accelerated recently – but there are indications that as many as one half of the rockets 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, though, that the Shahab 3 missiles are not operational. While Western militaries do not accept a new weapon for service until it achieves reliability in testing, the Iranians apparently think that if it worked once, it’s operational.

Somewhat mysteriously, Iran has managed to acquire from North Korea eighteen BM25 land-mobile missiles together with their launchers, which can 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, and 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 Iranians attempted to sell Scud “B”s to Zaire, and they signed a \$12 billion deal with Muammar Qaddafi to set up an entire missile industry in Libya – and were quite upset when Qaddafi abandoned his missile aspirations. Iran has also provided heavy rockets to Hizbullah: the Zalzal, the Fajer 3 with a range of 45 km, and the Fajer 5 with a 75-km range. A high-ranking Iranian official has declared that his country is ready to supply missiles to friendly nations. An unsubstantiated report from South America talks about the sale of Shahab missiles to Venezuela. In June 2006, an agreement of alliance was concluded with Syria by which Iran will refurbish Syria’s Scud missiles, provide Syria with Zalzal and Fatah 110 technology, and assume the financial burden for maintaining and enhancing Syria’s missile forces.

Somewhat mysteriously, Iran has managed to acquire from North Korea eighteen BM25 land-mobile missiles together with their launchers, which can strike targets in Europe.

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

Iran's army naval forces fire a ground-to-sea missile during a large maneuver in the Sea of Oman, near Jask, southern Iran, Aug. 26, 2006.



the U.S. Tomahawk. Recent reports indicate that an Iranian strategic cruise missile, patterned after the stolen Kh55, is now in development. Its reported range will be somewhat less than the 3,500 km range of the original, but not by much. The reported warhead weight will be 410 kg – close enough to a first generation nuclear warhead.

Iran's Space Program Could Extend Its Global Reach

Iran announced a space program in 1998, concurrent with the first test flight of its Shahab 3 ballistic missile. On February 4, 2008, Iran unveiled a fully integrated space program and infrastructure, including an indigenous satellite launch vehicle (SLV) dubbed "Safir,"² a small "entry ticket" satellite dubbed "Omid," and a launch complex replete with a large launch tower and various flight and ground systems associated with launching satellites into space. At the same time, Iran's minister of defense announced the major goals and timetables of the program: To orbit the Omid – Iran's "Sputnik" – by the spring or summer of 2008, and to be able to put into orbit high-resolution "earth resources" – that is, spy satellites – by 2015. Obviously, such satellites will require heftier SLVs than the "Safir," which is a hint that the Iranian plans contain an undisclosed, more capable SLV.

Anyone with a SLV can drop a bomb anywhere in the world. The "Safir" seems to be too light for anything but a token bomb. However, once Iran's more advanced SLV is completed, it could provide Iran with the capability of dropping a more sizable bomb, perhaps one outfitted with WMD, on any target it chooses. The Iranians might be clever enough not to actually develop a specific ICBM that

could reach America: It would be enough to orbit a satellite in a trajectory that traverses U.S. territory. Every time Iran's "Omid" will beep over the 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 the first "Sputnik" comes to mind

The Iranians might be clever enough not to actually develop a specific ICBM that could reach America: It would be enough to orbit a satellite in a trajectory that traverses U.S. territory.

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 to project power beyond Iran, over Europe, and to the United States. With its space program, Iran is bound to project power on a global scale.

Obviously, the Iranians are overstating their capabilities as part of the normal kind of psychological warfare in which regimes engage. But behind this overstatement is a real capability – not as much as is claimed, but not insignificant either. The Iranian capability is being improved by the investment of a great deal of money, and it is being developed over 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 should occupy its rightful place in decision-making in world affairs and in the allocation of the world's resources. Statements like that 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 views Iran as the spearhead of what he believes is an Islamic struggle against Western civilization. Other Iranians stress the historic greatness of Iran and its 6,000-year-old civilization. The Iranians are trying to retrieve the old glory of the Persian Empire and at the same time become a world power and the leaders of global 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.



Notes

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."
2. The Safir is a multi-stage satellite launcher that can throw a satellite into orbit, or a slightly heavier load into a shorter trajectory, that can hit a target on the other side of the world.



HAMAS: “GLOCAL” ISLAMISM

Dr. Martin Kramer

Supporters of Osama bin Laden hold his poster decorated with artificial flowers during an anti-U.S. rally, Sept. 23, 2001, in Karachi, Pakistan.

Since the 2006 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 dedicated 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 the failed Camp David negotiations 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 only we don special lenses 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 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.

Twenty-nine years after the Iranian revolution, we are still surprised when Islamists act in accord with their stated values.

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, 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 in which the





A poster found on a propaganda and indoctrination CD distributed by Hamas. The title reads: "Chechnya, Afghanistan, the Balkans, Kashmir, Palestine and Lebanon."



Palestinian national desire for independence is expressed – 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.

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.

Generally speaking, there is a structural tendency in our interpretation of Middle Eastern politics to downplay the salience of Islam. Twenty-nine 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 Islamic 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 Sheikh Ahmad Yassin and Abd al-Aziz Rantisi, two Palestinian Hamas leaders who were eliminated by Israel in targeted interceptions. 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.

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.

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 1988 Hamas Covenant 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.”

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 mentions 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 today, 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 Sheikh 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 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 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 to the cause. This is precisely the message that Hamas broadcasts to 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

This image taken from an undated video produced by al-Qaeda’s media arm, Al-Sahab, and made available on Sept. 7, 2007 by the SITE Institute, a Washington-based group that monitors terror messages, shows Osama bin Laden speaking in the first new video of the al-Qaeda leader in three years.





A masked Hamas militant stand guards as thousands of supporters gather as Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, not seen, delivers a speech during a rally in Gaza City, Dec. 15, 2006.

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 Palestinian 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 best be described as two branches of the same tree.

Several of al-Qaeda’s key members and leading commanders came out of the Muslim Brotherhood, the parent organization of Hamas.

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.



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.

Hamas has affinities and loyalties to groups and people outside of the Palestinian arena that seek to transform the existing world order from its very foundations.

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 westward. 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 arena that seek to transform the existing world order from its very foundations. 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.



THE HAMAS REGIME IN THE GAZA STRIP: AN IRANIAN SATELLITE THAT THREATENS REGIONAL STABILITY

Lt.-Col. (ret.) Jonathan D. Halevi

Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas (right), and Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh (left), speak as they head the first cabinet meeting of the new coalition government at Abbas' office in Gaza City, March 18, 2007.

Since its successful military takeover in June 2007, the Hamas government has managed to consolidate its control of the Gaza Strip. The opposition to Hamas in the Gaza Strip lacks any real power and does not constitute a plausible challenge to Hamas' regime. The Fatah party, the main rival to Hamas and the quasi-government that was expelled from Gaza in the military coup, has managed on a number of occasions to organize mass gatherings and demonstrations in Gaza, but these have been immediately suppressed, often violently, by Hamas security forces. Opposition to the Hamas regime has also been expressed in a number of attacks against persons, offices, and vehicles, but these were of no avail in undermining the Islamic rule of Hamas.¹

The Major Objective – A Takeover of the Palestinian Authority and Deposing Abu Mazen

The main near-term objectives of the Hamas movement focus on completing the takeover of the Palestinian Authority, obtaining international recognition as a legitimate political body, and enforcing a military balance of terror in its relations with Israel. The struggle to depose Abu Mazen (Mahmoud Abbas) on the West Bank is at this stage more important to Hamas than even the military battle against Israel, because such a victory would enable Hamas to achieve exclusivity in representing the Palestinian people – and would thwart any possibility for a diplomatic deal with Israel that bypassed Hamas.

On the declarative level, Hamas leaders reiterate their unconditional readiness to renew a national reconciliation dialogue with the Palestinian Authority. The Hamas movement agreed in principle to examine the March 2008 initiative of Yemen's president, Ali Abdullah Salah, to serve as a mediator for talks with the Palestinian

Authority. The Yemeni initiative included the following objectives: restoring the status quo ante that existed prior to the Hamas military coup; conducting early elections; renewing the national dialogue on the basis of the Cairo (2005) and Mecca (2007) meetings; establishing a national unity government; recognizing Palestinian legitimacy in all its components (i.e., the elected institutions); respecting the Palestinian Constitution; and rebuilding the Palestinian security forces on a national, rather than sectarian, basis.²

Despite Yemen's initiative, the Hamas leadership does not see a genuine basis for a renewed political partnership with Abu Mazen, and thus imposes impossible conditions on the Palestinian Authority: Hamas refuses to surrender its rule over the Gaza Strip and vigorously opposes holding early elections for the presidency and parliament as Abu Mazen proposes as a means for reconciling the differences between the parties.³ This double game has a number of objectives: on the one hand, it displays a pragmatic approach that is vital for obtaining support in the Arab world and is part of the struggle for Palestinian public opinion. On the other hand, it attempts to entice Abu Mazen into beginning a dialogue (that will go nowhere) in order to sow divisions between the PA and Israel and thus undermine the Annapolis diplomatic process.

The Hamas media strategy leaves no room for doubt regarding its true intentions. The Hamas leadership and its media – Internet, television, newspaper, and radio – incessantly attack the Palestinian Authority and its leaders, including Abu Mazen, and accuse them of betraying the Palestinian people, collaborating with the "enemy," persecuting and murdering Hamas members, and being willing to surrender Islamic holy places.⁴ These serious accusations are intended to strip the Abu Mazen regime of legitimacy in the eyes of the Palestinian public, arouse a popular uprising on the West Bank against the PA leadership, and pave the way for outlawing the Salam Fayyad government.





Hamas militant stand guards as thousands of supporters gather as Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, not seen, delivers a speech during a rally in Gaza City, Dec. 15, 2006.

Hamas is operating under the belief that eventually the West will be forced to reconcile itself to the reality of Hamas and its ability to foment regional instability that jeopardizes Western interests.

A good example of the Hamas *modus operandi* in this context is the case of Majid al-Barghouti, the Hamas activist who died in a PA prison. The official Hamas website publicized on February 26, 2008, the names of those responsible for torturing Barghouti and causing his death, and noted in a most emphatic fashion where they lived.⁵ The Hamas publication was intended both to embarrass the Palestinian Authority, and at the same time serve as a deterrent against those in the PA who would torture Hamas members by threatening them and their families with retribution.

In another official announcement, the Izadin al-Kassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, accused the General Intelligence apparatus and its chief, Tawfik Tirawi, of full responsibility for the “murder” of Barghouti, signifying that Tirawi’s penalty should be the same as that of any common murderer.⁶ Mukhalis Barzak, a Hamas activist primarily involved in the ideological sphere, went even further in an article published on the Izadin al-Kassam Brigades’ website. Barzak called Abu Mazen a “murderer” and justified exercising “divine justice” against him, relying on religious decrees that permit the killing of a Muslim who collaborates in a crime against another Muslim. Barzak also called for a volunteer to emerge from the Islamic public and carry out the “Justice of Allah” on Abu Mazen – i.e., assassinate him.⁷

The IDF action in the Gaza Strip of February 27–March 3, 2008 – Operation Hot Winter – was also exploited by Hamas to attack the Palestinian Authority. In an official announcement published on March 1, 2008, Hamas warned, in a clear allusion to the PA and the Fatah party, against what it referred to as “those who abandon *jihad* and resistance in their official orders and expect to resume their control over our people and its interests, as well as the agents who knifed the *jihad* fighters in the back.” As for the fate of those guilty of such crimes, the Hamas announcement was unequivocal: “the resistance will not take pity on them and the people will vomit them out from their midst and toss them into the garbage can of history.”⁸ The Hamas leader himself, Khaled Mashaal, accused Abu Mazen of a gross betrayal by saying that he “provided a cover for the genocide [against the Palestinian people] in the Gaza Strip wittingly or unwittingly.”⁹ Hamas’ Gaza leader, Ismail Haniyeh, also attacked Abu Mazen, saying on February 29, 2008, that the Palestinians are divided between a national group that defends the land and another group that sells out the land and expresses fealty to Israel and the United States.¹⁰

Winning International Legitimacy

The Hamas movement is attempting to imbue its brutal control over the Gaza Strip with international legitimacy via a show of military force, coupled with a readiness, albeit dishonest, to display political pragmatism within boundaries that do not deviate from its fundamental principles. Building up a military force is vital from the Hamas perspective not only for war against Israel and subduing internal opposition, but also to make it clear to the West that Hamas rule is stable and that Hamas is the dominant power in the Palestinian territories. Hamas is operating under the belief that eventually the West will be forced to reconcile itself to the reality of Hamas and its ability to foment regional instability that jeopardizes Western interests, and the absence of a Palestinian alternative. Hamas members are encouraged by Western and Israeli voices who recommend engaging the government of Ismail Haniyeh. For Hamas, these calls constitute proof that “the path of resistance” is succeeding and that Hamas will obtain international recognition without renouncing the armed struggle against Israel. Furthermore, as Hamas sees it, such recognition will severely weaken Abu Mazen’s rule.¹¹

Ahmed Yousuf, a top adviser to Ismail Haniyeh, is optimistic regarding the possibility of developing relations with Western countries. In an interview with the Hamas television station on February 24, 2008, Yousuf said that “the Europeans understand that



there is no other option but to engage the Hamas movement. In his opinion, "Europe is interested in freeing itself from the shackles imposed upon it by the United States because it does not want to tie itself to American policy." Yousuf added that there are contacts between European bodies and senior Hamas members, including Haniyeh, and that members of the European Parliament recently visited the Gaza Strip and were impressed by Hamas' ability to maintain law and order.¹² Mohammed Nazal, a member of the Political Bureau of Hamas, in an interview with *Quds Press* (February 22, 2008), congratulated the European Parliament for calling on Israel to lift its "siege" of the Gaza Strip and for calling for the opening of talks between the PA and the Hamas movement, terming this "an expression of the voice of reason and logic in the West."¹³

In order to project the right image in the West, Hamas is investing prodigious resources in the area of communications. It mounted a series of media campaigns emphasizing the human suffering caused by the siege on Gaza, the most prominent of which was the electricity blackout of the Gaza Strip in January 2008 following the publication of Israel's intention to cut back on the supply of electricity as a response to Hamas' rocket campaign. Hamas government ministries published data about the damages incurred due to the "siege," including the number of sick people who died presumably because they were unable to be transferred out of the Strip for treatment. It should be added that Hamas is deceiving the human rights organizations on this matter – organizations that, when it comes to Palestinian groups, frequently seem eager to be deceived – as there is nothing to prevent Hamas from sending patients for treatment abroad via Egypt, as the organization did when senior members of its military wing were wounded, or in the same manner that it dispatches thousands of fighters for military training abroad.

To wage the propaganda battle, "The Popular Committee for Struggle against the Siege" was established by parliament member Jamal al-Hudeiri in order to document and disseminate information about the repercussions of the economic siege and to organize demonstrations – with extensive media coverage – calling for a lifting of the siege and condemning Israel.¹⁴ Al-Hudeiri is a parliament member supported openly and directly by the Hamas movement, and for many years he served as chairman of the Islamic University in Gaza, which is controlled by Hamas and serves to advance Hamas' ideology. Al-Hudeiri's name came up in the past as a possible candidate agreeable to Hamas to head a unity government with Fatah.¹⁵

The Hamas movement is prepared for a temporary cease-fire with Israel, defined in Hamas terminology as a *tahdiya*, a period of quiet that is used in order to prepare for the next stage of the conflict with Israel.

Hamas' strategy vis-à-vis the human rights organizations is also achieving success. Amnesty International does not define Hamas as a "terror organization" and does not demand placing its leadership on trial for committing war crimes. On the contrary, the organization views Hamas as a legitimate governing body, despite Hamas' dedication to terrorism and genocide. A number of human rights organizations, including CARE UK, CAFOD, Christian Aid, Medecins du Monde UK, Oxfam, Save The Children International UK, and the Irish Trocaire, called upon the European Union and Israel, in a special report published on the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip in March 2008 to recognize Hamas rule as legitimate.¹⁶ Additional human rights organizations convey a similar approach, including the Israeli B'tselem organization.

Hamas adeptly exploits such statements from human rights organizations for its propaganda purposes and in order to whitewash the fact that it remains a terror organization with no regard whatsoever for Western human rights, and which strives for the violent conquest of all of Israel. Surreally, Hamas, which is responsible for hundreds of terrorism murders of Israeli citizens, turned to human rights organizations for relief from Israeli retaliatory attack after the launching of rockets against Israeli civilians. In an announcement to the press on March 3, 2008, a Hamas spokesperson denounced the delayed response by human rights organizations to the Israeli military action. He emphasized that human rights groups have an obligation to condemn "Zionist war crimes" and warned that if they refrained they would be complicit in "these crimes."¹⁷

The Gaza Strip: An Iranian Satellite and a Stronghold of Islamic Terror Organizations

Hamas is basing its strategy against Israel on a war of attrition and a continuous attempt to recruit the Arab masses to its cause, in order to alter the balance of power. The Gaza Strip under Hamas rule



A group called "Jaysh al-Ummah" - Army of the Nation, Jerusalem - is yet another global jihad offshoot in the Gaza Strip. Since the Hamas takeover of the Gaza Strip, there has been an increase in the propaganda and terrorist activities carried out by radical Islamic groups associated with al-Qaeda and the global jihad. In this picture: some of the group's masked, armed, and uniformed operatives at a press conference in Khan Yunis.

has thus become a flourishing refuge for Islamist terror organizations who view Western Christianity as the primary enemy of Islam in the twenty-first century and the struggle against Israel as part of the larger battle for establishing an Islamic caliphate that will pursue the decisive battle against Christianity. Under the protection of the Hamas government, various terror organizations enjoy a free hand to pursue terror attacks against Israel and launch missiles at Israeli communities. The Hamas government has reiterated that the armed struggle against Israel is legitimate and that no measures will therefore be taken against those who participate in that fight.¹⁸

Last year, organizations identified with al-Qaeda, including the Army of Islam, the Army of the *Umma*, and Fatah al-Islam, have joined the bevy of mostly Iranian-backed terror organizations that are operating in the Gaza Strip (Islamic Jihad, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Popular Resistance Committees, the Al-Aqsa Brigades, etc.). Ahmed Abed al-Rahman, Abu Mazen's close adviser and spokesman for the Fatah movement, accused the Hamas government on December 26, 2006, of giving a permit to the "Fatah al-Islam" organization to consolidate itself in the Gaza Strip.¹⁹ Abu Mazen reiterated in an interview with the newspaper *al-Hayat* (February, 26 2008) that al-Qaeda continues to expand its organizational infrastructure in the Gaza Strip in collaboration with Hamas." He said, "I believe that al-Qaeda is present in the Palestinian territories of Gaza. It is the Hamas movement that brought al-Qaeda in and it abets the entry and exit [of militants] with familiar measures....I believe that they [Hamas and al-Qaeda] are allies."²⁰

Hamas has denied these claims,²¹ denials which have become routine in the wake of such reports. This was Hamas' behavior after the General Security

Service arrested a Hamas militant from Jebalia who was recruited to al-Qaeda in August 2000, and after the publication of announcements and videos documenting the activity of al-Qaeda offshoots in the Gaza Strip – the Army of Islam and the Islamic *Umma*. Hamas has attempted to minimize the significance of al-Qaeda's presence in the Gaza Strip even after senior members of the Army of Islam openly admitted to receiving directives and funds from senior members of al-Qaeda.²²

The Muslim Brotherhood movement expresses open support for jihad, in all its forms and expressions, as waged by Hamas and other terror organizations in all the theaters of combat against the "contemporary crusaders" in places such as Iraq and Afghanistan.

Fatah al-Islam does not conceal its activity in the Gaza Strip. The organization published in November 2007 an official announcement in which it heralded the transfer of its activity from Lebanon to the area of Palestine, "near the Al-Aqsa Mosque" by its definition, after it had been defeated by the Lebanese army in the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp. The organization turned to the other Palestinian organizations and summoned them to collaborate in a *jihad* against Israel in order to accomplish the "slaughter of the Jews" by the "cutting sword of *jihad*." Video clips published by the organization show the launch of two rockets toward Sderot on November 25, 2007, and one rocket launch on December 23rd.²³ The Army of Islam continues to publish announcements claiming responsibility for launching missiles at Israel on websites identified with al-Qaeda.²⁴

The further the Hamas government consolidates its rule, the more Gaza acquires the character of a refuge for terror organizations and operatives the world over. A senior member of the Muslim Brotherhood conceded that the organization recently transferred some \$90 million to Hamas that was primarily earmarked to fund terror actions against Israel.²⁵



The *Tahdiya* and the War of Attrition

The Hamas movement is prepared for a temporary cease-fire with Israel, defined in Hamas terminology as a *tahdiya*, a period of quiet that is used in order to prepare for the next stage of the conflict with Israel. Mashaal's deputy in the Hamas leadership, Mousa abu-Marzouk (along with other senior members), presented in an interview on the Hamas website on March 8, 2008, the fundamentals of the *tahdiya* according to Hamas: the *tahdiya* must be general, mutual, and simultaneous, as Hamas will not agree to stop its "resistance" while Israel at the same time continues what Hamas defines as "terror activities" in the West Bank and Gaza. In short, Hamas will not grant a *tahdiya* gratis; rather, Israel will have to pay for it.²⁶

Hamas, therefore, is not prepared for a Gaza-only cease-fire. The price that it is attempting to exact from Israel is exorbitant, and is intended to achieve a halt in Israeli security operations in Gaza, the West Bank, and Jerusalem. In other words, Hamas demands a stoppage of essentially all Israeli security activities in the Palestinian territories, including the cessation of terror arrests, a cessation in the construction of the separation fence, and other measures.

From the Hamas perspective, a violation of these essential conditions, including the destruction of illegally built Palestinian houses, constitutes a substantive violation of the temporary cease-fire and legitimizes Palestinian retaliation. In practice, Hamas is trying to change the balance of power. Hamas proceeds under the assumption that Israel has no military option in Gaza and that continuing terror can break the spirit of Israeli society and compel Israel in the final result to agree to a *tahdiya* on Hamas' terms.

As mentioned, the Hamas war of attrition and the *tahdiya* are necessary stages in the strategy to weaken Israel economically, politically, and in morale. The buildup process is predicated on continued weapons smuggling from Egypt and the dispatch of Hamas operatives for military training in Iran and Syria. In an interview with the *Sunday Times* (UK), a senior Hamas figure related that, since Israel's disengagement from Gaza in August 2005, hundreds of fighters have been sent to Iran for military training, including 210 fighters trained by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, 150 more who were trained for up to six months, and 650 additional fighters who were sent to Syria. He further divulged that the military wing of Hamas, numbering 15,000 fighters, was building itself on the Hizbullah model and was receiving intelligence and guidance from Iran and Hizbullah.²⁷

Hamas and the Moderate Arab Regimes

The Hamas movement, aware of the limits of its military strength and of adversarial geopolitical conditions, is actively aspiring to change the equation of forces by dragging Arab countries into the fight against Israel and by creating a tangible threat to Western and American interests that will weaken Western support for Israel. The "Arab street" is the detonator at which Hamas is targeting its efforts. Time after time, in every round of conflict with Israel, and on other crises that Hamas foments (such as false accusations that Israel intends to destroy the Al Aqsa mosque), Hamas turns directly to the Muslim masses and summons them to rise up and rebel against the authorities, engage in mass demonstrations in support of the Palestinians, and compel the Arab regimes to alter their policy.

Statements of willingness to pursue a political partnership with Fatah are conceived by Hamas as tools for completing the overthrow of the Palestinian Authority.

During the IDF offensive in the Gaza Strip, on March 1, 2008, Khaled Mashaal called upon the masses in the Arab and Muslim world to "go out and stage protest demonstrations and pressure the rulers to act against Israel." Mashaal explained that the balance of forces would change in favor of the "Palestinian resistance" if the masses in the Arab world would galvanize against their rulers. Mashaal addressed the Israeli people with the following message: "you are living in a given historic moment when you are exploiting American support and Arab weakness. But this will not continue for a long time. The umbilical cord between yourselves and the United States won't last forever and the Arab weakness will not exist interminably as well."²⁸

Mashaal's concept dovetails with the program of the Muslim Brotherhood, the progenitor of Hamas, whose leaders continuously summon Muslims in the Arab and Islamic world to follow the path of resistance and *jihad*, and disregard the position of their governments until it is possible to realize the vision of the Islamic caliphate that will unify all the Muslim countries under one rule. The Muslim Brotherhood movement expresses open support for *jihad*, in all its forms and expressions, as waged by Hamas and other terror organizations in all the theaters of combat against the "contemporary



crusaders” in places such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Together with the calls to Muslim communities throughout the world to aid the *jihad* in every way possible, the Brotherhood sets its own example by organizing rallies to raise money for Hamas.²⁹

The Major Lessons

The major lessons that can be derived from this assessment are as follows:

The question of who represents the Palestinian people has produced a frontal and fateful clash between the representatives of the Palestinian national movement, headed by Fatah, and the Islamist forces, headed by Hamas and deriving inspiration and support from the Muslim Brotherhood and Iran. Not only will Hamas not agree to forgo its rule over Gaza, it views Gaza as a base for exporting its Islamic revolution to the West Bank. Furthermore, statements of willingness to pursue a political partnership with Fatah are conceived by Hamas as tools for completing the overthrow of the Palestinian Authority.

Contending with the threats posed by the Hamas regime is not only a local matter contained within the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Hamas and its sponsors pose a severe threat to Western interests in the Middle East: they are systematically seeking to overthrow the Palestinian Authority of Abu Mazen in order to thwart any possibility of a diplomatic process, and wish to undermine the stability of moderate Arab regimes.

The Hamas government has become one of the long tentacles of Iran, similar in kind, if not in degree, to Hizbullah.

The Hamas government has become one of the long tentacles of Iran, similar in kind, if not in degree, to Hizbullah. With active support from Iran, Syria, and Hizbullah, the Gaza Strip has become home to an amalgam of terror organizations. Hamas is in the midst of a military buildup that seeks to create a balance of terror with Israel primarily in the form of medium-range missiles of great destructive power. For the past four years, King Abdullah II of Jordan has constantly warned against the growing regional influence of Iran, its takeover of the Palestinian agenda, and its threats to regional stability and the peace process.

Hamas is playing a double game: It is attempting to portray itself as a responsible regime capable

of representing the Palestinian people and as the only group capable of delivering peace, while simultaneously persisting in terrorism. In order to contend with international pressure, it is attempting to create a false separation to credulous Western audiences – journalists, Europeans, and “human rights” organizations – between the political and military wings of Hamas.

Hamas is interested in forcing Israel to accept its terms for a general *tahdiya* because it would constitute a de facto recognition of its authority in the Gaza Strip and could constitute a severe blow to Abu Mazen. Such a measure could accelerate the empowerment of Hamas in the West Bank to the point that it could challenge the rule of the Palestinian Authority and attempt to overthrow it, similar to its successful coup in the Gaza Strip.

Israel’s vacillations, and the possibility of its abandonment of a military option, may work to afford Hamas time to consolidate its rule in Gaza and prepare for the next round of conflict, which, of course, would commence at a time and in a manner of Hamas’ choosing. It will then operate under better conditions and enjoy the capability of inflicting more severe damage on Israel.





Notes

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About the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs

Websites: English: www.jcpa.org | Hebrew: www.jcpa.org.il

The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs is a leading independent research institute specializing in public diplomacy and foreign policy. Founded in 1976, the Center has produced hundreds of studies and initiatives by leading experts on a wide range of strategic topics. Dr. Dore Gold, Israel's former ambassador to the UN, has headed the Jerusalem Center since 2000.

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Iran and the New Threats to the West – Preparation of a legal document jointly with leading Israeli and international scholars and public personalities on the initiation of legal proceedings against Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad for incitement to commit genocide and participate in genocide. This program also features major policy studies by security and academic experts on Iran's use of terror proxies and allies in the regime's war against the West and its race for regional supremacy.

Defensible Borders Initiative – A major security and public diplomacy initiative that analyzes current terror threats and Israel's corresponding territorial requirements, particularly in the strategically vital West Bank, that Israel must maintain to fulfill its existential security and defense needs.

Global Terrorism – Using previously unpublished documents, Jerusalem Center President Dore Gold explored the influence of Saudi Wahhabism on 9/11 in the *New York Times* bestseller *Hatred's Kingdom: How Saudi Arabia Supports the New Global Terrorism* (Regnery, 2003).

Institute for Contemporary Affairs (ICA) – A diplomacy program, founded in 2002 jointly with the Wechsler Family Foundation, that presents Israel's case on current issues through high level briefings by government and military leaders to the foreign diplomatic corps and foreign press, as well as production and dissemination of information materials. The program's Arabic language website provides information and articles on Israel and the region for Arabic speakers living in and out of the Middle East (www.infoelarab.org).

International Law Forum – A ground-breaking program directed by international law professor Abraham Bell that undertakes studies and advances policy initiatives to protect Israel's legal rights in its conflict with the Palestinians, the Arab world, and radical Islam.

Anti-Semitism After the Holocaust – Initiated and directed by Dr. Manfred Gerstenfeld, this program includes conferences, seminars, and publications discussing restitution, the academic boycott, Holocaust denial, and anti-Semitism in the Arab world, European countries, and the post-Soviet states.

Jerusalem in International Diplomacy – Dr. Dore Gold analyzes the legal and historic rights of Israel in Jerusalem and exposes the dangers of compromise that will unleash a new *jihadi* momentum in his book *The Fight for Jerusalem: Radical Islam, the West, and the Future of the Holy City* (Regnery, 2007). Justus Reid Weiner looks at *Illegal Construction in Jerusalem: A Variation on an Alarming Global Phenomenon* (2003). Prominent journalist Nadav Shragai assesses the imminent security threats to Israel's capital resulting from its potential division, and offers alternative strategies for managing Jerusalem's demographic challenge in his monograph *The Dangers of Dividing Jerusalem* (2008).

New Models for Economic Growth in Israel – This comprehensive, 10-year project has studied the application and impact of privatization policy and other financial innovations in Israel. Sponsored by the Milken Institute, the project includes nine published volumes in Hebrew and English.

Jerusalem Center Serial Publications:

Jerusalem Viewpoints – providing in-depth analysis on changing events in Israel and the Middle East since 1977.

Jerusalem Issue Briefs – insider briefings by top-level Israeli government officials, military experts, and academics, as part of the Center's Institute for Contemporary Affairs.

Daily Alert – a daily digest of hyperlinked news and commentary on Israel and the Middle East from the world and Hebrew press.

G-Alert – a weekly roundup in Hebrew of news and commentary from the world press on the Internet.

Post-Holocaust and Anti-Semitism – a monthly publication examining anti-Semitism after the Holocaust.

Jewish Political Studies Review – a scholarly journal founded in 1989.

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