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(*Editors*)

# The Dynamics of Sunni-Shia Relationships

*Doctrine, Transnationalism, Intellectuals and the Media*

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# Introduction

## Evaluating Contemporary Sunnite-Shiite Relations: Changing Identities, Political Projects, Interactions and Theological Discussions

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Prior to the first months of 2011, it was not the optimism and enthusiasm of the Arab Spring, but sectarian rivalry between Sunnis and Shiites that informed most political science accounts on the Middle East. The growing tensions and sometimes violent clashes between believers of the two main trends of Islam were the major points of attention for political commentators as well as academics. A number of facts accounted for this heightened attention: a series of upheavals within the Shiite sphere of influence had altered the relationship between Shiism and Sunnism over the course of several decades, and Shiism was perceived as progressively showing its propensity towards a higher level of historicity (i.e. its capacity to re-appropriate its destiny and demonstrate change).[1] The Iranian Revolution of 1979 changed the politics of Iranian Shiism, and subsequently impacted on Shiite communities throughout the region; the 2003 Anglo-American invasion of Iraq initiated a new phase of tension in the relations between the two trends and Shiites were suddenly gaining political power that had traditionally been held by the Sunnis. It also became more and more obvious that it was a specific form of Sunnism, namely Salafism, which was primarily responsible for anti-Shiite ideas and actions. The spectre of a sectarian war in Iraq,

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# The Shiite Peril in Palestine

## Between Phobias and Propaganda

*Jean-François Legrain*

Denunciations of a "Shiite threat" in Palestine have multiplied in the last three or four years, even if almost 99 per cent of the population in the Occupied Territories is Sunnite, and the remaining 1 per cent is Christian. These denunciations have been made by individuals, organizations and states empowered by various motivations but united in the same hostility towards Hamas and the Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine (IJMP), on the one hand, and the Lebanese Hizbullah, Syria and Iran, on the other.

In this chapter, I will first of all establish an inventory of the phobias and propaganda developed around the so-called "Shiitization" of Palestine as the cement of an "axis" of destabilization. Even if these phobias are usually religious and the propaganda political in nature, both tend to excel in mutual instrumentalization. I will then show that these types of discourse, beyond their superficial differences, centre on a common "conspiracy theory" (i.e. Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hizbullah, Syria and Iran are thought to form one ensemble, with every element being, *in fine*, enslaved to the interests of Iran alone, the "enemy" of peace and stability in the Greater Middle East). After exploring the relations maintained by these organizations and states between themselves from a diachronic and synchronic perspective, I shall then show

that the discourse about the Shiite threat in Palestine is a simplistic approach that is subservient to immediate political interests. I shall therefore question three main aspects of the "threat": the "spread" of the Shiite faith, the "fascination" with revolutionary Iran and the "uniqueness" of the Iranian, Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian projects. Given the scope of this chapter, I will take up this question from the standpoint of Palestine.

## An inventory of phobias and propaganda

Hamas and Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, Syria and Iran, apart from their official professions of faith in mutual cooperation in defending Palestinian rights, observe a semi-silence as to concretely implementing this cooperation in their political, ideological, organizational and operational relations. Even academic studies only rarely dwell on the question. The field of investigation has thus become monopolized by an inflated discourse expounded by actors and observers that are fundamentally hostile to these policies, which are labelled "Shiite" and are denounced as threatening. For convenience but provisionally, I shall differentiate here discourses related to a phobia of Shiism cultivated in Sunnite environments, which we could qualify as religious and as classic, from speeches that are only the tool of a political mobilization. But we will quickly realize that religious phobias and political propaganda are mutually instrumentalized.

## Religious phobias

The approach whereby Shiism is viewed in terms of a conspiracy to which the Jews are linked is not new in the Sunnite world. Ancient religious traditions had made Shiism the fruit of a Jewish conspiracy led by 'Abd Allâh Ibn Sabâ', a converted Yemeni native, when the Quran had developed the topic of the conspiracy led by the Jews against the Prophet and Islam itself. As a contemporary witness of this approach, a literary work called the "Protocols of the Ayatollahs of Qom", inspired by "The Protocols of the Elders of Sion", appeared during the 1990s.[1] Spread by Salafist circles, these pamphlets are used to disseminate the idea of the supposed conspiracy cooked up by the highest Iranian authorities to internationalize the Islamic revolution and reunify Islam by abolishing the Sunna.

As part of this approach, Salafists as well as Palestinian and international circles have made the question of the "Shiitization of Palestine" one of their

preferred themes in recent years. The terms most currently used are: *tashyi'* and *tashayyu'* (chiification in French, Shiitization or Shiafication in English), terms a priori lacking pejorative connotations, but which are employed in descriptions openly hostile to Shiism. Expressions like *al-taghalghul al-shi'i* (the Shiite penetration), *al-ghazû al-shi'i* (the Shiite razzia) or, further, *al-tabshir al-shi'i* (the Shiite evangelization) are also used, as well as *al-mashrû' al-safavi* (the Safavid project), which refers to the dynasty that had forcibly imposed Twelver Shiism on Iran, which had previously been Sunnite, in the early sixteenth century. Palestinians' individual conversions, which are celebrated by Shiites as *mustabsirûn* (those who came to light), are viewed by Sunnis as being part of a worldwide Shiite policy of moral corruption.

Two internet sites are specifically designed to broadcast Salafist speeches on the ill-effects of Shiitization in Palestine. Created in 2006, "*al-Haqiqa*" ("the Truth-Reality")[2] emanates from an unknown "Committee for the defence of Sunnite beliefs—Palestine", the declared mission of which is to bring to light the reality of threats that Shiites and other members of mislaid sects (Baha'is, Druses, Ahbash, etc.) constitute for Palestine in particular and, beyond this, for Sunnite Islam in general. Less Palestinian-centred but as Salafist as the latter, the "*al-Râsid*" website ("the Observer")[3] was inaugurated in 2003. In both cases, no information is given about the real identity of those responsible for the site, or their national and geographical origins. The most prolific author on the Shiite question, who is abundantly cited and reproduced by these sites as well as others, is Usâma Chahâda, a Jordanian national. He presides over a "Committee of the good word" and his writings are available on his blog.[4]

Diatribes against the Shiite articles of faith are broadcast on these sites and Shiites are designated as *rawâfid* (Rafidites) (i.e. those who reject the legitimacy of the first three caliphs called "the well directed" in Sunnite milieus), and sometimes also as *kuffâr* (infidels). But most often, the arguments proposed by these sites are eminently political and are intended for the here and now. Likened to Jews and Christians, Shiites thus become allies of Zionism and the United States. Islamic Jihad and Hamas, as a result of their links with Hizbullah and Iran, are in turn reduced to mere vectors of Iranian strategy for the expansion of Shiism.

On the ground, the Army of Islam (*Jaysh al-Islâm*) is one of the jihadist groups of the Gaza Strip that periodically denounces the process of Shiitization, which has benefitted from the toleration of the Palestinian Authority

controlled by Hamas. On the basis that "the Shia are more dangerous than the Jews and Christians", its communiqué, published on 12 June 2008, for example, claims that: "Shia Islam has invaded the Gaza Strip through foundations, organizations, societies, and parties, whose members are estimated to number thousands and are assuming the highest levels of the decision-making process. Some people among us are working to establish the throne of Satan in Palestine".[5] This topic is developed in a directly political mode by one of its spokesman, Sheikh Ibn Hârith al-Ansarî: "The problem of the Shiite plot is that it follows a 'long breath' strategy and uses public sympathy and the heart of the nation, Palestine, as it is no secret to anyone. [...] We should not ignore the role of Syria and Hezbollah in supporting, hosting, and training the sons of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad movements in the training camps, let alone the financial support which stems from a Shiite plot to export the doctrine [...]".[6]

Abû Hamza al-Maqdisî, in the name of the Islamic Front for the Liberation of the Palestinian soil-Army of Muhammad (al-Jabha al-Islâmiyya li-Tahrîr Ard Filastîn—Jaych Muhammad), goes further and qualifies Hamas as "a Shia Iranian movement" in a declaration published on 31 May 2008.[7]

Political propaganda

The discourse on the Shiite peril has also been developed by state actors. In this case, the "pro-western" camp, under the terms of an alliance more or less openly declared as "Sunnite", is mobilized against the anti-American camp, denounced as "Shiite": the Palestinian Authority of Ramallah, Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, to cite only those on the Arab side of the Near East, without forgetting Israel, periodically promote this discourse.

King Abdallah II of Jordan's declaration in December 2004 is usually considered to be the first manifestation of this contemporary political version of anti-Shiite discourse.[8] In the context of the first post-Saddam Iraqi elections, the Hashemite sovereign warned his American allies of the risks linked to "the emergence of a new Shiite crescent". Ranging from Bahrain to Iran and Lebanon, this so-called crescent encompasses Alawite Syria, and Iraq, the latter of which faces a threat from the Shiite majority of its population, and from that of its millions of co-citizens who, fleeing violence, have found refuge in the region's—Sunnite—countries. The resurgence in popularity obtained by the Lebanese Hizbullah on the occasion of its semi-victory against Israel during the summer of 2006 has only increased the fears of the pro-occidental camp, without forgetting the defence accord signed in

June 2006 between Syria and Iran in the context of the Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinejad's declared nuclear ambitions.

For its part, Palestine has been included in this crescent since the Hamas victory in the legislative elections of January 2006. The Shiite "threat" supposedly posed by Hamas was confirmed and augmented during summer 2007 when security forces affiliated to the Ministry of the Interior and the Ezzedin al-Qassam Brigades of Hamas anticipated a putsch fomented by security forces linked to the presidency and to Fatah under American supervision, which Hamas used to gain exclusive control of the Gaza Strip.[9]

In all discourses, Iran is considered to be the power that gives the orders: the Syrian government and Hizbullah are pure proxies of Iran whereas Hamas, which is at a lower echelon on the hierarchical ladder, constitutes an instrument armed by the Islamic Republic on the south side of Israel. The threat is sometimes qualified as "Shiite", sometimes as "Iranian", and often as both. The proponents of this discourse quite frequently use the term "axis" to indicate that these different, threatening Shiite actors are linked together. Such usage, of course, is not innocent even if the clear reference to the axis powers of the Second World War remains largely unmentioned. The notion of the "axis of evil" used by President George W. Bush adds an additional connotation to the language used by those who are anti-Shiite.

Lacking the space to assess each of these discourses in detail, I will merely cite here Mark Langfan, a strategist based in the United States. His "Iran: the fourth Reichastan", a four page text, has the advantage of expressing in a few words, and without any linguistic precaution, the theses underlying most talk on the Iranian threat to the Near East: "The grim reality is that the Hamas/Hezbollah Israel War and the Iranian backed component of the Iraqi insurgency are two sides of the same coin that has its fount the growing Iranian Fourth Reichastan Axis against America and the World". "Iran is in fact using Syria, as Germany used Italy, to facilitate its early strategic moves in the 'Thirties' so that in the 'Forties' Iran will come to rule. In short, the seemingly disparate elements of the emerging Fourth Reichastan supply each other as an axis, defend each other as an axis, and fight for each other as an integrated axis".[10]

Religion and politics in mutual instrumentalizations

The distinction previously made in this chapter between phobias and propaganda would be nonsensical should we consider that the religious

person takes his discourse to heart, whereas the politician maintains a critical distance from it, the very condition of controlled manipulation. But the reality is more complex and recent examples, in dealing with the Palestinian case, show that politicians and people who are religious are capable of using one another, depending on the context.

In Palestine, the violent mobilizations that occurred in 2006–2007 between supporters of Fatah and those of Hamas made use of religion in its most dangerous aspects.[11] Therefore, they brought to light an erosion of the feeling of membership of the same community, and contempt for the requirements of citizenship, as proclamations of "*takfir*" were declared. The implication of this is that one has to take his distance (to make "*hijra*") from the impious society by forming alternative pious societies. It could also imply, as is the case in Palestine, that impious persons should be physically eliminated. Such an instrumentalization of religion has not come from Hamas, a so-called "fundamentalist" organization, but from Fatah, the "secular" movement. In fact, the idea first emerged among those close to Muhammad Dahlân. The former chief of the preventive security forces in Gaza and former vice-minister of the interior, and a spearhead in refusing to let Hamas exercise the popular mandate it had won, General Dahlân was elected as a member of the Fatah Central Council in August 2009. Since 2005 he is also, and above all, the prime interlocutor of General Keith Dayton, US Security Coordinator for Israel and the Palestinian Authority and the real decision-maker for security policy in Ramallah. In January 2007, for example, Hamas was jeered with cries of "Shiites, Shiites" during a demonstration of mass support for Muhammad Dahlân held in Gaza. In May of the same year, an individual calling himself Sheikh Shakir al-Hayran published a fatwa[12] and a series of writings on an internet site linked to Muhammad Dahlân. These texts have been reproduced on various official Fatah sites and forums (which also distribute most of the Salafist material about the Shiitization of Palestine), as well as on the official site of the National Security Forces. Using the language of Islamic jurisprudence, the sheikh sought to deprive Hamas of its identity as a Sunnite Muslim movement, thus offering Fatah-linked security forces full religious latitude in physically eliminating their adversaries: "Hamas and the Jews are two sides of the same coin, collaborationist troops set on furthering Shiite regional interests, whose goal is the Authority's annihilation and destroying the [Palestinian] people in starving it and bringing it to its knees by force [...]". Most observers have identified the mysterious sheikh as being Mahmûd

al-Habbâsh, the minister of religious endowments of the Fayyad cabinet in 2009–2010, having deserted Hamas in the mid-1990s.

In 2009, information from Gaza indicated the possibility that certain Salafist-jihadist groups, with a message close to al-Qaida's and profoundly hostile to Hamas, have been manipulated by Fatah,[13] but clear evidence of this has yet to be provided. In any case, the movement's official forum[14] regularly posts communiqués of the World Islamic Media Front (the media front of al-Qaida) when attacking Hamas. In Ramallah, the minister of social affairs, and the presumed author of the 2007 fatwa, is entrusted by the presidency with a mission of good offices among the Salafists. As he was acting as a go-between, on 29 April 2009 President Mahmûd 'Abbâs received a delegation composed of the principal West Bank Salafist organizations. The Palestinian president did not fail to underline that during his long exile in Syria he had established close links with Imam Al-Albânî, the Salafist reference par excellence, even adding that he felt close to his ideas.

The Israeli government has also contributed to the denunciation of the "Shiite crescent" due to its central position in the pro-American apparatus in the region but also and more specifically due to its own narrow interests. In the 1990s it viewed Iraq as the most important threat to its existence, and Israel participated in building up the myth that Iraq was a worldwide threat. After the fall of the Baathist regime in Iraq, this role has been replaced by Iran. It is no coincidence that the reference literature on the "axis of destabilization" often originates directly or indirectly from the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) of Herzliya,[15] which "aims to train the future leaders of the State of Israel", and that the factual material for this discourse comes from the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, which is linked to the Israeli army.[16]

Amazingly, during the 2009 edition of IDC's annual conference on security (which is becoming the international reference point in strategic discussions on the Middle East), the contribution of Shmuel Bar,[17] Rachel Machtiger and Shmulik Bachar, "When Green Meets Black: Relations Between A Shiite boss And Its Sunni Protégé Organizations" was nothing else than a patchwork of Salafist texts translated from *al-Haqîqa* and *al-Râsid* (cf. *supra*) that were reproduced without any critical distance. For his part, just after the war against Lebanon and Hizbullah in 2006, Yossi Alpher,[18] the former head of the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies in Tel-Aviv and a counsellor of Prime Minister Ehud Barak, asked: "Could Israel Make Common Cause With Sunni Arabs?" and underlined the idea that

"the threat posed to Israel by Iran, its proxy Hezbollah and its ally Syria was also recognized as a threat by the Sunni Arab heartland [...] Israel and the major Sunni Arab states—Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the Gulf emirates—now appeared to share an enemy".

Attempts to characterize both threat and political projects in the region in sectarian or confessional terms are not new in Israeli circles.[19] Today, such projects of redrawing the boundaries in the Middle East, which reflect ethnic affinities and religious communalism, have been espoused and updated by American neoconservative circles.[20] The feeling of "threat", therefore, might be nothing more than the negative print of these plans.

### The "conspiracy" put to the test by history

A number of the elements that make up this "conspiracy theory" do not stand up to an examination of the facts. Actually, the relations Hamas and the Islamic Jihad maintain with Hizbullah, Syria and Iran are far from the simplistic essentialism that characterizes the discourse on the dangers posed by Shiism. Indeed, these relations appear eminently more complex to the historian, and are in constant realignment depending on the periods and cases involved.

### Spreading the Shiite faith

As a historian, I shall limit myself to questioning representations of the so-called "threat" and shall not venture into the domain of theology. In the context of the competition between Sunnis and Shiites, conversions to Shiism are addressed in a twofold way: that of the Shiites who put forward their capacities to persuade people to join their creed, and that of the Sunnis who point the finger at the "danger" these conversions represent. From a Shiite point of view, this question is often approached by websites that are dedicated to preaching.

The Center of Belief Researches[21] based in Qom (Iran) and in Najaf (Iraq), for instance, dedicates an important part of its efforts to the expansion of the Shiite creed, but it is particularly interested in conversions. Claiming that the centre has identified 8,000 converts in eighty-four countries, the section of its website dedicated to the biographies of the converts has, however, only 222 entries among which only three are Palestinians. Based in the holy city of Karbala (Iraq) and linked to Imam al-Shirazi, the

"Fourteen Massoum Humanitarian Foundation" has similar interests[22] and its site lists 154 converts for the contemporary period and the nineteenth century, of which five are Palestinians. *Al-Haqîqa* and *al-Râsid* continue to be used as Sunnite references on the websites.

For the Shiites as for the Sunnis, individual cases of conversion are treated as though they represent a mass trend, but it is very difficult to disentangle realities from phantasms. Extensive use of the net by Islamist and Islamic circles has intensified the internationalization of discourses and practices, in many cases fed by sources entrenched behind the anonymity of the internet. Initiatives which, in other times, would remain individual or local, thus instantaneously become world events. In the Palestinian case, for example, conversions to Shiism are denounced by Salafists as a mass phenomenon. Yet consultation of Sunnite websites celebrating the conversions and Shiite websites worried about this question, reveal merely fifteen to twenty cases of conversion (a number of them being refugees in Syria and Lebanon). Moreover, if the alleged conversion is proven for some, it is much more dubious for others as, for instance, that of the founder of IJMP Fathî Shqâqî.[23]

Once again, political interference appears. The campaign led in August 2007 on "The Iranian trials of expansion of Shiite confession in Palestine" illustrated by the alleged conversion of Khâlid Mash'al, president of the political bureau of Hamas, was thus conducted from Jordan shortly after Hamas gained exclusive control of the Gaza Strip. The source for this "information", which was instantly spread by the Salafist websites as well as by the international press, was *al-Haqîqa al-Duwaliyya* (*Fact International*).[24] This weekly had been created in February 2006 specifically to promote a "moderate" Islam, three months after the suicide operations against hotels in Amman.

Elsewhere denounced by the Salafists as evidence for the existence of Shiite missions in Palestine, some Shiite websites have portrayed themselves as "Palestinian". Only one of these, the oldest (founded in September 2004), can be linked to an identifiable institution, the Jafariya Society—Palestine, founded by Ashraf Amûna and other young people, all natives of Dabbûriyya (near Nazareth in Israel) and converted abroad. The association runs a place of worship (*husayniyya*), a public library and publishes a magazine. Named "Dhû al-Fiqâr",[25] the name of Ali's sword, the site was reduced to a simple homepage in 2005 and disappeared at the end of 2009. With the exception of a page dedicated to the history of Palestine, it was exclu-

sively devoted to religious questions. Several websites active between 2005 and 2008 can be regrouped in one ensemble. The oldest is the "Palestine Shia Forum",[26] which was online between November 2005 and June 2007. "Shia of Holy Land"[27] is contemporary of the latter. "Palestine Shia Forum"[28] was active from April 2006 until December 2007 and gave its place to the forum "Light of the Prophecy in Palestine"[29] online until May 2008. While the first two sites were exclusively religious, the last two also offered a certain number of "secular" pages. It seems that all these sites emanated from Abû al-Batûl al-Maqdisî, a converted native from 'Awartâ, near Tulkarm north of the West Bank. A second group of sites emanated from a mysterious "Omat al-Zahraa Studies Center—Palestine" (one of the nicknames of Fatima, daughter of the Prophet and spouse of 'Ali). The oldest[30] was online between March 2007 and March 2008 and its pages were dedicated to the Twelve Imams. Some of these pages reappeared in February 2008 in a blog named "Umat al-Zahrâ' Umat al-Nûr".[31] At the end of December 2009, the centre re-emerged with a website reduced to a small number of postings.[32] Its founder is known to be Abû al-Turâb al-Filastînî, a convert to Shiism, who asserts that his centre is based in Gaza (without any proof). A "site of the Shiitization of Palestine",[33] registered in Najaf (Iraq), seems to have been active for one or two months at the beginning of 2009, before becoming a victim of a cyber-attack. Its creator was another convert, Ibrâhîm al-Husaynî, and his aim was specifically religious. The only website remaining online in 2010, "Forums of the Twelvers of Palestine",[34] was registered in March 2009 in Cairo by Abû Maythum Filastîn, a convert who presents himself as a webmaster. Although the forum is supposed to tackle questions concerning Palestine, its main political subject, beside religious ones, is Iraqi Hizbullah. These websites thus have a relatively ephemeral existence. Aside from the Jafariya Society's site, they are simply individual initiatives taken by converts, their presence in Palestine being unproved in a number of cases.

The announcement on 2 March 2006 of the foundation in Ramallah of a "Higher Islamic Shiite Council in Palestine" set off chain reactions in the Salafist press as well as the international media. The most hostile among them talked about the opening of an "ideological embassy of Iran". Yet none of these commentators, including an academic researcher who wrote about the project, mentioned the announcement of its withdrawal five days later. Indeed, it would appear that the originator of the project, Muhammad Ghawânima, a refugee of Jalazûn camp near Ramallah, is psychologically

unstable. A former member of IJMP, he left the organization after its conversion to Shiism at the end of 1970s, and he had simply sought, as he specified, to open new channels of support for the Palestinian people. Therefore, his objective was tô break with the PLO policy that had cut itself off from the Iraqi Shiite population in supporting Iraq in its war with Iran. Disclaiming any prior understanding with Iran, he stressed that his contacts with Lebanese Shiites had solely taken place during his stay in Israeli prisons.

Fascination with Iran and distance-taking

IJMP was the first organization to be accused (at that time by the Palestinian Muslim Brothers) of being a vector of Shiitization in Palestine, its principal leaders being denounced as converts to Shiism. IJMP was founded in the late 1970s by Gazan students in Egypt. Disappointed with the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, which at the time was completely removed from any patriotic involvement, they considered Palestine to be the heart of Islam and made its liberation an immediate imperative. They were fascinated by the Iranian Revolution to which their Secretary General, Dr Fathî Shqâqî, dedicated an opuscule entitled "khomeini, the Islamic solution and the alternative". For a long time, IJMP remained the prisoner of its own understanding of itself as an "Islamic vanguard" (tali'a islâmiyya), which prevented it establishing any large popular base. The organization was decimated by targeted Israeli repression in 1986–87 and weakened afterwards by successive splits. IJMP has consequently been viewed for a long time as a small group that could be manipulated, and which was entirely dependent on its links with Teheran where an official representative has been mandated since 1991.

Such an interpretation, however, ignores the role played by Arab solidarity in the organization's activities, which, among other things, led IJMP to support Saddam Hussein in his war with Iran during the 1980s. It also neglects the fact that IJMP has more recently managed to build up a popular base of support (endowed with a charitable and social network, which although limited are certainly active), which assured the victory of some of its candidates in the municipal elections of 2005. It is highly unlikely that the organization's supporters would allow IJMP to be subject to any foreign manipulation. In short, such an approach forgets that the Iranian Revolution was lived first of all as Islamic and revolutionary, beyond any Sunnite-Shiite cleavages, when Arabs and Iranians in search of justice were reading

Sayyid Qutb. That an Islamic movement had proved successful in overthrowing one of the closest regional allies of the United States was viewed as being more important than the fact that the revolution was Shiite.

Today Hamas is designated as Iran's spearhead on Israel's southern flank, even if the movement still maintains close relations with Saudi Arabia and the other Arab states in the Gulf. Moreover, nothing in the movement would indicate a predisposition to becoming a puppet of a foreign regime, much less the puppet of a Shiite state. Hamas was created more or less a decade after the Iranian Islamic Revolution. Yet, as an "active member of the Muslim Brotherhood Association in the Intifada", according to the expression used in one of its first communiqués dated January 1988, Hamas claims a lineage going back to the late 1920s when Hassan al-Banna created the association in Egypt, and to the mid-1940s, when the association created a Palestinian branch. Moreover, endowed with a fundamentally Sunnite ideological corpus, Hamas maintains a vast associative network, which also suggests that it is an organization that will be hard to manipulate.

The founding of Hamas revealed a revolution within the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, which led them to abandon their traditional quietist politics in favour of active participation in the national struggle. In this sense, Hamas doubtlessly owes a certain debt to the exemplarity of Hizbullah and Iran, to which its very name bears witness. Hamas, which signifies "zeal", is merely an acronym. Its full name is "the Islamic resistance movement" (*Harakat al-Muqâwama al-Islâmiyya*), a designation similar to the "Islamic resistance in Lebanon", the name of the structure that coordinated the anti-Israeli uprising of South Lebanon's population in 1982 and which was the prototype for what was to become Hizbullah. Moreover, if IJMP had never existed—which would have allowed reconciliation between religion and patriotism in the Palestinian field because some of its members took the Iranian Revolution as an example—and if IJMP had not constituted a threat from the inner ranks of the Muslim Brotherhood itself, perhaps the Muslim Brothers would have arrived at the conclusion that their entry into the field of the national struggle was unnecessary. That did not make Hamas either a Shiite movement or even a dominant element inside the jihad trend.

In the Marj al-Zuhûr camp, for example, when the Israeli government exiled towards South Lebanon about 400 Islamic leaders of the occupied territories in 1992, Hamas designated its "university" with the name of Ibn Taymiyya, the medieval hero of the Sunnite apologetics. By this denomination the movement showed its determination to protect itself from its

neighbours, Shiite populations and Hizbullah. Moreover, Hamas has never produced any institutional theological speech of its own; instead, all of its citations are those of international Sunnite Islam with its modern Egyptian (Hassan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb) and Pakistani (Abu Al-'Ala al-Mawdudi) references, and with one of its most common guides being Yusuf al-Qaradawi. In the domain of religious thought, Hamas is diversified and made up of currents sometimes in contradiction with each other, but which share a more general culture of consensus (*ijmâ*) that unifies them into the movement. Sheikh Nizâr Rayyân, for instance, was a theological reference for the most rigorist Salafism that was fundamentally hostile to Shiism and to Iran. This aspect of his thought did not, however, bar him access to the highest levels of the decision-making process.[35]

If Hamas today is the target of outcries hostile to Iran and Hizbullah, as was IJMP for many years in the past, we should recall that Yasser Arafat himself was once the target of denunciations over Iranian and Hezbollahi engagement with the al-Aqsâ Martyrs' Brigades. Moreover, Fatah's flag adopted Hizbullah's yellow, but neither Yasser Arafat nor Fatah were ever suspected of Shiism.

## Uniqueness of projects or channels in competition?

As I have tried to show, the "conspiracy theory" developed in terms of a Shiite threat and an axis of destabilization has popularized a schema of operational cooperation between Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hizbullah, Syria and Iran in the form of an integrated and descending hierarchical ensemble.[36] In contrast to this ideological approach, the history of this cooperation shows a phenomenon of complementarities and competitions between two channels, a "historical" Lebanese channel (to which was attached an Iranian channel that almost disappeared in 1981–1982) and another channel, more recent and Iranian, while Syria was driven to deal with the contradictions that have occasionally arisen between the two. History also recalls the role played by Fatah in this "axis", which, although eminent in the past, is marginal today despite the fact that it is still active, even if the movement has become the cornerstone of the new American order in Palestine.

## The "historical" Lebanese and Iranian channel

The "historical" channel plunges its roots into the Lebanon of the 1970s when the PLO, particularly Fatah and the Popular Front for the Liberation

of Palestine (PFLP), assured military training for most of the armed opposition groups on the planet at that time. While the Marxist organizations tended to turn to the PFLP, other organizations chose Fatah for its absence of ideological marking other than nationalism, even if (or because) the movement had been viewed for a long time as being close to the Muslim Brotherhood. However, the training camps provided by the PLO were not religious: the motivations for the camps were first of all nationalist and/or social and revolutionary. For its part, the Jarmaq Brigade, the main Fatah contractor for military training to the foreigners, demonstrated a Maoist type of ideological commitment under the guidance of Mûnîr Shafîq, who had been profoundly engaged in the national liberation struggle since the beginning of his life. When he realized that Islam constituted the most powerful lever of revolutionary mobilization, he participated in the creation of various small Islamic jihad groups, in association with certain historical leaders of the religious trend internal to Fatah, before becoming one of the intellectuals of Hamas, despite being a Christian by birth.[37]

Throughout the 1970s, the armed forces of Fatah (al-'Asifa) in Lebanon were consequently in charge of the military training of the majority of the revolutionary Shiite activists. A feeling of "brotherhood in arms" consequently developed, which went beyond all political and/or ideological divergences that were originally present or which appeared later. Fatah, as a result, trained Shiite activists belonging to three different khomeinist tendencies in its camps: Iranians who prepared the future Islamic Revolution (at the same time as activists of the Marxist Feda'iyin-e Khalq were being trained by PFLP); Iraqis of the al-Da'wâ party; and the Lebanese with their Iranian allies who prepared the Shiite revival in Lebanon under the leadership of Imam Musa al-Sadr.

Contacts between Yasser Arafat and Imam Khomeini go back to 1969 when the latter was still a refugee in Najaf (Iraq), and they developed further during his exile in France. The military collaboration between Fatah and Khomeini's supporters in Lebanon began in 1975. Two of the Ayatollah's sons, Mustafâ and Ahmad, received their military training in the Fatah camps in Lebanon following the example of many of the highest leaders of the future Islamic Revolution. Some of them even pushed their commitment within Fatah to the point of participating in anti-Israeli military operations and becoming some of the movement's officers, such as Mostafa Shamran-Shavehi,[38] Mohamad Montazeri,[39] Ali Akbar Mohtashemi,[40] Mohsen Rafîq Dust,[41] and Jalal-e-Din Farsi.[42]

These historical Iranian networks, however, eventually lost their effectiveness for reasons pertaining specifically to Iran (some of the leaders of the Islamic Republic that had been trained by Fatah had been killed or marginalized at the end of the revolution's spasmodic first years) as well as for reasons that were specific to the Palestinian situation (the honeymoon between the PLO and the rising Islamic Republic broke down when Yasser Arafat demonstrated interest in the Arab nationalists of the Iranian Khuzestan).

On the Lebanese side, Imam Musa al-Sadr, the emblematic face of Shiism who was then undergoing a process of full political and social transformation, had made the liberation of Palestine an imperative for all believers. Unsurprisingly, he entrusted Fatah with the training of the armed personnel within his Movement of the Deprived (Harakat al-Mahrûmîn), the backbone of this resurgence. In July 1975 the Brigades of the Imam Ali for the liberation of Palestine (Katâ'ib al-Imâm 'Alî li-Tahrîr Filastîn)—the military wing of the Movement of the Deprived—that Musa al-Sadr had founded some years earlier was succeeded by Amal (Lebanese resistance detachments) (Afwâj al-Muqâwâma al-Lubnâniyya), which would owe its own name to Yasser Arafat himself, who was anxious to avoid locking up the liberation struggles in sectarian religious memberships. Part of the military personnel of Amal later migrated to Hizbullah and joined some of their old Iranian comrades-in-arms from the Fatah camps that were now invested with the task of coordinating between the new Lebanese movement and the Islamic Republic. These Lebanese Shiite networks, which were set up in the 1970s by Yasser Arafat and Fatah, continue operating to the advantage of the Palestinians up to the present-day, in spite of the torments that Shiite-Palestinian relations in Lebanon subsequently experienced.

For the Palestinians, the first beneficiaries of the operational aid given by this "historical" network, immediately after the evacuation of Lebanon in 1983, were members of Fatah's internal religious trends: the Hamdî Sultân al-Tamîmî's "Islamic Jihad Brigades" (Sarâyâ al-Jihâd al-Islâmî) (which led military operations in the occupied territories between 1985 and 1988, when their leaders were eliminated by Mossad in Cyprus); Munîr Shafîq's "Movement of Islamic fighting tendency" (Harakat al-Ittijâh al-Islâmî al-Mujâhid) (which took the political relay of the Islamic Jihad Brigades from 1989 until 1992); and Sheikh As'ad al-Tamîmî's "Movement of Islamic Jihad-Bayt al-Maqdis" (Harakat al-Jihâd al-Islâmî—Bayt al-Maqdis) (whose political activities stretch between the end of 1970s up to the death of the sheikh in 1998; his military commitment was nev-

ertheless limited to a short period around 1990). Fifteen years later, in the context of the second Intifada and at a time when the Israeli occupation of Lebanon had ceased, the same Lebanese Shiite leaders helped in the setting up and functioning of certain cells; the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades (*Katâ'ib Shuhadâ' al-Aqsâ*) (particularly from Nablus, Jenin and Tulkarm), and the Brigades of the Return (*Katâ'ib al-'Awda*) (which also operated in the northern West Bank). Both of these brigades, even if they pretended to be Fatah military wings, maintained more or less controversial relations with their alleged political command.[43]

Most of those in charge of that cooperation, organized in Lebanon itself (training in Hizbullah camps) or from Lebanon (financing, exporting arms), were killed in assassination attempts ordered by successive Israeli governments as has been documented by Lebanese courts. All of the individuals in question, before assuming responsibilities in Hizbullah's relations with the Palestinian organizations, were trained by Fatah in the 1970s.[44] Even in 2009, these "historical" Lebanese networks of Fatah persisted to provide help to the al-Aqsâ Martyrs Brigades—martyr 'Imâd Mughniyya's Groups (*Katâ'ib Shuhadâ' al-Aqsâ—Majmû'ât al-Shahîd 'Imâd Mughniyya*) headed by Salîm Thâbit. A native from Tulkarm but based in Gaza, Sâlim Thâbit managed to unite the various cells of the al-Aqsâ Martyrs Brigades which, after Hamas took exclusive control of the Gaza strip in June 2007, have decided to pursue the anti-Israeli struggle on good terms with the Palestinian Authority there, while breaking off relations with the Ramallah Authority. In Lebanon itself, the unavoidable Palestinian intermediary between Hizbullah and Fatah in the Palestinian territories was for a long time Brigadier General Munîr Maqdâh, the former Fatah military chief in Lebanon. Today, he runs Fatah's internal trend hostile to President Mahmûd 'Abbâs after he was military commandant-in-chief of Fatah forces in Lebanon.

This collaboration with the Palestinians, even if proved, does not imply that all groups of the West Bank and Gaza that have adopted Hizbullah as their name receive operational help from the Lebanese organization (and the question of their conversion to Shiism will not unsurprisingly be addressed). The most recent of these movements, for instance, the Brigades of Hizbullah in Palestine (*Katâ'ib Hizb Allâh fî Filastîn*), seem to maintain no direct link with Hizbullah in accordance with what they pretend.[45]

### The new Iranian channel

Shortly after the deterioration in relations between Iran and the PLO, a new Iranian channel of cooperation with the Palestinians was set up from Teheran. This time, the cooperation existed outside of any relation with Yasser Arafat and Fatah, which were considered guilty of the charge of having betrayed Palestine by agreeing to negotiate its rights. It was then a question of bringing the support of the Iranian Revolution to an organization of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad trend (whose other groups were close to Fatah), IJMP. These groups were organized at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s when they took their distance at the same time from the Muslim Brothers, who refused to enter the national struggle against occupation, and with the official position of the PLO, which was increasingly committed to compromising with Israel.

This new channel of cooperation was as non-ideological, in a Shiite missionary sense, as the historical Iranian and Lebanese channels. It was, as in the past, a question of fighting the Israeli occupation regardless of the underlying ideological motivation (nationalist and/or religious). As a result, the Pasdarans (Revolutionary Guard) were invested with contacts in Lebanon and Palestine. Mohsen Rafiq Dust, who had been trained in the Fatah camps in Lebanon, was once their minister. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—General Command (PFLP-GC) of Ahmad Jibrîl, for its part, linked the Lebanese and Iranian networks with a know-how that led him to become one of the main recipients of Iranian help in the nationalist sphere. In the Islamist orbit, IJMP, headed by Fathî Shqâqî, was the first of the Palestinian beneficiaries of this political, financial and operational collaboration. This relationship, however, generated jealousy on behalf of the beneficiaries of Lebanese support.

In the 1970s and until the second half of the 1980s, IJMP constituted only one of the elements of the Palestinian Jihad trend, next to groups that were close to Fatah, which, for this reason, benefited from the help of the Lebanese channel. The relations maintained by IJMP with these groups, which were at the same time friends and competitors, have thus often been stormy in spite of occasional collaborations, exacerbated by jealousies resulting from the passage of certain military and political personnel from one group to the other. But at the very beginning of the 1990s, the creation of Hizbullah-Palestine (*Hizb Allâh-Filastîn*) sowed the seeds for trouble. For the first time, the military cooperation provided by Iran and

Lebanese Hizbullah to the Palestinian mujahedeen appeared diversified, even contradictory.

The founder of Hizbullah-Palestine, Ahmad Muhannâ, was a former officer of the Popular Liberation Forces (*Quwwât al-Tahrîr al-Cha'biyya*), a unit of the Army for the Liberation of Palestine, which had been created after 1967 to resist the new occupant within the Occupied Territories. As a result of this partnership, Muhannâ was incarcerated by Israel until 1985. At first, he associated himself with Fathî Shqâqî, who had been banned from Palestine in 1988, as he had been three years earlier. Nevertheless, as a fervent supporter of the militarization of resistance, he took his distance from him after he failed to convince him of creating an armed wing. He then joined the "Movement of Islamic Jihad—Bayt al-Maqdis" headed by Sheikh As'ad al-Tamîmî and, under its signature, organized the February 1990 attack on an Israeli tourist bus near Ismailia (Egypt). But his attempts to infiltrate fighters into the West Bank from Jordan, and to import weapons through the Syrian-Jordanian border, damaged the position of Sheikh Tamîmî, established in Amman. He was therefore expelled from the ranks of Bayt al-Maqdis and decided to create his own armed organization, which he named Hizbullah-Palestine. Operating in symbiosis with elements of the Lebanese channel, the group maintained direct links with Iran and Syria, with its military camps being situated in the Syrian Hauran and the Lebanese Bekaa. Feeling deprived of its particular links with Iran, IJMP thence tried to sabotage the initiative in appealing directly to the Guide of the Revolution. As it failed to obtain the abandonment of Hizbullah-Palestine, IJMP finally decided to create its own military wing, the Islamic Fighting Forces "Qasam" (oath) (*al-Quwwât al-Islâmiyya al-Mujâhida-Qasam*), which later became the al-Quds [Jerusalem] Brigades (*Sarâyâ al-Quds*).

Starting from this Hizbullah-Palestine experience, the Lebanese and Iranian channels cooperated successfully and set up new alliances among Islamic Palestinian organizations outside the limits of the Islamic Jihad trend. Ahmad Muhannâ's deputy, Adnân al-Ghûl, a refugee from the Gaza Shâtî' camp, had first belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood. Advocating the armed struggle for the liberation of Palestine, he took his distance from the Brothers and frequented various jihadi groups before becoming a key military element of Hizbullah-Palestine. Yet, following the evolution of Hamas in the area of armed struggle, he rejoined his previous movement in 1992 and became deputy to Muhammad Dayf, chief of the Ezzedin al-Qassam Brigades (*Katâ'ib al-Shahîd 'Izz al-Dîn al-Qassâm*). Adnân al-Ghûl was

eliminated in October 2004, but, as a result of its relationship with al-Ghul, Hamas benefited from contacts with networks of the Lebanese branch at a moment when most of its higher leaders were exiled by Israel from Palestine to South Lebanon in 1992. At the beginning of the 1990s, links were established with this new Iranian channel. They became institutionalized after the first "Conference in Support of the Islamic Revolution in Palestine" was held in Teheran in October 1991 by opening an official Hamas office in Iran in 1993. In October 1992, military and financial agreements were signed on the occasion of a visit to Teheran of a delegation that was received officially by Imam Khomeini himself.

From this point onwards, cooperation has continued in the political, military and financial domains. This Iranian-Hamas relationship received a strong symbolic boost in March 1998 when the founder of Hamas, Shaykh Ahmad Yâsîn, was granted a reception in Teheran where he was treated like an acting head of state, during his vast diplomatic tour that took place just after his release from the Israeli prisons. For a long time, financial assistance from Iran remained comparatively limited. As long as Hamas merely had to compensate for AP's insufficiency in education and health matters, the need for assistance from outside remained comparatively low, due to the importance of the voluntary work of its actors but also to its self-financing capacity via the control of the committees of *zakât*. The nature of financial support changed, and its importance increased, when the international community decided to implement a complete blockade of Gaza after Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip. From this date onwards, Iran assumed the place of the international donors and it continues to assure the financing of the Gaza PA for the payment of its civil servants. In military affairs, Iran (and Hizbullah) favours imports of weapons into the Gaza Strip, even if these armaments are poorly-maintained. Iranian experts also play an advisory role. After the Israeli offensive of December 2008—January 2009, the evidence suggests that Iran sent a mission of evaluation of the military performance of the Ezzedin al-Qassam Brigades and security forces of the PA, which in turn led to changes in the latter organizations.

## Conclusion

The analysis of the discourses on the "Shiitization" of Palestine as the cement of a "destabilization axis" and their confrontation with a number of historical realities has shown that their various usages are eminently ideological and built on particular religious and political interests.

Denunciations of mass conversions in Palestine from Sunnism to Shiism, which are supposed to prove the religious offensive of Iran and Hizbullah are not based on reality (no more than the victorious Shiite claims). Denunciations of a "Shiite crescent" as well as calls to the constitution of a "Sunnite ark" are themselves only a political construction elaborated by the pro-Western camp which, under traits of a more or less alleged "Sunnite" alliance, rallies against the anti-American camp denounced as "Shiite". Religious phobias and political propaganda, far from ignoring each other, thus draw from a common pot; truths and untruths immediately become rearranged as part of their own obsession with a "theory of conspiracy".

The operational collaboration between Iran, Syria, Hizbullah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad does exist, as the actors themselves have acknowledged this a number of times. Far from a schema of operational cooperation in the form of an integrated and descending hierarchical ensemble—as popularized by the discourse about the Shiite peril—the history of this collaboration reveals a great deal of complexity. Throughout the last thirty years, in fact, this collaboration proceeded from complementarities and competitions between a "historical" Lebanese channel (to which was attached an Iranian channel that almost disappeared in 1981–1982) and another channel, more recent and Iranian. Fatah held a central place in this game, which is deliberately forgotten by the supporters of the theory of the Shiite conspiracy in the present-day. Each of the actors has retained an indubitable autonomy within this collaboration which, away from the religious field, is based on circumstantial political interests: Iran, Hizbullah, Fatah, Jihad and Hamas, depending on epochs, recourse to each other for the building or the preservation of their military and political apparatus in a common search of "liberation" and/or "revolution".

In the religious domain, the mobilizing capacities of the discourse about the Shiite peril among Sunnite populations shows a rupture with the recent period of modernist Islam, during which the rapprochement between Sunnism and Shiism was a motto used by al-Azhar as well as the Muslim Brotherhood. This discourse illustrates the failure of this slogan. In the political domain, this same mobilizing capacity testifies to a newly opened page where the Salafists (even if they sometimes borrow some of their concepts from al-Qaida) constitute the new potential partners of the supposedly "secular" regimes, members of the Western sphere in their conflict with the Islamists (in the Muslim Brotherhood manner), who are their only true opponents endowed with popular support.

4

# Ideological Tensions Between Hizbullah and *Jihadi* Salafism

## Mutual Perceptions and Mutual Fears

*Joseph Alagha*[1]

### Introduction

Fatah al-Islam (FaI), a *takfiri* jihadi Salafist movement inspired by al-Qaida, presented the first security threat both to the Lebanese state and to the Shiite resistance movement Hizbullah in the period following the evacuation of the PLO from Lebanon in 1982 and the collapse of its Sunnite allied militias, most notably the Nasserite *Murabitun*.[2] The sudden power vacuum this created left room for Hizbullah to gradually run the show, spearheading the resistance against the Israeli occupation until it succeeded in virtually driving the Israeli army out of Lebanon in May 2000. Until the appearance of FaI in 2006, Hizbullah had no local ideological competitor that posed a threat to its domination. FaI regards the Shiites as *rafida* (heterodox heretics) who should be fought against in the same manner as the "crusader and Jewish" occupying armies of Muslim lands. FaI has sought to use its transnational linkages to al-Qaida and global jihad to make Lebanon another Iraq where Sunnite-Shiite discord (*fitna*) might still explode into a full-scale civil war. FaI's innovative recruitment tactics have been more

grave, 2011, pp. 223–51; on the phenomenon of Sunnite converts to Shiism in general see idem, "'Then I was Guided'—Some Remarks on Inner-Islamic Conversions in the 20ᵗʰ and 21ˢᵗ Centuries", *Orient* 50, April 2009, pp. 6–15.

54. *al-'Arabiyya*, 29 March 2007, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2007/03/29/33006.html; *IslamOnline*, 31 March 2007, http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1175008761205&pagename=Zone-Arabic-News/NWALayout. The former vice-rector of al-Azhar, Mahmud 'Ashur, was nominated president of the new *Jama'at al-taqrib*, and, as in 1992, 'Abdallah al-Qummi took over the office of secretary general.

55. *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 1 April 2007, http://www.asharqalawsat.com/print/default.asp?did=413059

56. *al-'Arabiyya*, 7 February 2008, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2008/02/07/45312.html and 19 February 2008, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2008/02/19/45863.html

57. *al-Misriyyun*, 29 September 2008, http://www.almesryoon.com/ShowDetails.asp?NewID=54578 and 25 October 2008, http://www.almesryoon.com/Show-Details.asp?NewID=55546

58. *al-'Arabiyya*, 16 June 2009, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2009/06/16/76177.html

59. *al-'Arabiyya*, 2 April 2010, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2010/04/02/104746.html; in October 2010, however, he defended Shiism against the accusation that they claimed to possess a different version of the Qur'an (for the subject of *tahrif*, see below, note 63) and against efforts to declare them infidels (*takfir*); *al-'Arabiyya*, 16 October 2010, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2010/10/16/122427.html

60. *al-Ahram Weekly*, 24 May 2007, http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2007/846/eg3.htm, 4 October 2007, http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2007/865/eg2.htm

61. Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism*, pp. 228–48; *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 4 August 2004, http://www.asharqalawsat.com/print/default.asp?did=252186; *al-Misr al-yawm*, 11 November 2006, http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=36016

62. On Qaradawi (born in 1926) cf. Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen and Bettina Gräf (eds), *Global Mufti. The Phenomenon of Yusuf al-Qaradawi*, London: Hurst, 2009.

63. *IslamOnline*, 1 September 2006, http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/news/2006–09/01/04.shtml; *al-'Arabiyya*, 2 September 2006, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2006/09/02/27111.html; cf. also Israel Elad-Altman, "The Sunni-Shi'a Conversion Controversy", in Hillel Fradkin et al. (eds), *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, Vol. 5, Washington: Hudson Institute, 2007, pp. 1–10, http://www.futureofmuslimworld.com/research/ctID.9/ctrend.asp. For the debate about the alleged falsification of the Qur'anic text cf. Rainer Brunner, "La ques-

tion de la falsification du Coran dans l'exégèse chiite duodécimaine", *Arabica* 52, 2005, pp. 1–42.

64. *IslamOnline*, 22 January 2007, http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/news/2007–01/22/08.shtml; *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 29 January 2007, http://www.asharqalawsat.com/print/default.asp?did=403946; *al-Ahram Weekly*, 25 January 2007, http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2007/829/re71.htm; on the Doha conference in general, cf. Behnam Said, *Islamische Ökumene als Mittel der Politik. Aktuelle Tendenzen in der Annäherungsdebatte zwischen Sunna und Schia auf der Doha-Konferenz 2007*, Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2009.

65. E. Glass, "Recent Rise in Sunni—Shi'ite Tension (Part II): Anti-Shi'ite Statements by Sheikh Al-Qaradhawi", *MEMRI*, Inquiry and Analysis, no. 481, 16 December 2008, http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=subjects&Area=relations&ID=IA48108

66. Lewis, "The Shi'a in Islamic History", p. 159.

## 3. THE SHIITE PERIL IN PALESTINE: BETWEEN PHOBIAS AND PROPAGANDA

1. Read for example: Anonymous, "Iran's fifty-year Plan to export the revolution and spread Shiism".

2. http://www.haqeeqa.com/

3. http://www.alrased.net/ and http://www.alrased.info/

4. http://osamash.maktoobblog.com/

5. http://www.dd-sunnah.net/forum/showthread.php?t=72466

6. Interview on 17 August 2008, reproduced on the jihadist internet site al-Hesbah http://alhesbahweb.net/v/showthread.php?t=189194

7. http://www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=297744

8. *Washington Post*, 7 December 2004, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/mmedia/world/120704–20s.htm. For a critical approach, read the excellent synthesis of Pierre Pahlavi, "Croissant chiite: fondements et limites" and David Rigoulet-Roze, "'Arc sunnite' versus 'Croissant chiite': deux faces d'un même Janus conflictuel?".

9. Documented in David Rose, "The Gaza Bombshell", *Vanity Fair*, April 2008, http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2008/04/gaza200804

10. Mark Langfan, "Iran: the fourth Reichastan", *Jewish Voice and Opinion*, January 2007.

11. Jean-François Legrain, "L'impasse politique et institutionnelle palestinienne", *Critique Internationale*, no. 36, July-September 2007, internet document put online in January 2008, http://www.gremmo.mom.fr/legrain/impasse_politique.pdf

12. http://www.palpress.ps/arabic/print.php?ChannelID=74148

13. As was the case, for example, for the Army of Islam quoted *supra*, whose founder,

Mumtâz Dughuch, was an officer in the Preventive Security Forces headed by Muhammad Dahlân.

14. http://www.fatehforums.com

15. http://portal.idc.ac.il/

16. http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/

17. Shmuel Bar is director of studies at the Institute for Policy and Strategy, at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya. He served in the Israeli intelligence community for thirty years.

18. Ex intelligence officer in the Israeli army and the Mossad, Yossi Alpher served as special adviser to Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak during the Camp David talks in 2000. He now serves on the executive committee of the Council for Peace and Security.

19. For example, Oded Yinon, "Strategy for Israel in the Nineteen Eighties", a translation by Dr Israel Shahak (http://cosmos.ucc.ie/cs1064/jabowen/IPSC/articles/article0005345.html) of an essay which originally appeared in Hebrew in *Kivunim (Directions), A Journal for Judaism and Zionism*, no. 14, Winter 5742, February 1982, published by the Department of Publicity/The World Zionist Organization, Jerusalem. Oded Yinon was formerly a senior Israeli Foreign Affairs Ministry official who became a journalist for the *Jerusalem Post*. According to him, all the Arab States should be broken down by Israel into small units on religious and ethnic lines.

20. For example, Ralph Peters, "Blood borders. How a better Middle East would look", *Armed Forces Journal*, June 2006, http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/2006/06/1833899/. A retired United States Army (military intelligence) Colonel, Ralph Peters is a member of "Project for the New American Century", a neoconservative think tank.

21. http://www.aqaed.info/mostabser/all/

22. http://www.14masom.com/mostabsiron/index.htm

23. Fathî Shqâqî, in fact, had denied any conversion in an interview given to the Lebanese *Liwâ'* on 3 October 1990.

24. http://www.factjo.com/newsletterPrintable.aspx?id=1304

25. http://www.thu-alfiqar.com/

26. http://shiafalasteen.myfreebb.com/

27. http://shiafalasteen.jeeran.com/

28. http://www.pas-shia.com/

29. http://www.passhia.com

30. http://omat-alzahraa.com/, http://omat-alzahraa.net and http://omatalzahraa.org

31. http://ommatalzahraa.maktoobblog.com/

32. http://kenanaonline.com/omatalzahraastudiescenter

33. http://www.palsh.net/ and http://www.palsh.org/

34. http://psa12th.com/vb/

35. He was eliminated by the Israeli army in Gaza in January 2009 due to his military responsibilities. I would like to thank Dr Walid Charara for his stimulating remarks about my research on the subject.

36. As I am too ignorant of the arcane mysteries of Iranian policy-making, I shall content myself with reminding readers that its Palestinian policy makes the object of debates and rivalries between various poles of power, for instance between the Ministry of Intelligence and that of the Revolutionary Guard. The recent history also shows that the supposed pan-Shiism of Iranian foreign policy has some limits, as was the case, for instance, with the support granted to Christian Armenia against Shiite Azerbaijan. Far from obeying a religious logic, Iranian policy is pragmatic and is based on a classical comprehension of the defence of its economic interests (particularly in terms of energy).

37. Nicolas Dot-Pouillard, "De Pékin à Téhéran en regardant vers Jérusalem: la singulière conversion à l'islamisme des 'Maos du Fatah'" and Mohamed Tahar Bensaada, "La théologie de la libération de Munir Chafiq", oumma.com, 24 April 2007, http://oumma.com/La-theologie-de-la-liberation-de,2401

38. Advisor of Musa al-Sadr for the creation of Amal movement, he was the first minister of defence after the Islamic Revolution and founded the core of what would become the Revolutionary Guard; he perished during fights in Iranian Ahwaz in 1981.

39. Nicknamed Ayatollah Ringo for his devotion to weapons, he was Ayatollah Hosein Ali Montazeri's son and represented the internationalist tendency of the Islamic Revolution. In spring 1979, he founded, with Mehdi Hashemi Satja, the first structure in charge of the exportation of revolution. He died in 1981 in the explosion of the building of the Party of the Islamic Revolution in Teheran.

40. Later an ambassador in Syria and interior minister, he was assigned by Ayatollah Khomeini to the monitoring of Hizbullah but was marginalized at the end of the 1980s.

41. Minister of the Revolutionary Guard, he later assumed the presidency of the Foundation for the Oppressed and Disabled, one of the largest semi-public welfare foundations in Iran.

42. In 1978, he asked Yasser Arafat to grant in Iran itself military training of certain elements of a new regime, an initiative that was immediately abandoned. He planned to be a candidate in the first Iranian presidential election but was barred by Ayatollah Khomeini due to his Afghan origins.

43. Hizbullah General Secretary Hasan Nasrallah, on 19 July 2004, just after the assassination of Ghâlib 'Awâlî, acknowledged the assistance brought by his movement to the insurgents in Palestine, support that the persons concerned recognized in their turn. In March 2006, Zakaryâ Zubaydî, the leader of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades in Jenin, acknowledged the help given by Hizbullah in financ-

ing and in training matters. Cooperation between Hizbullah and Palestinian groups of the Fatah trend has thus proved to be active. Certain files, however, are controversial as for their true originators or beneficiaries, particularly those concerned with the massive importation of weapons by the sea, San Torini (January, 2001), Karine A (2002) or Abû Hasan (May, 2003).

44. Khadr Abu Hasan Salâla, also known as 'Alî Hasan Dhîb (killed on 16 August 1999 in Sidon), 'Imâd Mughniyya (killed in Damascus on 12 February 2008) and 'Abd al-Hâdî Hammâdî had been called "the Shiite Fatah clan" and, although Lebanese, had held high responsibilities in Force 17, nowadays the Palestinian presidential guard. 'Alî Husayn Salâh (killed on 2 August 2003 in southern Beirut) and al-Hâjj Ghâlib 'Awâlî (killed on 19 July 2004) had succeeded 'Alî Dhîb. All three were killed in attempts due to a Lebanese network linked to the Mossad and dismantled in June 2006. They were replaced by 'Imâd Mughniyya, himself killed in Damascus in an attempt whose sponsors have not yet been officially identified.

45. When announcing their foundation in October 2008, http://www.sawtakon-line.com/forum/showthread.php?p=599811, their spokesperson, a certain Abû al-Hasan, underlined that the Brigades are "sunni and have no affiliation with the Lebanese Hezbollah even if they consider the Islamic resistance in Lebanon an exemplary model of resistance ideology". Such an absence of an organic link is confirmed by Sâlim Thâbit, who has a relationship with Hizbullah. Nevertheless, from the announcement of their foundation, the Brigades provoked a number of questions that went so far as to even query the reality of their existence as an entity. Press releases and statements of their spokesman, in effect, were made in a context where Israel, Fatah and various Salafist groups were denouncing the direct or indirect infiltration of Hizbullah and Iran in Gaza.

## 4. IDEOLOGICAL TENSIONS BETWEEN HIZBULLAH AND *JIHADI* SALAFISM: MUTUAL PERCEPTIONS AND MUTUAL FEARS

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2. FaI is not the only *takfiri* group in Lebanon. The author is in no way referring to the mainstream Salafis (*ahl al-Hadith*) as "terrorists", but rather to a particular radical-militant group that employs *takfir* as a way of life. Nor is it his intention to classify groups into "good" or "bad" Salafis. Noteworthy, only a small minority of the Sunnis adhere to this ideology, and less than 1 per cent of Muslims engage in so-called "terrorist" activities.

3. It is estimated that around 30 per cent of FaI's members were Palestinians, the rest hail from different Arab countries, most notably Lebanon, Syria, Jordan,

Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. Around a hundred fighters come from further a field: Bangladesh, Pakistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Russia, Moldavia, Chechnya, Germany, Kosovo, Bosnia, Denmark, UK, Italy, France, Belgium, Australia, and Argentina. See Itani, 2008, p. 256 and p. 265; *Al-Safir*, 11 June 2007, no. 10720, p. 6; *al-Safir*, 25 June 2007, no. 10732, p. 1 and p. 6; *al-Safir*, 28 June 2007, no. 10735, pp. 4–5; *Daily Star*, 29 June 2007; *al-Safir*, 27 August 2007, no. 10784, pp. 1 and 16; *al-Bayraq*, 29 August 2007, no. 19247, pp. 1 and 14; *al-Nahar*, 16 October 2007, no. 23153; *al-Hayat*, 3 October 2007.

4. My reliance on publicly available primary and secondary sources, especially media sources, has its own inevitable limitations in exposing FaI's clandestine nature, given the largely secretive nature of the organization and its operations.

5. Meijer clarifies, "Purist Salafism recognizes the legitimacy of any ruler even if the ruler is unjust, unless the ruler admonishes the believers to act contrary to the *shari'a*. It rejects the right to rise up in revolt and believes that Muslims must concentrate on following the path of the pious ancestors…[In other words,] Quietist, conservative Salafism or 'apolitical' Salafism emphasizes correct behaviour and a positive attitude that is based on civilized norms (*akhlaq*) as its main task, as well as propagating the right creed and promoting the right *manhaj*, or practice". Meijer, Roel, "Towards a Political Islam", *Clingendael Diplomacy Papers* no. 22, July 2009, p. 30.

6. Wiktorowicz, Quintan, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 29, 2006, p.208.

7. Meijer, Roel (ed.), "Towards a Political Islam", *Clingendael Diplomacy Papers* no. 22, July 2009, p. 30.

8. Mainly compiled from FaI's statements posted on affiliated Salafi websites or reported in the media, newspapers, magazines, etc.

9. Hawari, Zuhayr, "Fatah Al-Islam in Nahr Al-Barid: The Boiling Palestinian Camp" in *Al-harakat al-Islamiyya fi lubnan* (Islamic Movements in Lebanon), Beirut: Al-Markaz al-'Arabi li Al-Ma'lumat, 2007, pp. 204–220; Gade, Tine, *Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon: Between Global and local jihad*, Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI), 2007, p. 4.

10. *Dunya al-Watan*, 10 January 2007; *al-Safir*, 8 September 2007, no. 10795, p. 5; *al-Anwar*, 16 September 2007.

11. *Al-Masira*, 18 June 2007, no. 1129, p. 15.

12. *Al-Kifah al-'Arabi*, 19 March 2007, no. 3890, pp. 22–23; "New Face of Jihad Vows Attacks", *New York Times*, 16 March 2007, pp. 1–7, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/0316/world/middleeast/16jihad.html? (Accessed 5 June 2007); a political declaration released in April 2007 as posted on: http://www.al-khayma.com/HomePage (Accessed 9 July 2007).

13. Lynch III, Col Thomas F., *Sunni and Shi'a Terrorism Differences that Matter*,