Current Trends in Islamist Ideology

VOLUME 10

HUDSON INSTITUTE
Center on Islam, Democracy, and the Future of the Muslim World

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The Iranian Revolution in the New Era

By Saïd Amir Arjomand

The June 2009 electoral putsch in Iran ushered in a new phase in the Islamic Republic's now thirty-one year long history. With the apparent backing of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the hard-line incumbent presidential candidate Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was declared the election's winner—a result that seemed impossible to many, and that immediately provoked a massive wave of protests in Tehran and other urban areas throughout the country. While several well-documented allegations of fraud were made public, these were summarily dismissed by the Guardian Council, the Islamic regime's most powerful organ of clerical rule. And then the regime's security services, again with the backing of the supreme leader, were unleashed to systematically and violently suppress the protest movements.

In August 2009, Ahmadinejad was officially sworn in as president by Supreme Leader Khamenei. This took place amidst a series of show trials featuring forced confessions by protestors, as well as rumors of systematic rape and torture at the makeshift Kahrizak prison, where scores of demonstrators had been locked up.

In the eyes of the Islamic Republic's defenders in the clerical establishment and elsewhere, the electoral putsch and the subsequent suppression of the protestors represented a vitally necessary return to the theocratic regime's founding revolutionary Islamic principles. For example, Ahmadinejad's mentor, Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Mesbah-Yazdi, declared the Khomeinist principle of the guardianship of the jurist (*velayat-e faqih*) the true spirit of the Islamic Revolution and the true basis of the Islamic Republic, and alleged that the demonstrators who were fomenting the crisis aimed to eliminate the Islamic Republic altogether. It is because the supreme jurist partakes of the rays of light emanating from the Hidden, Twelfth

Imam, Mesbah-Yazdi asserted, that "the people recognize him as the legitimate lieutenant of the Lord of the Age and consider obedience to him likewise incumbent upon themselves." Therefore, he added, "when the president is appointed and confirmed by leadership, he becomes the supreme leader's agent and the rays of light emanating from the Lord of the Age are shed on him as well."[1]

Other clerics rallied to provide their unflinching support for the Islamic regime and the principles upon which it was established. In his Friday sermon on January 1, 2010, Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, the Secretary of the Guardian Council, called the opposition protesters "flagrant examples of the corrupt on earth" and urged their execution, just as the counterrevolutionaries were "in the early days of the revolution."[2] Throughout the post-election crisis, Jannati and others of the Guardian Council provided Supreme Leader Khamenei and President Ahmadinejad (himself a former Jannati protégé) with some powerful legal instruments that the regime then used to systematically crush the opposition. Equally important support for the theocratic regime came from the judiciary, including both the judiciary's outgoing head, Ayatollah Mahmoud Shahrudi, as well as its incoming head, Ayatollah Sadeq Larijani.

While the events of the summer of 2009 helped to revitalize the revolutionary spirit among some in the clerical establishment, they also made clear that the Islamic Revolution within Iran had entered an entirely new era. In this new era, the clerical establishment's political dominance, rather than being reinvigorated, has actually been declining relative to a newly ascendant political class of hardliners supported by commanders in the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps. This has dramatically transformed the regime's internal power structure, with far-reaching consequences for the very constitutional principle on which the Islamic Republic was founded—that the supreme jurist should exercise absolute sovereignty over the country. It has also given rise to a wide-ranging political clash among the Islamic Republic's aging lay revolutionaries and clerics over the true legacy and future direction of the revolution and the republic it created. Perhaps most decisively, the electoral putsch provoked an unexpectedly vigorous and astonishingly persistent wave of popular protest, which has come to be known as the "Green Movement," and which has been swelling up from a new generation whose political sensibilities and aspirations are post-Islamist and post-revolutionary. All of these developments among others will have dramatic consequences for Iran and for the region as a whole in the decades ahead.

While the Islamic Republic was established on the Khomeinist revolutionary principle that Shiite clerics should rule, the 2009 electoral putsch brought about a major transformation in the mosque-state relationship. In fact, some of the most scathing criticism of the supreme jurist and the

regime as a whole came from high-ranking members of the clerical establishment itself. The late Grand Ayatollah Hossein-Ali Montazeri—a scholar of great prestige and influence, who had also been designated by Khomeini to succeed him as supreme leader—fiercely condemned the electoral fraud and declared Ahmadinejad's government illegitimate. Montazeri's condemnations were subsequently endorsed by Ayatollah Yusof Sanei, another scholar who had been close to Khomeini. The radical cleric, Hojjat al-Islam Hadi Ghaffari, who had been the founder of the Iranian Hezbollah in 1979, unleashed an especially vehement attack against Khamenei, and accused the supreme leader and his henchmen of "turning religion into lying."[3]

To understand the extent to which the relationship between the Iranian government and the Shiite clerical hierarchy has changed over the past year, it is useful to look back in history—in fact, to far beyond the founding of the Islamic Republic thirty years ago. Shiism was established as Iran's state religion through a Mahdist revolution in 1501, which was led by Shah Ismail the Safavid. As the Safavid monarch established his rule over Persia, he began to claim that he was acting as the representative of the Hidden Imam. Subsequently, he proceeded to import Shiite scholars from Jabal Amil (in modern day Lebanon) and Hilla (in modern Iraq) to convert the people of Iran to Shiism.

Initially, as Arab Shiite theologians and jurists were imported into Persian lands, there was considerable tension between two important groups. On the one hand, there was a group of "clerical notables"—the *sayyed*s and jurists who were at the time Sunni, but who joined the service of the Safavid Shahs and ultimately converted to Shiism. On the other hand were the immigrant Arab Shiite theologians of the 16th century. Tensions between these two groups eventually abated as they intermarried in the 17th century. Nevertheless, the social division between these two sections of the Safavid elite tended to express itself in the form of a doctrinal schism within Shiism.

The clerical notables tended to support an intellectual trend that came to be known as "Akhbarism;" the Akhbaris rejected the use of *ejtehad* (independent legal reasoning; Ar. *ijtihad*) in the interpretation of Islamic law and were, generally speaking, politically quietist. The Safavid claim to power was not entirely unopposed however. Throughout the 17th century, Safavid rule and Akhbari quietism were challenged by the mojtaheds, Shiite jurists of Arab descent who practiced *ejtehad* and claimed to be the "Deputies of the Hidden Imam" (according to their theory of "general deputyship," or *niabat amma*). It was ultimately the Usuli movement of the mojtaheds—not the Akhbaris—that prevailed after the Safavids' fall and emerged as the dominant stream within Shiism, creating a Shiite hierocracy that later became independent of the state.

After the overthrow of the Safavid empire by Afghan tribes in 1736, the Usuli teachings began to shape Iranian political life in important ways. In the 19th century,

during the period of Qajar rule, Usuli scholars elaborated a theory of a Shiite hierocracy that was independent of the Shah, and it was on this basis that a dual structure of authority—a system of two powers—was established. This dual structure rested on the Usuli principle that "every mojtahed is [equally] right (*mosib*)" and the theory that the mojtaheds collectively shared the office of "general deputyship" (*niabat amma*) of the Hidden Imam. The lay people could therefore choose any mojtahed to follow, and the latter would become their *marja-e taqlid* (source of imitation)—or, as it is more popularly called today, their Grand Ayatollah (Sign of God). Needless to say, this meant that some charismatic clerics could acquire a considerable following and, by extension, political influence.

The emergence of this dual system of power in the 19th and early 20th centuries ultimately set Shiite Iran apart from the rest of the Sunni Muslim world—and especially as clerical power grew relative to the political power of the shah. Indeed, in 1815 Sir John Malcolm, the British diplomat and historian of Iran, observed the tremendous power of a few eminent mojtaheds in Persia in the early 19th century. A century later, the British Orientalist scholar, E.G. Browne, pointed out the surprising number of conservative Shiite dignitaries who played prominent roles as leaders of the opposition toward the shah during the Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1907. During the rule of the Pahlavis from 1925 to 1979, the independence of the hierocracy was not impaired, though its power was greatly reduced, thanks to the shah's secularizing policies. It was under the leadership of Khomeini that the clerics' lost power was regained with a vengeance; a theocratic republic was established under the rule of a supreme jurist and a new hierocracy organized around revolutionary principles.

Khomeini's revolutionary innovation in the early 1970s—which came to be fully articulated in his theory of the guardianship of the jurist, or velayat-e faqih—rested on the proposition that if one mojtahed or jurist (faqih) succeeded in establishing an Islamic government, then other jurists were obligated to follow him. This novel theory of Islamic government became part of the Islamic Republic's constitution after the revolution in 1979. And yet, even though velayat-e faqih was inscribed in the new Islamic regime's constitution—and even though clerical rule was further qualified as absolute (*motlaqa*) in the constitutional amendments of 1989—fundamental ideological contradictions still persisted. Perhaps most important was the enduring tension between the Khomeinist idea of theocratic government, which obligated all Iranians to follow the supreme jurist, and the old Usuli theory, which held that the opinion of all mojtaheds was equally the same and thus permitted people to follow marjas other than the supreme jurist.

For obvious reasons, this created some fundamental problems for the Khomeinist regime as it sought to consolidate its power over the Shiite clerical class who were, among other things, accustomed to their independence. In fact, a number of Grand

Ayatollahs became well-known for opposing Imam Khomeini in the 1980s. Between 1992 and 1994, three Grand Ayatollahs died one after the other. The regime decided to take the opportunity created by these deaths to try to reconcile the conflicts between the old Usuli teachings and the new Khomeinist principles of clerical authority once and for all. The Head of Judiciary, Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi, sought to do this by declaring Supreme Jurist Khamenei the sole marja in 1995.[4] But this attempt proved unacceptable to the Grand Ayatollahs and failed. Subsequently, the Islamic Republic began publishing a list of seven maraje that were approved as sources of imitation for the Iranian people. Khamenei was in the third place on the list, while the top marja was the hard-line, pro-regime Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Fazel-Lankarani (who died in June 2007). The glaring omission from the list was Ayatollah Sayyid Ali Sistani, the Najaf, Iraq based Grand Ayatollah who represents a more traditional Shiism and who the Islamic regime has clearly sought to marginalize. Clearly, the publication of this list signaled the beginning of a new and concerted effort by the Islamic regime to promote certain maraje as sources of imitation over others. This, among other tactics, was designed to help enhance the supreme leader's control over the religious hierarchy.

Following 2009's contested presidential elections, a new phase of hierocracy-state relations was inaugurated. The political crisis that ensued resulted in the alienation of a considerable number of Iran's clerical elite, including most notably former presidents Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani and Mohammad Khatami, as well as the former Majles Speaker Mehdi Karroubi. Today, as a consequence of the sweeping militarization of the Iranian regime and the expanding powers of the military-intelligence personnel in the new Ahmadinejad administration, these and other clerical dissidents are beginning to form and consolidate a new center of clerical authority. In this, we are witnessing perhaps the emergence of a sustained Shiite oppositional jurisprudence.

Khomeini's revolution not only transformed mosque-state relations, but continues to play a fundamental role in the structuring of Iranian politics. Since the Islamic revolution, any group that sought to participate in politics was obligated to rally behind the three sets of principles identified as Khomeini's heritage—namely, theocratic government, the rule of law and participatory representative government, and populism on behalf of the disinherited. These were the only open avenues for political participation. The many contradictions that have emerged between the first two heterogeneous principles of the 1979 Constitution help to explain the political confrontation that emerged in the 1990s between Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei and the pro-reform leader Ayatollah Mohammad Khatami, who served as Iran's president from 1997 to 2005.

In this clash, Khamenei emerged as a champion of theocratic government, the

constitution's first principle, and a group of conservative clerics who had risen to power largely as consequence of the Islamic Revolution aligned themselves within this camp. These clerics have been amply rewarded for their support for the supreme leader, and they preside over a broad-based system of collective rule created by the revolution that includes clerical councils, foundations (*bonyad*s), as well as foundation-supported unofficial groups, including the thuggish Helpers of the Party of God (*Ansar-e Hezbollah*). Perhaps more importantly, this camp of revolutionary hardliners, who later called themselves the "Principlists," are enormously influential in the judiciary, as well as among the commanders of the Revolutionary Guards and its ancillary militia, the Basij.

The reform leader Khatami stood for the constitution's second principle—participatory government and rule of law—and seamlessly fused this together with his frequent appeals for civil society and greater openness. This position has been increasingly referred to as the "republicanism" of the regime established by Imam Khomeini, as distinct from its "Islamicness" (ostensibly represented by the principlists). Khatami's political allies included regime technocrats, reformist clerics and others who had been marginalized by the hierocracy that emerged from the revolution, as well as the country's disenfranchised middle classes, including especially students and women. As the political clash between the Islamic and republican principles of the revolution unfolded, the battlefield was slanted against the president and his pro-reform supporters, since the Islamic Constitution and the rhetoric of the Islamic Revolution in which so much of Iranian politics is conducted has generally tended to advantage the Principlists.

The rise of Ahmadinejad to the presidency in 2005, who took up the third heterogeneous Khomeinist principle of populism, brought about a new era in Iranian politics that has included a new configuration of social forces and the formation of entirely new political alliances. With his populist rhetoric and demands for social justice, Ahmadinejad won election as the mayor of Tehran in 2003 by declaring he had a "Basij mentality"—a position that evidently succeeded in appealing to a critical percentage of the masses. He has since touted the "Basij culture" and a return to the Islamic Revolution as the panacea for all of Iran's troubles not to mention the world's, and his populist style of politics—which involves regular provincial tours and an array of new social welfare programs—appeals directly to the urban poor, whose plight had been neglected by Khatami and the reformists.

The Ahmadinejad era has brought with it a steady militarization of the regime. In much the same way as the Helpers of God operated in Khomeini's time, the Basij corps and the Revolutionary Guards have increasingly come to play a direct role in Iranian political life. In 2005, for example, the Basij were used by the regime quite effectively to alter the elections by stuffing ballot boxes. This was done albeit on a limited scale

(so as not to raise the opposition's ire), and in tandem with other regime efforts to influence electoral outcomes, such as Council of Guardians' highly selective annulment of votes, which it did whenever it deemed necessary.[5] Ever since, Iranian politics (though not always public opinion) has further swung in favor of the Principlists, especially as the supreme leader began accumulating enormous extra-constitutional powers and began planting men loyal to him throughout the executive branch.

It was from this position of relative strength that Ahmadinejad and the commanders of the Revolutionary Guards decided on their preposterous electoral putsch of June 12, 2009 once their campaign, which they had been hyping as the harbinger of a "Third Revolution," took a wholly unanticipated turn for the worse. The putsch immediately rekindled the constitutional struggle between the children of the revolution; between the "republicanism" of the reformists and the "Islamicness" of the theocrats and the hardliners.

The reformists' instinctive reaction was to bemoan the end of the Islamic Republic as instituted by Imam Khomeini. For example, the editorial of Mousavi's organ, *Kalemeh-ye Sabz* (*Green Word*), was entitled "Political Coup, End of Republicanism," and asserted that the coup's Principlist-military engineers had "put their seal on the end of the republicanism of the regime."[6]

Indeed, Khamenei's firmness and determination in dealing with the unexpected explosion of popular protest in the aftermath of the electoral fraud reassured theocratic hardliners. For example, Ayatollah Abdallah Javadi-Amoli, who was one of the major early theorists of the Mandate of the Jurist and was recently "promoted" to the rank of Grand Ayatollah by being declared a *marja-e taqlid* by the government, issued a *fatwa* in preparation for the 31st anniversary of the Islamic Revolution on February 12, 2010. Based on the premise that "maintenance of the Islamic order is an individually incumbent religious duty," he declared that disturbing this order by participating in the protests was "forbidden (*haram*) to [each and every] individual."[7]

Even moderate clerics who seemed to be sitting on the fence eventually came to align with the theocrats as well. For example, Grand Ayatollah Naser Makarem-Shirazi—whose passionate plea against the constitutionalization of the Khomeinist principle of the guardianship of the jurist in its present form attracted much attention in 1979—had originally sent mixed signals toward the putsch. This ambiguous posture encouraged a group of reformers to seek his intervention on their behalf. But Shirazi, too, ultimately toed the regime's line. When an appellate court approved that a twenty year old student, Mohammad Amin Valian, should be executed for his role in anti-regime protests during Ashura, they based their decision on the interpretation of a speech made by Makarem-Shirazi to the effect that those who broke the sanctity of Ashura (December 27, 2009) to demonstrate were fighters against God. The court interpreted this statement as a binding *fatwa* and obligatory for all.[8]

Revolutions give birth to a new political class, and Iran's Islamic revolution was no exception. The political class formed after 1979 consisted of a narrow ruling stratum of clerical elites and a much broader second stratum in charge of the country's administration and political mobilization. The composition of Iran's new political class has changed drastically since Khomeini's death 20 years ago. Most significantly, the power of the clerical elite that originally ruled revolutionary Iran through a number of councils has gradually declined relative to the military and bureaucratic leaders that populate the second stratum, which today is led by President Ahmadinejad. This second stratum has been heavily recruited from the Revolutionary Guards and its mobilization corps, the Basij, which replaced the irregular vigilante groups that had been unofficially organized by hardliners in the revolutionary era.

On June 12, 2009, the Revolutionary Guards decided unabashedly to steal the presidential election in a bid to take over the government. And they did this with the blessing of Supreme Leader Khamenei. The electoral putsch was quickly solidified by Ahmadinejad's new cabinet appointments following his confirmation in August 2009.[9] This, in turn, has been followed by the rapid growth of a corporatist economic empire that has, among other things, rewarded loyalty to Iran's new political rulers.

By endorsing Ahmadinejad's re-election—and by extension, backing the coup that brought the power the president and the military-security apparatus that he leads—Supreme Leader Khamenei has effectively alienated an important segment of the ruling clerical elite. He has also seriously diminished the powers of his own office. Khomeini, for example, utilized his position as ruling jurist to act as the regime's arbiter, and was thus able to maintain his rule by balancing competing factions within the regime and the society as a whole. Today, because Khamenei has identified so strongly with the Principlists, it no longer seems possible for the supreme leader to maintain his rule as Khomeini once did. Nor does it seem possible for the clerical elite and military-security second stratum to coexist as they have in the past.

Analysts of revolutions have remained for too long under the sway of an idea drawn from the experience of the French Revolution. The conceit is that revolutions bring about a period in which political moderates are dominated by the radicals who ousted them, and that this period is normally followed by a return of moderates—or a "Thermidor"—that marks the revolution's effective end. The revolutions of Mexico, Russia and China, however, have all demonstrated a further possible stage in the revolutionary sequence: the return of the radical hard-liners. In contemporary Iran, this stage has also been reached with the dominance of Ahmadinejad and the Revolutionary Guards.

The parallel between Iran's Islamic Revolution and the Russian Revolution is particularly striking. From 1947-1948—a full thirty years after the 1917 Bolshevik revolution—radical hardliners were politically ascendant in Russia, and the world

witnessed the peak of Soviet expansionism and export of the Marxist-Leninist revolution and ideology. Today in Iran, three decades also separate the rise of Ahmadinejad and the Principlist-military regime from Khomeini's 1979 revolution. And, much like the Soviet Union in 1947-48, the Islamic Republic today is pursuing a newly aggressive foreign policy; the Revolutionary Guard Corps—especially though not exclusively the Qods Force—has inserted itself into Iran's foreign policy under Ahmadinejad, and Pasdaran commanders have conspicuously missed two opportunities to take tough stands on Iran's nuclear option.[10] (Moreover, it is worth noting that the Soviet Union's victory during the Second World War was highly conducive to Moscow's pursuit of an aggressive foreign policy—just as Iran's regional predominance, which has been obtained thanks to the American-led destruction of the Saddam Hussein regime in Iraq and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, has been favorable to the Principlist-militarists' radical ambitions.)

While Ahmadinejad has acquired unprecedented powers as president, it is important not to forget that his rise, and the rise of the Principlist-military regime, began with Supreme Leader Khamenei's efforts to augment his own personal powers. The supreme leader has managed to do this, in part, by replacing the men that former Presidents Hashemi-Rafsanjani and Khatami had appointed to the regime's various bureaucracies with his own appointments. While the supreme leader's power today may be weaker relative to the president's, Khamenei's dependencies in the government, combined with the growth of the supreme leader's extra-constitutional powers, has introduced a strong element of unpredictability in Iranian politics.[11]

Dictatorships—that is, autocratic political regimes that rest on power centralized in one person— are immensely fragile during periods of crisis. In the case of Iran, the shah's regime was fragile because it was rooted in a system of personal power in which the shah made all the decisions; the regime collapsed once the shah was mentally paralyzed by the outpouring of anti-regime forces in the late 1970s. Today, Khamenei's clerical monarchy is similarly a regime of personal power that is also enormously brittle and could come undone in the event of either the supreme leader's death or incapacitation. Whatever his personal reasons, Ayatollah Khamenei's backing of the June 2009 electoral putsch now appears to have been a costly mistake—and a potentially fatal error for the clerical regime, exactly 30 years, or one generation, after the revolution that replaced the crown with the turban. Khomeini's successor has unwittingly replaced the robust post-revolutionary developmental course of the first and only theocracy in the modern era with his own tenuous personal rule over an inharmonious amalgam of post-revolutionary clerical conciliarism and brute military-intelligence domination. This has the effect of focusing popular discontent and opposition toward the regime narrowly on the supreme leader—as was reflected in the vociferous calls of "Death to the Dictator!" that increasingly followed the cries of "God is Great!" heard

from Iranian rooftops earlier in the summer. This outpouring of hostility toward the supreme jurist became especially evident in the last wave of demonstrations in Tehran, Tabriz, Shiraz and other Iranian cities at the end of December 2009.

THE ERUPTION OF THE GREEN MOVEMENT IN IRAN HAS OCCURRED IN conjunction with birth of a new oppositional Shiite jurisprudence whose roots may be traced to the reform movement that emerged during the first year of Khatami's presidency. In November 1997, Ayatollah Hossein-Ali Montazeri openly challenged the principle of supreme leadership on the basis of the absolute guardianship of the jurist, arguing that supreme rule should consist only in the supervision of popular government. Shortly thereafter, in 1998, Montazeri's student, Hojjat al-Islam Mohsen Kadivar, issued a tract that presented Khomeini's theory as only one of eight recognized Shiite political theories. Kadivar also published a detailed refutation of Khomeini's theory and the official view labeled the "absolute appointive authority of the jurist." In February 2001, Montazeri further demanded that the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, of which he was one of the main authors, be revised in light of these new clerical rulings.[12] After the electoral putsch of June 2009, this nascent dissident Shiite jurisprudence acquired greater urgency and a more systematic oppositional character.

In reaction to the putsch, Ayatollah Hashemi-Rafsanjani, the chairman of the Assembly of Leadership Experts and former president, emerged as reform candidate Mousavi's most influential supporter and Ahmadinejad's staunchest enemy. Rafsanjani disappeared from the political scene for a month after the election while members of his family were harassed and detained. He was finally allowed to lead Friday prayers in Tehran on July 17, 2009. Rafsanjani's sermon—which was delivered to a massive and raucous audience, though not broadcast live—gave new voice and encouragement to the pleas of the reform movement. "We believe that republicanism and Islamicness must go together," the former president said. "Our revolution is lost if either is hurt." He maintained that according to the Constitution, "everything in the country is in the hands of the people. From the Supreme Leader, who is elected by indirect popular vote through the Assembly of Experts, to the direct election of the President, the Majles and the [local, municipal and provincial] Councils, everything is left to the people."

To provide support for his call to return to republicanism, Rafsanjani cited a tradition, or *hadith*, of the Prophet Muhammad, which constitutes a source of law in Shiite jurisprudence. In this tradition, the Prophet, after designating the first Imam Ali as his successor, tells Ali to exercise his mandate to rule the Muslim community only if he is acceptable to the people by consensus or majority. Significantly, Rafsanjani

claimed that he first learned of this hadith from Imam Khomeini himself—a claim clearly intended to provide a boost to the opposition's calls for greater republicanism. The reform leader would later cite this hadith again, stating that it may be found in books prepared by the medieval Shiite scholar Sayyed Ibn Tawus (d. 1267).

Since Rafsanjani presides over the Assembly of Experts—a leadership council of mojtaheds that constitutionally has the power to dismiss the supreme leader—his remarks have encouraged the opposition and others within the clerical establishment who are inclined to back it. In the second week of August 2009, a group of currently serving and former reformist Majles deputies wrote to Rafsanji requesting that the Assembly of Experts hold Khamenei responsible for the Stalin-type show trials of dissidents and for the torture and rape that took place in Iranian prisons. Ayatollah Sayyed Ali-Mohammad Dastgheib, representative of the province of Fars in the Assembly of Experts, and a Mousavi supporter, took up this cause and demanded an extraordinary meeting of the Assembly.

Dastgheib published the rationale for his demand in terms of Shiite jurisprudence on his website, www.dastgheyb.ir. In a carefully worded statement, he appealed to a more traditional Usuli conception of religious authority, and reclaimed for "every jurist and mojtahed in whatever time and place, authority (velayat) over those who accept him." He further claimed that the "protection and guardianship of the Constitution" belongs to the clerical scholars, or experts, whose duty it is to defend the constitution's every clause. He then pointedly reminded his colleagues on the Assembly of Experts of one of the cardinal principles of Usuli jurisprudence: "the experts are mojtaheds, and imitation is forbidden to the mojtahed." Based on this fundamental principle—which directly counters the Khomeinist argument that a mojtahed is obligated to follow another mojtahed who manages to establish Islamic government—Dastgheib called on the assembly to convene to restore the traditional authority and reputation of the preeminent jurists (*marjaiyyat*).

Despite Dastgheib's demands, the Assembly of Experts never met. In fact, not only was there no extraordinary session, but even the assembly's regularly scheduled session was postponed for a full month. When the assembly finally met on September 22-23, 2009, Rafsanjani (apparently to save his own neck) capitulated to Khamenei, and confessed to Dashgheib that he had not dared call for a meeting of the assembly to review the regime's conduct during the electoral putsch. Despite the fact that two-thirds of the Assembly of Experts had voted to elect him their president, Rafsanjani's capitulation is a sign that he is not willing to use his influence and power to remove Khamenei.[13] His subservience appears to have been rewarded by the supreme leader: in July 2010, Rafsanjani managed to successfully ward off—with the strong support of the Majles—an attempt by Ahmadinejad to wrest the control of the Islamic Free University (founded by Rafsanjani) from its independent Board of Trustees.

But Rafsanjani was not the only cleric spearheading the oppositional jurisprudence. On August 16, 2009, in a speech in the city of Gorgan, which was disseminated electronically through YouTube and other channels, Ayatollah Sanei joined the opposition by supporting Mousavi and attacking Ahmadinejad. Without naming Ahmadinejad explicitly, Sanei said "this bastard (*haramzada*) is lying; the Hidden Imam has no dealing with him whatsoever!" Sanei told his audience that he had been working on Shiite political jurisprudence, and cited a hadith of the first Imam, Ali, to the effect that all confessions extracted in isolation, let alone through intimidation, were invalid. This was a direct rebuke of the regime and its ongoing show trials of Iranian dissidents.

As August 2009 came to a close, Grand Ayatollah Asadallah Bayat-Zanjani—(whom Khomeini had appointed as a representative of militant clerics to the commission that drafted the constitutional amendments of 1989)—made his contribution to the opposition in a two-part interview published in the daily *Etemad*. In the first part, Bayat-Zanjani echoed Sanei and the reformists by citing Khomeini's statement, "the criterion is the vote of the nation." The Grand Ayatollah referenced Khomeini's pronouncement to provide a boost to Rafsanjani's above-mentioned interpretation that it was not Ali's designation or appointment by the Prophet but the allegiance (*bayat*) of the people 25 years later that entitled him to political rule over the Muslim community. Political authority invested in the ruler by the pledge of allegiance, according to Bayat-Zanjani, is purely contractual, just like any contract to buy and sell (*bay*), and there is nothing sacred nor is there a divine appointment involved in such pledge of allegiance.[14]

It should be noted that this popular and contractual understanding of political authority contradicts the fundamental idea of the Iranian theocratic government as the continuation of the Imamate of the Twelve Shiite Holy Imams, which was written into the Preamble to the Islamic Republic's Constitution and propounded as its official interpretation. In the second part of his interview with *Etemad*, Bayat-Zanjani interpreted the Iranian constitution in light of this principle of popular sovereignty by establishing four sets of mutual relationships involving responsibility and accountability. These relationships include those between the supreme leader and the three powers (the Executive, the Legislative and the Judiciary), those between the president and the Majles, those between the judiciary and the citizens, and those between the supreme leader and the Assembly of Experts. Underlying all four of these relationships, Bayat-Zanjani maintained, is the fundamental contract between the constitution of the regime and the nation itself, which has the power to confirm or change the constitution. [15]

The principal objective of this new oppositional jurisprudence is to contest the authority of the supreme jurist. The authors of this jurisprudence may be aware of the

fundamental shift in the Islamic Republic of Iran's structure of power in favor of the Revolutionary Guards, but such awareness is not reflected in their arguments. Their statements clearly show a deep apprehension of Ahmadinejad and the threats he poses to their religious authority. Even so, the clerics tend to see this threat in doctrinal rather than political terms. Ayatollahs Bayat-Zanjani and Dastgheib, for example, both see the threat posed by Ahmadinejad to the authority of the preeminent mojtaheds as the latest in a string of efforts to subvert Imam Khomeini's teachings on Islamic republicanism by a group that he disbanded after the revolution, the *Hojjatiyya*. This group's aim is to expedite the return of the Lord of the Age, the Hidden Imam, and Ahmadinejad and his mentor, Ayatollah Mesbah-Yazdi are reputed to belong to it.[16]

Many dissident clerics have been arrested since June 2009, and the dissident Grand Ayatollahs have been under great pressure. Following the brutal suppression of the demonstrations of the last days of December 2009, the offices of the dissident Ayatollahs Sanei and Dastgheib were attacked and their contents impounded, alongside a massive wave of fresh arrests. The regime, furthermore, sought to forcibly demote Sanei from the rank of Grand Ayatollah by alleging that he lacked qualification as a fully competent mojtahed.

The massive marches and protests against Ahmadinejad's electoral fraud that were staged by millions of Iranians gave rise to the widespread view that another Iranian revolution was in the making on the thirtieth anniversary of the one that toppled the Shah. The cheated presidential candidates, both veteran 1979 revolutionaries, almost instinctively thought of a replay of history, and the leading one, Mir Hossein Mousavi, claimed the internationally-inspired green color, which was selected by his young supporters, was indeed the color of the House of the Prophet. He told his supporters to fill the air of the cities at night with cries from the rooftops of "God is Great!" The idea refused to die, and was vigorously reasserted after the demonstrations and clashes that occurred on the day of Ashura, and then again in the wake of Ayatollah Montazeri's funeral in the closing days of December 2009. Although another revolution did not materialize, the last six months of 2009 revealed an evident split between Iranian society and its government that seems far wider than in the last days of the Shah thirty years earlier.

Technological advances in the last thirty years greatly favored the 2009 protesters in comparison to the 1979 revolutionaries, and facilitated their astonishing persistence. SMS and the Internet have proven infinitely superior to Khomeini's smuggled cassettes that helped foment the revolution in 1979. On the other hand, the opposition movement's lack of a charismatic leader comparable to Khomeini has greatly

diminished the prospects for any immediate revolution. Nor does it bode well for the long-term development of an Iranian democracy. Indeed, the striking feature of the Green Movement has been the lack of effective leadership. As Mir Hossein Mousavi soon and readily acknowledged, neither he nor Mehdi Karroubi called the shots or felt that they were in charge. Furthermore, the death of Grand Ayatollah Montazeri on December 19, 2009 significantly weakened the dissident clerics and reduced what influence they had on the Green Movement.

But this has not stopped other aging children of the revolution from striving to lead the Green Movement. On January 3, 2010, just two weeks after Montazeri's death, a manifesto by five prominent opposition intellectuals in exile referred to him as the deceased spiritual leader of the Green Movement and stated that "religious despotism" (*estebdad-e dini*) had completely lost its legitimacy after the regime's violent suppression of unarmed demonstrators at Montazeri's funeral and in a separate incident during Ashura. One of the signatories was Montazeri's student, Hojjat al-Islam Mohsen Kadivar. It was most likely Kadivar, drawing on the nascent Shiite oppositional jurisprudence, who penned the line in the manifesto that referred to Supreme Jurist Khamenei as the "tyrannical guardian" (*vali-ye ja'er*).

The five signatories of the manifesto put forward their demands for reform and democratization as "a small sector of the nationwide Green Movement of the people of Iran." They defined the movement as dedicated to civil disobedience and devoted to "the observance of human rights and acceptance of the democratic demands of the people, realization of civil society, religious tolerance, recognition of the principle of pluralism and variety in the political space, and finally the abolition of the tyrannical Mandate [of the Jurist] (velayat-e jaer)." Within a few days, during the first week of January 2010, Ezattolah Sahabi, a member of Bazargan's revolutionary provisional government in 1979, and a leader of the so-called "nationalist-religious" opposition, also put in a bid for the leadership of post-putsch opposition movement by explicitly advocating civil disobedience instead of revolution. In an open letter issued in Tehran, Sahabi warned the movement not to slide into "radicalism and violence," stating categorically that "a revolution in today's Iran is neither possible nor desirable."[17]

It seems unlikely, however, that other graying children of the Islamic revolution turned reformists can control the Green Movement any more than Mousavi and Karroubi. The fundamentally new feature of the Green Movement is that it is driven by a post-revolutionary generation of young Iranians that includes women. Clerics like Khatami, Karroubi and Kadivar remain highly visible in the Green Movement, but for the first time in the history of the Islamic Republic of Iran, there is no room for clerical leadership in this popular movement, nor for its control by the former Islamic radicals-turned-reformists in their 60s and 70s. The massive demographic shift, in both generation and gender, during three decades of revolution and war has created

a new post-Islamist, post-revolutionary oppositional movement that is as widespread as it is persistent. So far it lacks a leadership structure as its dynamism entirely comes from below.

After the electoral putsch, the Ayatollah-Dictator and the Revolutionary Guards inadvertently revealed their fears by extracting forced confessions at the show trials that followed the arrests of scores of reformists. These concocted confessions were meant to highlight the "foreign inspiration" behind the protest movement and elaborated a conspiratorial theory that a "Velvet Revolution" was being fomented within the Islamic Republic thanks to the penetration of Western social sciences. But the authorities know very well that there is no such foreign-led conspiracy. The challenge to their rule, rather, is grounded in something far more inexorable: the objective forward march of history past the aging revolutionary elite.

Today, the Iranian ruling class is facing a new, hostile, and well-educated generation of women and men. While the three principles of Khomeini's revolutionary legacy still dominate the discourse of the reform-oriented children of the Islamic revolution, they've struggled, in their bewilderment, to get a handle on the Green Movement. For the first time, however, the opposition cannot be controlled by the children of the revolution. The rift resulting from the mobility of women and an educated younger generation versus the structure of the Islamic Republic seems irreparable. Khomeini's long shadow on Iranian politics no longer extends to the Green Movement. This does not bode well for the future of clericalism, nor for Iran's aging reformists.

To allay history's forward movement and revive a modicum of popular support for the regime nothing is more tempting for Iran's new Principlist-military political class than an aggressive foreign policy. It is hard to imagine a greater stimulus to bellicose adventurism and a greater boon to Ahmadinejad and the Revolutionary Guards than a strategically misguided provocation by those in the West whom the Iranian regime has declared as its foes. This is all the more disconcerting in view of the fact that the nationwide grass-roots Green Movement is committed to non-violence and civil disobedience. For this reason, it is slow to mature and subject to periodic dissipation. A year after the electoral putsch, Ahmadinejad's hard-line government has therefore prevailed, despite the opposition of the Greens and a significant segment of the clerical elite.

NOTES

1. BBC News [Persian], 8/13/2009.
2. Edward Yeranian, "Senior Iranian Pro-Government Cleric Urges More Executions of Regime Opponents," Voice of America, January 29, 2010.

http://www1.voanews.com/english/news/middle-east/Iranian-Cleric-Calls-for-More-Executions-83044532.html

3. Arjomand, Said Amir, *After Khomeini: Iran under his Successors* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) p. 187.
4. Arjomand, p. 42.
5. It is worth recalling that Hojjat al-Islam Mehdi Karroubi was pushed out in the first round of the 2005 presidential election to make room for Ahmadinejad, although he almost certainly had more votes. See Naji, Kasra, *Ahmadinejad: The Secret History of Iran's Radical Leader* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008) pp. 77-78.
6. Arjomand, p. 169.
7. Tabnaak, 2/8/2010. Ayatollah Javadi-Amoli appears to have fallen out with the regime, and he resigned as the prayer-leader (imam jomeh) of Qom in early summer 2010.
8. In an earlier explicit *fatwa,* Makarem-Shirazi had declared contacting internet sites that sow dissension "definitely forbidden by the Shari'a." (IRNA, 1/12/2010, cited in Mohammadi 2010); The confirmation of the sentence on Amin Valian came in early March 2010. In May, 2010, however, as an indirect response to the international protests against the executions of the Kurdish separatists, the Judiciary commuted Valian's sentence to three years in prison.
9. *The Economist*, 8/29/2009.
10. Arjomand, Chapter 10.
11. Arjomand, Chapter 9.
12. Arjomand, pp. 52-54, 102.
13. BBC News [Persian], 9/23/2009.
14. *Etemad*, # 2039, 8 Shahrivar 1388; BBC News [Persian], 9/23/2009.
15. *Etemad*, # 2040, 9 Shahrivar 1388.
16. The Hojjatiyya are also said to advocate the replacing the "Islamic republic" by what they call "Islamic government;" *Etemad*, #2040, 9 Shahrivar 1388; BBC News [Persian], 9/23/2009.
17. *The Economist*, 1/9/2010: 27.

Why Iran's Islamic Government is Unraveling

By Jamsheed K. Choksy

On June 12, 2009, the day of the Islamic Republic of Iran's tenth presidential elections since the 1979 revolution, it seemed for many in Iran and around the world that democracy had finally triumphed over theocracy. By apparently voting to oust President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad—the incumbent who had the backing of clerical hardliners in the regime, including Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei—the Iranian people demonstrated that the theocratic regime had lost its tyrannical grip on their aspirations. Yet the mullahs and their allies in the government bureaucracy had other plans. To prevent the most important popularly-elected political office in Iran from slipping beyond their control, the regime decided to engineer what Khamenei infamously described as an "electoral miracle." So, after a hard-fought election with the largest turnout of voters in Iranian history, Ahmadinejad was allegedly re-elected to a second term.

As people flooded into the streets to protest the fraud, the theocratic regime unleashed the Basij paramilitary forces to suppress them. Bearing the brunt of the repression was the Green Movement, a broad-based, loosely-knit grassroots movement that coalesced around a diverse group of dissident clerical and secular politicians like Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Seyyed Mohammad Khatami, Seyyed Mehdi Karroubi, and Mir Hossein Mousavi.

As the Iranian regime regained control of the streets, it appeared at first that the mullahs had prevailed. But it soon became clear how narrow the Islamic Republic's victory over the Iranian people actually was, and how brittle the regime had become in the process. While the disputed elections brought to light the full extent of citizens' outrage and the government's flagging legitimacy, it also brought into the

open many festering disputes within the regime itself between competing political and ideological orientations.

This clash over the tenets, goals, and institutions of national administration has serious ramifications for the future of Islamic government within Iran. In essence, the revolutionary Shiite ideology of *velayat-e faqih*, or the rule of the jurist, which brought the Islamic Republic into existence, is no longer binding even the clerical establishment together. Nor is it linking the clerical establishment to other branches of Iran's government let alone to the Iranian people. Even though it seems unlikely to collapse in the near future, the Islamic regime has begun to unravel, and appears to be headed down the path of becoming "neither Islamic nor a republic," as branches of the state continue to attempt to wrest power exclusively for themselves.[1] This struggle between competing factions may prove to bring about the Islamic Republic of Iran's ultimate demise.

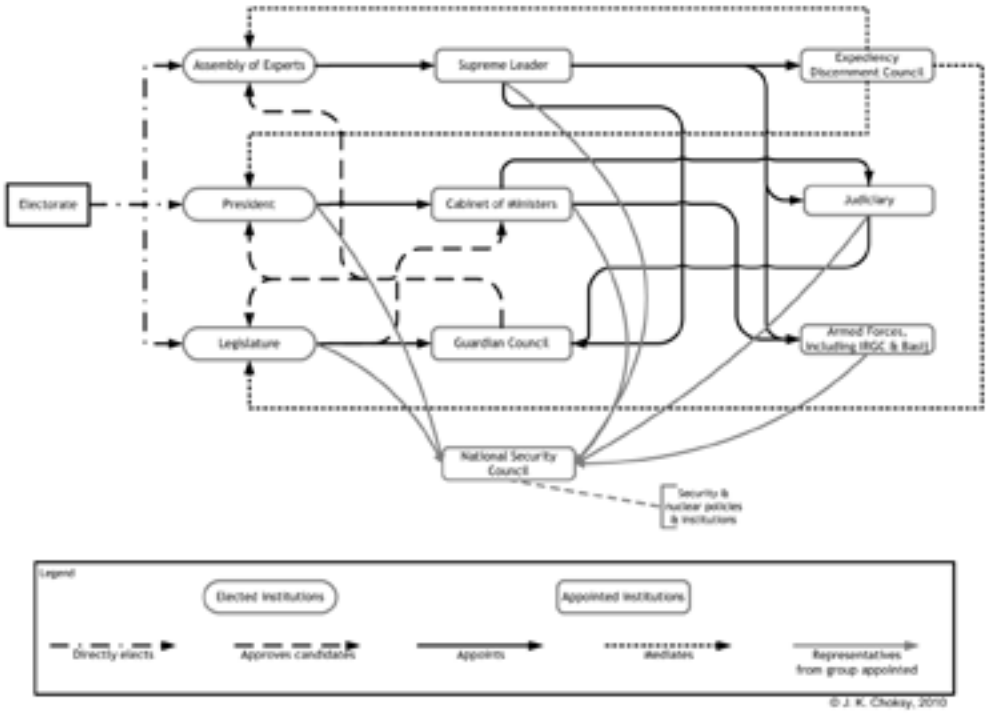
Clerical Contentions

OF ALL THE IRANIAN STATE'S INSTITUTIONS, ONLY THE THEOCRATIC BRANCH'S highest office comes with a constitutionally-approved, *de-facto* permanent appointment—that is, the position of *rahbar*, or supreme leader. The supreme leader is appointed by a body known as the Assembly of Experts (*Majles-e Khobregan*), which consists of 86 *mojtahids,* or Muslim scholars, who are themselves elected to eight-year terms of office. An influential supreme leader can exercise considerable authority, if not final say, over many aspects of Iranian politics, society, economy, and religion. This authority includes shaping the outcome of elections and the trajectory of Iranian foreign policy, such as the objectives of nuclear power.[2]

Iran's current supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was appointed in June 1989 after the death of Ayatollah Khomeini. Before his appointment, Khamenei served Khomeini as deputy minister of defense and then as representative to the IRGC. Thereafter, with his mentor's backing, Khamenei was elected to two consecutive terms as president of the Islamic Republic. Despite this political career, Iran's mullahs initially resisted Khamenei's appointment as supreme leader because he didn't even hold the rank of ayatollah at the time, and many complained he lacked the requisite religious scholarly credentials to hold such office.

Yet of those candidates for supreme leader who were religiously qualified, none eventually proved to be as politically acceptable to the Islamic regime's rulers as did Khamenei. One leading candidate, Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, had fallen out of official grace for becoming a moderate. Another leading candidate, the politically pragmatic Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Reza Golpaygani, failed to gain

IRAN'S GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE



IRAN'S POLITICAL SYSTEM is often regarded as consisting of three governmental branches: executive, legislative, and judicial.[3] The regime's theocratic branch is not usually thought of as melded together with this administrative hierarchy, but it should be, because the theocracy underlies and shapes all aspects of Iranian society and politics. Shiite Islam and its representatives, the *mullahs* or clerics, have become an intrinsic and central part of Iranian statecraft. In the words of Iran's Islamic revolutionary founder Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, "It is the laws and ordinances of Islam ... Islamic government may therefore be defined as the rule of divine law over humans."[4] Likewise, the military must also be included in any analysis of Iran's political system, for the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) or *Pasdaran,* in particular, has become a major influence in Iranian political life. The *Pasdaran* is likely to remain a pivotal political force for the foreseeable future.

the Assembly of Experts' support. With no politically acceptable alternatives, the assembly elevated Khamenei to the highest religious and political position in Iran.[5]

Since rising to the position of *rahbar* and *veli-ye faqih,* or guardian jurist, over twenty years ago, Khamenei has proved to be a shrewd politician, and he has steadily and methodically increased the power of his office. His political opponents have

been imprisoned. He has isolated influential mullahs from Shiism's quietist school, which challenges the very core of the Islamic Republic as it maintains that clerics should only play an advisory, rather than a direct, role in Iranian political life.[6] He has also assiduously nurtured ties within the IRGC and the paramilitary Basij forces, thereby ensuring that any popular opposition to his authority could be effectively countered. This is precisely what occurred after the last presidential election, when security forces suppressed popular protests quickly and violently.

Just as importantly, Khamenei has been able to foil efforts from within the regime itself to remove him from office. Since coming to power, Khamenei has actively promoted those who support his overall agenda, and surrounded himself with a clique of extremist mullahs who are hostile to plurality, moderation, and fundamental rights. He and his cohorts have accrued for themselves lavish lifestyles—something quite contrary to what is popularly expected of high-ranking religious figures.[7] Fiscal and sociopolitical perks are spread by his administration to most members of the Shiite clergy, as long as they publicly toe the supreme leader's line. Such incentives have made ordinary mullahs loath to depose the theocratic system, even though many disagree with it on theological as well as political grounds.[8]

It was this power base within the polity that proved most valuable to Khamenei when Rafsanjani led an effort to impeach and remove him from the supreme leadership through the Assembly of Experts. To foil this attack, the supreme leader's network of appointees in the clerical and judicial establishments launched an assault on Rafsanjani, impugning his religious credentials and questioning whether he was even entitled to hold the rank of ayatollah. They also attacked Rafsanjani's family.[9] Rafsanjani was eventually forced to concede considerable political and ideological ground to Khamenei. Even though he previously served two terms as Iran's president, and despite currently serving as chair of both the Assembly of Experts and the Expediency Discernment Council (*Majma-ye Tashkhis-e Maslahat-e Nezam*, which mediates political squabbles between the branches of government), Rafsanjani has been forced to publicly acknowledge Khamenei's leadership as paramount.[10]

His recent failure to oust the supreme leader notwithstanding, Rafsanjani may still be the one senior cleric who can seriously challenge Khamenei's grip on power. Because he is over 70 years of age, Rafsanjani is precluded by Iran's Constitution from holding presidential office for a third term. There are no age restrictions on elevation to the post of supreme leader, however. Ironically, Rafsanjani might even benefit from the abolition of the theocracy and its conversion to a federal system, for he remains an influential, wealthy, and popularly electable politician.

While many clerics who backed the Green Movement early on have since broken ranks, there are indications that many other mullahs, including some who have thus far remained silent, may still yet align themselves with the expanding ranks of

discontented people to seek the abolition of the office of *rahbar,* under which they have lost any real ability to govern themselves. For example, Ayatollah Hossein Mousavi Tabrizi, the influential Secretary of the Assembly of Qom Seminary Scholars and Researchers (*Majma-ye Mohaqeqin-e Modarresin-e Howze-ye Elmiyye-e Qom*, also known as the Association of Researchers and Teachers of Qom), has noted that "the guardianship of the jurist should last only as long as the people desire it and then be replaced by citizens' franchise."[11]

The Assembly of Experts has thus far resisted all calls to amend the constitution, not least because disbanding the office of supreme leader would also make the assembly itself obsolete. To forestall the assembly's members from blocking any effort to revise the constitution, some Iranian intellectuals are privately suggesting that the assembly be transformed into an upper chamber, or a Senate, of a bicameral legislature. Indeed, the *majles* or consultative legislature had been a bicameral body from the period of the Constitutional Revolution of 1905 until the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Rafsanjani was among those in the Assembly of Experts who pushed this idea in tandem with his attempt to oust Khamenei. His effort failed because other members of the assembly believed Rafsanjani would then seize absolute power.

So today, thirty years after ousting their shah, Iranians are now subject to an autocratic theocracy, and are increasingly outraged by the fact that the Islamic revolution has replaced one despot with another. Although Khamenei remains in office, he is respected by neither many Shiite clergymen and politicians nor most ordinary Iranians.[12] More important, the office of *rahbar* itself is no longer invulnerable due to mullahs concluding that Khamenei has failed them politically. Khamenei continues to advocate an "active presence of people believing in religion and the values of the Islamic revolution" to hold change at bay.[13] Yet increasingly, Iranians are openly calling for constitutional and governmental transformation. Hence, it is far from clear how the Islamic Republic will be able to recover from this crisis of its revolutionary ideology, especially insofar as it involves defections from within the religious establishment itself.

Executive Machinations

AS THE CRISIS WITHIN IRAN'S THEOCRATIC BRANCH HAS DEEPENED, YET ANOTHER challenge to the Islamic Republic and to *velayat-e faqih,* or the guardianship of the jurists, upon which it was founded, has arisen from within the regime's executive branch.

Iran's president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is best known to the world as an anti-Semitic, Holocaust-denying, and apocalypse-threatening firebrand. Yet within Iran,

Ahmadinejad is also widely viewed as an astute, manipulative, and populist politician. Since first elected president in 2005, his power has been growing. His re-election to a second term, in fact, was engineered by loyalists in the Interior Ministry, endorsed by the Guardian Council of the Constitution (*Shura-ye Negahban-e Qanun-e Assassi*, a body that is chaired by the powerful Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati), and ultimately confirmed by Supreme Leader Khamenei himself.[14] It was, of course, Khamenei's imprudent and hasty confirmation of Ahmadinejad as the election's victor that triggered the crisis of 2009 and nearly ended the theocracy. Importantly, Khamenei backed Ahmadinejad because he believed the president would become ever more beholden and subservient to the office of supreme leader. Instead, Ahmadinejad has rebelled against his clerical patron.

In the turmoil that engulfed the country following his re-appointment, Ahmadinejad and ideologically-kindred bureaucratic appointees—known collectively as the *Osulgarayan*, or the Principlists—sensed an opportunity to dramatically enlarge their power, and they seized upon it. As popular attentions shifted away from elections fraud toward far more fundamental and constitutional issues, the Principlists sought to take advantage of Khamenei's beleaguered status specifically, and the growing weakness of the theocracy and its clerical backers as a whole, so as to place more power and independence into the hands of secular autocrats.[15]

In effect, Ahmadinejad perceived a power vacuum within the clerical establishment, plus the shifting tide of public sentiment against theocracy, and he moved decisively to fill it.[16] The president and his supporters believe that the period of religious sovereignty will soon be over. In a country where overt allegiance to fundamentalist Shiism and obedience to the religiopolitical authority of ayatollahs is expected of senior state officials, Ahmadinejad and his clique have fast emerged as a stark exception. Their behavior displays increasing autonomy from the theocrats in both domestic and foreign affairs. The root cause of their independence has been the post-election struggle within the government itself, as Ahmadinejad's cronies undermine the religious establishment in order to gain an increasingly larger share of power.[17]

Since the president's re-election, the Principlists have managed to seize considerable new powers, including substantial control of state funds.[18] They have arrogated these new powers in a way that many Iranians regard as being as dictatorial and as reprehensible as the theocrats' rule, but which some Iranians—especially those who have become fed-up with the mullahs' theocratic rule—seem to desire and even approve. Ahmadinejad publicly chastises his rivals in the other branches of Iran's government for "running to Qom for every instruction," adding that Iranian politicians "should not leave the burden of administering the country on the shoulders of the [supreme] leader, the religious scholars, and other [clerics]. We must administer the country."[19]

In a bid to undercut the religious basis of the clerics' political authority, Ahmadinejad

has begun emphasizing "pragmatic values" in governance.[20] His chief of staff and relative through marriage, Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei, has been a leading exponent of this approach. According to Mashaei, "an Islamic government is not capable of running a vast and populous country like Iran. Running a country is like a horse race, but the problem is that these people [the clergy] are not horse racers."[21] In response to these attacks, Shiite clergymen have declared that they "will not tolerate attacks on the principles of religion." Yet these protestations have largely fallen on deaf ears in the regime's executive branch.[22]

Meanwhile, Ahmadinejad has been actively populating the government with appointees, and promoting those who share his overall agenda. In the face of strenuous objections on religious grounds from clerics and legislators, the president nominated three women for Cabinet-level portfolios in 2009. Ahmadinejad went so far as to ridicule his clerical opponents, demanding to know why women shouldn't hold cabinet positions. More recently, he threatened to replace ineffective male administrators with more efficient women. In the end, only Ahmadinejad's nominee for health minister, Mazieh Dastjerdi, was confirmed. Yet Dastjerdi herself has only further provoked the clergy's ire by publicly arguing, contrary to Islamic tradition, that a woman's rights should be conceived of as unique to them as individuals, and separately from their fathers and husbands.[23] Ahmadinejad has subsequently appointed other women to senior administrative posts, including provincial governorships.

Moreover, Ahmadinejad has selected only one cleric, Heidar Moslehi, to fill a Cabinet position, as Minister of Intelligence and National Security (there were three mullahs in his previous government).[24] Moslehi is unlikely to subvert the president, thanks to his own close ties to the secular autocrats via the IRGC where he once served as a commissioner. Essentially, the president is methodically building a bureaucratic base faithful to him, and at the expense of those who serve the theocrats.

Ahmadinejad's dismissive attitude toward the theocratic, legislative, and judicial branches of the Islamic Republic has been followed by his subordinates and even by some family members. In January 2010, science minister Kamran Daneshjou inaugurated an international conference for women in the sciences at Tehran. Azamossadat Farahi, Ahmadinejad's wife, defied both tradition and clerical approval by delivering a keynote speech at the conference that described women, knowledge, and science as "cornerstones of Allah's creation." Since the 2009 elections, Farahi has become a visible fixture in Iranian politics by participating in a meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement, and by publicly raising the issue of women's lack of rights in the Islamic Republic.[25]

At the same time, realizing that anti-government sentiments are fueled, in part, by years of behavioral restrictions, Daneshjou is encouraging attendees at funerals and memorial services to observe a moment of silence instead of reciting the first chapter of the Quran as has been obligatory. Likewise, the government's cultural

advisor, Javad Shamghadari, is recommending that the *hejab*, or veil, should not be mandatory—much to the horror of mullahs and orthodox laypersons.

Denunciations as "heretics" and "infidels" have not swayed the president and his bureaucratic cohorts from these secular agendas, which are designed to further weaken the theocrats' hold on power.[26] Indeed, the clerical establishment has been unable to muster an effective response to the president's broadsides. The president maintains close personal ties with Ayatollah Mohammad Mesbah Yazdi, an influential ultraorthodox scholar in the Assembly of Experts, who might ordinarily be expected to be a staunch defender of the Islamic Republic's clerical establishment. But even this has not reined in Ahmadinejad's drive to consolidate his power by abjuring beliefs and practices central to the theocracy. In fact, Yazdi, the consummate theocrat, has himself been accused by other theocrats of plotting against the supreme leader with the help of his presidential acolyte—a sign of just how splintered the Shiite clergy have become.[27]

Whenever possible, Ahmadinejad, his ministers and his staff seek to avoid meetings with the Expediency Discernment Council, a body that's led by two of the president's fiercest political rivals—Rafsanjani is its chairman and former presidential candidate Mohsen Rezai is its secretary. Consultation with Khamenei is, for the most part, perfunctory as well. In fact, hardline clerics and legislators grumble that Ahmadinejad and his ministers regularly defy the supreme leader. But, having validated Ahmadinejad's re-election, their reprisals are limited to attempts at blocking certain executive actions—such as a nuclear deal with the West. Moreover, when rebuffed by the theocrats, the president often finds ways to work around them. For instance, when the theocrats recently blocked the president's attempt to reach an agreement directly with the IAEA and U.S. for a nuclear fuel swap, he struck a similar deal with Turkey and Brazil. While it was relatively easy for regime hardliners to reject an agreement with the West, they had to consent to working with other developing countries. And even though the U.S. rejected the latter agreement, it served to bolster the Principlists' cause at home and in the Third World.

The Principlist-Military Complex

AHMADINEJAD AND HIS PRINCIPLIST ALLIES HAVE CULTIVATED A SERIES OF ALLIANCES in yet another vitally important branch of the Iranian government—the armed forces. Iranian sources indicate that the president is using the IRGC and its ancillary wing, the Basij, to centralize power within the executive branch.[28] The upper ranks of the military have served as training grounds for many of the increasingly secular militants now in power—including the president, who was himself an influential

Basij organizer while studying at the University of Tehran prior to serving in the IRGC's 6th Special Operations Unit.[29] The IRGC, for its part, is utilizing its connections with the executive branch to acquire major financial stakes in important industrial sectors that are being privatized, including oil and gas, construction, manufacturing, and agriculture. It is becoming a major player in Iran's foreign policy as well, funding development aid, weapons technology, and the spread of anti-Western ideology in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.[30]

So in exchange for helping Ahmadinejad intimidate the clerical establishment and ordinary Iranian subjects through the threat and actual use of violent force, the military is deepening its hold over the Iranian economy. As the U.S. government convinces growing numbers of multinational corporations to cease business with Iran, the IRGC's development wing is stepping in to fill the void. Seizing the opportunities created by international sanctions, the IRGC's ever-increasing array of companies is steadily taking over every major industrial sector within Iran. They are utilizing their growing industrial expertise to engage in international trade, construction, and military-related ventures in other Third World countries.[31] Because the state sector provides a major employment pool, the military is entangling the general population in its tentacles. Moreover, as ostensibly private companies are increasingly tied to the executive branch and its supporters via financial stakes, the positions of Ahmadinejad and the IRGC grow stronger vis-à-vis the clergy.[32]

The ideology undergirding this Principlist-IRGC bid for power was echoed by Mohammad Ali Jafari, an IRGC general, who stated publicly that preserving the government "is more vital than performing daily prayers."[33] In a stark example of what this new policy means in practice, the IRGC has begun assuming control over the administration of important Shiite rituals, and has appointed prayer leaders and blocked the participation of clerics who do not bend to the IRGC's will or who criticize the president—such as Seyyed Hassan Khomeini, the grandson of the late Ayatollah Khomeini.[34] Ahmadinejad and IRGC commanders even keep leading ayatollahs and prominent politicians on short leashes by regulating their movement within and outside Iran. They do the same for all other citizens by controlling airports, harbors, and overland border crossings. The IRGC maintains its own media outlets, seizes and closes down news sources critical to its activities, and arrests editors, broadcasters, and reporters. Many of these activities are conducted with Iran's Ministry of Intelligence and National Security, which is also known as Vezarat-e Ettela'at va Amniyat-e Keshvar (VEVAK). The IRGC and VEVAK are linked to the assassination of dissidents, too.

Under Ahmadinejad's presidential patronage, the Basij militia's annual operational budget has grown to 14.85 trillion *rials* (U.S. $148.5 Billion)—an amount that allegedly funds as many as twenty million volunteers.[35] Iran's annual budget is the equivalent

of U.S. $349 billion, and its population is estimated at between 70 and 74 million. As such, the paramilitary draws upon a major share of revenue and manpower in the Islamic Republic. In exchange, Basij cadres have been at the forefront of the regime's efforts to violently quash protests against Ahmadinejad's presidency. Meanwhile, the IRGC, although much smaller than the Basij with approximately 150,000 soldiers, are now the best trained, equipped, and funded of Iran's regular military forces.[36]

So, even though supreme leader Khamenei originally endorsed both Ahmadinejad's re-election and the IRGC's growing influence as a means of reinforcing clerical power and rule in the wake of last June's electoral dispute, his actions inadvertently helped to create a major, secular-oriented challenge to the theocracy from within the government itself.[37] Simultaneously, the Iranian people's own demands for representative government, and their challenge to the political legitimacy of rule by Muslim jurists, have also weakened the status quo. Thanks in part to this conspiracy of factors, the secular autocrats within the administration and the military have been able to find common cause, and they've been consolidating their grasp on power by turning to totalitarianism and away from the revolutionary Shiite Islamism of the clerics—who the Principlists have begun excoriating in public as *monafeqan*, or backstabbers of the regime.[38]

Electoral, Legislative, and Judicial Maneuvers

THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH, HOWEVER, HAS ONE MAJOR WEAKNESS: ITS LEADERSHIP serves for a fixed time period. Ahmadinejad's current term of office ends in August 2013 and, by constitutional stipulation, he can run for a third presidential term only after sitting out the next election. No prior Iranian president has been successful in a third bid—a fact proven once again by Ahmadinejad's own victory over Rafsanjani, when the latter attempted to regain the presidency for a third time in 2005. The mullahs know that if they can stall the executive branch's power grab for a few more years, Ahmadinejad may be gone from the political scene and the secular autocrats would be greatly diminished. For these reasons, the Guardian Council can be expected to vet presidential candidates even more closely for the 2013 election to avoid secular-leaning power-grabbing leaders like Ahmadinejad.

In response, Ahmadinejad's cohorts have now launched attempts to remove the consecutive and overall term limits which exist on election to presidential office.[39] This is very much a long shot, because Ahmadinejad has alienated many powerful

politicians including Rafsanjani and the legislature's leadership. But if the Principlists are successful, the mullahs will face a serious challenge, and Iran could move politically from a theocratic system to a more secular, but no less dictatorial one.

Should current conditions hold, Ahmadinejad's replacement as president is likely to be Ali Larijani, who serves as Speaker of the unicameral legislature, or majles. Ali Larijani hails from a family of well-known and increasingly influential clerics.[40] Under Larijani's oversight, members of the majles, who are elected to four-year terms by the general population, have forged stronger ties with the theocrats in an attempt to counter the rising political power of the executive branch. According to the Islamic Republic's constitution, all candidates for election to the majles are screened by the Guardian Council, whose own membership consists of six Muslim jurists selected by the supreme leader, and another six selected by the parliamentarians. This presents an opportunity for the ayatollahs, who may seek to regain some of their power by determining the eligibility of candidates for the 2012 parliamentary elections and then utilizing a well-stocked legislature, sympathetic to clerical rule, to block executive actions.

Should the theocrats pursue this electoral strategy, they are likely to receive considerable backing, at least in the short-term, from the judiciary, which is headed by Speaker Larijani's brother, Sadeq Larijani. Sadeq Larijani previously held an eight-year term on the Guardian Council, courtesy of an appointment by Khamenei, and his connections to the clerical establishment run deep. Sadeq Larijani has made a number of recent pronouncements stressing the importance of judicial independence, and these appear aimed at protecting the judiciary's autonomy from Ahmadinejad's appointees, and at counter-balancing the executive branch's attempts to create an imperial presidency.[41]

The judiciary seems more than willing to play political hardball as well, as it has recently sought to place the blame for the gross violations of human rights since June 2009 squarely on Ahmadinejad and his allies in the executive branch, on the civil bureaucracy, and on the Basij militia forces. Needless to say, success creates new opportunities, and despite the theocrats' best laid plans, the Larijani brothers may eventually choose to make their own play for political supremacy at the theocratic branch's expense.

Yet, contenders are emerging from Ahmadinejad's camp to challenge Ali Larijani, the legislators, judges, and the theocrats. Principlists, too, have begun planning for the next round of majles and presidential elections. Their leading candidate for now is Ahmadinejad's relative and chief of staff Mashaei. Mashaei's political and economic policies are in line with those of the IRGC. His policies including attitudes on Islam, women's rights, and international affairs (such as relations with Israel) are more tolerant than those of the mullahs and even his presidential mentor. Ayatollahs regularly denounce him as impious, and he retaliates by calling them "ineffective

administrators like the prophets Noah and Moses."[42] Indeed, Mashaei may appeal to a wider range of the Iranian polity more than any other prospective candidate precisely because his politics have been more agreeable to intellectuals, artists, entrepreneurs, and the youth.

Like Mashaei and other Principlists, even Ahmadinejad has sought to reach out to Iran's demographically numerous younger generations (who make up 50 percent of the country's total population) by claiming that he, too, is "strongly against" clergy-instigated crackdowns on Iranians' social choices and behaviors, as he believes "it is impossible for such actions to be successful."[43]

The military apparatus also has an inherent weak spot. Commanders of the Pasdaran and the Basij rise through the ranks, retire at the end of their careers, and can be reassigned or even stripped of their commands by public officials. Technically, the armed forces report to the defense minister, and thereby to the president. However, the supreme leader can and routinely does exercise his constitutionally-granted authority to intervene in military affairs, including promotions and assignments. By shuffling generals between postings, and even summarily removing some from their positions, Khamenei recently has sought to prevent military officers from developing personal power bases to the detriment of the mullahs.[44]

Such tactics do not always prove successful. To Iran's immediate east, the historical role of Pakistan's military commanders as powerbrokers and coup d'état leaders is well-known and much-feared by the mullahs. Ideally, the ayatollahs led by Khamenei hope they can restore a balance between the executive, legislative, judicial, and military branches of Iran's government—as seems to be happening in Pakistan—so that the theocrats might once again reign supreme over elected and appointed officials.[45] The future of the Islamic Republic, and of theocratic rule, very much depends on their ability to do so. For now, their success seems unlikely; rather, the Principlists and their IRGC and Basij allies are on the upsurge within Iran's ruling hierarchy.

The People's Challenge

SO WHERE DO THE GREEN MOVEMENT AND OTHER DEMOCRACY-SEEKING GROUPS fit into the political struggles that are gripping Iran? Many formerly prominent leaders of the opposition appear to be putting their long-term political and personal self-interests above all other considerations and are maneuvering to make amends with the fundamentalist mullahs. Initially on the upsurge, their protests have fizzled out in recent months. Rank and file dissidents have been arrested, tortured, abandoned, and left without rights and leadership as the state effectively maintains control of public gatherings. Ideologically, theologically, and strategically, the Greens

and other opposition elements are now becoming internally divided and politically marginalized.[46]

Perhaps the most influential of all the opposition leaders to have recently come in from the cold is Rafsanjani, that consummate political survivor.[47] Having failed in his efforts to push Khamenei aside, Rafsanjani has once again accepted the supreme leader's authority, claiming that an enemy plot against the Islamic system and the velayat-e faqih has been successfully thwarted. Rafsanjani has extolled his former foe as "the most qualified person to resolve the current problems" and has fawningly remarked that "the supreme leader has never endorsed extremism or transgression of the law." He also has resumed urging the general public "to support the Islamic Republic" because "the era of suppression and imposing decisions upon the people has come to the end."[48] Of course, this is not to say that Rafsanjani isn't keeping his options open. Ever the opportunist with few discernible principles, Rafsanjani is still trying to straddle the fence—recently claiming the "government should try more to satisfy public opinion."[49]

Another Green Movement leader and former two-time Iranian president, Seyyed Mohammed Khatami, has largely retreated from public view. He is said to have written to Khamenei "recognizing the regime's authority" and seeking reconciliation and an end to violence. In so doing, Khatami has managed to evade house arrest or defrocking—the fate of other dissident clerics—even though from time to time he still urges the regime not to impose its will upon the people—and especially not violently.[50]

Even the defeated presidential candidate and former Speaker of Parliament Seyyed Mehdi Karroubi, who still grumbles that last June's presidential election was rigged, has reined in his rhetoric. Though he insists he hasn't made a deal with the regime, he speaks today only of "reforming the government, not toppling the theocracy." In proclaiming this, Karroubi clearly seeks to maintain revolutionary Shiism as the basis of the Iranian state.[51] While he has been attacked relentlessly in recent months by supporters of both Khamenei and Ahmadinejad, Karroubi stands to regain acceptance among Iran's clerical and political elites if he continues mollifying his words and actions.

Mir Hossein Mousavi, originally the most prominent of the unsuccessful presidential candidates, has become increasingly isolated. For now, he remains semi-defiant, still rejecting the presidential election's results. In an attempt to broaden his appeal and to reverse his diminishing influence and public visibility, he has sought to convince labor and teachers' unions to join a revamped opposition movement—albeit one loyal to the state.[52] Moreover, Mousavi has attenuated his reformist agenda, insisting that he cares only for "[following] up people's rights and demands with honesty."[53] Of course Mousavi, who is a former prime minister of the Islamic Republic and has served as Iran's representative on Hezbollah's leadership council,

has never been a true reformer but more of a political opportunist. Mousavi also oversaw violent enforcement of political repression during his time in office as prime minister.[54]

Not surprisingly, Mohsen Rezai, who also ran as a secular presidential candidate, is attempting to bring Mousavi back into the Islamic Republic's corrupt political mainstream. Rezai's attempts at reunifying the divergent groups of the Islamic revolution carry the authority of his own roles as a former commander of the IRGC and current secretary of the Expediency Discernment Council.[55]

Once stalwarts of the Islamic regime, who were then denounced for backing the popular Green Movement, Rafsanjani, Khatami, Karroubi, and Mousavi are slowly returning to the fold and the status quo rather than taking the risk of being swept aside by the wide-ranging changes the movement's rank and file would usher into Iran. The Green Movement's very success in unmasking the government as intolerant, corrupt, and violent has unnerved its original leaders. While the Green's leadership was not truly committed to regime change to begin with, the rank and file has been demanding that the government and the political system be discarded. As the Green's leaders have backtracked, they've also begun trying to temper both the populist uprising and the public's desire for change.[56] So the leaders, in turn, are being rejected by the public. Their cancellation of public protests on June 12, 2010—the much-contested presidential election's anniversary—was as much to escape the embarrassment of their declining prestige and influence as it was to avoid violence from the Basij.

As hardline clerics such as Ayatollah Ahmad Khatami have regained control, they have stressed the need for social unity while denouncing the remaining nonconformists as *mohareb,* or enemies of God.[57] Consequently, Karroubi and Mousavi comment repeatedly and publicly that they do not wish to be "topplers [of the theocracy] ... have held positions within the regime ... [and are] soldiers of the revolution and the Islamic Republic."[58] That is precisely the reason why they do not represent a hopeful future for Iran, where every citizen will have full representation free from coercion.

Much of the political turmoil that was sparked by the 2009 presidential election is now blamed by fundamentalist mullahs on the moral turpitude among the protestors. Consequently, there's been a new push by the clerical establishment to reinforce what they construe as appropriate Islamic political morality. For instance, Ayatollah Naser Makarem-Shirazi, speaking in a mosque at Qom, urged that a governmental "ministry to propagate virtue and ban vice must be formed to deal with moral issues, [especially] in schools, universities, and the media." He went on to claim, "When importance is not attached to moral issues, political and economical problems arise and decadence spreads."[59] So rather than face the reality of their political failure, the theocrats continue to proffer moral explanations, including faltering faith allegedly arising from "rotten and corrupt" secularism, caused by globalization.[60]

Hope for the Future

DESPITE THE REVERSALS OF SOME OF THE GREEN MOVEMENT'S MOST VISIBLE LEADERS, dissent against the Islamic Republic has spread throughout Iran and remains fueled by long-standing constitutional and socioeconomic problems that are unlikely to be solved by the incumbents. By virtually all accounts, the Green Movement's desire for sweeping change has now become broad-based and mainstream, and consequently the betrayals of some of its leaders may prove over the long range to be less detrimental than they appear now. On the other hand, organized opposition to the regime has been weakened, at least temporarily. The opposition desperately needs to find new leadership among Iran's discontented and highly rebellious youth. Events have demonstrated that it cannot rely on ageing individuals, whose personal experiences, stature, and wealth are tied to the status quo and the Islamic revolution that created it. Entrepreneurs and intellectuals also need to take up the herculean task of challenging a government that tries desperately to quash all dissent. Only then can a revolt against the hardline ayatollahs and their despotic counterparts succeed.[61]

The fact that the Islamic regime is itself internally divided, and will likely remain so, suggests that the opposition will have ample opportunity to succeed in the future. Widespread discontent, coupled with the steady collapse of Iran's national economy, fuels not just more public challenges to the regime's durability, but it also feeds the desires of various government factions—the theocrats, the Principlists, the opportunists and the true reformers—to cling to and enhance their power, even at the expense of the Islamic Republic itself. At this time, therefore, perhaps the most promising vehicle for broader changes may be the ongoing battle within the regime between the theocrats led by Khamenei and the secular autocrats led by Ahmadinejad. The ideological clashes and attendant power grabs between these two factions could ultimately weaken them both, thereby permitting the Green movement and other reformists to regroup and, eventually, to flourish.

For now, the desire to see freedom triumph despite the odds stacked against it may seem hopeless, but it should not. Historically, Iranian governments have been unable able to suppress their people's aspirations—neither in 1905 during the Constitutional Revolution nor in 1979 during the Islamic Revolution. Yet this time around, there are both religious and totalitarian overtones in the struggles within the Islamic Republic's ruling hierarchies, and between the regime and the people's opposition. Iran's emergence from the 1979 revolution's stifling legacy could therefore become much bloodier domestically, and its policies more erratic and fraught with danger internationally, before improving.

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The Iranian Clergy's Silence

By Mehdi Khalaji

"What we see is a military government, not the rule of the Shiite jurist."
—Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri's 2009 open letter to Shiite religious authorities in Islamic countries.

On June 13, 2010, when Mehdi Karroubi, the reformist candidate in Iran's 2009 presidential elections, paid a personal visit to the home of Ayatollah Yousef Sanei in the Shiite holy city of Qom, dozens of militants also descended on Sanei's residence to disrupt the get-together. The militants were members of the Imam Sadeq Brigade 83, a paramilitary unit consisting of young radical clerics that is under the direct command of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. These days, the brigade functions as one of the Islamic Republic of Iran's main instruments of suppression against clerics and others that oppose the regime. In the early morning hours after ransacking Sanei's office, the brigade stormed adjoining offices that belonged to the late Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, causing a great deal of property damage. These were but the latest actions undertaken by the theocratic regime against Ayatollahs Sanei and Montazeri—both religious leaders that supported protesters and the anti-government demonstrations that swept Iran in the wake of the country's disputed presidential elections in 2009. Indeed, only several days before the raid on Montazeri's offices, it was reported that Khamenei traveled to Qom with plans to visit the Shrine of Masoumeh (the sister of the eighth imam recognized as legitimate by Shiites). Ayatollah Montazeri was buried at the same shrine, but the regime ensured that his tombstone was removed on the day of Khamenei's arrival.[1]

Over a year since Iran's hotly disputed 2009 presidential elections and the subsequent violent crackdown on the opposition Green Movement, the Iranian regime is continuing its campaign to suppress and discredit Shiite clerics. Not unreasonably, Iranian democrats and others in the opposition expect Shiite religious scholars to react to these affronts and to defend their own against the Islamic regime. And yet, by and large, the clerical establishment has remained silent against the regime's attacks. What accounts for this silence of so many?

While there are several explanations why the clerical establishment has been unwilling to defend reform-minded clerics against the regime's attacks, what is clear is that the Shiite clergy's silence does not stem from indifference. In fact, there is a fundamental tension between Iran's clerical establishment and its theocratic government whose roots date back to the very inception of the Islamic Republic and, in important ways, even farther.

RELATIONS BETWEEN SHIITE CLERICS AND THE IRANIAN STATE HAVE been problematic and fraught with tension ever since the Safavid era, during which Shiism was adopted as the official religion of Iran. Before the Safavid period, few Shiites recognized or required an explicitly religious basis for political legitimacy, nor were they prone to advocate rebellion against the government. According to this classical view, everyone was obliged to support and obey the sultan—even though he acquired power by force and illegitimate means—because it was the sultan and the institutions of the sultanate that were charged with guarding and protecting the territories of Islam against infidels. However, by making Shiism the official ideology of the government, the Safavid rulers inadvertently helped to overturn this tradition of clerical self-subordination to temporal political power. In fact, many Shiites at the time believed that the establishment of a religious government before the return of the Hidden Imam was not legitimate; others within the clerical establishment believed it was necessary and sought to defend the Safavid regime.

As a consequence of this politicization of religion, Safavid rulers helped inaugurate a new historical phase of tension between Shiite clerics and the state, as well as a new era of competition within the clerical establishment itself over what the clergy's proper relationship to political power should be. Often times, these intra-clerical rifts came to be reflected in an overtly political and bureaucratic struggle over whom among the clerical ranks would hold which offices in the government, including powerful state positions like the *qadi*, or judge. After the Safavids fell, influential kings tended to ignore the clerics altogether, whereas fragile rulers invariably sought rescue from clerics. Such tensions within the clerical establishment and the rifts between clerics and kings lasted for nearly four centuries.

Ayatollah Khomeini intended to solve this tension between religious authority and political power once and for all by implementing the idea of velayat-e faqih—or, the guardianship of the jurist. In effect, his theory sought to unify the religious and political authorities in a new form of Islamic government and Shiite hierocracy; at the top of this new regime was the ruling jurist, a position that united both king and cleric. But the history of Iran since the Islamic revolution has shown that Khomeini's vision has largely failed, and that the Shiite clerical establishment has not fully incorporated itself into the state apparatus.

THE KHOMEINIST CONCEPT OF "ISLAMIC GOVERNMENT" IS ROOTED IN AN expressly modern ideology that has little basis within the religious and political traditions of Shiism. In 1979, when Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini mobilized people to courageously come into the streets and risk their lives for the sake of the Islamic revolution, many tradition-minded religious authorities stiffly resisted his political outlook and agenda. While Khomeini sought to overthrow the Shah and bring a decisive end to the monarchy, Shiite tradition historically accepted the monarchy and its institutions. Many Shiite scholars, in fact, considered the sultanate, not the republic, to be functionally in partnership with religion, and the kind of government that was best-suited for Muslims. For instance, Sayyed Abul Hassan Isfahani (1867-1946), an eminent religious authority, or *marja*, wrote that the "greatness of the sultanate is the highest dream of any devout Shiite, because the independence of an Islamic country, its security, and the immunity of Islam and Muslims depend on it."[2]

Because of this traditional preference for the monarchy, many modernizing reform movements have faced stiff resistance from Shiite clerics in Iran. For example, after the decline of the Qajar dynasty, Reza Shah Pahlavi claimed that he sought to establish an Iranian "republic" similar to the one founded by Mustafa Kamal Pasha in Turkey, but Iranian clerics prevented him by arguing that the republican system was against Islam. As a consequence, Reza Shah Pahlavi was forced to inaugurate the Pahlavi dynasty and rule Iran by continuing the tradition and institutions of monarchy.

When the Islamic revolution erupted in 1979, some high-ranking Shiite clerics openly criticized Khomeini for provoking ordinary people to rebel against the Shah and the monarchy. Exposing these people to the government's violent reprisals was seen by many as a violation of Islam. In a 1965 meeting in Najaf, Ayatollah Mohsen Hakim, an Iraqi marja with an extensive following in Iran, confronted Khomeini, saying that "the way you resist [against the Shah's regime] is not right, because we do not have a weapon and power. Our weapon and power is people, and they are looking

to see where the wind is blowing." Khomeini responded, "I did not do anything without research and reliable documents." Hakim asked, "How will you answer to God for this bloodshed [that you've brought upon the people]?" Khomeini replied, "Imam Hossein rose up and he and some others became martyrs. Why was that? It was for saving Islam. Therefore we have to protest against Shah."

At this point, Hakim became visibly upset. "Sir!," he angrily retorted, "*you* compare yourself to Imam Hossein? Imam Hossein was an [infallible] imam whose obedience was obligatory for all worshipers and he was a knowledgeable person who was entrusted by God... shedding one single drop of blood of an innocent would bear a great responsibility before God." According to a witness, Khomeni was at a complete loss for a response, and "then silence reigned."[3]

In addition to the ongoing dispute between traditionalists and modernists, there are intractable struggles over the concept of Islamic government among modern Shiite scholars as well. Most modern jurists concur that, at bare minimum, an Islamic government is one that implements the *Sharia*, or Islamic law. Yet among these scholars, there has emerged virtually no consensus about the extent to which sharia law should, or even could, be implemented within a society for it to be properly considered 'Islamic.' (In the traditional Shiite legal system, the full implementation of Sharia requires the presence of an infallible Imam. Since traditional Twelver Shiites believe the Twelfth Imam has gone into occultation, they consider the full implementation of Islamic law to be impossible at this moment in time—until his return.) Moreover, there is even less agreement among modern Shiite scholars over whether the implementation of Islamic law in a society requires the political rule of a Shiite jurist. This principle—that a jurist must rule, or velayat-e faqih, for Islamic law to be properly implemented—is of course the core tenet of Khomeini's revolutionary teaching, upon which the Islamic Republic of Iran was founded in 1979. And it has laid at the crux of intra-Shiite religious and political disputation ever since.

One of the most prominent early opponents of Khomeini's theory of the rule of the jurist was Ayatollah Mohammad Kazem Shariatmadari (1905-1986).[4] He was a recognized marja long before Khomeini, and was trusted by the Shah's regime. Shariatmadari was also the most open-minded marja of his time. He tried, for example, to modernize the educational system of the Shiite religious seminaries, and he also sought to introduce clerics to the study of the modern humanities. Furthermore, Shariatmadari was well known for his resistance to the creeping politicization and radicalization of the Shiite clerical establishment.

Shariatmadari argued that clerics and jurists should not assume positions in government or seek political rule. He believed religious scholars should only involve themselves directly in government in the event that the government has collapsed—and even then, only for the purpose of helping to form a new government and

re-establish order. According to Shariatmadari, only the absence of political institutions justifies a jurist's direct intervention in political affairs; otherwise, the jurist is authorized only to judge a government based on Islamic criteria while sympathetically advising its rulers to respect and apply Islamic law.

In sharp contrast to Khomeini, Shariatmadari did not believe that there should be a paramount position for one special jurist to serve as the "ruling jurist," or vali-ye faqih. In fact, while he recognized fundamental inequalities among religious scholars of differing ranks and learning and spiritual cultivation, Shariatmadari believed that all religious scholars were of an equal rank before government, or with respect to temporal political powers. He simultaneously maintained that religious authority was far superior to that of the temporal, political authorities who administered a society's government. For these reasons, he believed religious scholars should not diminish their positions and demean themselves by seeking to occupy political office or play a political role.[5] For Shariatmadari, running a country was not essentially a religious job, as anyone who was qualified could occupy a governmental position—even an infidel, provided that he was respectful of Islamic law and rituals. In essence, a political ruler's role was not unlike that of a plumber's: One can appoint a ruler to govern a society just as one can hire a plumber to fix the pipes in one's house.[6]

The learned, quietist teachings of scholars like Shariatmadari were not the only reason Shiite clerics resisted Khomeini. In fact, many clerics felt that the Khomeinist revolution did not go far enough. They had assumed that an Islamic republic would apply the sharia codes in all realms of human activity. However, when these scholars discovered that Khomeini was more tolerant than them regarding women and other issues, they condemned his government for failing to be sufficiently Islamic. (Ayatollah Sayyed Hassan Qommi, who was under house arrest for more than two decades after the revolution, is a leading proponent of this kind of criticism of the Islamic Republic.) In today's Iran, there are still marjas who find fault with the current Islamic government from this perspective. For instance, Ayatollah Lotfollah Safi Golpayegani has fiercely criticized President Ahmadinejad's decision to appoint several women as ministers of his cabinet.[7]

Of course, not all clerical resistance to the Islamic Republic has been based on principle. In fact, many Shiite clerics, both within Iran and without, opposed Khomeini's revolutionary agenda for entirely personal reasons—just as many clerics today oppose Ayatollah Ali Khamenei because of their own personal grievances and vendettas.

Ayatollah Khomeini was especially adept at creating personal enemies within the clerical establishment. Few people in the history of Shiism engaged in publicly attacking and humiliating other clerics as frequently as Khomeini did. In his speeches and statements, Khomeini chastised high-ranking ayatollahs who disagreed with his principle of velayat-e faqih. He called them "stupid," "blithering," "backward," and "monarchist

clerics" who had been "deceived by colonialism," and were "enemies of Islam and its prophet" as well as loyal to "American Islam" (a phrase meant to describe a liberal and pro-Western understanding of Islam). In 1987, Khomeini stated in an open letter to clerics around the country that "the extent to which your old father [himself] has been agonized by this petrified group [clerics who believe in separation of Islam and state] was much more than any pressure and difficulties by others."[8]

Because of this antagonistic history between Khomeini and elements of the clerical establishment, some clerics to this day regard Khomeini—and Khamenei as well—as a tyrant who rose to power through illegitimate means and by selectively purging his clerical opponents. Others who early on championed the revolution expected that Khomeini would bring them to power; when Khomeini failed to do so, these clerics felt slighted and began to hate him. These personal disputes continue to shape the inner workings of the clerical establishment, and of the Islamic regime as a whole.

THE SUCCESS OF AYATOLLAH KHOMEINI IN IMPLEMENTING HIS THEORY OF the rule of the jurist after the 1979 revolution has placed Shiite clerics in a very difficult position. For the first time in the history of Shiism, the revolution had installed an ayatollah in the position of the king; for many, this made the idea of the implementation of Islamic law seem possible. At the very least, it made the clerical establishment's conventional reluctance to involve itself in political activity seem antiquated. Moreover, after decades of living under authoritarian and erratically secularist rule during the Pahlavi period, Iran became home to the only government on earth that was run by a Shiite scholar. This historic development was thus popularly invested with even divine significance—and especially within the Shiite community, which had experienced centuries of persecution at the hands of hostile governments.

The Islamic revolution thus dramatically transformed the Shiite clerical establishment's relationship to Iranian political institutions, opening up entirely new horizons for political thought and endeavor. At the same time, the revolution created entirely new dynamics for which the clergy was ill-prepared. For example, before the Islamic revolution, a cleric might have accrued tremendous prestige and authority by popularly opposing an unjust government, and by portraying this conflict as a struggle between spiritual and temporal powers. But with the establishment of an Islamic state, any clerical opposition to the theocratic regime came to be seen as an internal fight between clerics, with both parties able to damage each other's religious legitimacy and prestige.

In the years since the revolution, the formation of a new Shiite clerical hierarchy and the increasing concentration of power in the office of the supreme leader and

jurist have rendered it increasingly difficult for clerics to register even mild criticisms of the Islamic regime in public. In fact, for a cleric to oppose the supreme leader and the religious hierarchy is seen as tantamount to dissenting politically with the most fundamental principle and institution of the theocratic regime itself—i.e., the absolute authority of the jurist.

The further institutionalization of the Islamic hierocracy has been reinforced by cultural practices within the Shiite community as well. Traditionally, Shiite jurists sought to avoid public disputes among themselves over non-scholarly issues as a way of pretending that they were pious and did not care about worldly affairs, only higher ones. While they openly squabbled amongst themselves over scholastic matters, the clerical community strived to portray itself to society at large as united on virtually all matters of consequence. After all, the clerics routinely claimed that as a class they were obligated to the highest of standards, as they professed to being the "heirs of prophets" (*al-ulama warathato al-anbia*) whose primary task is the safeguarding of the interests of the Islamic territories (*Bayzato al-Islam*) and preventing them from falling into chaos.

In addition to this, there are other important factors why clerics have generally been reluctant to publicly oppose or criticize the Islamic Republic. First of all, the supreme leader or jurist was declared to be a jurist unlike any other. To enforce his rule within the hierocracy, the supreme leader is able to exert his authority through a range of coercive instruments—including, perhaps most notoriously, through a body known as the "Special Court of Clerics" (*Dadgah-e Vizheh-ye Rowhaniyat*). This special court operates under the direct supervision of the supreme leader, and it does not follow the juridical procedures and laws of the rest of the country.

Since its establishment, the court has become well-known for its brutal and humiliating treatment of clerics of all ranks. For example, Ayatollah Shariatmadari was "tried" in this court. He was accused of being involved in a military coup to overthrow the regime and assassinate Khomeini, when in fact his real "crime" was attempting to challenge Khomeini's legitimacy as a ruling jurist. His dossier was closed after many of his followers and relatives were arrested or executed, and Shariatmadri himself was shown on state television making a "confession" and begging for Khomeini's pardon.

In addition to the special court, the Islamic regime has developed a range of other techniques for enforcing its rule within the clerical establishment. Among other things, the Islamic regime claimed direct responsibility for the day-to-day management of clerical institutions, and this fundamentally altered the clergy's access to financial resources.[9] To begin with, the Islamic government confiscated much of the property that belonged to Iran's traditional religious authorities. In turn, this property was placed under the control of the supreme leader. For example, *Dar al-Tabligh* (the House of [Islamic] Propaganda), which was owned by Ayatollah Shariatmadari, became a base

for *Daftar-e Tablighat-e Eslami-e Qom* (the Office for Islamic Propaganda), the head of which is appointed by the supreme leader.

Khamenei also exercises considerable control over the clerical establishment directly through his own office. Ahmad Marvi, a cleric and former intelligence official, is the deputy in the supreme leader's office who deals with clerical affairs. The Ministry of Intelligence also supervises the establishment through its deputy on clerical affairs. Evidently other paramilitary units like the Imam Sadeq Brigade 83 have a significant role in intimidating the clerics and oppressing independent voices.

In more recent times, Khamenei's office has spearheaded the computerization of the management of the clerical institutions, which has thereby helped the supreme leader establish even more control over the clergy's financial resources and dealings. Before Khamenei, every marja had his own financial section where subordinate clerics registered to receive their salaries. But under Khamenei's financial system, all payments from marjas to clerics, or from one religious institution to another, first have to pass through a centralized office run by the Center for the Management of Qom Seminaries. Therefore, these payments ultimately require approval from the supreme leader's representatives. The Center for the Management of Qom Seminaries also maintains a comprehensive database about the marjas' properties, assets and income. The supreme leader utilizes this data to manage the marjas' financial activities.

Even Ayatollah Sistani—the preeminent marja of Najaf, Iraq, who has always enjoyed considerable autonomy from the Iranian hierocracy, and who represents a more traditional Shiism—cannot operate his office or manage his religious-financial network within Iran (and in some cases in other countries in the Middle East such as Lebanon and Syria) without cooperating with the Iranian regime.

Before the revolution, ordinary clerics were financially dependent on marjas. Today, however, most clerics also receive financial support through institutions run by the state and by the supreme leader. Furthermore, in order to demonstrate his financial and religious supremacy, Ayatollah Khamenei pays salaries to clerics much higher than the amount paid by the marjas. While most marjas supposedly rely on religious taxes, the supreme leader presides over the wealthiest and most profitable economic institutions in Iran, such as the Oppressed Foundation and the Imam Reza Shrine and affiliated companies. Today, religious marjas altogether provide but a small percentage of the clerics' financial needs. By contrast, the government and Khamenei himself are primarily in charge of financial issues in Shiite seminaries, especially in Iran.[10] As such, the economic role and authority of the marja has been systematically reduced, just as the regime's authority and power over Shiite financial networks has been enhanced.

Moreover, since its establishment the Islamic Republic has created an entirely new

network of institutions—seminaries and dozens of research institutes, community centers, and libraries—whose principal purpose is the propagation of an ideology favored by the regime. The regime actively uses this influence to promote ideas beneficial to its goals while at the same time sidelining those ideas and religious teachings that are not. This has ultimately allowed the Islamic regime to dominate the intellectual life of Iran's clerical establishment. This has been especially the case since the deaths of Grand Ayatollahs Abul Qassem Khoei, Mohammad Reza Golpayegani and Shahab Al-Din Marashi Najafi—all eminent scholars who opposed many aspects of the Khomeinist agenda. Following their deaths, the traditional centers of religious authority that operated as a religio-political check on the newly formed hierocracy went into steep decline, and a younger generation of clerics reared by the Khomeinist regime has come to occupy positions of great religious and political influence.

For clerics who are on the Iranian regime's payroll, life is full of special privileges and perks. The government underwrites a hefty budget for religious institutions, making today's Iranian clerical establishment the wealthiest in any period of history. Well-connected clerics and marjas favored by the regime are involved in lucrative business deals, receive exclusive governmental benefits, and can borrow large amounts of money from banks without sufficient guarantees for repayment. What's more, many charities in Iran owned by marjas and other high-ranking clerics are doing business through corrupt dealings with the government.

The Khomeinist doctrine of the guardianship of the jurist requires that all clerics be subject to the orders of the supreme leader and jurist—just as any other Shiite worshiper would be. This doctrine is premised on the view that the ruling jurist is the heir of the Prophet Muhammad and the representative of the infallible Hidden Imam and benefits from all of their divine authorities. The supreme leader thus has the authority (*valayat*) over everything even beyond the Sharia and the country's constitution, granting him—at least in principle, though there are always limits to this in practice—enormous powers over society in general and the hierocracy in particular.[11] What justifies the authority of the ruling jurist beyond the Sharia or constitution is the interests of the regime. According to Khomeini, the expediency of the regime or its interests overrules all Islamic laws. In this vein, some have claimed, for instance, that marjas cannot use religious taxes without the approval of the ruling jurist. It has additionally been argued that "fatwas by marjas that deal with public issues can come into practice only after the approval of the ruling jurist."[12]

Therefore, within the Islamic Republic, what an individual jurist believes or the quality of his scholarship is of little significance; what matters most is how, within the structure of the hierocracy, the ruling jurist chooses to define his relationship to other individual jurists. In other words, jurists do not deal with the supreme leader and his office as a fellow or even as a superior member of a religious community,

but instead as the head of an expansive military-economic-political corporation.

And for members of this corporation in good standing there are abundant rewards. The very constitution of the Islamic Republic is based on a series of discriminations in favor of clerics. For instance, the head of the government, the head of the judiciary, all the members of the Assembly of Experts, the six members of the Guardian Council, the Minister of Intelligence and several other positions should be necessarily *mujtahid* or jurists. A secular democratic government that removes all discrimination, including policies that favor clerics, would not be an ideal government for the overwhelming majority of jurists and clerics, whether they like the existing political system or not. What the Iranian people might consider an ideal alternative to the current regime is not so for the majority of clerics. The Islamic Republic has systematically sought to deprive clerics of their independence and tarnished their reputations. Despite this fact, the Islamic Republic of Iran is still widely viewed as the most favorable government for clerics in the history of Islam.

THE ISLAMIC REGIME'S UTILIZATION OF AN ARRAY OF BOTH COERCIVE instruments to punish anti-regime tendencies as well as incentives and other perks to encourage and reward pro-regime behavior—not to mention the clerical establishment's own desire for self-preservation and well-being—helps to explain why a great majority of Iranian Shiite clerics have, on balance, kept silent about the government's violence against peaceful demonstrators following the June 12, 2009 presidential elections.

But the Shiite clergy's silence and failure to respond to the regime's oppressive violence has also brought to light something much more fundamental: that is, any clerical opposition to the regime, whether actual or potential, currently lacks an intellectually coherent and compelling Islamic alternative to the Islamic regime, and more specifically, a religiously-sanctioned theory about the relationship between Muslim jurists and the state that offers an alternative to the Khomeinist teaching that the jurist must rule.

This fact is apparent among those within the clerical establishment who claim to seek reform of the Islamic regime by making it more "Islamic." While there is a wide range of opinions over what kinds of reforms are necessary for the regime to become more Islamic, no members of the clerical establishment have been willing to articulate an alternative to the theory of the rule of the jurist. Marjas like Ayatollah Youssef Sanei, for instance, may single out regime actions—such as the government's violent crackdown against protesters—as being "un-Islamic," but they also make statements that unconditionally back the Khomeinist doctrine of the rule of the jurist. Other reformist clerics have voiced their frustrations with the supreme leader's

decisions, though have fallen short of criticizing the theory and institutions of the ruling jurist. For instance, Ayatollah Mohammad Ali Dastgheib has criticized Khamenei because he feels that he is entitled and even obligated to do so by the constitution of the Islamic regime itself: as a member of Assembly of Experts, Dastgheib is part of a body whose job is to appoint the ruling jurist and supervise him. The assembly is also theoretically authorized to dismiss the ruling jurist if it determines that he has failed to operate properly or lost the necessary conditions.

While they might take issue with the repressive and erratic policies of Khamenei's government, it seems that most clerics would prefer that the Islamic Republic survive. Indeed, many of the clerics who have been routinely identified as being part of the opposition appear to have reined in their support for the Green Movement and sought reconciliation with the regime. They might have contentious debates among themselves over differing visions for reforming the Islamic regime, but they have been unable to offer an Islamic alternative to the rule of the jurist.

For these reasons, many in Iran and elsewhere have begun to look to Iraq for a new Shiite theory concerning how to structure the relationship between the jurists and the state. The revival of the Najaf Hawza and of a more traditional, politically quietist form of Shiism in Iraq since the fall of the Saddam regime has indeed begun to reshape the internal dynamics of the Shiite world as a whole. And yet, it may well be a mistake to assume that the Najaf Hawza will provide an alternative Shiite way of organizing religious authority and political authority that would challenge Iran's Khomeinist doctrine and institutions—at least any time soon.

In a recent meeting with Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Ayatollah Ali Sistani expressed deep concerns about the conflict between Rafsanjani and Khamenei and what this meant for the future of the Islamic Republic. He told Rafsanjani, "If you [Rafsanjani and Khamenei] stay united, all problems will be solved. I know that you have said that for you [Khamenei's] word is the last and that you would follow him, but I read your interviews with Mr. Ziba Kalam [a political scientist from University of Tehran] and found out that you [and Khamenei] have many [theoretical and jurisprudential] differences between you two." The reporter who witnessed the discussion said that Rafsanjani failed to convince Sistani that he actually follows and obeys Khamenei.[13] This exchange suggests that, for Sistani, theoretical issues or matters of principle do not have the same importance as practical issues—including, foremost, the political unity and survival of the Islamic Republic of Iran as a powerful Shiite government grounded in the doctrine of the rule of the jurist.

Indeed, historically, Shiite jurisprudence has generally been guided more by practical considerations about the public interest than by theory-based or moral argumentation. Nowadays, the ultimate goal of Sistani and the jurists of the Najaf Hawza is to safeguard the clerical institutions and the interests of the marjas throughout

the Shiite world. Their experience of living under the Saddam tyranny in Iraq taught them how quickly hostile political rulers can devastate these clerical institutions. Therefore, Sistani and Iraq's clerical establishment will likely not take any action that will weaken or threaten Iran's government and Ayatollah Khamenei, as they see the survival of the Islamic Republic as a powerful Shiite state as the best protection for Shiism and its most cherished institutions.

For the forseeable future, Iraqi Shiism will remain in important ways under the Iranian clerical establishment's shadow. Iraq's seminaries today have only a few thousand clerics, whereas there are nearly three hundred thousand in Iran's seminaries. Wherever he might hail from, the aspiring Shiite cleric simply cannot become powerful if he is separated and disconnected from Qom.[14] Iraq's senior Shiite clerics may not agree with a maximalist interpretation of velayat-e faqih and might sympathize with some anti-government religious strata of Iranian society, but they will most certainly restrain themselves from confronting the regime head-on or collaborating with its opponents. Iraq's clerics, who are very much in the margin of the transnational Shiite clerical establishment, cannot afford this confrontation with the Islamic Republic, especially given their current vulnerabilities. For example, without Sistani's office in Qom and his other facilities and properties in Iran, it would be extremely difficult for him to operate his *marjayya*. As such, barring the collapse of the Islamic Republic—an event that would be catastrophic for Shiite clerics, because of their unprecedented proximity to the political order—the future of the clerical establishment and of Shiism as a whole for the next several decades will likely be shaped more by developments in Qom than by those in Najaf.

While many within the Shiite clerical establishment have benefited enormously from the Iranian regime, they also cannot be completely happy with it. The clergy's prestige and authority and wealth fundamentally depend on the people's trust. Without that trust, those whom the clerics seek to lead will not follow them in religious or other matters, and will not pay them their religious taxes. The Islamic Republic, by providing clerics with exclusive political and economic rights and benefits, has increasingly undermined the clergy's traditional independence from the state, and thereby placed the clergy's future ability to win the people's trust in jeopardy. To the extent that the clerical establishment is seen by ordinary Iranians as being close to the regime—or for that matter, complicit in its authoritarian and unjust rule—then it, too, will become the object of the opposition's enmity.

Most senior clerics do not accept the Khomeinist doctrine of velayat-e faqih in its maximalist interpretation. After all, the maximalist interpretation of "guardianship

of the jurist" effectively destroys the traditional position, prestige and functions of the jurist because it equates the jurist with ordinary people insofar as the jurist, like the people, is obligated to obey the ruling jurists in anything that relates to the public sphere. And yet, due to the intellectual poverty and the decadence of contemporary Islamic thought in general, clerics are unable to generate a new and alternative theory or conceptual framework for explaining sociopolitical realities and outlining a practical plan for reforming them.

For these reasons, many Shiite clerics have begun to return to older, pre-revolutionary Shiite theories about government, including the theory of the sultanate. While this may be interpreted as a turn away from the Khomeinist principles that inspired the Iranian Revolution, it also represents an implicit acceptance of the authoritarian regime that the revolution created. Increasingly, the ruling jurist is seen as a sultan whose legitimacy from a religious point of view is of little relevance. In this theory of the sultanate, what matters most is that the sultan has the ultimate power. Since clerics can neither reform the current system within Iran through political means nor advise the people on how to overthrow it (due to their lack of a coherent intellectual alternative to velayat-e faqih), more increasingly see the supreme leader as a sultan-like figure to whom obedience is obligatory for all. According to this perspective, even if this sultan doesn't respect or fully implement Islamic law, and even if this Muslim leader might brutally punish his subjects (like Supreme Leader Khamenei) in the interests of protecting the Islamic regime, the jurists still dub him legitimate because a strong sultan whose strength is enhanced through loyalty of his subjects is best able to secure the Shiite territories and protect them from foreign aggressors.

Moreover, in today's Iran, and because of the current government's crackdown on elements of the religious establishment, a growing number of clerics have begun to take refuge in the tradition of *taqiyya*—a legitimate Shiite practice of deliberately disguising one's religious or political beliefs in order to protect one's life, money or safety. In this, Shiite clerics justify their general silence about the Islamic regime's injustice and brutality toward the Iranian people by recalling a saying of Imam Ali, the Shiite's first divine guide: "During civil disturbances be like an adolescent camel who has neither a back strong enough for riding nor udders for milking."[15]

NOTES

1. See the report: http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,5687709,00.html.
2. Manzoor al-Ajdad, Sayyed Mohammad Hossein, *Marjaiyat dar Arsseh-ye Ejtima va Siasat*, (Tehran: Shirazeh,1379) p. 157.

3. Jafarian, Rasool, *Tashayo dar Iraq, Marjaiyat dar Iran,* Moasseseh-ye Motaleat-e Tarikh-e Moasser-e Iran, (Tehran, 1386) p. 95.
4. For a short biography of Shariatmadari see: Milani, Abbas, "Eminent Persians, The Men and Women who Made Modern Iran, 1941-1979," Syracuse University Press, 2008, vol. 1, pp. 367-376.
5. Rooznameh-ye Ettelaat, 23 khordad 1358 & Nashriyah-e Khalq-e Mosalman, 1 Mehr, 1358 & 22 Mehr, 1358.
6. Hosseini Shirazi, Sayyed Monir Al-Din, *Khaterat*, Markaz-e Asnad-e Enqelab-e Eslami, (Tehran, 1383) p. 256.
7. See Raja News report about this issue: http://www.rajanews.com/detail.asp?lang_id=&id=34710.
8. Khomeini, Ruhollah, Sahifeh-ye Noor, Entesharat-e Vezarat-e Farhang va Ershad-e Eslami, Tehran, 1384, Vol. 21, p. 273.
9. For a detailed account of government control over the clerical establishment see: Khalaji, Mehdi, "*Nazm-e Novin-e Rowhaniyat*" in Iran Nameh, Tabestan va Paiiz-e 1387.
10. Khalaji, Mehdi, *Last Marja, Sistani and the End of Traditional Religious Authority in Shiism*, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, September 2006, available online: http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC04.php?CID=250.
11. See Khomeni, Rouhollah, Sahifeh-ye nor, vol. p.
12. Hajjarian, Said, *Az Shahed-e Qodsi ta Shahed-e Bazari*, Tarh-e no, Tehran, 1380, p. 90.
13. Rooznameh-e Jomhoori-e Eslami, 9/3/1388.
14. For instance, Sayyed Mohammad Hossein Fazlallah, a Lebanese jurist who entered into a bitter fight with the Iranian regime over *marjayya*, has in recent years finally reconciled with the Islamic Republic (he later opened an office in Qom). In early 90s when Khamenei was announced a marja, the Islamic Republic spent millions of dollars in Lebanon to discredit Fazlallah and campaign for the marjayyat of Khamenei in Shiite community. This led to Fazlallah's resentment and he cut his relationship with Iran for a number of years. But he knows very well that not having an office in Qom would pigeonhole him as a local marja, and not as a transnational leader.
15. Imam Ali, *Nahjul Balaaghah*, (Potomac, MD: Ahlul-Bayt Assembly of America, 1996), 263.

Reform Versus Radicalism in the Islamic Republic

By David Menashri

THE 1979 ISLAMIC REVOLUTION MARKED A MAJOR TURNING POINT in modern Iran's history that has had far-reaching consequences both within the country and beyond. The aim of the revolution was not simply to replace the Shah's monarchical government with a new, republican system, but to radically restructure the Iranian state and society through the implementation of a new Islamic doctrine. To many Iranians, as well as scores of others throughout the Middle East and elsewhere, the Islamic revolution embodied a promise—and an expectation—of a brighter future with greater prosperity and more liberty.

In the three decades since the revolution, the Islamic Republic of Iran has demonstrated an impressive measure of political resilience and continuity. However, the popular hopes and expectations of the revolutionary era have remained, thus far, largely unsatisfied. Nowadays, the Iranian regime is struggling to find viable ways to cope with a seemingly ever-expanding array of governance challenges—from intensifying power struggles between competing factions within the country's ruling elites to crippling social and economic malaise, a hostile regional security environment, and rising popular discontent at home. Needless to say, many of these challenges are products of the Islamic regime's own making.

In response to these challenges, Iranian politics in the contemporary era have tended to swing between two poles—reform and radicalism. These are best illustrated by the distinctive visions of the Iranian polity's two main camps, which are perhaps best expressed by their most visible leaders—namely, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad,

who represents the radical camp, and former president Mohammad Khatami and presidential aspirant Mir Hossein Mousavi on the other hand, representing the reform movement. Both of these trends stem from the experience and ideals of the Islamic revolution, and both lay claim to the revolution's future. This struggle between reformism and radicalism has gone through several phases since the founding of the Islamic Republic. While Khatami's presidency (1997-2005) marked a period of greater openness and reform within Iran and inspired hopes for continued change, Ahmadinejad's election in 2005 inaugurated a reversal of this process. Ahmadinejad's re-election in June 2009 and the regime's crackdown on the massive protests that ensued reveal that the antagonism between these two camps has reached a new, formative stage. To understand the future of the Islamic revolution within Iran, it is necessary to begin with the past of this reform-radicalism antagonism.

A Framework for Revolutionary Politics

IRAN'S 1979 ISLAMIC REVOLUTION THOROUGHLY UP-ENDED MANY CONVENTIONAL notions about political life and revolution in the modern Muslim world. It produced a new pattern for assuming power, a new political leadership and form of government in the modern Middle East, and a new ideology rooted in a utopian vision of an ideal Islamic society. This new society was (or was supposed to become) superior to all other nations around the world.

As a general rule, the Middle East's many coups from the mid-20th century onward were executed by small groups led by military officers seeking popular support for themselves and their new ideas—but only after they had successfully seized power. Iran's Islamic Revolution was a striking exception to this rule. It was led primarily by Shiite religious scholars who enjoyed popular support not as a consequence of, but as a condition and reason for, their seizing power. Moreover, the Iranian revolution's innovative doctrines were based not on a new ideology, but essentially on Islam, whose glorious heritage and ideology was intimately familiar to ordinary Iranians.

Given these differences between the Islamic revolution and other 20th century coups, it nevertheless echoed earlier Iranian opposition movements in important ways. Three previous popular Iranian uprisings are especially noteworthy: 1) the Tobacco Movement of 1891-92, which rallied against the tobacco concession and the capitulation system in general, ultimately forcing the shah to revoke the concession; 2) the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, which demanded that the shah approve a constitution limiting his power; and 3) the national movement headed by

Mohammad Mosaddeq (1951-1953), which successfully forced Mohammad Reza Shah into temporary exile.

The Islamic revolution shared certain characteristics with all of these movements. For instance, they all began as reactions to the reigning shah's policies, which were injurious to various socioeconomic groups and eventually caused diverse forces to agglomerate and rally around a common agenda. In all but Mosaddeq's nationalist movement, Shiite clerics were the driving force—a fact that demonstrated the clergy's ability to mobilize popular support long before the Islamic revolution. Mass support played a decisive role in each movement. Mounting social and economic tension, intensified autocratic rule, growing secularization, and extensive Western influence were instrumental in garnering opposition in each case.

Finally, notwithstanding their differences, the various groups in each movement rallied around a powerful, unifying symbol: tobacco (and the capitulation system) in the late 19th century; constitutionalism in the early 20th century; oil, nationalization of oil or nationalism in the early 1950s; and Islam in the late 1970s. All four movements were successful in attaining their initial goals, but whereas these earlier popular eruptions had limited objectives (i.e., changing one major item on the government's agenda), the Islamic revolution's ambitions were wide-sweeping and much more radical. The revolution, in fact, did not aim merely at achieving a change of government, but rather sought to completely transform all spheres of Iranian life along Islamic lines.

After 1979, the first 31 years of clerical rule were characterized by an attempt to attain two interrelated goals: 1) to consolidate, institutionalize and, as much as possible, perpetuate clerical rule, and 2) to implement Ayatollah Khomeini's ideology and the new doctrine of Islamic government in all spheres of Iranian life. The revolutionary generation believed wholeheartedly that Islamic government would alleviate the socioeconomic malaise that Iran had succumbed to, which would in turn eventually help to further consolidate and legitimize clerical rule.

While the theocratic regime has been generally successful in enhancing its power and maintaining its rule since the revolution, it has proved less effective in utilizing its revolutionary dogma to address the fundamental social and economic problems that were the initial root cause of the revolution.

Once it assumed power, the Shiite Islamist movement faced the complex demands of governing a country, and the new regime that it established has struggled to adapt itself to these new realities ever since. Obliged to manage rather than simply theorize about state affairs, the Iranian government has been forced to compromise its founding revolutionary ideology—not out of a newfound moderation, but as a natural response to the exigencies of political rule. As the leader of an opposition movement, Ayatollah Khomeini could rally crowds by calling for a "new Iran" modeled on a utopian Islamic

design. But once he commanded the nation, Iran's first supreme jurist soon understood that he could not rule by revolutionary slogans alone. Khomeini's descendants—including both the Islamic Republic's founding generation as well as the so-called "children of the revolution"—have become ever more aware of these facts of political life. As a consequence, many of them embraced policies in the pursuit of state interests (largely defined) that represent a divergence, if not a retreat, from the original Islamic principles that inspired the revolution.

Khomeini himself argued that the state had the authority "to destroy a mosque" or suspend the exercise of the "five pillars of the faith" if the larger interests of the state (*selah-e keshvar*) so required.[1] Subsequently, the authority to determine the "state's interest"—a phrase found in the name of one of the Islamic Republic's key institutions, the *shura-ye tashkhis-e maslahat*, roughly defined as the Discretionary or Expediency Council—was entrusted to a mixed assembly composed of theologians and government officials. This step deprived the cleric-dominated Council of Guardians of its exclusive right to approve legislation. As such, ever since the founding of the Islamic Republic, and with very few exceptions, whenever ideological convictions clashed with the interests of the state, political interests took precedence over religious dogma. This proved the case in both Iran's foreign relations as well as its domestic politics.

Most importantly, the well-being of ordinary Iranians has not improved significantly under the Islamic regime, while at the same time the regime has clamped down on basic freedoms and extended its autocratic powers. Naturally, this led to growing disillusionment and discontent with the revolution and the regime, which in turn gave rise to both popular cries for reform and a broad-based opposition movement. Today, the people's discontent is the main challenge to the Islamic regime's survival.

Among the Islamic Republic's various political factions, there is a wide array of opinion about how to deal with the regime's legitimacy crisis, as well as how to address specific areas of national policy. The two most important political trends competing for ascendancy may be defined generally as "reformists" or "pragmatists" on the one hand, and "conservatives," "radicals" or "principlists" (*osulgarayan*) on the other. Both of these camps are actively maneuvering to set Iranian policy. While both trends emerged from the revolution and are intimately connected with the Islamic regime, the differences between them are nevertheless substantial, especially today.[2]

Since the June 2009 presidential elections, the reformists have become most commonly identified with the Green Movement—the popular, grass-roots social movement that took shape during the mass protests against Ahmadinejad's re-election. The reformist movement contains a spectrum of intellectual trends and political

agendas ranging from those who seek to gradually emend and modernize Iran's governmental institutions to those who hope to thoroughly overhaul the regime.

The conservatives, or "principlists," currently consist of at least three main streams. All of these streams support the Islamic regime, but they remain bitterly divided regarding the future direction of the state's policies. The first stream, the "traditional conservatives," is identified with Speaker of the Majles Ali Larijani, the former speaker Gholam Ali Hadad Adl, and the Supreme Leader's foreign policy advisor, Ali Akbar Velayati. They are loyal to Supreme Leader Khamenei personally and to the Khomeinist doctrine of *velayat-e faqih* (guardianship of the jurist); they oppose Ahmadinejad's provocative theatrics and do not seek direct confrontation with the West. "Pragmatic conservatives," such as former commander of the *Sepah-e Pasdaran* (Revolutionary Guards) Mohsen Rezai and former Tehran Mayor Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, support privatization of Iran's state-centric economy—a move that would open up the Iranian financial system to the global marketplace. A third stream, the "radicals," align themselves with President Ahmadinejad and his clerical supporters such as Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Mesbah-Yazdi and Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati. These men fervently oppose the Western-dominated global order and view themselves as faithful executors and guardians of Ayatollah Khomeini's ideology. For this reason they are often referred to as the "neo-conservatives." Importantly, however, even these divisions within the conservative camp are fluid and constantly changing.

Although both the reformist and conservative camps began as followers of Imam Khomeini's revolutionary doctrine, they parted ways over the contemporary meaning of that teaching, and their differences today are deep. While reformists uphold some basic principles of political freedom, economic openness, and social change, and advocate improved ties with the non-Muslim world, the conservatives very often emphasize the importance of strict adherence to revolutionary dogma in formulating national policy. There is a vigorous and complex debate among these groups on such pivotal questions as the relationship between religion and state, ideology versus national interest, isolationism versus globalization, and which attitude to adopt vis-à-vis the outside world. In important ways, these clashes reflect a more fundamental contest between the revolutionary ideals of 1979 and a newer spirit of reform, a contest between institutions of power and an emerging Iranian civil society, between the old guard and the new generation now known as "the children of the revolution."

An interesting manifestation of the widening split in Iranian politics is found in a seminal article that appeared in the magazine *Jamee* (or *Society*, a reformist publication banned shortly after the article's publication). In response to an appeal by Hojjat al-Islam Mohammad Javad Hojjati-Kermani, who had exhorted Iran's youth not to exceed the boundaries of true Islam, one student passionately queried the cleric: How many Islams are there, and who decides what the true Islam is? The

main question for Iranian society, the student continued, was not the youth's penchant for crossing certain unspecified religious "red lines," but how to deal with the fact that "on a one way street" leading to reform, a certain group—i.e., the conservatives—were "driving against the flow of traffic" and were restricting the thought (*andisheh*) of the entire society within a "narrow and dark alley."[3]

The Futile Hope of Reform

THE CONFLICTING POSITIONS AMONG IRAN'S CURRENT RULING ELITE, AND between elements of the founding generation and the children of the revolution, are perhaps best exemplified by the distinctly different worldviews and political agendas of the country's last two presidents—Khatami and Ahmadinejad. More recently, in the turmoil that engulfed the country following the 2009 elections, this constitutional clash came to the fore in the political struggle that erupted between the Ahmadinejad-Khamenei camp, which was backed by the Revolutionary Guards, and the reformist Green Movement led by former prime minister Mir Hossein Mousavi and backed by influential politicians like Khatami and Karroubi, among others.

Khatami's election in 1997 marked the culmination of what might be described broadly as a growing trend toward pragmatism within Iranian society. A liberal by Iranian standards, Khatami respresented a new societal desire for openness, and he advocated for greater political and social freedoms, the relaxation of cultural norms, economic rehabilitation and, in general, the adoption of a more practical attitude toward the outside world. Once elected president, Khatami's pragmatic record and overtures to the West heightened expectations at home and also abroad that a dramatic policy change was in the works. His election was widely perceived as a watershed event that would bring about even greater change within the Iranian polity (albeit change that would occur within the framework of the Islamic revolutionary system).

Such hopes were soon frustrated, however. While Khatami's personal status as an establishment outsider abetted his political rise, his lack of an independent power base within the regime structure posed serious obstacles to his reform efforts. The main stumbling block to Khatami's effectiveness was the fact that the head of state in Iran is the supreme leader (*rahbar*), Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and not the president. Khamenei and his office limited the president's power considerably, since the supreme leader did not share many of Khatami's convictions and, more often than not, identified with his political rivals. In addition to the supreme leader, Khatami also had to reckon with other powerful institutions that were not inclined to reform. These included governmental institutions such as the judiciary, the Council of Guardians, the Council

of Experts and the Revolutionary Guards, as well as a number of revolutionary foundations and semi-governmental bodies (for example, the Foundation of the Dispossessed and Self-Sacrificers and the Foundation of the Martyrs). All of these institutions, as a matter of course, worked to slow down the president's reform initiatives, or blocked them altogether. In fact, in the formulation of national policy, and in all significant contests of power that occurred following Khatami's assumption of office, the hard-liners remained triumphant.

Significantly, Khatami's reformist agenda did not aim for the creation of a new Iranian regime but instead represented a fresh approach within the system established in 1979. It was an attempt to fulfill yet unrealized revolutionary aspirations in a somewhat modified fashion. It amounted to a call to policy reform, not regime change—to save the revolution, not to abandon its Islamist dogma altogether. As a consequence of this, the Khatami presidency inaugurated a genuine *Kulturkampf* within the Iranian polity between two competing visions of the Islamic revolution, between two different sides who have since vigorously fought to determine the future of the country.

While it was unable to affect official policy, the emergence of the reform camp in the 1990s did transform the nature of political participation and significantly alter the political landscape. Symbols that were hitherto sacred lost their sanctity and fundamental taboos were broken. Compared with the realities before the revolution, and relative to most neighboring countries, Iranian society under Khatami's presidency practiced an impressive measure of free expression. Public discourse regularly questioned the erratic application and sometimes even the very principle of *velayat-e faqih*, and people openly discussed the advantages of renewing ties with the U.S.

The magnitude of change during the Khatami era was perhaps best reflected in Iran's intellectual life and press. At no time previously had so many newspapers and journals enjoyed such a degree of freedom and expressed such a diversity of viewpoints with such fervor and sense of mission. A new generation of investigative journalists emerged; brave, penetrating and determined, they questioned basic revolutionary axioms and criticized leading revolutionary figures. The title of a 1999 article by Mohsen Kadivar, "The Basic Problem of Iran is Velayat-e Faqih," captured this newly emerging spirit. Meanwhile, new books were published containing harsh criticism of the Islamic Republic's ideological tenets and describing, in accurate detail, the actual realities in the country. Among the most important of these books were those written by the so-called "jailbirds" (several reformist intellectuals who were imprisoned during the 1990s): Abdollah Nouri's *Showkaran Eslah* (*Hemlock for Advocates of Reform*), or Akbar Ganji's "*Talaqqi-ye Fashisti az Din va Hokumat*" (*The Fascist Interpretation of Religion and Government*).[4]

This new reformist discourse was not simply critical of the regime, but constructive

and expressive of new, post-revolutionary ways of thinking about the inter-relationship of religion and state and, more specifically, about the relationship between Islam and democracy. Voices called frequently for greater freedom (*azadi*), openness, and respect for civil rights. Thinkers such as Professor Abdul-Karim Soroush, Hojjat al-Islam Mohsen Kadivar and Hojjat al-Islam Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari soon emerged as the most eloquent spokesmen for these viewpoints. No less important, leading Shiite scholars—most prominent among them being Ayatollah Hosein Ali Montazeri, a man who Khomeini himself initially designated as his successor—added their voices and their authority to this debate.

The open criticism of the regime culminated with the student riots of July 1999. The protestors lamented the lack of freedoms under the Islamic Republic, and their sloganeering directly challenged the authority of the supreme leader, the righteousness of the conservative elite and even the very concept of *velayat-e faqih*. Some of their slogans were particularly revealing: "Khamenei be ashamed (*hayya kon*), abandon the leadership! (*raha kon*)." Heshmatollah Tabarzadi, one of the leaders of the Islamic Union of University Students and Graduates, complained that the original vision of the Islamic Republic, based on democratic principles and the concept of republicanism, had never been achieved. The application of "absolute *velayat*" by the conservatives, he said, "leads to monocracy" of the kind that "no society" would accept, leaving the government no option but to "impose it by force of the knife, the lash, the Revolutionary Court, [or] the Special Clerics' Court."[5]

Like Khomeini in the 1970s, Khatami in the 1990s became a popular symbol of hope with a mass following. He provided ordinary Iranians with a sense of renewed optimism that the unfulfilled democratic promises of the revolution might finally be achieved. At the same time, the revolution had by then matured, and people as a whole had grown more aware of its limits—and much more wary of its excesses. The objective realities within the country called for an embrace of pragmatism—even if this meant a retreat from Islamist dogma. It seemed that many Iranians, including a growing number of aging revolutionaries, had realized that fundamental reforms were essential in order to solve the country's mounting problems and assure regime stability and longevity.

For all these reasons, the electoral victories of reformist candidates—including the presidency in 1997 and 2001, municipalities in 1999, and the Majles in 2000—indicated a widespread yearning for fundamental political change. And yet, the reformist trend ultimately failed to achieve meaningful results. Faced with stiff conservative opposition in the bureaucracy, the people's hopes for reform have evaporated gradually since the turn of the millennium. All in all, the euphoria following the reformers' sweeping 1997 victory was soon deflated by a growing feeling of resignation to the status quo, the reformists' ambitions curtailed by sobering realities.

The Conservatives Strike Back

EVEN WHEN THE REFORMISTS MANAGED TO WIN OFFICE AND LEAD THE government, their conservative rivals, entrenched in the Islamic regime's bureaucracies, enjoyed disproportionately more power and, by and large, managed to dictate national policy. Moreover, even before Khatami's 2001 re-election, the conservatives, led by supreme leader Khamenei, had begun their counteroffensive.

Since the founding of the Islamic republic, both reformists and conservatives have stressed the achievement of justice as a major revolutionary goal. The two camps have parted ways, however, in their visions of justice and its requirements: conservative rhetoric has generally given preference to social and economic development (*towseeh eqtesadi*), whereas reformers have tended to emphasize political justice and institutional development (*towseeh siyasi*). This split, already evident in the early days of the revolution, has in recent years found expression in the antagonism between the reformist politician Khatami and the supreme leader Khamenei.

Either out of sincere conviction or as a way of checking Khatami's popular reformist agenda, Khamenei's pronouncements in the late 1990s stressed the need for government to respond to the country's economic failures before political reform. In 2000, Khamenei thus urged Majles members to abandon "petty issues" and trivial intellectual argumentation over political reform, and to devote themselves fully to resolving the country's complex economic troubles. Portraying a gloomy picture of the population's daily life, he urged the government to focus on securing people's livelihood (*maishat*) and well-being; otherwise, the supreme jurist warned, there will be no religion, no morale and no hope.[6]

Khamenei's economic populism struck a deep chord with the Iranian people, and soon it also had the public backing of conservative clerics Ayatollah Mahmoud Hashemi Shahrudi and Mohammad Yazdi, among others.[7] As a consequence of this economic populism, and thanks to the conservatives' entrenchment in government bureaucracies, conservative power was revitalized in the face of the reformists' challenge. Consequently, this set the stage for Ahmadinejad's rise.

Economic development and welfare were the primary messages of Ahmadinejad's campaign, and ultimately won him the presidency. More than any other candidate in 2005, he represented a return to the original revolutionary principles of social justice. He sought to embody the changes demanded by voters and he reaffirmed the ability of the revolution to cure societal malaise. His campaign slogan was simple and appealing—*mishavad va mitavanim*, or "it is possible and we can do it."

When he assumed office, Ahmadinejad was himself an inexperienced politician,

and he brought with him a team that was equally inexperienced and lacked the knowledge needed to address an extremely critical moment in Iran's history. Moreover, while all previous Iranian presidents became relatively more pragmatic during their time in office, Ahmadinejad is the first president to become more extreme—particularly on issues relating to the United States and Israel. The simplest explanation for this may be his deep-rooted anti-Western views and his belief in the need to eliminate Israel; in Ahmadinejad's rhetoric, these sentiments blend seamlessly with his pronouncements on economic populism and social justice. Meanwhile, widespread perceptions that America was stuck in a debilitating quagmire in Iraq and Afghanistan combined with the Iranian regime's burgeoning oil revenues to contribute to a perceived sense of national strength. This, too, may have encouraged the president to revive revolutionary era anti-Western rhetoric.

By embracing a radical international agenda, Ahmadinejad apparently also hoped to shore up his political position at home. Although he was elected on a platform of social justice and economic populism, Iran's domestic problems have continued to deteriorate during his term. Perhaps the president reasoned that diverting attention toward an external enemy would serve to mollify public opinion at home. At the same time, he may have expected that a stridently anti-Western and anti-Israel stance would enhance Iran's leadership position in the Muslim world. Many attentive observers have also sought to explain Ahmadinejad's radical foreign policy by reference to his apparent mystical belief in heavenly oversight and his own divine mission.[8]

Be all this as it may, Ahmadinejad's first term as president did not alleviate the burdens on the lower strata of Iranian society and failed to provide for and extend the basic liberties that people enjoyed in the late 1990s—and which they now came to expect. As a consequence, opposition to the president and to the regime more generally gained momentum, soon acquiring an intensity and tone not seen since the early 1980s (when the Islamic revolutionaries were purging their opposition to consolidate the new regime). The yearnings for reform were once again ignited.

Ahmadinejad and the 2009 Presidential Elections

TWO FACTORS, MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, BREATHED NEW LIFE INTO THE Iranian people's desire to reform the Islamic Republic in 2009. First was popular disenchantment and disillusionment with the Iranian government due to socio-economic distress combined with the lack of liberties and basic respect for human dignity within Iran. The second factor was the election (and early presidential actions) of President

Barack Obama. Dissatisfaction with the status quo, coupled with President Obama's dramatic rise to power in the U.S.—and his subsequent civil rights emphasis and offers of dialogue with the Iranian regime—inspired ordinary Iranians to seek alternatives to the political deadlock and malaise stifling their national life for decades.

For well over a century, the Iranian people have fought to achieve two major goals: freedom and welfare, or political justice and economic justice. Nowadays, systemic domestic failures continue to fuel the fire of ever-increasing public discontent. Despite the government's oil revenues (which have expanded dramatically due to the price of oil), economic hardships and social gaps are no less burdensome on ordinary people than previously. Moreover, despite the high promises and once quite popular appeal of "Islamic Democracy," freedom has yet to appear in any real sense of the word. During the shah's reign criticism against the regime was considered a crime; under the Islamic regime it is tantamount to a sin against Islam.

The U.S. elections of 2008 gave added boldness to Iran's already dissatisfied reform camp. Obama's rise from a modest background captured the imagination of many throughout the world—and perhaps most acutely in Iran. His pledge of dialogue with Iran helped encourage reformists and revitalized optimism about the possibility for a new détente with the U.S. Iranians, too, began to believe in the Obama slogan "Yes, we can." Thus, only a few months after Obama's inauguration, riots and disorder broke out in Iran—the most extensive public unrest since the early 1980s.

Inspiration is difficult to measure, and no doubt the precise quantification of Obama's influence on Iranian voters is elusive. Nonetheless, President Obama's conciliatory approach to Iran was unmistakable in early 2009. The U.S. President's Nouruz greeting to the "Islamic Republic of Iran" (March 21, 2009)—in which he urged Iran "to take its rightful place in the community of nations," and implicitly recognized both the regime's leadership and its Islamic character—marked a significant departure from the U.S. posture toward the Iranian government since 1979.

This new U.S. posture toward Iran, and President Obama's appeal to "human rights everywhere," seemed to encourage the Iranian reform movement as well. In the aftermath of the unrest following the disputed presidential elections in Iran, both the Western and Iranian media tried to assess how the "Obama effect" or "Obama factor" influenced the rise of the Green Movement. Publications ranging from *The New York Times* to the hard-line Iranian daily *Javan* stressed Mousavi's dynamic and tech-savvy campaign suggesting reform was, in fact, modeled on Obama's own campaign. The conservatives, for their part, were quick to warn that the U.S. administration's conciliatory offer was "poisoned." Their deepest fear was the subversive impact that a warm American embrace might have on the hearts and minds of the children of the revolution.

When Iran's riots came, they presented the U.S. with a serious policy dilemma. In 1953, the United States interfered directly in Iran's politics—a move with toxic effects

on U.S.-Iran relations ever since. By contrast, in 1979, President Carter chose not to interfere and his inaction eased the revolution's victory and the rise of hardliners. To be or not to be involved, and in what shape or dose, was the question facing Obama. Dialogue with the Iranian regime constituted a major pillar of U.S. policy and non-interference a significant principle of President Obama's platform. Hence, endorsing the reformists might have brought about an unintended consequence—eliminating common ground for dialogue with Tehran—without necessarily benefiting the reformists. Obama first chose not to refer to the opposition movement or the Iranian government's crackdown on protestors directly. Only after ten days did the U.S. President convey to Iran a message of support and respect for political freedom and basic human rights.

For the reformers, this message of support came too late. Further, for many protestors, the message didn't seem strong enough; following the June 2009 elections, a constant refrain heard from Iranian protesters through at least November was, "Obama! Either you are with them [the regime] or with us!" Meanwhile, the hardliner Mojtaba Samareh-Hashemi, who ran Ahmadinejad's presidential campaign, claimed that Obama reversed his initial "soft" stance toward Iran's presidential election because Zionists and U.S. neoconservatives had forced him to take a tougher approach toward the Islamic regime.[9]

While Washington struggled to define its policy, Iranian conservatives mounted an impressive political and security response in order to suppress the riots and counter the reform movement. The conservatives in the regime utilized the fact that they claim to speak in the name of Islam, and actively work to silence dissident voices in the clergy. This gives them enormous influence among religious believers, and they rallied this constituency to check the opposition. Perhaps more importantly, the conservatives in government, who enjoy the loyalty of top commanders in the military and paramilitary security forces, were well-prepared to employ these forces to safeguard the Islamic regime ever since they first clashed with reformists and student protestors in the late 1990s.

In July 1999, Ayatollah Mesbah-Yazdi, a leading ultraconservative from the Assembly of Experts, unleashed an ideological attack on elements that were beginning to challenge openly the regime's policies. In a Friday sermon, Yazdi proclaimed that the heads of those acting against the Islamic regime or speaking out against its basic tenets should be cut off with a sharp sword. After dismissing leniency (*tasahol*) and indulgence (*tasamoh*) as alien to Islam, he inquired whether anti-regime actors, who he alleged were conspiring to undermine the Iranian people's lives, property, chastity and religion, ought to be treated with leniency. "Where do these fallacies stem from?" he asked. Islam, he said, directs Muslims to remove these fallacious weeds, and obliges them to act vigorously against hooligans, traitors and heretics, and against foreign influences.

In this struggle against un-Islam, Yazdi said Iranians should first use "exhortation" (*nasihat*), then, if necessary, "the sword" (*shamshir*). Those who claim that Islam does not approve violence (*hoshunat*), he concluded, do not understand Islam at all.[10]

In 1998, Yahya Rahim Safavi, then Commander of the Revolutionary Guards, also threatened to use violence and purge those unfaithful to the revolution. He complained that segments of the press had become nests in which anti-revolutionaries flourished. Safavi saw the West's cultural onslaught as the main threat to the Islamic regime and recognized the dangers of free expression. He declared that the Guards would not allow the press to inflict blows on the precious ideals of the Islamic revolution.[11] He went so far as to state that the Revolutionary Guards would be ready to decapitate and cut out the tongues of the regime's political opponents.[12]

Ten years later, in 2009, the regime's condemnation of the protestors and opposition was no less harsh. In a Friday sermon in Tehran, Hojjat al-Islam Ahmad Khatami (a Friday prayer leader in Tehran) pronounced that "unauthorized demonstrations are both against the law and against the Sharia because His Eminence [Khamenei] has advised against them." The hardline cleric further stated that Khamenei, "the imam, the leader of the Islamic community, can fight [against anyone who acts against the Islamic system] until [that person's] destruction." He then declared that the protestors were enemies of God (*muharib*), and ruled that anyone who "wages war against God" or "who takes up arms, be it guns or knives, is a *muharib* and Islam has said that *muharib* should receive the severest of the punishments."[13]

Such pronouncements provided the conservatives with religious justification to act against their opposition—and they did so systematically and brutally. By acting in this way, the regime sought to assure their supporters that they remained in full control. Clearly, the conservatives learned from their own revolution. They exhibited unwavering resolve in their efforts to prevent their reformist opponents from overthrowing them just as the Islamic revolution toppled the shah's regime. Unwilling to voluntarily concede power, they are ready to forcibly suppress their rivals and determined to fight to preserve their political status and the survival of the regime. In the minds of these conservatives, the destiny of Islam as whole, of the Islamic regime, and of Iran's ruling elite, are all one and the same.

Conclusion

OVER A YEAR SINCE IRAN'S DISPUTED ELECTIONS, THE CONSERVATIVES APPEAR to have firmly re-established their control. And yet, beneath the surface the popular fires of rebellion still rage. Moreover, the regime's integrity and revolutionary identity has been compromised—and perhaps terminally so. The reform movement's hostility

was directed not only at Ahmadinejad, but also toward the supreme leader of the Islamic Republic himself. Indeed, in video footage posted on YouTube during the Shiite *Ashura* commemoration (December 27, 2009), demonstrators were seen tearing down billboards of Khamenei's image and crying out "Death to the Dictator!"[14] Graffiti calling for "Death to Khamenei!" could be seen scrawled in a few public places.[15]

Such calls reveal just how precarious things have become for the Iranian government. Supreme leader Khamenei—whose religious credentials to hold the office of ruling jurist have been questioned ever since he assumed power, and who has always lacked the political acumen and personal charisma of Ayatollah Khomeini—chose to use the authority of his office to support Ahmadinejad's re-election as president. Unlike Khomeini, who managed to maintain his rule and even his personal prestige in times of crisis by standing above factionalism and bridging divides (or by playing factions against one another), Khamenei publicly identified with one element of the Iranian polity and involved himself and his office directly in factional politics. The reformist opposition will not likely forget the supreme leader's attitude anytime soon.

If, during the lead up to the 2009 presidential elections, the political competition appeared to be "within the family" and among competing factions who all laid equal claim to the Islamic revolution, the rifts between the followers of Ayatollah Khomeini now seem much deeper. Moreover, the political base from which the regime derives its authority has narrowed significantly. Thus, while the regime's strength in the past relied in part on its rigorous adherence to Islamic doctrine and values, it now increasingly resorts to oppressive measures and the force of arms.

The revolutionary principle and institutions of *velayat-e faqih*—the main historical achievement of the Islamic revolution—have also suffered a serious blow. In fact, as the Green Movement's opposition to Khamenei attests, the revolutionary mythology by which the Islamic regime has justified its rule appears to be shattered.

In the meantime, the reform movement's inherent flaws have played to the conservatives' advantage. The reformers seem to lack a cohesive alternative ideology, a structured and effective organization, and charismatic leadership. Leading a country fed up with its government was easier for Khomeini, who called to uproot the old system entirely, than for Mousavi, who "merely" wants to improve the system from within. The Green Movement has yet to match the explicit, unequivocal, catchy slogans of 1979 ("Shah must go," "Islam is the solution"). Finally, previous Iranian mass movements were based on a dual pillar—the quest for both welfare and liberty. Powerful as the Green Movement's call "Where is my voice?" has been for those that cry out for political representation and justice, it only attracts a certain segment of contemporary Iranian society. To empower a real mass movement, a supplementary socio-economic and anti-corruption banner could be helpful—perhaps something like "Where is my oil money?"

Despite these shortcomings, Mousavi does enjoy wide-ranging support among the youth and the general public, as well as within segments of the clergy. Indeed, in important ways, the reform movement appears to be a grassroots nationalist movement much stronger than its leader. For example, on the September 2009 Al-Quds [Jerusalem] Day, an annual occasion aimed at demonstrating solidarity with Palestinians, demonstrators were heard chanting "Not Gaza, Not Lebanon! I will give my life for Iran!"[16]

Iranians have an impressive tradition of popular involvement in politics. More than other nations in the Middle East, Iranians have taken to the streets to shape the destiny of their country—for better and for worse. Across history, Shiites have never been strangers to struggles against the unjust usurpation of authority and the search for just rule. Indeed, in important ways, this was the founding principle of Shiism itself. The memories of the past and the experience of the last year should serve as a daunting alarm to Iran's Islamic regime. As of now, the impact of the events of 2009 may appear more like the 1999 riots than the 1979 revolution. Yet, revolutionary movements spring up suddenly; they are rarely predictable, and don't send out early warning signals.

And so, the Iranian ship of state continues to drift from course to course and in constant search of a proper equilibrium between dedication to its revolutionary convictions and the importunate demands of governance, between religion and state, between an inward-looking Islam and the temptations of the West. The Islamic regime is still searching for an appropriate way to deal with the day-to-day challenges of governance—and at a time of enormous domestic upheaval, worsening social and economic difficulties, dramatic regional changes and increased international pressure. If and when the Iranians decide to change course for the betterment of the people, their decision will depend not upon the degree to which they seek to "return to Islam" or to a utopian Islamic society, but on the measure in which their national political life meets the expectation that fed the Islamic revolution from its inception—the promise of greater welfare and more freedom, of bread and liberty. This remains the revolution's main challenge, for it has yet to achieve the significant progress the Iranian people seek.

NOTES

1. *Kayhan* (Tehran), January 7, 1988.
2. In discussing Iran's diverse domestic camps and tendencies, one caveat should be mentioned: categorizing these groups is exceedingly difficult because their composition and membership often prove fluid. Some of Khomeini's most devout supporters in 1979 challenged his doctrine and practices later on (e.g., Ayatollah Hussein Ali Montazeri and Prof. Abdul-Karim Soroush). Some of the

most radical figures from the early days of the revolution became the leading reformists in the 1990s (for example, former Prime Minister Mousavi, former Majles Speaker Ayatollah Mehdi Karroubi, Ali Akbar Mohtashami-pour, and Sadegh Khalkhali). In addition, the two main camps—largely referred to as reformist and conservative—are not unified; there are, in fact, significant variations and sub-groupings within each of them.

3. *Jamee*, May 19, 1998.
4. See an elaborate discussion of such tendencies in my book, *Post-Revolutionary Politics in Iran: Religion, Society and Power* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), chapters 1 and 3.
5. *Jahan-e Islam*, February 14, 1999.
6. *Jomhuri-ye Islami*, June 19, 2000.
7. IRNA, August 1 (Shahrudi); *Jomhuri-ye Islami*, July 1, 2000 (Yazdi).
8. An Iranian website published a video recording of Ahmadinejad in which he claims to have "felt" a divine light while addressing world leaders at the UN General Assembly in September 2005. Ahmadinejad said, "I felt it myself, too, that suddenly the atmosphere changed." He went on: "I am not exaggerating ... because I was looking. All the leaders were puzzled, as if a hand held them and made them sit." Also, his repeated reference to the expected return of the Hidden Imam is indicative of his deep belief. Radio Free Iran, Radio Liberty, November 29, 2005, http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1063353.html.
9. Press TV, June 30, 2009.
10. *Neshat* and *Iran Daily*, July 24, 1999. See similarly in IRNA, August 6, 1999, Daily Report (Middle East), Foreign Broadcast Information Service [DR].
11. Interview with Safavi in *Kayhan* (Tehran), June 1, 1998.
12. *Kayhan* (Tehran), May 28, 1998 and *Mobin*, May 2, 1998.
13. BBC World Monitoring Service, June 26, 2009.
14. *The New York Times,* December 28, 2009.
15. *International Herald Tribune,* August 18, 2009.
16. *The New Yorker*, October 5, 2009; *The New York Times,* September 19, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/19/world/middleeast/19iran.html.

The Shiites of Saudi Arabia

By Joshua Teitelbaum

Since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003 and the ensuing alteration of the regional balance of power in favor of Iran, Saudi Arabia has looked at the world through an Iranian and Shiite prism. This prism affects the way it views its neighbor across the Gulf, its position in the Arab and Islamic world, and its own Shiite population.

Saudi Arabia's current regional political troubles are nearly entirely connected to the rise of Iran and the Shiites in the region. Saudi Arabian involvement in the West Bank and Gaza—and in particular in the agreement to establish a national unity government, signed on February 8, 2007 by Fatah and Hamas—was meant to lower the flames in the region in order to limit Iran's influence. Saudi involvement in Lebanon also stems from this desire to check Iran, as do several meetings between Saudi and Israeli officials and the revival of the Saudi initiative for a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict.[1]

As the Saudis move to restrain the rising strength of Iran and the Shiites outside the kingdom, they keep an ever-watchful eye over their own Shiite population. The ascendancy of the Shiites in Iraq and Lebanon has given rise to a feeling of empowerment amongst the Shiites of Saudi Arabia. They are proud of the accomplishments of their brethren. At the same time, they are cautious in what they hope for and how they express themselves, because much of the Wahhabi *ulama* in Saudi Arabia fears the rise of Shiism, and vocally opposes it. The Saudi Shiites expect the government to condemn anti-Shiite fatwas, and act as a protector, but the government has not done so.

The Saudi government, in fact, has its own concerns. Its base of support is

amongst the Wahhabi, anti-Shiite majority. It is a religious state that derives its legitimacy from a form of Islam that is, almost by definition, anti-Shiite. Indeed, there is a long history of Wahhabi anti-Shiite polemics.[2] The Wahhabi majority expects the Saudis, as the leaders of the Sunni world, to put the Shiites, led by Iran, in their place. The government therefore cannot be seen as trying to placate its own Shiites at this time.

The Shiites of Saudi Arabia have the misfortune of outside forces—be they the Saudis of Najd or the Persians of Iran—always determining their fates. The Saudis and the Iranians have a long history of enmity, punctuated with periods of good relations. Saudi Arabia's Shiites have often found themselves caught in the middle. They have been both the object of Saudi persecution and disdain and the subject of Iranian recruitment to subvert the Saudi regime.[3] Historically, their response has moved between dissimulation, accommodation, attempted reconciliation, and terrorism.[4] They reject the official narrative of Saudi history, which portrays the capture of the area where most of the Shiites live—al-Hasa—as a mythological "unification" of the Arabian Peninsula.[5] For many of the Shiites, their homeland has been occupied since the capture of al-Hasa by Ibn Saud in 1913.

There are two important political elements that constantly impact the fate of Saudi Shiites. One is internal—the Wahhabi ulama and their rank-and-file followers. The other is external—Iran, Saudi Arabia's main political and religious rival across the Gulf.

It is impossible to arrive at an exact determination of the number of Saudi Shiites. They constitute between ten and fifteen percent of the population, and about thirty-three percent of the population in the Eastern Province.[6] They reside primarily in the Eastern Province, where Saudi Arabia's oil is located, with a small number living in Medina.

While the most important Shiite centers have always been Iran and Iraq, the eastern part of Arabia has always held significant Shiite populations. Prominent historical Shiite *mujtahid*s include Ibrahim al-Qatifi (sixteenth century), Ahmad Zayn al-Din al-Ahsai (d. 1801), and Ali al-Khunayzi (d. 1944). Until the Saudi occupation of the Eastern areas, Shiite mosques and *husayniyya*s (community centers) were allowed to develop. Learning centers, known as *hawza*s, were allowed to exist until the mid-1940s. The connection of Saudi Shiites to Iraq is a strong one. Upon the closing of Shiite learning centers in Saudi Arabia, most religious studies students went to Iraq.[7]

Deep in Shiite historical memory rests their persecution by the Saudis during the 18th and 19th centuries. Expanding into Iraq in the early 19th century, Saudi warriors famously destroyed the tomb of Imam Husayn in Karbala and the tombs of the Prophet's companions (the *sahaba*) in Mecca and Medina, demonstrating the extreme enmity

the Saudi Wahhabis held towards the Shiites. For the Wahhabis, grave worship was the paramount act of *shirk*, or polytheism, a severe accusation, so its practice by the Shiites became a source of constant suffering.

The Shiites of Saudi Arabia do not represent a threat to the government or the state. They are too small in number and too unpopular with most Saudis. But what they do, and how the Saudi government reacts to and treats them, are important for both domestic and foreign policy.

Saudi Shiites have never felt part of the state, and the government has rarely given them reason to. There are several factors influencing the government's treatment of the Shiites: Wahhabi ideology, pressure from and response to the Wahhabi ulama, the presence of the Shiites in the sensitive oil region, and the government's relations with Iran. These four factors have combined to influence the fate of the Shiites in Saudi Arabia throughout their history.

Modern Saudi Arabia is the result of an 18th century alliance between the Saudi family of Najd in Central Arabia and an extremist shaykh of the Hanbali school of Islamic jurisprudence, Muhammad bin Abd al-Wahhab. Wahhabism was a powerful and fanatic ideology that served the regime well in mobilizing the disparate tribes and casting the Shiites in the role of the quintessential "Other." Muslims who were worse than Jews or Christians. To Sunnis in general, the Shia are known as *rawafid*, those who reject the first three "Rightly Guided" Caliphs in favor of Ali and the Prophet's House, known as *Ahl al-Bayt*. But for the Wahhabis, they are worse than rejectionists: they are associationists and polytheists (*mushrikin*) who associate people (such as Ahl al-Bayt) and objects with God. Many Shiite beliefs and practices stand in stark contradistinction to the Wahhabi creed, with its strong emphasis on *tawhid*, or the uncompromising unity of the Divine.

The Saudi ruling family's legitimacy is religiously based. The family claims to rule in the name of Islam, as interpreted by the Wahhabi clerics. The commitment of the Saudi family to Wahhabism has often been measured by the way they treated the Shiites under their control. Throughout their history, the Shiites have paid the price of the Saudi family's quest for religious legitimacy. And religious legitimacy has been the maidservant of political aspirations and expansion.

The modern misfortunes of the Shiite community of Saudi Arabia began in 1913, with the capture of the eastern oasis of al-Hasa by the recently resurgent Saudis. They were subject to depredations and persecutions under the rulers of the governors of al-Hasa, the Jiluwi family, relatives of the Saudi royal family. Many Shiites were killed by Ibn Saud's *Ikhwan* warriors when they refused to convert.

Religiously and socially, the Shiites were marginalized by the emerging Saudi state. Sunni merchants were encouraged to settle in al-Hasa and take over traditional Shiite commercial ventures, such as the trade in dates.[9] Shiite critics would later

complain that the traditional interdependence between Najd, the Hijaz, and al-Hasa had been violated by the Saudis, who made all regions dependent on Najd.[10]

Shiite religious practices and institutions were severely curtailed. In 1927, the Wahhabi ulama published a fatwa calling upon the Shiites to "convert" to Islam. Some Shiite notables complied, while others left the country.[11] The publication and distribution of religious texts was forbidden, the Shiite call to prayer was outlawed, and centers of religious studies were dismantled. Specific Shiite customs such as grave visitation (*ziyarat al-qubur*) were forbidden, as were the Ashura commemorations.[12] The Shiites have been vilified in textbooks, and generally have been made to feel like outcasts.

Economically as well as socially, the Shiites have rarely been treated or led to believe that they are part of a common Saudi experience. For example, in the 1950s there were labor riots in the oil fields run by Aramco, where most of the workers were Shiites. At the time, the ideologies that were gaining ground in the Arab world, such as socialism and communism, seemed attractive to many Shiites who felt discriminated against by the Saudi authorities. The Shiites felt that they were not part of the wealth that was beginning to flow to the kingdom as a result of the oil industry.[13] These riots were put down very harshly by the Saudi Arabian National Guard. In 1979 and 1980, encouraged by the success of the Iranian revolution they again rioted in demonstrations which became known as the "Intifada of the Eastern Province." These riots were firmly crushed as well. The government did not hesitate to use helicopter gunships against the demonstrators.[14] Many leaders of the Shiite community went into exile or were arrested following these protests.

Fouad Ibrahim, a Saudi Shiite scholar and former activist, relates that the main Shiite opposition body, the Organization of the Islamic Revolution (*Munazzamat al-Thawra al-Islamiyya*), was established by Shaykh Hasan al-Saffar, a Shiite cleric, in December 1979, following the first burst of rioting. Saffar, who participated in the uprising, was inspired by the revolutionary reading that the Iranian Ali Shariati gave to the battle of Karbala. The group functioned as a political and religious outlet for feelings of oppression and insult.[15]

Shaykh Saffar was echoing the thought of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini when he wrote:

> We are genuinely part of the realm of the downtrodden [*mustadafun*] while the despots of Al Saud...are genuinely part of the realm of oppressors...and colonizers. The ongoing battle is now between these two realms.... Our struggle against...tyrannical rule is a cycle of a long chain of a universal revolution which will, inevitably, lead to the collapse of imperialistic superpowers and the rise of the world of the downtrodden.[16]

After the uprising Saffar found asylum in Iran; his organization established offices in Tehran, London and Washington, where it was concerned primarily with the publication of *al-Thawra al-Islamiyya*.

During the 1990s the nature of the relations between the Saudi regime and the Shiites changed from confrontational to accommodating. The Shiite opposition turned its attention to a search for cultural authenticity, a creative and less violent way to relate to the Saudi state. This change stemmed from a realization that confrontation provided limited or no results, and that a revolutionary stance had little chance of success. They therefore tried to find another way to give expression to their Shiite identity while demanding social change. To this end, the organization changed its name to *al Haraka al-Islahiyya* (the Reform Movement), and in 1991 it began to publish *al-Jazira al-Arabiyya* in London and *Arabian Monitor* in Washington. The journals were moderate in tone and tended to highlight human rights abuses. They called for a progressive agenda in the kingdom and addressed non-Shiite issues. Until the Sunni Committee for the Defense of Legitimate Rights (CDLR) began publishing in 1994, these Shiite publications were the only overseas voice of the Saudi opposition.[17]

The Shiite opposition tried to open avenues of communication with some of the Sunni opposition during the 1990s, but, as could perhaps be expected, they were rebuffed. The Saudi regime noticed and welcomed the shift in Shiite tactics and apparent goals, for it faced a more radical and more threatening Sunni opposition. In the autumn of 1993, and after negotiations carried out by the Saudi ambassador to the United Kingdom, Ghazi al-Qusaybi, several members of the Shiite opposition returned to Saudi Arabia.[18]

For the Saudi government, accommodating the Shiite opposition seemed a relatively easy way to temper a serious conflict, even at the cost of angering radical Sunni fundamentalists at home. Saudis already owned most of the international Arab press, and for a small price they could shut down two major opposition publications. Moreover, Saffar's group appeared to have settled for a separate deal with the Saudis, accepting commitments to improve the situation of the Eastern Province Shiites and agreeing not to press their demands for general reform and human rights domestically. Compared to the tougher and potentially more dangerous demands of groups such as the CDLR, reaching a separate *modus vivendi* with the Shiite opposition was a small price to pay and also prevented a temporary but potentially damaging alliance between the opposition movements.

Tawfiq al-Sayf, a leader of the Saudi Shiite opposition in exile, led a large delegation to Saudi Arabia in October 1993 to meet with King Fahd and other Saudi officials. According to the few press reports available, Fahd instructed his son, Prince Muhammad,

governor of the Eastern Province, to carry out Shiite demands, which included allowing the practice of Shiite religious rites previously outlawed, returning canceled passports, allowing exiles to return, and guaranteeing that those who returned would not be arrested or questioned. As a result of these contacts, the authorities released scores of Shiite prisoners and issued travel documents previously denied to Shiite activists. In a development the Shiites perceived as highly significant, the Saudi regime reportedly reissued a school text that had referred to Shiites as one of the heterodox sects. The new edition mentioned that there were now five Islamic *madhahib* (schools of jurisprudence) in Saudi Arabia: four belonging to Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jamaa (Sunnis) and one belonging to the imamiyya or ithna ashariyya (Shiites). The Shiite publications *al-Jazira al-Arabiyya* and *Arabia Monitor* published their last issues in August 1993.

Both sides kept the news of the agreements fairly quiet;[19] the Saudi domestic and overseas press ignored it, and opposition activists suddenly assumed a very low profile. This reaction probably resulted from a mutual understanding that too much publicity would draw the fire of radical Sunni fundamentalists, who were troublesome for both the Saudis and the Shiites.

Both the government and the Shiite opposition seemed to greatly desire some arrangement, although it appeared that the Saudi authorities emerged victorious, successfully silencing several of its major critics. There was no evidence that certain other key Shiite demands had been met, including the official recognition of Shiism as a Muslim *madhhab* and the right to implement Shiite law accordingly; recognition of the rights to build and to worship in Shiite holy places—husayniyyas and mosques—and to repair graves destroyed by the Saudis in the al-Baqi cemetery in Medina; freedom to hold Shiite religious celebrations; an end to discrimination against Shiites in government and in universities; and general improvements in the Eastern Province.[20] Additionally, not all Shiites accepted the new accommodation with the regime, and some members of the overseas opposition did not return.

Shiite activists led by Saffar accepted the principle of engagement as the best way to achieve Shiite rights and inclusion in Saudi society. Saffar and his followers tend to accept the religious leadership of Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the spiritual leader of Iraqi Shiites, but distinguish between religious and political leadership. Like Sistani, Saffar does not accept the principle of *wilayat al-faqih*, the rule of the jurist.[21]

But one organization accepted neither Saffar's policy of engagement nor the accommodation with the Saudi regime. This was Hezbollah al-Hijaz, known also as Saudi Hezbollah and Ansar Khat al-Imam (Followers of Imam Khomeini). They follow the *marjaiyya* of Ayatollah Khamenei, the supreme leader (*rahbar*) of Iran, and they are politically loyal to him. Unlike Saffar's group, they accept wilayat al-faqih.[22] These two remain the major trends in the Shiite population today.[23]

Hezbollah al-Hijaz came out strongly against the accommodation of 1993 and treated Saffar's group like traitors, although it profited from the arrangement. "Let the cowards leave and let the people choose and pave the way, which will lead to the emergence of sincere and committed men."[24] It is this group that is usually held responsible for the bombing of the Khobar Towers complex in Dhahran in 1996, which killed 19 American servicemen. The attack was carried out with Iranian support.[25]

TWO THOUSAND AND THREE WAS A CRUCIAL YEAR FOR THE SHIITES OF Saudi Arabia. As part of the general reform trend that swept the country after 9/11, and fearful of the extremism represented by al-Qaeda, leading Saudi Shiites joined liberal Sunni Islamist reformers in publishing a January petition entitled, "Vision for the Homeland."[26] This was a landmark event since leading Islamists had previously not agreed to sign petitions with Shiites. Several of the signatories were received by then-Crown Prince Abdallah. The petition called for an end to corruption and greater accountability, but did not call for the overthrow of the regime.

But there can be no doubt that the most significant recent event for Saudi Shiites was the downfall of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in April 2003. The Shiites felt empowered—even emboldened. Najaf, the heart of Shiism, had been liberated. Seeing millions of their Iraqi brethren freely carrying out the rituals of Ashura, they felt their time had now come within Saudi Arabia—a Shiite state in Iraq would bring Saudi Shiites their due. One Shiite religious official, who preferred to remain anonymous, told a reporter: "If a Shia state takes place in Iraq, we can be assured that there will be justice. It will be based on the religious teachings of the prophet, and after that, the Saudi Shia will be in a better situation." In an uncharacteristically public move, Shiite leaders expressed their satisfaction with the end of the Baath regime, but followed their expression of happiness with a call to improve their own situation. The leading Shiite figure, Shaykh Hasan al-Saffar, said that now Saudi Shiites were "determined to claim some of their rights while defending the nation's unity."[27] Saffar's views epitomized the dilemma of the Saudi Shiites—making an effort to achieve equality while trying to avoid a backlash that could put the Shiites back many decades.

While the Shiite rise in Iraq planted hope in the hearts of Saudi Shiites, it also brought their problematic situation into focus. For this reason Saffar felt obligated to stress national loyalty in order to avoid an accusation of Shiite separatism.

Fortunately for the Shiites, then-Crown Prince Abdallah was a supporter of reconciliation. The Shiites published a memorandum signed by 450 activists, which some delivered personally to Abdallah on April 30, titled "Partners in the Homeland." The title reflected Shaykh Saffar's moderate tone as a loyal Saudi Arabian Shiite who

was only seeking integration into Saudi society. The fact that they were received by Abdallah gave them hope. They were particularly concerned about heading off Wahhabi extremists, who might be worried about Shiite triumphalism. The memorandum demanded a public declaration of equality among all citizens, specifically including Shiites. It demanded Shiite representation in Saudi-led international Islamic forums and charities, and asked the royal family to issue and express support for dialogue between ulama of all the religious sects in the kingdom. They were at pains to emphasize their loyalty, particularly at a time when they were accused of being more loyal to Iran than to Saudi Arabia. Further demands included letting Shiites into government positions, official statements against discrimination, an end to detentions and travel bans, the right to publish Shiite material and perform Shiite rituals, and an end to the publishing of official texts that discriminate against the Shiites. The petitioners also demanded the recognition of an independent Shiite judiciary. If there was one overarching point it was to demonstrate loyalty, while demanding in return public statements by members of the royal family that the Shiites were equal citizens and that their rights should be respected.[28]

The signatories emphasized that the request for equality did not contradict their loyalty to the state. While aware that the royal family bases its legitimacy on being a Wahhabi state, by definition anti-Shiite, they are equally aware that the Al Saud represent their main defense against unrestricted Wahhabi fanaticism.

But as luck would have it, less than a month after the audience with Crown Prince Abdallah, Saudi Arabia was hit by a series of devastating terrorist attacks. On May 12 al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula carried out its biggest operation in over a decade, attacking simultaneously three Riyadh compounds used to house foreigners. Dozens were killed. A full-scale al-Qaeda insurgency was underway.[29] It was likely that there were members of the royal family who wondered if it was the right time to begin a serous dialogue with the Shiites, who were anathema to extremist Wahhabis like al-Qaeda and its supporters.

But Crown Prince Abdallah was determined to make some progress with the Shiites, come what may, and his views carried the day. In June 2003, the first "National Dialogue" was held in Riyadh. It lasted four days, and brought together more than fifty clerics and intellectuals, both Sunni and Shiite. This was the first time that such a meeting had been held, and it involved establishment Wahhabi ulama as well as some former oppositionists who had termed the Shiites infidels. While the content of the discussions were not made public, the official Saudi Press Agency praised the gathering and quoted Abdallah as favoring such "quiet dialogue."[30]

For the Shiites, the fact that the dialogue took place at all was an achievement, particularly since it was attended by both establishment Wahhabi ulama and more radical figures. After all, these ulama had met with Muslims who worshipped in

ways and had beliefs that were not in accordance with Wahhabi practice. But at the same time, the Shiite leadership did not receive any direct support from ulama or royal family members for integrating them into the political and economic life of the country. It is likely that the Saudi leadership believed that while a dialogue was desirable, under the current situation overt support for the Shiites was a risk they were not willing to take. Moreover, the ongoing al-Qaeda-led Sunni insurgency had dampened the regime's enthusiasm for any real reconciliation with the Shiites. In sum, one could say that the Shiites had gained some points in the dialogue, but remained far from any serious change in their basic situation.

There were two important events in 2005 for Saudi Arabia's Shiites. One was the accession of Abdallah to the throne in August, following the death of King Fahd. The other was the elections held for the Saudi municipal councils. When Abdallah became King, the Shiites thought their moment had finally arrived. He was the champion of reform and religious tolerance. A busload of leaders and clerics from the Eastern Province traveled to Riyadh to pledge their loyalty, or *baya*. A Shiite activist was quoted as saying, "I have never seen anything like this."[31]

In the spring of 2005, national elections were held for municipal councils. These were the first such elections in over forty years. Although some more radical Shiite clerics declared a boycott of the elections, Shaykh Saffar's policy of engagement carried the day. Coming on the heels of the Shiite victory in the January 2005 Iraqi elections, Saffar pointed to Iraq as an example of the need to participate in the process. The turnout was relatively high, even higher than in the rest of the kingdom. Even though the actual positions contested were for half the seats in powerless municipal councils (the other half being appointees), the campaign itself and the very fact that their vote counted was reason for great optimism among the Shiites. They won nearly all of the seats they contested.[32]

While Shiite participation in elections was reason for celebration, the Shiite ascendancy, which became evident in Iraq during 2005 and into 2006, increased tension between Sunnis and Shiites in the kingdom. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's remarks in March 2005 that Shiites were more loyal to Iran than their own countries elicited a flood of protests from Saudi Shiites, particularly since no one in the Saudi government found it necessary to contradict Mubarak and attest to the loyalty of Saudi Shiites.[33] But the perception on the part of Saudi Sunnis that Saudi Shiites were more loyal to Iran was very widespread, according to leading liberal Turki al-Hamad. "I'd say 90 percent of the people in Saudi Arabia don't trust the Shiites," he averred.[34]

The war in Lebanon in 2006, during which Hezbollah attacked Israeli cities and appeared triumphant, only worsened matters for Saudi Shiites. While Abdallah had been ready to meet publicly with Shiites (he was photographed with Saffar at the 2003 National Dialogue),[35] Hezbollah's popularity in the Arab world and its

destabilization of the pro-Saudi government in Lebanon was more than he could bear. The government came out strongly against Hezbollah and Iran, calling Hezbollah's kidnapping of Israeli soldiers Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser "rash adventures carried out by elements inside the state and those behind them." At the same time, there were pro-Hezbollah demonstrations in the Eastern province.[36] With this background, Abdallah was not able—or did not want—to restrain the traditional Wahhabi anti-Shiite polemics from bursting forth. At a time of Shiite ascendancy, the leading Sunni state could not be seen as coddling the Shiites.

The prominence of Hezbollah during the July 2006 war led to a discussion of the organization in particular, and by implication the Shiites in general, as well as the Shiites in Saudi Arabia. Safar al-Hawali, once of the opposition "Awakening Shaykhs," who became popular in the 1990s and still maintained his distance from the regime, castigated Hezbollah (the Party of God) as "Hizb al-Shaytan" (the Party of the Devil), and said that it was forbidden to pray for it or to support it in any way. His former partner in the opposition of the 1990s, now closer to the regime, Salman al-Awda, exhibited a more Arab nationalist bent, saying that while there were disputes with the Shiites, "I, as a Muslim and an Arab, feel happy when Hezbollah inflicts damage on the Zionists, and we should praise the resistance in the media."[37] The dividing line between the two oppositionists was clear. Hawali had boycotted the 2003 National Dialogue with the Shiites, while Awda had attended.

Extremist Wahhabi shaykhs continued to point out the "evil nature" of the Shiites. During the Lebanon war, a fatwa appeared on the internet by leading Sunni Shaykh Abdallah bin Jibrin, a former member of the establishment Senior Ulama Council, calling on Sunnis to disavow Hezbollah as a party of rawafid that was anti-Sunni.[38] Although Bin Jibrin later said this was an old fatwa that was no longer applicable to the present situation,[39] his anti-Shiite views were well known, and he had even called for Shiites' deaths in a fatwa published in 1991.[40]

Websites run by less established but still popular clerics published virulently anti-Shiite polemics. The Nur al-Islam website even had a special page dedicated to articles on the subject, entitled, "The Rawafid are Coming," and illustrated with bloody graphics.[41] Shiite websites castigated Bin Jibrin, warning him not to forget that he would have to face God on judgment day. The radical Hezbollah al-Hijaz issued a statement saying that Bin Jibrin had angred "all the sons of the Arabian Peninsula, not to mention the entire Islamic nation. This occurs while the Islamic nation is at the peak of its feelings of pride, dignity, and joys of victory over the sons of Zion, the victory that is recorded by the hand of the mujahidin of Lebanon's Hezbollah."[42]

The intensification of Sunni-Shiite strife in Iraq was reflected in a fatwa signed by 38 radical Sunni ulama in December 2006. Although it was addressed to the Sunnis of Iraq as a message of support, it was strongly anti-Shiite in general, complaining

about their un-Islamic practices. This fatwa had been organized by Shaykh Abd al-Rahman al-Barrak, a radical cleric who still occasionally appeared on Saudi TV.[43] Barrak also issued his own fatwa proclaiming the infidelity (*takfir*) of the Shiites and their polytheistic practices, and repeated the old accusation that the sect had been founded by a Jew.[44] In January 2007, Bin Jibrin let his true colors fly, and published a fatwa on his own website giving eight reasons why the Shiites should be considered polytheists (*mushrikin*). He distinguished between the Shiites and "true Muslims."[45]

For the Saudi Shiites who supported a model of cooperation with the regime, Shiite identification with Hezbollah proved particularly problematic. Saudi Arabia is a Sunni religious state. To identify with a Shiite movement, and, by implication, the Shiite state of Iran, ran counter to the normative Saudi ethos. As time wore on and Shiite regional ascendancy became more apparent, the Saudi Shaykh Salman al-Awda sounded the alarm about Sunni conversion to Shiism (*tashayyu*), expressing his fear that Shiite victories in Lebanon and Iraq might draw Sunnis away.[46] Many Saudi newspapers carried warnings from Wahhabi clerics against conversion to Shiism.[47] King Abdallah himself addressed this issue in an interview with the Kuwaiti newspaper *al-Siyasa* in late January. The interviewer referred to a "campaign" of Shiite proselytism and asked to know what Saudi Arabia's position on the issue was as the source of religious authority (*marja*) for Sunni Muslims and protector of the law of God and His creed. Abdallah, accepting the premise of the question regarding the campaign and Saudi Arabia's role as protector of the Sunnis, said that the Saudi leadership was following the issue, but that the Shiite campaign would fail because Sunnis held fast to their beliefs.[48] The presentation of Saudi Arabia as the source of religious authority for Sunni Muslims drew a stark distinction between Shiite Iran and Sunni Wahhabi Saudi Arabia.

THE SAUDI REGIME IS CAUGHT BETWEEN ITS WAHHABI ROOTS AND WISHES by some in the royal family, particularly Abdallah, to effect reconciliation with the Shiites. A graphic illustration of this dilemma is shown by examples from two websites. A Saudi Sunni rabidly anti-Shiite website, *al-Furqan*, published a "document" stating that according to Shiite calculations, Abdallah would be killed on December 18, 2007, which is one month before the coming of the Shiite Mahdi.[49] On the other hand, the Shiite al-Rasid site published a tongue-in-cheek article entitled "King Abdallah is a Shiite" which expressed support for Abdallah, as a challenge to those who would say that they were more loyal to Iran than Saudi Arabia.[50]

In May 2007, Sunni activists hacked Saffar's website and published the following message: "In the name of God, the Merciful and Compassionate: All rawafid websites will be attacked and all sites belonging to the *Majus* (pagan Zoroastrians—a reference to Iran) will be removed from the Internet.[51]

In general, over the years there has been some improvement in the lot of the Shiites of Saudi Arabia. They are allowed to hold Ashura commemorations, publish Shiite works, open Shiite mosques and Shiite schools, albeit all in a very slow and highly scrutinized manner.[52] Even so, Saudi Shiites never stop worrying that their hard-won gains may evaporate one day and they do not have faith in the government. Paradoxically, the gains of their Iraqi brethren might cause them to lose what they have achieved in Saudi Arabia. Saudi Sunnis accuse Saudi Shiites of funding terrorism against Sunnis in Iraq, while Saudi Shiites accuse Saudi Sunnis of funneling funds to Sunni terrorists in Iraq. Saudi Shiites are also worried about extremists in their midst.[53] In the village of Awwamiya, some residents were reported to be carrying automatic weapons and wearing necklaces with a picture of Hezbollah Secretary General Hasan Nasrallah.[54]

Saudi Shiites continue to be divided between those who favor further dialogue and those who want a more confrontational approach, while all Shiites perceive a lack of momentum regarding reform. Leaders such as Ja'afar al-Shayib, Muhammad Mahfuz and Hasan al-Saffar support continued engagement with the regime and the conservative Sunni elements of Saudi society, while others, such as the cleric Nimr al-Nimr pursue a more militant line. Some leaders have even proposed the establishment of a Saudi Shiite *marja al-taqlid* (source of religious emulation) in order to allay Sunni fears that the Saudi Shiites are influenced by Shiite clerics in Iran and Iraq.[55]

Meanwhile, those Shiite activists favoring dialogue are reaching out. Saffar has traveled to the Wahhabi stronghold of Unayza to meet clerics, and has invited them to visit him in the Eastern Province.[56] In April 2010, Saffar appeared on a televised debate with al-Barrak. While no progress was made, the Shiites could point to the fact that Barrak was willing to appear with Saffar as an indication that the approach of those favoring dialogue was making headway.[57]

In order to preserve their gains, the Shiites believe it is necessary for King Abdallah to speak out against anti-Shiite fatwas; indeed, they argue that such fatwas should be criminalized.[58] Otherwise, they maintain, matters run the danger of returning to the problematic 1980s. But it is likely the Saudi Shiites will be disappointed. Relations between the regime and the Shiite population are fraught with difficulty. Given the reliance of the regime on the Sunni Wahhabi clerics, it is unlikely that they will rein them in. The situation in Iraq has made it much harder to do so. The royal family feels keenly its role as a leader of the Sunni world, and local Sunnis are pressuring the regime to support the Sunnis in Iraq. In the face of the regional Shiite ascendancy marked by Hezbollah's performance against Israel, a possible Shiite state in Iraq, and a powerful Iran, it is likely that Saudi Shiites will continue to pay the price of being the ultimate "Other," sacrificed on the altar of the Wahhabi legitimacy on which the regime is so dependent.

NOTES

1. On Saudi regional mediation efforts, see Joseph Kostiner, "Saudi Regional Strategy: The Power of Mediation," *Tel Aviv Notes*, March 25, 2007, online at http://www.dayan.org.
2. See Meir Litvak, "Worse than the Jews: The Anti-Shiite Polemics of Sunni Islamic Radicalism," in Tamar Yegnes (ed.), *Sunna and Shi'a: The Changing Balance of Power* (Tel Aviv: Moshe Dayan Center, 2008), pp. 43-57 (Hebrew).
3. On the history of the Shiites in Saudi Arabia, see: Guido Steinberg, "The Shiites in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia al-Ahsa, 1913-1953," in Rainer Brunner and Werner Ende (eds.), *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture and Political History* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2001), pp. 236-251; Fuad Ibrahim, *The Shi'is of Saudi Arabia* (London: Saqi, 2006). See also Werner Ende, "The Nakhawila: A Shiite Community in Medina, Past and Present," *Die Welt des Islams*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (November 1997), pp. 263-348.
4. On Shiite terrorism, see Joshua Teitelbaum, *Holier Than Thou: Saudi Arabia's Islamic Opposition* (Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2001), chapter 6.
5. Madawi Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 199-200.
6. "The Shiite Question in Saudi Arabia," International Crisis Group, September 19, 2005; Graham Fuller and Rend Rahim Franke, *The Arab Shia: The Forgotten Muslims* (New York: Palgrave, 1999), p. 180.
7. The Qatif hawza was known as "little Najaf." The authorities appear to be exercising benign neglect with two currently operating hawzas: one in Qatif and one in al-Hasa. "Shiite Question."
8. For more details on the implications for the Shiites of the capture of al-Hasa, see Steinberg.
9. "Shiite Question." Steinberg raised the possibility that until the Saudi conquest Shiites may have even formed the majority in al-Hasa.
10. Madawi Al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 199-200.
11. Steinberg, pp. 248-249.
12. "Shiite Question."
13. Ibrahim, p. 33.
14. Toby Jones, "Rebellion on the Saudi Periphery: Modernity, Modernization, Marginalization, and the Shia Uprising of 1979," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (May 2006), pp. 213-233. While the regime was busy putting down a Shiite uprising in the Eastern province, Wahhabi radicals took over the Great Mosque in Mecca. On this incident, see Teitelbaum, *Holier Than Thou*, pp. 19-22, and Yaroslav Trofimov, *The Siege of Mecca: The Forgotten Uprising in Islam's Holiest Shrine and the Birth of al-Qaeda* (New York: Doubleday, 2007).
15. Ibrahim, p. 33.
16. Hasan al-Saffar, *Kalimat al-Haraka al-Islamiyya*, p. 30, quoted in Ibrahim, p. 132.
17. Teitelbaum, *Holier Than Thou*, pp. 49-71.
18. Madawi Al-Rasheed, "The Shia of Saudi Arabia: A Minority in Search of Cultural Authenticity," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 25 (1998), pp. 121-138; Mamoun Fandy, "From Confrontation to Creative Resistance," *Critique* (Fall 1996), pp. 1-27; Joshua Teitelbaum, "Saudi Arabia," in Ami Ayalon, (ed.), *Middle East Contemporary Survey (MECS) 1993* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1995), pp. 575–600; "What Future for the Saudi-Shiite Accord?," *Mideast Mirror* Vol. 8, No. 54, March 18, 1994.

19. See al-Diyar, October 13, 1993; Youssef M. Ibrahim, "Saudi Officials Reporting Accord with Shiite Foes," *New York Times*, October 29, 1993, p. A11; *al-Quds al-Arabi*, November 1, 1993; *al Alam*, November 13, 1993; for Shiite oppositionist attacks on the Saudi regime, see various issues of *al-Jazira al-Arabiyya* and *Arabia Monitor*, as well as the article in the summer 1993 issue of *Arab Review*, detailing Saudi abuse of holy sites in Mecca and Medina."
20. See *al Alam*, November 13, 1993.
21. "Shiite Question."
22. "Shiite Question."
23. "Shiite Question."
24. *Al-Nasr*, October 1993, quoted in Ibrahim, p. 196.
25. Teitelbaum, *Holier Than Thou*, pp. 84-94. The most recent study of Hezbollah al-Hijaz and its clerical wing, Tajammu Ulama al-Hijaz, is Toby Matthiesen, "Hezbollah al-Hijaz: A History of The Most Radical Saudi Shi'a Opposition Group." *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 64, no. 2 (Spring 2010), pp. 179-197.
26. *Al-Quds al-Arabi*, January 30, February 14, 2003; "Shiite Question."
27. *Washington Post*, April 22; *AFP*, 23, 24 April; *arabicnews.com*, April 24; *al-Quds al-Arabi*, May 1; *Los Angeles Times*, May 8, 2003.
28. For the text of the petition, see *al-Quds al-Arabi*, May 1, 2003.
29. Joshua Teitelbaum, "Terrorist Challenges to Saudi Arabian Internal Security," *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (September 2005), pp. 1-11.
30. AFP, June 18, 21 2003; "Shiite Question."
31. Toby Jones, "The Iraq Effect in Saudi Arabia," *Middle East Report*, No. 237 (Winter 2005).
32. "Shiite Question;" *AFP*, March 3, 2005.
33. April 10, 2006, http://www.rasid.com/artc.php?id=10664;
    April 12, 2006, http://www.rasid.com/artc.php?id=10698;
    April 17, 2006, http://www.rasid.com/artc.php?id=10771. Al-Rasid is a Saudi Shiite website.
34. *Los Angeles Times*, April 26, 2006.
35. F. Gregory Gause, "Saudi Arabia: Iraq, Iran, the Regional Power Balance, and the Sectarian Question," *Strategic Insights*, Vol. 6, No. 2 (March 2007),
    http://www.nps.edu/Academics/centers/ccc/publications/OnlineJournal/archivebydate.html#vol6.
36. Demonstrations with participants carrying pictures of Hezbollah leader Hasan Nasrallah were reported to have been held in Qatif in July and August. Several arrests were made. In October, during Ramadan, the authorities arrested four more Shiites after they brandished a Hezbollah dinner at an *iftar* gathering. July 21, 2006, http://www.rasid.com/artc.php?id=12054; *Haaretz (English edition)*, October 17, 2006.
37. *AP*, August 4, 5, 2006.
38. Federal Broadcast Information Service, OSC Report, August 16, 2006; *Middle East Times*, July 24, 2006.
39. See the article explaining Bin Jibrin's position on the al-Arabiyya website at
    http://www.alarabiya.net/Articles/2006/08/08/26443.htm.
40. Ibrahim, p. 197; Teitelbaum, *Holier Than Thou*, p. 46.
41. http://www.islamlight.net/Files/Rwafeth/.
42. Federal Broadcast Information Service, OSC Report, August 16, 2006.
43. December 11, 2006, http://www.islamlight.net/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=3818; *Reuters*, December 11, 2006.
44. December 17, 2006,
    http://albarrak.islamlight.net/index.php?option=com_ftawa&task=view&id=18080&Itemid=7,
    cited in Gause. See also FBIS, Saudi Clerics Roundup, 19-23 February 2007.

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46. October 24, 2006, http://www.middle-east-online.com.
47. *Kuwait Times*, November 21, 2006.
48. *Al-Siyasa*, January 27, 2007.
49. http://www.alfrqan.com/docs.phtp?docid=65, February 28, 2007.
50. http://www.rasid.com/artc.php?id=9943, February 20, 2006.
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52. *AP*, January 30, 2007; *Los Angeles Times*, April 26, 2006; *New York Times*, February 5, 2007; Department of State, Saudi Arabia: "Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2006," March 6, 2007.
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56. Wehrey, "Shi'a Pessimistic."
57. *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, April 15, 2010.
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Iran's Central Asia Temptations

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In the foreign policy of the Central Asian states—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan—the attraction to the rest of the Muslim world has had a relatively short history. The political independence of these countries following the break-up of the Soviet Union was accompanied by their populations' growing interest in their Muslim identity as well as an initial openness to the Muslim world's great powers such as Pakistan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. However, since the mid-1990s, fear of political Islam has helped to curb these emerging relations, which have also proved disappointing in economic terms. The denunciation of the Sunni "Wahhabi threat" has become one of the leitmotifs of Central Asian states, which are adamant about retaining their secular character. They also advocate a more traditional Islam that is steeped in Sufi mysticism and depoliticized.

Since the mid-2000s, Muslim states such as the United Arab Emirates and Malaysia have gained greater visibility on the Central Asian economic scene, though their impact on the political and cultural life of the region has been minimal. It is quite another case for the Islamic Republic of Iran, whose push into Central Asia was strong in the early years following the demise of the Soviet Union, and is a presence in the region two decades later. Despite this, the religious and political influence of Iran in Central Asia has often been overestimated, and concerns related to the expansion of political Islam inspired by the Shiite Iranian model have by and large been exaggerated. Tehran, for instance, has not tried to play the card of religious

one-upmanship in Central Asia as it has done in Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine, nor has it sought to mobilize the small minority of Shiites in the region.

Iran has, however, pursued a flexible policy in Central Asia that has created for it a range of opportunities for dramatically expanding its influence in the future. The Islamic Republic's intelligence services are very active throughout the region; the Revolutionary Guard has at its disposal networks of influence in the region; Iranian universities host Central Asian students every year; small Sunni religious groups receive funding from Tehran; and new Shiite movements with connections to Iran have formed in Tajikistan. Moreover, the current strengthening of Sunni Salafism in the post-Soviet world has pushed Tehran to likewise seek to increase its position in Central Asia—not so much for the purposes of propagating Shiite ideology (though this has been a consequence), but in order to maintain an ability to balance the ambitions of Sunni Middle Eastern powers and to promote its own state interests.

Revolutionary Ideology or Economic Pragmatism?

FOR IRAN, THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION, WHICH DURING THE COLD WAR era was the main counterweight to U.S. influence within the Greater Middle East, meant a sudden transformation in its geopolitical environment. Not long after the Soviet collapse, Iranian officials began expressing concern about the rapid progress of Turkey in Central Asia. Ankara, after all, was seen as close ally of the United States, and a return of pan-Turkism would endanger Iran's position in the region. In Soviet times, Iran was widely regarded as a buffer state between Russia on one side, Turkey and Pakistan on the other, but the geopolitical game reversed in the 1990s, when Ankara and Islamabad presented themselves as barriers to the expansion of revolutionary Islamic ideas in Central Asia and the Caucasus.[1]

Despite centuries of cultural, commercial and political interchange, Central Asia is a region that contemporary Iran has largely ignored. Following Central Asia's independence, Iranian leaders had no specific ideas about what they might hope to achieve in the region, and they did not consider it to be a priority area. Iran's primary concerns were domestic: After emerging from a decade of war with Iraq, the Islamic regime's domestic economic and social situation was tense, and the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989 aroused concerns of political destabilization. In the early 1990s, Iran engaged in a program of reforms designed to lead the country towards a more market-oriented economy. Tehran, among other things, encouraged local governmental bodies to establish relations with neighboring states, and this

ultimately allowed the Islamic Republic's northern provinces to turn to their former Soviet neighbors. As a consequence of this, the new province of Golestan, the main Iranian province with a Sunni majority, and its capital Gorgan, have forged direct relations with Kazakhstan, while the Mazandaran province has deepened its relationship with Turkmenistan.[2] It was not until 2001, however, that the Foreign Minister of Iran, Kamal Kharrazi, announced that Central Asia would become a priority of Iranian foreign policy.

For their part, the Central Asian states were trying, through partnership with Tehran, to escape Russian influence, to diversify economically, and to gain access to open seas in the south. Central Asian states were also quite wary about forging a relationship with the Islamic regime. They feared that Tehran would seek to export the Islamic revolution as it had done in Lebanon and Palestine, and that Iran would thereby weaken Soviet successor regimes, which maintain a separation of state and religion. At the time, Central Asian states also faced strong pressure from Washington, which sought to prevent the transformation of Iran into a regional power. In 1992, Kazakhstan was obliged to refuse help offered by Iran for the restoration of the Caspian port of Aktau; instead it chose to work with the Netherlands.[3] Islam Karimov's regime in Uzbekistan, uneasy about Islamist tensions in the Fergana Valley, decided to curb Iranian influence in the early 1990s. Turkmenistan invited the development of economic relations with Iran, but has demonstrated a deep reluctance with regard to its religious presence. The Iranian influence was at first confined to Tajikistan alone, in light of their linguistic and cultural proximity, but the Tajik civil war worried Tehran, which has no interest in destabilizing its neighbor.

It is likely that Iran funded, at least initially, the Party of Islamic Revival of Tajikistan, and indirectly participated in the overthrow of the government of Rakhmon Nabiev in 1992. Between 1993 and 1998, the Iranian authorities regularly hosted the leaders of the Islamic opposition. However, Tehran has always denied a direct role in the Tajik armed conflict, claiming to have perceived it as a civil war between regional clans, not a holy war on behalf of Islam. Nonetheless, along with Russia, Iran quickly became involved in the negotiation process. In 1995, Emomali Rakhmon and Nuri Said Abdulloh were invited to Tehran to find a peaceful settlement to the conflict.[4] Furthermore, the policy of revolutionary export was in doubt within the Iranian government itself, with Hashemi Rafsanjani criticizing the preference given to fluid ideological goals at the expense of national interests. From 1997, the export of political Islam was clearly challenged by the rise of the reform-oriented president Mohammad Khatami, who accelerated the removal of Shiite revolutionary ideology from Iran's foreign policy in an effort to bring the country out of international isolation.[5]

At the end of the 1990s, Iran tried to strengthen its position in international structures, such as the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), but relations with Israel

quickly constituted a point of contention between the Central Asian governments and Tehran. The pressures from Iran, which then sought to adopt resolutions against Israel during its 1997-2000 presidency of the OIC, led the Central Asian states to keep their distance from the organization on behalf of their good relations with Tel Aviv. The Kazakh and Uzbek presidents threatened to leave the OIC if Tehran continued to exploit it in its struggle against Israel. Iran also sought a leading role in the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), the only major regional organization to which it belongs.[6] Again, the Central Asian states rejected Tehran's attempts at politicization of the organization, which would have put them at odds with the United States; instead they demanded that the role of the ECO be limited to development assistance and regional transport. The organization has certainly failed to take off and today plays only a marginal role in the development of exchanges between Iran and Central Asia.[7]

In the context of Iran's relations with the five Central Asian states, several contentious issues remain unresolved. The main one concerns the legal status of the Caspian Sea, as Iran is now the latest actor to refuse to adopt the majority opinion of the median line. If it were to do so, it would see its share of the Caspian Sea drop from 20 to 13 percent.[8] Nor is Tehran's place in regional geopolitical reconfigurations settled. The Iranian regime hopes to break its international isolation by focusing on the Asian side of the country and joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). It obtained observer status in 2005, but its hopes of becoming a full member are reduced, as the Central Asian governments, Moscow, and Beijing are unfavorable to it.

Finally, the Iranian nuclear issue is not without problems for the Central Asian states. They seek to maintain a middle position on this issue, affirming the inalienable right of Iran to use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes and calling for an exclusively diplomatic settlement to this international problem. A possible U.S. military intervention would threaten the region's geopolitical balance and jeopardize its stability. The Central Asian governments are worried about pressure from Washington and retaliation from Tehran due to their support for the United States. Kyrgyzstan is in a particularly difficult position, given the presence on its soil of the U.S. military base at Manas, and has already declared that it would refuse any U.S. intervention against Iran launched from its territory.

The partnership between Iran and Central Asia seems destined to grow. Although Iranian products arrived in Central Asian markets in the early 1990s, Iran has proved unable to withstand competition from China and will eventually be forced out. However, new areas of cooperation that value Iranian expertise are developing: primarily oil and hydroelectricity, but also minerals, the industrial processing of agricultural production, and the textile and automotive industries. Iran currently ranks as the eighth trading partner of Turkmenistan, the sixteenth of Kazakhstan, and the seventh

of Tajikistan.[9] Its geographical location also enhances Iran in the eyes of the Central Asian states, which are in search of access roads leading eventually to southern seas, Europe, and the Mediterranean basin. Projects connecting Central Asian road and rail networks to their Iranian neighbor, then on to Turkey or Afghanistan, are numerous, but for the moment the amount of traffic utilizing them is very small.[10] Until now, geography has not won its battle with geopolitics. However, the strategic role Iran plays as a transit zone on the Eurasian continent, as much on the East-West axis as on the North-South one, will work to its benefit over the long term. The reorientation of Iran toward a more Asian identity, along with its growing interest in China, is expected to change the status quo and open up new prospects for Iranian cooperation with Central Asia.

Shiism's Heterogeneity in Central Asia

THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE POPULATION OF CENTRAL ASIA ADHERES TO THE Hanafi school of Sunni Islam. But in addition to the Ismailis, who live in the Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshan autonomous region in the Pamir Mountains, and are followers of Aga Khan,[11] the region also has a Twelver Shiite minority. These Shiites are only permitted to practice their faith under relatively difficult, sometimes illegal, conditions. Many factors—internal and external, political and religious—hamper the acknowledgment by Central Asian authorities of the existence of Shia, which is associated with national minorities, equated with Islamism, and therefore with the risk of terrorism or rebellion. Shiism is also seen as an agent of Iranian influence.

The Shiites of Central Asia, which amount to a very small minority, can be divided into two main categories. The first and most statistically significant group includes the Azeri minority, mainly in Turkmenistan, where they comprise about 15 percent of the population,[12] and in Kazakhstan. According to the 1999 census, Azeris numbered approximately 78,000 in Kazakhstan and 15,000 in Kyrgyzstan, and according to the 1989 census, there were 44,000 in Uzbekistan and 33,000 in Turkmenistan.[13] Despite the relatively large size of this population, Kazakhstan has not officially authorized any Shiite mosques; however, many places of worship operate informally under permanent threat of legal sanction. In Kyrgyzstan, there exists only one Shiite mosque for the Azeri minority, led by an Azeri imam, in Bishkek. It falls under the jurisdiction of the Muslim Spiritual Board of Kyrgyzstan, which does not recognize Shiite institutional autonomy. The attendees of the mosque are mostly Iranian businessmen and diplomats, and members of the Azeri minority.[14] In Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, where authorities are particularly suspicious with regard to religious matters, Shiites find themselves in particularly difficult straits.

Shiism is a major target of religious repression in Turkmenistan. Any cultural reference to Shiism is punishable under the law. In 2004, the Turkmen author R. Esenov was imprisoned for depicting, in his novel *Bayram Khan*, a 16th century regent of the Mughal Empire as a Shia, and for refusing to bend to the will of the then president Saparmurat Niyazov, who insisted that the agent was Sunni.[15] Severely strained relations between Ashgabat and Baku have added to the many difficulties facing Shiites in this state. Azeri religious commemorations following the death of President Heidar Aliyev in 2003 have been forbidden. No Shiite mosques have been permitted to officially register, very few prayer rooms in Sunni mosques are open to Shiites, and these are more or less clandestine. There were only five such establishments in 2008.[16] A Shiite mosque in the village of Bagyr, near Ashgabat, was demolished in 2005. The last Shia imam of Turkmenbashi, a Caspian city that is home to a large portion of the Azeri community, was forced to leave the country that same year.[17] With its protected diplomatic status, the Iranian embassy in Ashgabat does have its own mosque, but it remains inaccessible to citizens of Turkmenistan.

The fear harbored by the Central Asian states about links between their Azeri minorities and Iran is inappropriate. The Azeri minority practices its faith as a national religion and does not have links with Iran. Relations between Iran and Azerbaijan are also tense. In the 1990s, Tehran claimed Shiite solidarity with Baku and many young Azeris were trained in Iranian theological institutions, particularly in Qom. Quickly, however, the state bodies responsible for religious issues became concerned about proselytism, especially after riots in Nardaran, (one of the major growth centers for Iranian Shiism) and tensions in the Lenkoran region, along the border with Iran.[18] Although Baku has tried to limit its religious links with Iran, the Iranian embassy remains a source of Shia influence in the country.

At the present time, any Shiite movement with too much inspiration from Iran is prohibited in Azerbaijan, and this is the situation in which the Islamic Party of Azerbaijan finds itself. The authorities seek to give preference to "Azeri Islam," a complex endeavor since it is difficult to nationalize Shiite traditions and religious practices. The situation is complicated by the rapid development in recent years of Salafist movements, especially around the Abu-Bakr mosque, funded by Kuwait and led by Ilgar Ibrahimoglu. Azeri Salafism presents itself as a counterweight to Iranian influence through the promotion of a form of Islam that many Shiites consider Wahhabist.[19] These strictly religious issues are thus intrinsically linked to national ones—primarily the defense of Azeri identity against Iranian domination—and the strained political relations between Baku and Tehran. The Azeri minority of Central Asia can therefore not be considered a "fifth column," and Iran has never mobilized it to leverage influence in the region.

The second, smaller Shia group in Central Asia, the *Ironi* (Iranians), is a population

living in the Samarkand and Bukhara regions of Uzbekistan. They are often seen as part of the Tajik minority, since most of them are Tajik-speaking (although some are also Uzbek-speaking). But unlike many Tajiks, they are Shiite. Although there are no official figures, it seems that Ironi number at least 300,000 in the country, mainly in Samarkand (200,000) and Bukhara (100,000). The delicate subjects of Uzbek nationalism, and the state promotion of Uzbek identity and a national version of Sunni Islam further complicate the situation of the Ironi minority, which is seen not only as a Shiite, but also "too Tajik" and/or too close to Iran.[20] The Uzbek Muslim Spiritual Board does not recognize Shiites as separate, therefore the Shia do not have any institutional autonomy. Three Shiite mosques are registered—two in Samarkand and one in Bukhara—but they remain subject to increased police and state administrative surveillance. Ironi tend to practice their religion in private and therefore do not encounter a great amount of institutional difficulty. But processions associated with the Ashura or Muharran celebrations are the subject of tensions between the Shiite community and Uzbek authorities.[21] These authorities systematically reject applications to open new mosques or to create a Twelver madrasa. The question of religious education is particularly problematic. No Shiites are allowed to receive religious training abroad, but Twelver Quranic education is also prohibited inside the country.

Both Azeri and Ironi Shiites in Central Asia often live in difficult conditions—clandestine mosques, a lack of theological training, and no formal links with the state—since the Central Asian spiritual boards do not recognize their existence. Believers experience strong administrative and police pressure, which is supported by Sunni authorities worried about possible Shiite proselytism. The political and religious pressures suffered by Shia in Central Asia widely vary. Azeri minorities are not well tolerated in Turkmenistan but can more or less freely practice their religion in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, while Ironi are subject to forced "Uzbekization" from Tashkent. More so than Sunnis, Shiites have been the victims of restrictions on religious education and the right to pilgrimage imposed by the Central Asian regimes. It is harder for them to make the *hajj* than it is for Sunnis.

Looking East

WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE IRONI AND AZERI MINORITIES, VERY FEW GROUPS practice Shiism in Central Asia. In Kyrgyzstan, a mosque for unregistered "converts" exists in Bishkek, along with two houses of prayer in the Chui region.[22] Some underground *jamaat* seem to be developing in Kazakhstan, especially in the western regions around Atyrau, where there is a several hundred-person Sufi group based on the traditions of the Qadariyya brotherhood.[23] The Ahli Beit society, present in

Russia, where it seeks to convert Sunnis to Shiism,[24] does not appear to be very active in Central Asia. The Iranian government, meanwhile, does not distribute official Shiite propaganda and seeks instead to strengthen its image of cultural and economic power. Under the supervision of embassies, Tehran funded the opening of several cultural centers, as well as chairs of Iranian studies at universities in Kyrgyzstan (the Slavic Kyrgyz-Russian University of Bishkek, the University of Humanities, and the State University of Kyrgyzstan) and Uzbekistan. The literature available in these centers is not at all focused on religious issues, but it seems that free courses for familiarization with Iranian Islam are sometimes offered in a totally informal manner.[25]

However, other key organs of the Iranian government continue to play the religion card. The Guardians of the Islamic Revolution are in charge of many aspects of foreign policy. Their Mashhad office manages the Khorasan region, as well as the bordering Central Asian states and Afghanistan. Allegedly, clandestine groups linked to the Revolutionary Guard have attempted to infiltrate the region; Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have regularly accused Iranian intelligence and the Revolutionary Guard of trying to destabilize the ruling regimes. Controlled by the Revolutionary Guard, Khorasan radio and television is tasked with promoting Iranian policy in Central Asia and disseminating a positive image of Iran in order to develop ties between post-Soviet states with Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, excluding the Arab countries.[26] Khorasan radio and television, for example, seem to have sponsored the 2008 conference on the SCO, which was hosted by the Russian political scientist Alexander Kniazev on the shores of Lake Issyk-Kul.[27]

Khorasan radio works closely with the Imam Reza Foundation (named after Reza, the eighth Shiite Imam, who was buried in Mashhad in 818), itself integrated with the Revolutionary Guard's Astana Association (*Astan-e Kuds-e Rezavi*), which controls about sixty companies in Iran and is located in Khorasan. The Association provides financial support for the Imam Reza Foundation's campaigns for the enhancement of Iranian prestige and influence in Central Asia, and for the small groups that propagate the values of the Islamic Revolution.[28] The foundation also argues for the holy shrine of Imam Reza to be regarded as a place of pilgrimage for Central Asians. Because Central Asian pilgrims (in groups of as many as fifty) visit there as a small *hajj*, the foundation has published, in Russian, works on the religious life of the imam and the precepts of Shiism. Charitable foundations like the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee, which has been present in Tajikistan since 1994,[29] are regularly accused of disseminating religious precepts in addition to humanitarian aid.

The Iranian state also uses the quality of its higher education institutions to attract Central Asian students. In the absence of official statistics, it is assumed that thousands of young Central Asians—mainly Tajiks, Kazakhs, and Kyrgyz—study

mostly secular disciplines in Iranian universities, particularly at Imam Khomeini International University. The choice of Iran for these students is due to several factors: linguistic proximity for Tajik students; low prices offered by institutions of higher education in Iran as compared to Russia or China; and general attraction to the country. These students are the subjects of increasing attention from Tehran, which has, for example, established a few hours of radio in the Kazakh language aimed at the Kazakh diaspora in the country.[30] But they have difficulty finding employment upon their return to Central Asia because their long stay in Iran casts suspicion on them in the eyes of the authorities, like those returning from Pakistan or Middle East states.[31]

In addition, hundreds of Central Asian students in Iran follow religious curricula, including some 300 Tajiks and an unknown number of Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, and Turkmen. These students of theology can be divided into two categories. A minority of them studies Shiite coursework, mostly at the famous University of Qom, and is therefore considered "converted" to Shiism. The majority follow a Sunni curriculum taught either in Zahedan, the provincial capital of Sistan and Baluchistan, or in Mashhad. In Zahedan, a dozen Sunni madrasas propose curriculum in theology; among them the Makki one is known to have ties to terrorist organizations, such as the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). In Mashhad, an official Sunni madrasa, run by the Turkmens of Khorasan, is open to foreign students. Another madrasa, this time an illegal one, has been run since the late 1990s by Uzbek exiles, known for their Salafist beliefs.[32] While the curriculum of Zahedan is intended primarily for future Baluch imams, courses offered in Mashhad are meant for Central Asians and Russian citizens from the North-Caucasus and Volga-Ural regions. The presence of these Central Asian students in theology raises concerns both in Central Asia and in Iran. Regularly, several dozen of them are deported for having expired visas (many are in fact illegal). Perhaps the Iranian authorities are also frightened of the potential radicalization of these students.[33]

The Iranian regime has financially and politically supported the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan (IRPT)—in particular its two leaders, Said Abdulloh Nuri and Hoja Akbar Turadjonzoda—even while participating in the reconciliation process that led to the 1997 peace agreement. Today Tehran maintains close ties with the IRPT, which it sees as the only possible barrier to counter the growth of Salafism. The party is divided into different ideological factions, including a moderate or traditionalist one, led by the historical leader Said Abdulloh Nuri (1947-2006); a modernist one, lead by the current leader and Nuri's successor, Muhiddin Kabiri; and a Shiite branch.[34] This last one is controlled by Akbar Turadjonzoda, who was once Nuri's right hand as well as former Vice Prime Minister of Tajikistan. Today he is a deputy and businessman. Turadjonzoda's entire family is Shia and they travel regularly to

Iran. The Shiite torch is also carried by Akbar's brother, Eshoni Nurridin, one of the only Tajik politicians and theologians who does not hide his aversion to the secular nature of the country's political system. But Tehran may also rely on non-Shiite leaders of the IRPT like Muhammadjon Nuri, son of the historic leader, who was educated in Iranian universities and is also close to Tehran's interests.[35]

The southern Tajik regions of Kulyab and Khatlon seem to be increasingly subjected to Shiite influence. The number of Shiite followers has grown in the mountainous parts of Kulyab with the support of IRPT vice-chairman Saiduram Khusaini. A generation of young theologians trained in Iranian Shiism is now serving in some local mosques for the first time in the history of the country.[36] This evolution is of particular concern to Dushanbe, which has very limited control over this area, where past tensions related to the civil war have not disappeared. Moreover, the authorities are worried about a possible division of the country along a north-south axis. The south is more open to Iranian Shiite influence, while Salafist movements are gaining influence in northern regions like Sogd. They have always enjoyed a strong base in the Fergana Valley and are now represented by several groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir, Tablighi Jamaat, and the Salafiyya movement of Mukhamad Rakhmatullo. The IRPT Shiite branch regularly asks the state to better control these so-called Wahhabist groups, which it deems dangerous to the country's internal stability.[37]

Beyond Tajikistan, Iran's primary base in Central Asia, the Islamic Republic has also established itself rather well in Kyrgyzstan. The relative flexibility of the Kyrgyz state towards religion has allowed various groups to seek financial support from Tehran. Among the supporters of Kyrgyz rapprochement with Iran is Tursunbay Bakir Ullu, a former deputy ombudsman,[38] president of the small democratic Erkin party, and now the ambassador from Bishkek to Malaysia. In his work as an ombudsman, Tursunbay has taken part in several Islamic organizations and has defended the Hizb ut-Tahrir, saying that its international classification as a "terrorist movement" is not legitimate. During the 2005 presidential elections that followed the "Tulip Revolution" and the overthrow of President Askar Akayev, Tursunbay was one of the first politicians to seek the Kyrgyz Islamic vote. Alongside businessman Nurlan Matuev, he created the Congress of Muslims of Kyrgyzstan. In so doing, he did not hide his Islamist sympathies, but called for economic development consistent with the canons of Islam, for strengthening the fight against corruption, and for making public life more moral.[39] In 2009, after becoming angry with Tursunbay, Matuev created his own movement, the Union of True Muslims of Kyrgyzstan, which includes members of Hizb ut-Tahrir and Tablighi Jamaat. Other small movements, like the women's organization Muttakalim, also appear to receive regular financial support from Iran.[40]

In Kazakhstan, Iran has developed contact with President Nursultan Nazarbaev's nephew, Kayrat Satybaldy. Satybaldy is a former KGB general who is considered an

influential Muslim leader and has been approached by Tehran via its close relationship with the Tajik leader Turadjonzoda.[41] In 2005, Satybaldy founded the political movement Ak-Orda, which sought political representation for the Muslims of Kazakhstan and had the public support of the Spiritual Board.[42] Ak-Orda quickly disappeared from the political scene but Satybaldy is known for his generous funding of mosques and Islamic discourse. Iran also enjoys contact with the politician Imagaly Tasmagambetov, the former mayor of Almaty, and now mayor of Astana. For a time, as a representative of industrial lobbies, Tasmagambetov was considered a potential dauphin of Nazarbaev. He has facilitated the opening of an Iranian cultural center in the National Library of Kazakhstan, which is led by Safar Abdullo, a Kazakh citizen of Tajik origin who is close to Iran and promotes the brotherhood Qadariyya in Kazakhstan.[43]

In Uzbekistan, Iran enjoys little support and relies primarily on Ismail Djurabekov (of Ironi origin and therefore Shiite). Djurabekov, a former *eminence grise* of the Karimov regime in the 1990s, has now fallen into disgrace. Iran also looks to Khaet Sharifkhodzhaev, one of the directors of the SNB security service, the successor to the KGB.[44] Iran has thus embarked on a strategy that gives broad support to certain Islamic groups, all of them Sunni, which claim to promote a traditional Central Asian Islam in opposition to Wahhabism, but also have links with Salafist movements coming from Pakistan or the Middle East.

Conclusions

UNLIKE ITS POLICIES IN LEBANON, SYRIA, AND PALESTINE, IRAN DOES NOT PLAY the revolutionary card in Central Asia. The Iranian state presents itself as a pragmatic partner, willing to put aside the ideological differences it has with its Central Asian neighbors—for example on Israel or the secularity of the regimes—in order to promote regional cooperation. It does not seek to exploit Shiite minorities, Azeris and Ironis, and wields relatively little influence over them, unlike the case of the Hazaras of Afghanistan.

Naturally, the Iranian state is not a monolith, and it is composed of different actors and influence groups, each with a specific agenda. The Revolutionary Guard Corps seems, for instance, much more active in the Central Asian states, operating with ideological goals that contrast with the more nuanced position of Iranian diplomats. Moreover, the Iranian state controls neither its entire population, nor the flows of people, drugs and ideas that cross its borders. Iranian religious seminaries have thus become places of Salafist education for some Central Asians coming to study in Baluchistan or in Mashhad, even as Iran's central government affirms its fight against radical Sunni trends.

Almost no movement from Iran actively seeks to promote the conversion of Sunni Central Asians to Shiism. The few Shiite-inspired religious groups not belonging to the Azeri or Ironi minorities are Qadariyya Sufi brotherhoods. They practice an underground faith, often operate as initiatory secret societies, and are unlikely to receive financial support from Iran. Only Tajikistan is experiencing a real movement of conversion to Shiism, but it is limited specifically to the regions of Khatlon and Kulyab, where the influence of IRPT is significant. This would affect about five percent of the population, especially the young generations who suffered from civil war. Tajikistan is the only country in Central Asia where pan-Iranian sentiments can be expressed, where Iran is seen by some as a model, and where Shiite leaders make public their worries about the rise of Salafist groups.

With these two exceptions, Iran's policy is much broader and more flexible than one solely focused on Shiite proselytism. The Iranian associations and groups most involved in Central Asia, including the Revolutionary Guard, do not broadcast Shiite theories per se, which would bring little agreement in the region; they instead propagate the legacy of the Islamic Revolution. Beyond theological differences between Shia and Sunni, Iran knows that its best hand to play is that of its Ayatollah-dominated regime: a popular founding revolution, a unique religious legitimacy in the Muslim world, and an unambiguous international position vis-à-vis the United States. All these elements are seen positively by some Central Asian Islamic movements, which, although Sunni, are disappointed in the double play of the pro-Western Islamic regimes like Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. These movements call for the moralization of public life through the return of Islamic rules.

Iranian policy in Central Asia is paradoxical at multiple levels. This is because the Iranian actors are themselves diverse, and because Tehran sees Central Asia as an area of potential *dual* conflict: traditional conflict with the United States, through their presence in the Caspian basin and in Afghanistan, and more recent conflict with Sunni fundamentalist movements from the Indian subcontinent or the Persian Gulf. Since 2001-2003, the Iranian state has been, for instance, seeking to expand contacts with the secret services in Central Asia. This was initially due to Russian and American bases in the region, but subsequently it is because of Salafist groups, which Tehran sees as complicit in a general process of ideological Arabization that it deems detrimental to its interests. This situation has led Iran to conduct a paradoxical strategy in Central Asia. It supports local Islamic groups that call on Central Asians to become good Muslims in their daily practice as well as in foreign policy by being more critical of the Western (American, Russian, European) presence, while at the same time it seeks to halt Sunni radicalism. These two trends are contradictory because the first groups are most often inspired by Salafism.

The Iranians are themselves lost in their attempts to discern the real intentions

of local actors such as Bakir Tursunbay Ullu and Nurlan Matuev in Kyrgyzstan, or Kayrat Satybaldy in Kazakhstan, who advocate an Islamic traditionalism that would curb the spread of Wahhabist theories, but actually have contacts with Pakistani and Saudi groups. Iran finances groups hoping to transform them into tools to leverage its influence, but these groups have their own agenda—one that Tehran does not control at all. However, it is likely that with the rise of Salafists in Central Asia and their attempts to take control of Spiritual Boards, Iran will be forced to engage more substantially in the region by deploying a wide range of activities: supporting traditionalist as well as Sufi movements; emphasizing its image as a revolutionary anti-American state; increasing contacts between secret services; and forming links at the highest state levels. The Shiite identity is just one component among others in the spectrum of arguments Iran uses to secure its interests in Central Asia.

NOTES

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Jordan's Encounter with Shiism

By Khalid Sindawi

THE SECURITY SERVICES OF THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN have in recent years become actively engaged in monitoring the activities of Shiites who are residing within their country—including Iraqi refugees, but especially what appears to be a growing number of new converts to Shiism. The security services have carried out raids, arrests and interrogations targeting some Shiite populations, and they are keeping a close eye on political and religious developments within Shiism both within Jordan and beyond. This has naturally caused Shiite refugees and converts in Jordan to be ever on their guard, and they have frequently turned to the traditional practice of *taqiyya*, or dissimulation, according to which Shiites are permitted to hide their true beliefs in case of danger. Needless to say, this tactic has made the task of the Jordanian security services more difficult.

An obvious question comes to mind: Why have the Jordanian security services given this matter of Shiism and of conversion to Shiism so much attention? There are in fact a number of reasons.

First, although conversion to Shiism is not a widespread phenomenon in Jordan today, the fact that it is occurring worries Jordanian authorities, since the country is overwhelmingly Sunni and has historically been untouched by sectarian strife. The Jordanian security services fear that conversion to Shiism will grow dramatically and beyond their control, and that this might expose Jordan to the ethnic and sectarian conflicts that have been on the rise in recent times in the Arab and Muslim worlds. Jordan's rulers seek to avoid such conflicts at any cost, having witnessed the unrest in Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan and other Muslim-majority countries.

Second, Jordan's ruler's worries about Shiism are a function of their deep concerns about the growing influence of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the Middle East. They worry not simply about Iran's growing religious influence but Iran's potential political influence over Shiites and new converts. One area of particular concern for the Jordanians is Hezbollah's growing profile, including the ties it has formed with Hamas and the support it gets from the Muslim Brotherhood. Some worry that, because of Iran's influence over this Hezbollah-Brotherhood alliance, the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood may not be inclined to stem any future wave of conversion to Shiism among its own numerous Jordanian and Palestinian members, should this begin to occur. Not all agree with this view, however. One member of the Jordanian parliament, Muhammad Aqel, who belongs to the Muslim Brotherhood, believes that the alliance will not bring widespread conversion. He claims that conversion to Shiism is much more likely to occur among youths whose religious beliefs are based on emotion and who have not received a proper Sunni religious education (i.e., not Muslim Brotherhood members).

Be this as it may, the Jordanian security services are keenly aware of the potential military and political deterioration in the Middle East. Currently, the region's politics is increasingly divided between two camps. One is led by Iran and includes Syria and various Islamic movements such as Hezbollah, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad; the other, which might be called the "Arab moderate camp," consists of Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The relationships between these two camps are fraught with tension and could deteriorate suddenly and with little warning. Unrest could easily encompass broad sections of the Arab public everywhere, leading to immense internal challenges for Arab regimes.

Many Arab rulers see themselves in an ideological competition with the Iranian-led camp. The behavior of Hezbollah and the carefully crafted speeches of its secretary general Hassan Nasrallah, as well as the purposely aggressive stance taken by the Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad against Israel and America, is clearly meant for the ears of Arab and Islamic public opinion. These leaders' antagonistic posturing may well arouse popular support for the Iranian and Shiite camp and push many young people into the arms of the Iranians, particularly if the military and political situation in the region worsens.

At the same time, Arab leaders in the moderate camp face a difficult situation because of their position on the Arab-Israeli conflict and their relations with America. Popular anger in the Arab world is rising for several reasons. These include America's ongoing support for Israel; the collapse of the peace process and the lack of any sign that Israel is making an effort to restart it; the poor results of the second Arab initiative in the Security Council; and the Palestinians' inability to resolve their internal differences. Popular feelings of discontent and anger do not stop with Israel

and the United States, but are also directed at moderate Arab allies. Arab leaders have warned the U.S. administration that if the Palestinian problem is ignored, America's friends in the region will face difficulty and spreading radicalism. In their view, if a confrontation transpires, the Iranian axis will most certainly exploit it for its own military and political benefit.

THE JORDANIAN SECURITY SERVICES HAVE BEGUN CONSTRUCTING A DETAILED database of Iraqi Shiites who are active in Amman in light of reliable information that some of these Shiites have extremist tendencies and are in close contact with Iran and its intelligence and military organizations. Jordanian converts to Shiism are routinely investigated and supervised to prevent them from engaging in missionary activities. Furthermore, security sources confirm that anyone proven to be engaged in Shiite missionary work is immediately deported from Jordan. Indeed, 23 Iraqis accused of "disseminating Shiism" among members of the Muslim Brotherhood in the al-Baqaa refugee camp were deported.[1] The security forces also search Shiite bookshops in Amman to ensure that they are not selling books that encourage conversion. Many such books are imported from Lebanon and Syria; others have been brought into the country by Iraqi Shiites since 1990, where they have been copied and reprinted.

Middle East analysts are not all in agreement whether conversion to Shiism poses a security and political risk to Jordan or whether there is an attendant danger of Iranian influence. For instance, the analyst Jamil al-Nimri believes that although conversion to Shiism is, at the moment, quite limited, it nonetheless represents an Iranian bridgehead that could become significant in the event of a regional confrontation between Iran and the United States. Nimri distinguishes between religious and political adoption of Shiism; he also thinks that Jordan's security could indeed be threatened if it turns out that information about the existence of Iranian cells in Jordan is true, and that these cells are activated in case of a regional crisis.

On the other hand, the political analyst and head of the Jerusalem Center for Political Studies, Urayb al-Rantawi, sees no reason for the Jordanian authorities to be worried about Iranian influence. He believes that such fears are fed by America, which wants to create what he calls "Iranophobia," in an effort to persuade people that the real danger to Arab societies is posed by Iran rather than Israel. Al-Rantawi believes that the geographical and demographic barriers between Iran and Jordan are such that Jordan is neither in danger from Shiism nor likely to fall under Iranian influence, unlike some other Arab countries which may have reason to worry. On the contrary, al-Rantawi maintains that it would be dangerous to try to create a military or political crisis with Iran and the Shiite forces in the Middle East.

Al-Rantawi also raises interesting questions: what would happen if Iran and the United States eventually made a deal with each other? In such a scenario, what would Jordan have gained by pursuing a policy that was hostile toward Iran?

In trying to keep track of conversions to Shiism, one of the difficulties faced by Jordanian security forces is the fact that the process of conversion usually proceeds in stages. The first step in the adoption of the Shiite creed is the development of sympathy towards the idea of the Shiite imamate, or the affirmation of the right of the Prophet's descendants to lead the Muslim community. This includes the belief that the Prophet's family was greatly wronged by the Prophet's Companions and later by Muslim states (especially the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates). In other words, the prospective convert accepts the Shiite claim that Ali b. Abi Talib was the legitimate successor to the Prophet and not Abu Bakr, Umar or the subsequent caliphs accepted by Sunni tradition. Furthermore, the prospective convert believes that Ali's descendants are the true leaders of the Muslim nation who have been unjustly deprived of their position and authority.

The second step in the conversion of those who have been convinced of Ali's right to rule and of the injustice done to his descendants consists of studying the Shiite creed and its religious law. A convert to Shiism is called "enlightened" (*mustabsir*), meaning someone who has seen the right way and affirms the importance of the Prophet's family, loving it with all his heart. The enlightened, who quite often immerse themselves in the study of Shiite books on faith and law, confess to having intimate spiritual links with the *hawza* of the city of Qom in Iran and with the wider community of other enlightened "perceivers" in the Arab world. CDs produced in Qom tell the stories of the "Arab enlightened." Today the Zaynab hawza in Damascus is one of the main centers of the enlightened. Here they study, tighten their links with other Shiites from the region, and obtain books written by Shiite imams and religious authorities.

Interestingly enough, the Arab enlightened, unlike actual Shiites, are not required to pay the "fifth,"[2] nor are they required to subject themselves to the rulings of any particular religious authority. This, after all, would reveal their conversion status, and would ultimately increase their vulnerability to interrogation by the authorities. Furthermore, they make frequent use of taqiyya and deny the fact of their conversion to Shiism, which helps them to avoid trouble.

Although Shiite communities have lived in the Arab world for centuries, the "Shiite question" has never existed in the Middle East as it does today. Iranian influence waned during the 1990s, when the reformists, headed by former leader Muhammad Khatami, attempted to improve relations with the neighboring Arab states and promised not

to export the revolution. However, "Khatami's perestroika" did not last long, and today the mullahs once again dictate Iran's foreign policy. Iran's nuclear program has helped it gain more influence, as the American involvement in Iraq deteriorated.

For all of these reasons and others, Jordanian officials believe that there are Shiite sleeper cells operating in their country. Broad segments of Jordanian society expressed enthusiastic support for Hezbollah during its recent war against Israel, and the Jordanian authorities are aware of the growing Iranian and Shiite influence throughout the region, by way of the Iran-Syria axis, reinforced by various Islamic movements. In the Arab world in general, Iranian influence is viewed with some alarm, as reflected in statements made by leaders of the group of moderate Arab states, whose central members (Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan) openly warn against Iranian influence and express suspicion over the political loyalty of Arab Shiites. In addition, newspaper articles in these countries regularly warn that Iranian President Ahmadinejad and his colleagues are making attempts to export Iran's Islamic Revolution once again.

Several factors have contributed to the phenomenon of conversion to Shiism in Jordan. First, broad segments of Jordanian society were impressed by Hezbollah's performance in its 2006 war with Israel. Some Jordanians who were thus impressed underwent a "political conversion" to Shiism, which was later followed by religious conversion. Most of these converts were residents of Palestinian refugee camps, mainly on the outskirts of Amman. Among the converts were also a number of Jordanians belonging to prominent families from al-Salt, al-Tufayla and al-Badiya.[3] Informed sources claim that 150 families converted in the al-Baqaa refugee camp, mostly after Hezbollah launched rocket attacks against northern Israel.[4]

According to some sources, numerous Jordanian youths went to Lebanon after the war and visited Hezbollah camps. Some of these youths converted to Shiism, and then returned to Jordan. In the opinion of observers, Hezbollah's psychological and morale achievements at the time were exploited in Jordan, where conversion had thus far been very limited; Shiism was given a push by the "divine victory" over Israel and by Nasrallah's new standing as a hero among the Arab public. This also encouraged Iraqi Shiites in Jordan to speak openly about their faith and to further the claim that Hezbollah was assisted by God in its war against Israel.

There is strong evidence that growing numbers of Jordanians traveled to Damascus and Lebanon during the 2006 war and in its aftermath, where they visited Shiite shrines. Hundreds of them returned after converting to Shiism and went on to convince their families to convert as well, using religious and historical arguments to prove that the Shiite creed is truer than Sunnism.

Another factor in these conversions is Shiite satellite channels, which have become influential in Jordan and other Arab countries, especially after the occupation of Iraq. Today there are around 20 such channels, which broadcast Shiite sermons and traditions, making a considerable impact on public opinion. The more important of these channels are al-Fayhaa,[5] al-Anwar,[6] al-Kawthar[7] and Ahlulbayt.[8] Among their best-known preachers are Muhammd al-Waili and Abd al-Hamid al-Muhajir.

The Shiite station that has had perhaps the greatest influence over Arab public opinion in recent years is Hezbollah's al-Manar.[9] Many people watch the station for its news broadcasts—especially since the 2006 Hezbollah-Israel military confrontation—but the station also broadcasts Shiite religious propaganda. For instance, a Jordanian husband reported that his wife used to watch the station because she was impressed with Hezbollah, but late at night it would broadcast programs whose religious content did not accord with the Sunni view, and he consequently forbade her to watch the station.

The Internet also plays a significant role in conversions to Shiism. According to a Jordanian media expert, the proportion of Jordanians who access Shiite websites is one of the highest in the Arab world. Shiite missionary websites number in the dozens; among the most popular are al-Mustabsiruna (the enlightened) and al-Mutahawwiluna (the converted). Both of these sites post lists of the names of hundreds of Sunnis who have converted to Shiism, and also publish letters in which new converts explain how and why they took this step. Naturally, there are also Sunni websites aimed at countering Shiite claims and presenting the stories of Shiites who have converted to the Sunni creed. Among these sites are al-Bayyina and al-Rasid.[10]

Members of the Shiite community in Jordan belong to a number of different groups of varying origins. First are the Shiites whose families originally came from Southern Lebanon, especially from Bint Jbeil. More than 5,000 Shiites in Jordan have ancestors who came from southern Lebanon. They left their homes after the town of Bint Jbeil was destroyed by the French in the course of their campaign in Syria and Lebanon after World War I.

At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, Bint Jbeil was a major commercial center, whose merchants traveled to northern Palestine, southern Syria and northern Jordan. Many also had homes in these areas. The people of Bint Jbeil rose up against the French mandate in 1920, protesting the establishment of Greater Lebanon, to which the Jabal Amel region was annexed. Following these disturbances, the French sent an expeditionary force of more than 4,000 soldiers, who attacked Jabal Amel and destroyed much of the town of Bint Jbeil.[11] Subsequently many of the city's residents fled to northern Palestine, Jordan and southern Syria, with which

they were already familiar due to their previous commercial dealings. They stayed there in the hope of returning some day to their homes. Indeed, many of them did return in the mid-1940s, after the French had been driven out of Lebanon.

The Jordanian Shiites of Lebanese origin live mainly in the province of Irbid (80 km north of the capital Amman), in the city of Ramtha. They've also settled in smaller towns such as al-Tara, Kafr Asad and Dayr Abi Said, and some live in Amman. These Shiites have integrated into their local society, and some have married into Jordanian families. They number close to 3,000 today, the most prominent being the Bayaun, Sad, Dabaja, Firdaws, Juma, al-Sharara, Harb, Barjawi and al-Bazzi families. Although these Shiites have become assimilated, some still symbolically commemorate Shiite occasions.

In the 1990s members of these families made contact with the Shiite al-Khoei Islamic Center in London, with the blessings of Prince Hasan, who encouraged dialogue between the various sects and ethnic groups. However, a proposed Shiite organization, to be named "Abu Durr al-Ghifar," was never established, since the Jordanian authorities had second thoughts and refused to support the idea.

Jordanian officials confirm the existence of Jordanian Shiite families whose members are full-fledged citizens and maintain good relations with the state. Yet, they do not deny doubting the loyalty of some Jordanian Shiites, whom they suspect of having contact with Shiite religious organizations outside the country, and even with Hezbollah. There are also those who say that in the course of the Iraq-Iran War (1980-1988), the Jordanian authorities attempted to investigate their Shiite citizens' loyalty, in view of the fact that Jordan sided with Iraq. According to these accounts, Jordanian security services kept a close eye on Jordanian Shiites during and after the war. This scrutiny returned in the wake of the crushed Shiite uprising in southern Iraq in 1991, which deeply affected Jordanian Shiites. As a result, the Jordanian media considered them hostile and suspicions have lingered since.

After the fall of the Saddam Hussein in 2003, a great many Iraqis fled to Jordan, for both personal and economic reasons. Their number was estimated at more than one million, and the majority of them are Shiites. According to some sources, there are currently some 200,000 Iraqi Shiites in Jordan, belonging to two groups. One group consists of poor people who would rather move on to Syria, where the cost of living is lower and where Shiites are freer to practice their faith. This group is attached more to its religious creed than to Arab ideals. The second group consists of more affluent Iraqi Shiites who are imbued with the ideals of Arab nationalism and who likely had good relations with the Baathist Iraqi regime. Members of this group prefer to stay in Jordan, where they do not feel detached from their Arab identity. Many of them are well-educated and familiar with the various Islamic sects and the disputes among them. This group exploited the Jordanian law, recently repealed,

which gave Jordanian citizenship to anyone willing to invest at least 15 thousand dinars in the country.

The Iraqi Shiites who have become assimilated into Jordanian society have been able to exert some influence, especially since many people in Jordan do not understand Shiism well. In an interview Muhammad Abu Rumman conducted with Mahir Ismail, the latter told him that a number of his female relatives said that Iraqi Shiite women from wealthy families had befriended Jordanian women and, over a period of time, tried to convert them to Shiism. Along similar lines, Umar Shahin, a resident of al-Zarqa, told an *al-Ghad* reporter that some of his friends were converted by Iraqi Shiites who had come to stay in Jordan but traveled to the Zaynabiyya Hawza in Damascus in order to study the Shiite creed.

The same newspaper also reported that the security services are aware of a number of Shiite religious authorities who live in Jordan and influence both Iraqi Shiites and a growing number of Jordanian converts. One of these lives in the al-Hashimi al-Shimali neighborhood and offers teaching on Shiism in his home. Muhammad Khizai, an Iraqi Shiite who came to Jordan from Damascus, tried to establish a Shiite center, but the Jordanian security services deported him as soon as he arrived.

One of the most prominent Jordanian converts to Shiism is Marwan Khalifat, a young man from Kafr Jayiz by Irbid, who converted during his studies at Sharia College, where he graduated in 1995. He then went on to study in the city of Qom in Iran and in the Zaynabiyya Hawza in Syria. He currently lives in Sweden. He is the author of a well-known book, *Wa-rakibtu al-safina* (*I Rode the Ship*), published by al-Ghadir in 1997. In this book he relates the disputes and dialogues that accompanied his conversion to the Shiite creed, the role played by a Shiite friend of his in this conversion, and the impact on his beliefs made by Shiite books that criticized the Sunni faith.[12]

Another prominent convert to Shiism is Hasan al-Saqqaf, an elder of the Ashari school and a prominent academic. He adopted the Jafari Shiite creed in the wake of a sharp dispute with the Salafists. The latter have written a number of books attacking his views; prominent among these are Ghalib al-Saqi's two books, *al-Isif fi al-kashf an Haqiqat al-Saqqaf* (*Relief in Exposing the Truth about al-Saqqaf*) and *Kashf al-ghumma fi al-tahdhir min taaddi al-Saqqaf ala ulama al-umma* (*Removing the Veil in Warning against al-Saqqaf's Attack on the Nation's Learned Men*). Both books have been distributed free of charge. Al-Saqqaf also wrote a number of books in response to these Salafist attacks against him, the best-known of which is a book on the Wahhabi Salafists, which has been translated into English. Yet another prominent Jordanian convert to Shiism is attorney Ahmad Husayn Yaqub from Jerash. He was born into a Shafii family in 1939 and studied law at Damascus University. According to his own account, he converted to Shiism following a stay in Beirut, where he read a number of Shiite books that convinced him to adopt the creed.[13]

Shiite students from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Oman also study in Jordan. Although their religious mentors warn them not to proclaim their faith in public, they often attempt to make individual conversions among their Jordanian friends and associates.

THE IRAQI SHIITES IN JORDAN CELEBRATE THEIR RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS, such as the Day of Ashura, the birthdays and death-anniversaries of Shiite imams, the Day of Ghadir, and others. The ceremonies and celebrations take place in a number of places. Some are held in private homes, often in underground chambers, especially in the lower-class neighborhoods where many of the Shiites live, such as the well-known al-Mahatta quarter.

According to reports, a number of husayniyyas[14] have been established by Iraqi Shiites in the Jabal Amman al-Sharqiyya neighborhood for small groups wishing to avoid unwanted attention. There are reports of husayniyyas in areas such as al-Nazha and al-Ashrafiyya, attended by Jordanian converts to Shiism, who come to read Husayn's biography and sing religious hymns. One of the best known of these husayniyyas was in Jabal al-Jawfa before its imam, Ali al-Sabari, was arrested by the Jordanian security forces, interrogated and expelled from the country.

Some Shiite ceremonies and celebrations take place in lower-class restaurants run by Iraqi Shiites such as the "al-Azaim," the "Tannur al-Habayib" and the "al-Bash." Shiites gather in these restaurants on religious occasions and hold commemorative ceremonies. They may also watch films about the specific religious occasions being observed and recite elegiac poems such as those written in memory of the death of Husayn on the Day of Ashura.[15] In some instances, a wealthy Shiite will rent an entire restaurant on a holiday and serve the food there free of charge. The only dish cooked on these occasions is *harisa*, which is made of cooked meat and bulgur. Celebrations sometimes are also held in the public parks near the Roman amphitheater and in Hashemite Square. In 2006, a number of Iraqi Shiites filtered into these two places and performed their religious rites, although with a great deal of circumspection.

Shiite holy days are also observed at the mausoleum of Jafar b. Abi Talib,[16] the Prophet's cousin—also known as Jafar al-Tayyar ("Flying Jafar")—who was killed at the battle of Muta in 629 CE, one of the most important conflicts in the Prophet's lifetime. The mausoleum is located in the southern province of al-Karak, at al-Muta, in an area known as "the southern sanctuary" (c. 160 km south of the capital Amman). The Jordanian authorities have built a large mosque at the site, funded by the Iranian government at a time when the number of Shiite pilgrims to Jordan burgeoned because Iranians were unable to visit Iraqi shrines for two decades during the Iraq-Iran war and its aftermath.

Thousands of Iraqi and Iranian pilgrims come to perform the Ashura rites and others at Jafar's mausoleum. On these public occasions the Jordanian authorities guard the site under the motto of "religious tourism." The Iranian pilgrims also visit the institute and university of Al al-bayt ("The Prophet's family"), founded by Prince Hasan b. Talal. This site houses some of the most ancient extant Shiite manuscripts and books, along with numerous studies whose objective is to bring Sunnis and Shiites closer together. The residents of al-Karak and Muta have sometimes used force to prevent Iraqis from visiting the shrine and the authorities have been compelled to intervene.

Iraqi Shiites in Jordan have attempted to purchase property near Jafar's Shrine and register it in the name of Jordanian citizens. Remarkably, the shrine is not furnished with any amenities. In the past it even lacked rugs, and people could not sit there for long periods of time. Near the shrine, vendors offer pictures of Shiite personalities such as the Imam Khomeini, Hassan Nasrallah, Muqtada al-Sadr and others, in addition to videos of *latmiyya* ceremonies and the story of the death of Husayn. In the same area "Husseini soil" is sold. [17] The soil is brought in from Iraq, in clods of various shapes: round, rectangular, octagonal or square. Shiites sit on this soil during their prayers.

In the early 1980s, Iran offered to construct the shrine of Jafar, including tourist facilities, at its own expense. However, the last King Hussein (d. 1999) rejected the offer, even though accepting it might well have brought up to a million Iranian tourists to Jordan annually. Later the Jordanian government itself constructed the mausoleum as part of a national project of building shrines over the tombs of the Prophet's Companions.

THE QUDS PRESS NEWS AGENCY HAS REPORTED THAT A NUMBER OF IRAQI Shiite businessmen have applied to the Jordanian Ministry of Religious Endowments (Waqf) for permission to erect the first Shiite mosque and husayniyya in Jordan and to found an association called "al-imam al-Husayn." The site chosen for the construction of the mosque and husayniyya is in the Abdun quarter, one of Amman's more exclusive areas, located in the southern part of the capital. The American Embassy is located in the same neighborhood.

However, at the time of this writing there are no signs that Jordan will give an official permit to build on the property, whose value is estimated at over three million dollars. In fact, the former Jordanian Minister of the Interior, Id al-Fayiz, stated that the Jordanian government would never permit anyone to exploit the climate of pluralism in Jordan and work against the country's national unity. This statement came in the wake of declarations by members of the Muslim Brotherhood, in which they expressed their worries that the government might approve the construction of the husayniyya.

In fact, the Jordanian Minister of Religious Endowments and Islamic Holy Sites, Abd al-Fattah Salah, has denied that any Iraqi group or person has requested the Ministry's permission to establish a husayniyya or Shiite mosque in Jordan. His statement followed media reports that the Iraqi Shiite leader Muqtada al-Sadr, on a recent visit to Jordan, asked for permission to build at least one husayniyya in the capital Amman, so that Iraqi Shiites would have a place to carry out rituals that differ from those of the local Shiites. The same sources added that al-Sadr claimed such a step would help strengthen the ties between the Iraqi and Jordanian peoples. Previously, the Ministry of Religious Endowments had refused permission to construct a Shiite mosque or a husayniyya in western Amman. Although initial permission was granted by the Ministry, it was revoked in January 2006, under still-unclear circumstances. The request was made by an Iraqi businessman living in Jordan, who offered to construct a large Shiite mosque at his own expense.

The Jordanian authorities thus apparently believe that providing official permission to construct a husayniyya in Amman would give Shiism the status of an officially recognized creed, thereby encouraging conversion to Shiism.

THE CONVERSION OF JORDANIANS TO SHIISM HAS BEGUN TO AROUSE BOTH official and unofficial concern in that country. A number of compelling factors have made Shiism attractive to Jordanians—and indeed, for Arab Sunnis as a whole. One of these is the political vacuum created by official Arab regimes, including the Jordanian regime, which have failed to confront the major issues concerning Arabs everywhere: e.g., the Palestinian problem, Iraq and Lebanon. Arab regimes are perceived as serving the interest of a pro-Israel United States, instead of giving support to Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas and Islamic Jihad in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and the Iraqi insurgents in their struggle against the American occupation. The Arab man-in-the-street feels that his government lends support to the siege against the Palestinian people, creating a growing gap between subjects and rulers in Arab countries with Sunni majorities.

Iran has been quick to fill this vacuum by offering the Arabs of the Middle East a carefully crafted popular political and cultural message. Iran's political adroitness was clearly evident during the 2006 Lebanon War and in the dispute over Iran's nuclear program. The Arab masses were made to forget Shiite Iran's collusion with America in the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, and they now perceive Iran as the primary champion of the Arabs and the Muslim world. Hezbollah's successes against Israel in southern Lebanon also had a great influence; the organization is seen as the bearer of Arab hopes to retrieve their honor and national will.

In fact, the honor of the Arab peoples, which according to popular opinion has

been disgraced by the policies of the Arab governments, has been redeemed by "Shiite achievements" in the struggle against America and Israel. For many Arabs, who ask themselves how it is that the Shiites do what the Arab peoples think should be done, the answer is to be found in Shiite culture and literature, which, so they believe, contain the key to understanding the causes of power, influence and success.

Sunni youth in Jordan do not possess the authoritative sources and debating skills of their Shiite counterparts, and therefore find themselves in an unequal confrontation in which the Shiites usually dominate. When one considers the poor religious education of many Sunnis together with the way many Arab regimes treat their own subjects, it is no wonder that conversion to Shiism is on the rise.

In Jordan the regime's behavior and the lack of religious culture has produced a particularly fertile ground in which conversion to Shiism can flourish. Consequently, the Iraqi Shiites in Jordan have penetrated every stratum of Jordanian society and proven themselves capable of holding their own in political and cultural debates with Jordanians. The anti-American feelings of many Jordanians also contributed to the wave of conversion to Shiism, especially in light of the proven Shiite capacity for action, as shown by the success of Hezbollah and of Iran's nuclear program. Hamas, which is also very popular among Jordanians, has played an important role in alleviating anti-Iranian feelings as well, since many Jordanians are grateful for Iranian aid to Hamas. As a result, Jordanians first become political adherents of Shiism; they then may also adopt the Shiite religious creed.

Future developments depend to a large extent on the actions and behavior of the Jordanian government, on how the conflict between America and Iran evolves, and on political events in Iraq. If Iraq stabilizes, most of the Iraqis now living in Jordan will return home, and the direct contact that now occurs between Jordanians and Iraqi Shiites will come to an end. If the Iraqi problem is solved, the attraction of Shiism for Sunnis will perhaps wane as well, because Shiism's present good reputation in the region owes much to its anti-American stand. If Shiites and America end their state of conflict, conversion to Shiism in Jordan will in all likelihood decline. To put the matter succinctly, future political developments in the region will determine the future of conversion to Shiism in Jordan. This will especially remain the case for as long as the official policies of Arab states do not take their own peoples' wishes into account.

NOTES

1. The newspaper *al-Bayyina*, issue 478, August 12, 2007.
2. The "fifth" is the proportion of every Shiite's income, from whatever source, which he is required to give to the community. Shiites divide the "fifth" into six parts: one part to God, one to the

prophets, one to relatives, one to orphans, one to the poor, and one to wayfarers. The first three parts, God's, the prophets' and relatives,' are considered to belong to the Prophet's family (*ahl al-bayt*). Fully half of the "fifth" thus goes to the imams and their families. For more details on the "fifth" in the Shiite faith see: Calder, N., "Khums in Imami Shii Jurisprudence from the Tenth to the Sixteenth Century A.D," *BSOAS* (1982), 1-45; Sachededina Abudulaziz "Al-Khums: The Fifth in the Imami Shii Legal System" *JNES* 39 (1980), 275-289.

3. See the Thaqlin website, www.althqlin.net/forum/showthread.php?t=13565.
4. Riya Manour, "al-Shiia fi al-Urdunn," *al-Madina* (Saudi Arabia), 22, February 2007.
5. An Iraqi satellite television channel, which broadcasts at present from Ajman. It began its broadcasts on July 20, 2004 and is registered in Dubai. It employs about 40 media professionals in addition to the management. Al-Fayhaa broadcasts various programs in addition to the news. For more details see the station's website, http://alfayhaa.tv.
6. A subscription Shiite satellite station broadcasting from Kuwait, where it is licensed. It broadcasts Shiite religious programs, especially on the self-infliction ceremonies in the months of Muharram and Safar. For more details see the station's website, www.alanwartv.com. .
7. A Shiite station which broadcasts from Iran. Its Arabic program first went on the air in 1980, when it was called the Sahar channel and broadcast one hour a day. Today it broadcasts eighteen hours daily. For more details see the station's website, www.alkawthar.ir.
8. The Islamic satellite channel Ahl al-bayt broadcasts from Karbala. It began operating on October 14, 2005. For more details see the station's website, www.ahlulbayt.com.
9. Hezbollah founded this Shiite channel in Lebanon in 1991. Since the year 2000 it has been broadcasting 24/7. It has hundreds of employees and broadcasts worldwide. For more details on the station see Dina Matar "What It Means to Be Shiite in Lebanon: Al-Manar and the Imagined Community of Resistance," Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture 2006 (University of Westminster, London) vol. 3(2): 22-40.
10. Muhammad Abu Rumman, "al-Tashayyu fi al-Urdunn" ("Conversion to Shiism in Jordan"), *al-Ghad* (a Jordanian newspaper), October 4-5, 2006.
11. For details see: Mustafa Bazzi, *Jabal Amil fi muitihi al-arabi* (*Jabal Amil in its Arab Surroundings*), (Beirut: Research and Documentation Center of the Supreme Islamic Shiite Council, al-Rihani publications, 1993), p. 211; idem, *Bint Jbel ÎaÃirat Jabal Amil* (*Bint Jbel Capital of the Jabal Amil Region*), (Beirut: Dar al-amir lil-thaqafa wal-ulum, 1998), pp. 498-499.
12. Muhammad Abu Rumman, "al-Tashayyu fi al-Urdunn," *al-Ghad*, October 4-5, 2006.
13. *Ibid*.
14. *Husayniyya*: a Shiite building used for holding the annual commemorative services in remembrance of the death of al-Husyan b. Ali. The fact that Shiites have a specific structure just for this purpose shows the importance they attach to Husayn's death and its commemoration. Most of the husayniyyas in the Shiite holy cities are also used as pilgrim hostels, free of charge. The various husayniyyas are usually named after the people of the city who founded them, such as the Esfahani husayniyya, the Teherani husayniyya, and so on. Husayniyyas of this type can be found in the cities of Najaf, Karbala, Mashhad, and elsewhere. They are not considered mosques, and do not have the restrictions on visitors that the latter have, especially concerning entry by non-Muslims. In some areas of Lebanon they are called *al-nadi al-Husayni* ("Hussein Club"), such as the one in Tyre in southern Lebanon. In the Persian Gulf area, husayniyyas are known as "al-matam" ("funeral rites"). In Bahrain, for example, there are today some 3,500 "maatim Husayniyya," reflecting the frequency with which they are used. In India and Pakistan they are called "imam bareh" ("the imam's center"),

i.e., the center of the imam al-Husayn. The buildings themselves do not have any constant shape. Some husayniyyas have large, mosque-like spaces while others are more like lecture halls, with rows of chairs and a raised dais in front. The former type is common in Iraq, Kuwait and elsewhere in the Persian Gulf region while the second type is frequently encountered in Lebanon. There are separate husayniyyas for women in Lebanon, the Gulf and elsewhere. Some husayniyyas stand by themselves and others are attached to mosques. The oldest extant husayniyya is the "Imam Dalan" husayniyya in Dacca, Bangladesh, which was constructed in 1642 CE. The husayniyyas play an important religious, social, political and cultural role. Since the beginning of the 20th century they have functioned as social and cultural clubs where people meet and exchange views and information. They are especially active during religious holidays. For more details see the author's paper: Sindawi, K., "The Husayni Sermon (al-Khutba al-husayniyya) in Shiite Literature: Development, Structure, Venue, Preachers' Titles," *Orientalia Suecana* 54 (2005), 151-178.

15. These poems are called *latmiyya* in Iraq, Bahrain and Kuwait, because those who attend the reading of these poems beat (*latm* in Arabic) their chests in grief. The latmiyya poems are recited during the day and at night on numerous occasions in the Shiite calendar, especially the death-anniversaries of the imams and Fatima. The most important occasion is the anniversary of the death of Husayn in the month of Muharram. Then Shiites gather together in a single procession, headed by a reciter of verses (called *radud* in colloquial Iraqi Arabic, because he repeats the elegiac lines of poetry to the crowd beating themselves) who relates the catastrophes which have befallen the Prophet's family.
16. He was the brother of Ali b. Talib. He died after both his hands were cut off in battle.
17. For more on "Husseini soil" and its uses see the author's paper: Sindawi, K., "Holy Earth: The Importance of the Land of Karbala for the Shia," *Islamic Culture* 77(3) (2003), 73-84.

The Making of the Christmas Day Bomber

By Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens and Jacob Amis

LIKE MANY OF HIS PREDECESSORS, UMAR FAROUK ABDULMUTALLAB, the "Christmas Day Bomber," left behind a personal testimony. His was not a scripted "martyrdom video," but a series of online postings written over the course of two years. They relate a dramatic journey, born of a web of influences. Within a few months of his first Internet writings, Abdulmutallab, already flushed with Salafist religiosity, encountered the highly politicized Islam that is prevalent on the British university campus. The organizations and institutions with which he interacted, as a member and then president of the UCL Islamic Society, openly promulgated a radical worldview: the "War on Terror" is in fact a "War on Islam," resisted by the freedom fighters of Hamas, Hezbollah and the Taliban, in a valiant defensive jihad. For some, this heroic mantle could extend, with only subtle qualification, to the offensive jihad of al-Qaeda.

One actor on this stage was Shaykh Anwar al-Awlaki. In 2002, dogged by allegations that he mentored two of the September 11 hijackers, Awlaki arrived on the British Islamist scene to a hero's welcome. It was a hinge moment in an ideological progression originating with the Muslim Brotherhood and later landing him in Yemen at the sharp end of the jihad of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). In 2009, Abdulmutallab joined Awlaki in Yemen. In the intervening years, despite the increasingly violent content of his preaching, Awlaki continued to receive the sponsorship of prominent British Islamic organizations—even when restrictions on his movements limited him to video-link speeches.

The careers of Awlaki and Abdulmutallab powerfully suggest the fluidity of Islamist thought. In particular, they illustrate the confluence between what might be broadly termed "hard" and "soft" Islamism. The latter is based on long-term and largely non-violent social and political activism, while the former looks to immediate violence to further its goals.[1] Awlaki and Abulmutallab, however, moved rapidly and seamlessly within and between these different modes of Islamism, and it would seem that extreme beliefs common to both provided a launching pad for increasingly extreme actions. It is argued here that an intensely literalist yet politically impassive Salafism made Abdulmutallab nevertheless receptive to the activist Islamism of the UCL Islamic Society. Later, he made a further jump to jihadism. It remains to analyze the milieu that framed this change, and the parallel ideological trajectory of Awlaki. This, more than any other element, shaped the violent synergy of theory and practice that was reaped on Christmas Day 2009.

The Internet Writings of Abdulmutallab

BETWEEN JANUARY 2005 AND SEPTEMBER 2007, UMAR FAROUK ABDULMUTALLAB regularly contributed to an online Islamic forum, www.gawaher.com, under the pseudonym "Farouk1986."[2] This was the period of his formative journey from the British School of Lomé, Togo, to Arabic studies in Sanaa, Yemen, to his presidency of the Islamic Society of University College, London. His postings to the online forum, which usually offered advice on questions posed by other forum members but occasionally aired his own personal dilemmas directly, ranged from theology to sex and from politics to football. His 310 postings are among the most illuminating primary source material emanating from the convulsions of the War on Terror in recent years. A careful and collective reading of this remarkable stream of consciousness takes us inside the mind of a young man on the path to ever-greater extremism and violence.

The problems of interpretation are manifold. They will be familiar on some level to any routine user of modern communications technology. How do we make sense of the deadpan of raw electronic text? How do we distinguish firm conviction from experimental half-thoughts, the earnest entreaty from the throwaway remark? Where do we find the line between humor, sarcasm and insult in the patois of this particular ethereal micro-community? Such difficulties can derail a dialogue between friends and acquaintances, but the reader does not know Abdulmutallab and never will. Added to this imperfect picture is a fact of immense significance: a little

over two years after his final online post, the 23-year-old was only narrowly prevented from committing suicide and mass murder on Northwest Airlines Flight 253.[3]

Little wonder, then, that media interest in Abdulmutallab's online corpus essentially focused on a handful of references to jihad. The most cited passage is indeed eye-catching. On February 20, 2005, an 18-year-old Abdulmutallab responds to a topic on "fantasies" as follows:

> Alright, I won't go into too much detail about my fantasy, but basically they are jihad fantasies. I imagine how the great jihad will take place, how the Muslims will win *insha'Allah* [God willing] and rule the whole world, and establish the greatest empire once again!!![4]

Another topic sees Abdulmutallab posting information about his native Nigeria: "So here it is Nigeria. The Muslim Nation. It seems to me that Islam's rise back to power will come from the roots of Nigeria."[5] Elsewhere he opines that "killing is only permitted in *jihad*, retaliation by *sharia* for murder, etc.,"[6] and calls on Allah to "unite us all Muslims and give us victory over those who do not believe."[7]

Then there are allusions to what might be termed "foreign policy." In 2005, Abdulmutallab writes, for example, of the divine torment that awaits "Bush" and "all the people who oppress the Muslims" for "invading Muslim lands and killing my Muslim brothers and sisters."[8] A disgruntled excursus on the House of Saud harks back further to the first Gulf Crisis and Operation Desert Shield.[9]

Yet one of the most striking aspects of Abdulmutallab's writings is how little such themes feature, at least initially. Rather, Abdulmutallab's discourse is dominated by a social, even civilizational, discontent of an exaggeratedly apolitical kind. One of his earliest postings is a revealing soliloquy in which he appeals to "Muslim brothers and sisters" for advice on "several dilemmas I want to get out of and [have] made me lonely." The lament, which dates from his days at the British School of Lomé (where his piety had already earned him the nickname "The Pope")[10] is worth reproducing in some length:

> First of all, I have no friend. Not because I do not socialise, etc. but because either people do not want to get too close to me as they go partying and stuff while I don't, or they are bad people who befriend me and influence me to do bad things. Hence I am in a situation where I do not have a friend, I have no one to speak to, no one to consult, no one to support me and I feel depressed and lonely. I do not know what to do.

> And then I think this loneliness leads me to other problems. As I get lonely, the natural sexual drive awakens and I struggle to control it, sometimes leading to minor sinful activities like not lowering the gaze...
>
> The last thing I want to talk about is my dilemma between liberalism and extremism. The Prophet said religion is easy and anyone who tries to overburden themselves will find it hard and will not be able to continue. So anytime I relax, I deviate sometimes and then when I strive hard, I get tired of what I am doing i.e. [sic] memorising the Quran, etc. How should one put the balance right?[11]

Loneliness and sexual frustration form a special refrain in Abdulmutallab's writings, with both invariably ascribed to the paucity of "good Muslims"—even in Muslim-majority countries.[12] In May 2005, he debates whether to attend his school prom, only to conclude: "I think it's *haram* [forbidden]. Allah says 'Do not come near *zinah* [temptation]'... there's also the extravagance in spending for the prom, drinking usually takes place, music that excites evil desires."[13] He is dismissive of Western culture, which he sees as centered on "winning girlfriends."[14] For Abdulmutallab, "the biggest obstacle... is the *kafir*-imposed school system. These guys are just controlling us around anyhow. We ought to have our own systems that will make our *ummah* do things according to *Quran* and *Sunnah*."[15] He urges his fellow forum users to restrict their activities to the "Islamically good," and also to "hang around with good Muslims, and students who enjoy studying."[16]

All this is set against a strong fixation with the minutiae of religious ritual. In language peppered with Arabic terms, Abdulmutallab advises a strict, perfectionist approach to prayer.[17] In several places he speaks with apparent earnestness of the existence of *Shaytun* (Satan) as well as *Jinn* (spirits).[18] From January 2005 he claims to be in the process of memorizing the Quran.[19]

In the main, Abdulmutallab's early writings convey a religious and social outlook strongly analogous to more recent forms of apolitical Salafism, or what Olivier Roy has termed "neofundamentalism." As distinct from political Islamism, one can detect no specific activist or militant zeal for the creation of an Islamic State. Rather, the emphasis is on a narrow and conservative view of Islam, centered on the Quran and the Sunna as practiced by the earliest generations of Muslims, with more interest in *umma* consciousness and the implementation of *sharia* than the statist political program of classic Islamist ideology. Above all, it is concerned with the self—religiosity rather than religion—and hence the fixation on personal faith (*iman*), dress, speech and ritual.[20]

The religious scholars and institutions that Abdulmutallab mentions reinforce this interpretation. Whatever his thoughts on the Saudi royal family, he is much taken by the Wahhabi imams of the Grand Mosque in Mecca. Special praise is reserved for Shaykhs Saud al-Shuraim and Abdul Rahman al-Sudais. Significantly, it is their Quranic recitation that enthuses Abdulmutallab, not their views on Palestine or Iraq.[21] In London, his favorite place of worship is the Regent's Park Mosque, which is closely linked to and partly funded by the House of Saud.[22] Abdulmutallab also frequently refers forum members to Islam Online, a website that has historically taken its ideological lead from Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, for "professional Islamic counseling"—as opposed to political analysis. He professes to enjoy the sermons of Amr Khaled, the popular Egyptian "televangelist," but notes that "some people criticize him for not following the *Sunna* ways, but *kafir* ways like his dressing in [a] suit and shaving."[23]

Though this religious austerity characterizes much of his writing from the outset, a progressive literalism is clearly in evidence across his digital footprint. For instance, in his earliest postings, Abdulmutallab discusses soccer with great interest.[24] Yet already by February 2005 he begins to voice doubts: "To be honest football and Islam... they don't blend very well. It's a pity."[25] In the same month he relates that he has stopped wearing clothes by French Connection UK, because the logo alludes to a "foul word."[26] By November 15, Abdulmutallab, now ensconced at University College London, has definitively turned against football: "Let's save our honor and religion and try to stay away from football and do sporting activities that are more Islamically beneficial... running, paintball, archery (or any other sport of the like that teaches [how to] target and aim)."[27] Interestingly, musical instruments are jettisoned from the realm of the permissible on the same day.[28]

In December 2005, Abdulmutallab describes a sudden crisis over the consumption of non-*halal* meat, precipitated by a parental visit. Appealing for advice from his peers, he explains: "My parents are of the view [that] as foreigners, we are allowed to say *bismallah* [in the name of God] and eat any meat. It occurred to me [that] I should not be eating with my parents as they use meat I consider *haram*." This is no minor matter for the freshman: "Please respond as quickly as possible as my tactic has been to eat outside and not at home till I get an answer."[29]

Following his arrival at university in September 2005, Abdulmutallab's discourse also becomes more political. There is every reason to suspect that this is related to the milieu in which he now finds himself (on which more later), while his first trip to Yemen in the months immediately previous may have also been a factor. In February 2006, Abdulmutallab expounds at length the efficacy of anti-war demonstrations, arguing that "recruitment into the British Army has hit an all time low" and "the British and American governments will at least now hesitate, and not hasten

to go to war with Syria or Iran."[30] In March 2006 the forum discusses "The Road to Guantanamo," a British film narrating the story of the "Tipton Three."[31] When a member questions the film's version of events, Abdulmutallab refers him to a UCL Islamic Society webpage containing an interview with Yvonne Ridley, the British journalist and prominent anti-war activist, who has frequently voiced support for the Taliban and Hamas.[32] Pointing to Ridley's experiences as a captive of the Taliban, he notes "how humane[ly] she was treated relative to Guantanamo detainees."[33]

In March 2006, Abdulmutallab stopped posting on the forum. He resurfaced in January 2007, but tarried for a mere handful of contributions. We can only speculate as to the causes of this considerable lifestyle change, but it seems likely that by this time his involvement in the UCL Islamic Society had taken him onto an altogether more worldly and active plane. His penultimate posting, on January 26, 2007, was a promotion for the Islamic Society's "War on Terror Week." He writes of "the death of thousands of innocent lives" and "thousands more detained illegally without trial or judgment."[34] In these postings, Abdulmutallab—once a sedentary school boy, absorbed by the chimerical world of the online community of believers—has all but vanished. Now he has reinvented himself as a man of action.

From the Brotherhood to Jihad

BORN IN LAS CRUCES, NEW MEXICO TO A FAMILY OF YEMENI DESCENT, SHAYKH Anwar al-Awlaki apparently began his Islamist intellectual life as a committed follower of the Muslim Brotherhood. In his own accounts of his Islamic education, Awlaki names a number of Ikhwani teachers and institutes that helped mould his understanding of Islam. In an August 2008 blog, responding to questions about his Islamic education, Awlaki claims that he "benefited from the teachings of Shaykh Abdul Majid al-Zindani."[35] Among other things, Zindani is the rector of the Eman University in Yemen and the head of the Shurah Committee of Islah, the Yemeni wing of the Muslim Brotherhood.[36] Awlaki also wrote that in 2002 he was "given permission from the administration of the University of Eman in Yemen to attend any class at any level."[37]

Awlaki's active role in the Muslim Brotherhood network can be traced to at least the early 1990s, when he was Vice President of the Charitable Society for Social Welfare, the U.S. branch of a charity founded by his former teacher Zindani.[38] Between 2001-2002, he served as the imam at the Dar al-Hijrah Mosque in Falls Church, Virginia, which is widely recognized as a hub for the *Ikhwan's* activities in the United

States.[39] The 9/11 Commission Report also quotes FBI sources that alleged that Awlaki had strong connections with the Brotherhood's U.S.-based Hamas fundraising charity, the Holy Land Foundation.[40] In one of his blog posts, Awlaki also mentions that in the late 1980s and early 1990s he held a number of talks with high level members of the Ikhwan about Islamist participation in democratic elections.[41]

Beyond his organizational links to the Brotherhood, Awlaki's early lectures suggest a close ideological affinity with the movement. In the days following the September 11, 2001 attacks, he expressed sympathy and support for Palestinian terrorist groups, telling a reader on Islam Online "these are freedom fighters fighting an illegal occupation."[42] In the same interview, he strongly suggested Israeli involvement in September 11, claiming that the actual Arab Muslim hijackers had been framed. Support—both financial and rhetorical—for terrorist operations in Israel and a conspiratorial view of 9/11 are a major preoccupation of the Brotherhood and other "soft Islamist" movements such as the Jamaat-e-Islami.

In a January 2009 open letter to President Obama, leading Islamist theologians including Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Qazi Hussein Ahmed (the former *emir* of the Jamaat-e-Islami) referred to the jihads in Israel, Afghanistan and Iraq as a resistance to "the aggression, injustice and tyranny practiced or sponsored by the United States."[43] The only solution to achieve world peace was "to end occupation and return to the peoples their rights and sovereignty."[44] On the subject of September 11, the letter made precisely the same claim as Awlaki: "The events of the 11th of September 2001 were nothing but fabricated drama by some influential forces in America in coordination with Israeli Mossad."[45] Such theories are not the sole preserve of the Muslim Brotherhood, of course, but other aspects of Awlaki's early discourse provide powerful corroborating evidence of the movement's influence.

In a 2001 lecture in the United States, "Tolerance: A Hallmark of Muslim Character," Awlaki addressed a number of conventionally Ikwhani themes, including the current weak state of the *umma*, or "Muslim Nation," and the importance of drawing lessons from the time of the Prophet in order to unify and strengthen the Islamic nation. He identifies two types of Islamic tolerance: that toward other religious groups and that among Muslims. The modern relevance of the former is quickly dismissed: "When you look at Muslims driven out of their homes and their land invaded and then you tell them to be tolerant: it doesn't really make a lot of sense."[46] Instead, the majority of the talk is devoted to the "*fiqh* of priorities," where Awlaki criticizes Muslims for attaching importance to small and insignificant disagreements while ignoring the major problems faced by the umma. The *fiqh* of priorities is an issue which the Brotherhood, and Qaradawi in particular, have also emphasized. Writing on this subject, Qaradawi uses a strikingly similar example to that given by Awlaki in his lecture. In his 1990 treatise, *Priorities of the Islamic Movement*

in the Coming Phase, Qaradawi writes, "It is a pity that we ask for instance about the blood of a gnat, and do not care about the shedding of al-Hussein's blood."[47] Similarly, in his talk Awlaki refers to a story where a delegation of Iraqis from Kufa visit Mecca for the hajj and ask Abdallah ibn Umar if their prayers will be spoiled were they to kill a mosquito. Awlaki notes the response: "You kill the grandson of Hussein bin Ali, and now you are asking about killing mosquitoes?"[48]

In 2002, Awlaki gave a lecture at a JIMAS conference in Leicester, England, which mirrored many of Qaradawi's teachings of the previous decade.[49] In "Lessons from the Companions: Living as a Minority," Awlaki again echoes Qaradawi's *Priorities of the Islamic Movement.* In the book, Qaradawi stresses the role played by Western Muslims in conducting *dawa* (proselytizing) through "organized, collective work, undertaken by the people, to restore Islam to the leadership of society."[50] In his 2002 lecture, Awlaki speaks about the importance of "working collectively" in almost identical terms, reminding his audience that "We cannot march forward unless we are organized."[51]

He also specifically referred to the importance of creating a *jamaa* (community) that will be stronger and more effective than any individual efforts to spread Islam. Notably, the term *jamaa* was used in this context by none other than Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood. In *The Message of the Teachings*, Banna explained that the creation of a *jamaa,* or community of like-minded Ikhwanis, was an essential step in the development of a truly Islamic society.[52]

Perhaps most significantly, Awlaki's emphasis on organized *dawa* as the key to Islamic revival stands in direct contrast to the ideology of al-Qaeda, which seeks to change the global balance of power by unleashing indiscriminate violence on Western cities. Indeed, Qaradawi's doctrine of *wasatiyya* (middle way) represents, as its name implies, a rejection of this approach, favoring a peaceful (at least with respect to the homelands of Western countries) yet persistent program of delegitimizing secularism while simultaneously offering Islam as the only viable alternative. Awlaki made precisely this point to his Leicester audience:

> The wisdom comes in on how (the method with which) the package is delivered. Rather than using a hammer to knock on the door and then throwing the package into the face of the person who opens the door, the door should be knocked on politely and the package delivered in a polite manner.[53]

This metaphor would seem to represent a denunciation of global jihadism as crude and ineffective next to the smooth and plausible proselytizing of the Muslim Brotherhood. Indeed, it is often overlooked that Awlaki received heavy criticism

from Abdullah al-Faisal, an influential jihadist preacher, for his initial rejection of *takfir* (excommunication)—a core element of al-Qaeda's ideology.[54] Branding him a purveyor of "CIA Islam," al-Faisal even declared takfir on Awlaki, deeming his murder permissible.

As we have seen, this is not to say that Awlaki ever opposed violent jihad *per se,* but rather that his interpretation of jihad and its requirements under present circumstances was emphatically Ikhwani. In 2003, Awlaki released "The Story of Ibn al-Akwa," a lecture series based on the *Book of Jihad* written by a 14th century scholar, Ibn Nuhaas.[55] It is regarded as a classic work on jihad—and is a favorite text of the Muslim Brotherhood. It was hailed by Abdullah Azzam as "the best book on Jihad," and listed by Hasan al-Banna as essential reading on the 1940s *Ikhwan* members' syllabus. Headings such as "Jihad is the most beloved deed to Allah," "The *mujahid* is the greatest of all people," and "The pinnacle of Islam is jihad," give a sense of the book's content.[56]

Interestingly, Awlaki began the lecture with a disclaimer affirming its wholly academic and theoretical nature—a mark of caution that he later dispensed with—before warmly citing Sayyid Qutb's maxim: "Our words are dead until we give them life with our blood."[57]

Awlaki then criticizes modern interpretations of jihad as an inner struggle: "Nowadays, it is common to find among Muslims the understanding that jihad is primarily *jihad al-nafs* (internal struggle) and the secondary meaning is the fighting of the *kuffar* (non-believers)."[58] He rejects a popular *hadith*, "We returned from the lesser *jihad* (battle) to the greater *jihad* (*jihad* of the soul)," calling it a fabrication. Instead, the true Islamic meaning of jihad is fighting in the cause of Allah (*fisabeel ilah*).

The rejection of the notion that an inner struggle of the soul is the greater jihad is a common theme among modern Islamist ideologues, not least Hassan al-Banna, who in his *Book of Jihad* writes: "Many Muslims today mistakenly believe that fighting the enemy is *jihad asghar* (a lesser jihad) and that fighting one's ego is *jihad akbar* (a greater jihad)."[59]

Soon before his move to Yemen, Awlaki delivered another lecture series that included unmistakably Ikhwani themes, stressing the importance of the all-encompassing Islamic identity and directly drawing on the distinctly Qutbist interpretation of *jahilliya* as not just the historical pre-Islamic period but a timeless concept.[60]

It was in 2005 that Awlaki's public work began to suggest a stronger affinity with al-Qaeda. This was the year he published his exegesis of *Constants in the Path of Jihad*, a book by Salafi scholar Yusuf al Uyayree. In contrast to his 2003 lecture on Ibn Nuhaas, Awlaki no longer saw the need to include a disclaimer. Also, unlike Nuhaas, Uyayree was a modern jihadist who learned his trade fighting for the mujahidin against the Soviets in Afghanistan and his text is a contemporary jihadist tract,

explicitly applying many of Nuhaas' ancient teachings to modern times. It may have been about this time, in the summer of 2005, that the 18-year-old Abdulmutallab first encountered Awlaki. The chronology of their first meeting is unclear, although in January 2010 Awlaki confirmed to a Yemeni journalist that "Umar Farouk is one of my students."[61] While enrolled in the Arabic Institute of Sanaa, Abdulmutallab attended lectures at Zindani's al-Eman University, where Awlaki had begun speaking soon after his return to Yemen the previous year. If he did attend Awlaki's lectures, Abdulmutallab would have absorbed a rapidly hardening jihadist discourse. By August 2006, the Yemeni authorities were sufficiently perturbed by the shaykh's activities to secure his incarceration, which would last until December 2007.[62]

Writing of his time in prison, Awlaki names Sayyid Qutb's *In the Shade of the Quran* as one of the books that "carried me through and offered me solace during that period."[63] In a review of the book on his blog, he suggests that, along with Qutb's political manifesto *Milestones*, this work is crucial to his understanding of Islam and its holy book. This growing adoration of Qutb reflects Awlaki's shift from Qaradawist *wasatiyya* to a more radical strand of Brotherhood thought. From there, the transition to jihadism was a painless one.

In an August 2008 blog, "A Question about the Method of Establishing Khilafa," Awlaki openly rejects the Muslim Brotherhood approach to Islamizing the West, now wholly embracing the al-Qaeda strategy.[64] Awlaki lists four different approaches to the establishment of a universal caliphate: *tarbiyah* (Islamic education) of the *umma* until it is able to establish the caliphate; participation in democratic systems so as to change secular societies from within; Hizb ut-Tahrir's approach of raising awareness of the importance of the caliphate and searching for *nusrah* (help); and fighting in the path of Allah. The first two strategies are typical of the Muslim Brotherhood's gradualist approach, which only a few years earlier he would likely have accepted. By now, however, his strategic outlook has changed. Instead, he rejects the first suggestion on the basis that it negates "the duty of jihad" and rejects democratic participation and infiltration as un-Islamic: "It is not our way. It is the way of the Jews and the *munafiqeen* [polytheists]...we make our intentions open."[65] Crucially, moreover, the jihadist obligation is no longer merely defensive: "Our position is that we will implement the rule of Allah on earth by the tip of the sword whether the masses like it or not."[66]

From this period onwards, Awlaki's pronouncements became ever more aligned with al-Qaeda's—and increasingly operational in their perspective. By December 2008 he was in correspondence with al-Shabaab, a Somali militant group linked to al-Qaeda. In a blog congratulating the group on their successful establishment of sharia through jihad rather than democratic means, he exclaimed, "The ballot has failed us but the bullet has not."[67] Shortly thereafter, he posted al-Shabaab's response

on his blog, where the group thanks him for his ongoing support, referring to him as their "beloved shaykh."[68] Months later, *The New York Times* reported that Awlaki's sermons had helped to inspire a Somali student in America to join al-Shabaab.[69]

In January 2009, he released a document entitled "44 Ways to Support Jihad," presenting the global jihad as a Clausewitzian total war which calls upon man, woman and child to do all in their capacity to assist the mujahidin, from providing them with financial support to helping their families. He also utilizes the Salafi-Jihadi interpretation of *al-wala wa-l-bara*, as developed by Abu Muhammed al-Maqdisi,[70] explaining to the reader,

> The hatred of kuffar is a central element of our military creed. We need to realize that Allah will not grant us victory as long as we still have some love towards His enemies in our hearts. The spiritual condition of total loyalty towards Allah and total animosity towards his enemies was a necessary precursor to the judgment of Allah between His prophets and their disbelieving nations. Never was victory attained by the Prophets of Allah and their people until their loyalty towards Allah was complete and their disassociation with the kuffar was complete.[71]

Between 2001 and 2009, there was a clear progression in Awlaki's public pronouncements. He began with extensive connections to the international Muslim Brotherhood movement,[72] and espoused views almost identical to leading Brotherhood ideologues, both past and present. He recommended classic Ikhwani texts in his lectures and generally avoided any direct incitement to violence in what he regarded as non-Muslim countries. Although his views on "defensive jihad" in "Muslim lands" remained consistent throughout, his strategic vision for the spread of Islam in the West gradually changed. Whereas in 2002 he discussed the peaceful and polite delivery of the "dawa package," by 2005 he began to suggest that immediate violence was the only true path.

It is difficult to assess exactly why Awlaki transformed from an Ikhwani into an al-Qaeda jihadist, and a multitude of factors were likely at work. A frequent reason given by some of his former allies and supporters for Awlaki's motivation is the 2003 Iraq War, although he has never made this claim himself.[73] Now his speeches often cite what he regards as the atrocities of the Iraq war, but even before the invasion he disparaged the UN sanctions on Iraq, lamenting the supposed indifference of the world's Muslims to their coreligionists being "choked to death."[74] Indeed, he did not begin supporting al-Qaeda openly until some years after the invasion. Another oft-cited reason for his shift is his time in a Yemeni prison, but again, this is not a claim

he has made for himself.[75] His motivations are likely to have been diverse; pressure from takfiri Islamists, of the kind detailed above, may also have played a role.

One of the traits Awlaki shares with numerous al-Qaeda ideologues before him is that he began his career as a disciple of the Muslim Brotherhood and, like Qutb after Banna, took these teachings to a violent conclusion. The change in Awlaki was not one of core beliefs—even in his early days he supported militants who sought to create an Islamic state in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine and other regions he defined as Islamic. He also supported the idea of a caliphate that would eventually encompass the entire world. The real change lay in his vision or method of how best to achieve this.

Rolling Out the Red Carpet

AFTER SEPTEMBER 11, 2001, REPEATED FBI INVESTIGATIONS EVENTUALLY CAUSED Awlaki to seek refuge in his Yemeni tribal base in 2004. Prior to this, however, he spent approximately a year (between late 2002 and early 2004) in the United Kingdom, the European hub of the *Ikhwan*, where he was welcomed with open arms. As well as his conspicuously Ikhwani outlook, the treatment Awlaki received from the Muslim Brotherhood/Jamaat-e-Islami network upon his arrival in the UK reflected his strong connection with the movement. Indeed, it would be no exaggeration to say that his reception was unprecedented—to this day no other foreign-based preacher (apart from Yusuf al-Qaradawi) has compared.

His ideological partners, the Brotherhood-aligned Muslim Association of Britain (MAB),[76] the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS),[77] Jamaat-e-Islami's Islamic Forum Europe (IFE), and East London Mosque (ELM)[78] immediately sought to promote him among British Muslims as a role-model.

The Muslim Brotherhood

THE ARRIVAL OF ANWAR AL-AWLAKI CAUSED SUCH EXCITEMENT ON THE BRITISH Islamist scene that news of the commotion reached Parliament. In December 2003, Louise Ellman MP informed the House of Commons:

> It is time that the spotlight fell on the Muslim Association of Britain, particularly the key figures, such as Azzam Tamimi, Kamal el Helbawy, Anas Al-Tikriti and Mohammed Sawalha. All of them are connected to the terrorist organisation Hamas. The Muslim Association of Britain itself is a branch of the Muslim Brotherhood—an extremist

> fundamentalist organisation founded in Egypt in 1928, and the spiritual ideologue of all Islamic terror organisations.
>
> [...]In June 2003, the Muslim Association of Britain organised a series of meetings with an American imam, Anwar Al Awlaki, as guest speaker. That gentleman is reportedly wanted for questioning by the FBI in connection with the 9/11 al-Qaeda terrorist attacks on New York and Washington.[79]

This was a remarkable "grand tour," which saw Awlaki championed by the MAB over the length of the British Isles, from London to Aberdeen. The campaign was entitled "To Be a Muslim Think Globally and Act Locally"—then the official MAB slogan—reflecting the grassroots proselytizing ambitions of the *Ikhwan* in Europe.[80] One of the lectures in the series specifically targeted British Muslims on campus. "A Day to Remember: Muslim Students...The Remaking of a Great Nation," was held in conjunction with a number of British universities, including the School of Oriental and African Studies, Imperial College, King's College and the London School of Economics.[81]

Similarly, Awlaki was a "distinguished guest" at the FOSIS annual conference, held at the University of Nottingham on June 19-22, 2003, where his fellow speakers included leading European Brotherhood figures Kemal el-Helbawy and Anas al-Tikriti, then a Director of the MAB.[82]

The Jamaat-e-Islami

ON OCTOBER 12, 2003, AWLAKI WAS A KEYNOTE SPEAKER AT THE "EXPOISLAMIA" event held by the IFE, where he appeared alongside Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Tariq Ramadan.[83] The IFE is a subsidiary organization to the East London Mosque (ELM), which itself first hosted Awlaki at a 2003 event called "Stop Police Terror." Speaking on the familiar theme of a Western "war on Islam," Awlaki suggested to the audience that it would be unacceptable, under any circumstances, for them to report fellow Muslims to the police:

> A Muslim is a brother of a Muslim, he does not oppress him, he does not betray him and he does not hand him over... You don't hand over a Muslim to the enemies...[84]

Despite Awlaki's post-2005 public support for al-Qaeda's global jihad, he remained a popular figure in UK Islamist circles. In 2006, then Scottish MAB spokesman,

Osama Saeed, voiced support for the cleric on his widely read blog.[85] Protesting his arrest in Yemen, Saeed wrote: "If you want further evidence on what a crock the war on terror is, or motivation to do something about it, this should galvanise you... Imam Anwar al-Awlaki was originally hounded in the US because two of the 9/11 bombers happened to pray at his mosque. Many of my Muslim readers will either know him personally or have heard his lectures. He preached nothing but peace, and I pray he will be able to do so again."[86]

Azad Ali, a prominent IFE member, was equally generous in his praise of Awlaki well into 2008.[87] In a blog on the IFE website on November 5, Ali described Awlaki as "one of my favourite speakers and scholars... I really do love him for the sake of Allah, he has an uncanny way of explaining things."[88] The article even contained a link to Awlaki's blog, which by now included the aforementioned article advocating the establishment of the caliphate "at the tip of the sword." It seems unlikely that Ali was unaware of this content. On November 19, 2008, he wrote: "Reading his blogs, one cannot help but feel his frustration at the constant denial of legitimate Islamic principles. Worse is the complete incompetence of some Muslims to distinguish between jihad and acts of murder."[89] While praising and disseminating Awlaki's work, Ali apparently did not deem it necessary to make even a cautionary mention of his more violent, al-Qaeda inspired views.[90]

In a particularly revealing episode, the East London Mosque played host to Awlaki again in January 2009, this time via video-link. The event was titled "The End of Time... A New Beginning!" and promotional flyers featured a crumbling statue of Liberty set against an apocalyptic New York skyline. In the run-up to the event, two British newspapers reported Awlaki's impending video-lecture at the mosque, detailing his extreme views and alleged links to al-Qaeda. The coverage led then Shadow Justice Minister Dominic Grieve to publically express his concern at the mosque's decision.[91] Nevertheless, the East London Mosque refused to cancel Awlaki's appearance—or to condemn his beliefs. Rather, a spokesman protested that "Mr Awlaki has not been proven guilty in a court of law. Everyone is entitled to their point of view."[92] The event went ahead as planned.

Despite this furor, Awlaki was once more invited to broadcast a speech from Yemen, at an August 2009 event sponsored by two British pressure groups: Cageprisoners and the Cordoba Foundation.[93] His appearance, which was set to take place at the Kensington and Chelsea Town Hall in Central London, was cancelled only by a last-minute intervention from the local council.[94]

It was not until the emergence of his second major association with terrorist violence that British Islamists began to cede their support for Awlaki. In the wake of the November 2009 Fort Hood shootings, as details of Major Hasan's relationship with Awlaki began to appear across the international media, British Islamists scrambled

to dissociate from the cleric. The official line, from many prominent individuals and organizations, was that Awlaki's radicalization had been an insidious process that had caught them unawares.[95] As we have seen, Awlaki's transition from "soft Islamism" to violent jihad would have been obvious to any regular consumer of his output. In some cases, individual organizations had been specifically confronted over Awlaki's record and yet continued to hold him aloft as a learned scholar. Clearly the support for Awlaki in Britain meant one of two things: either the organizations in question knowingly extolled an al-Qaeda ideologue, or they failed to identify the dangerous radical who had become their figurehead.

The UK Islamist Milieu

UMAR FAROUK ABDULMUTALLAB ARRIVED ON THIS SCENE IN SEPTEMBER 2005. He came during a storm of Islamist activity in the UK. Events and campaigns organized by *Ikhwan* and Jamaat-e-Islami inspired groups were taking place almost on a weekly basis, with their influence over British Islam steadily increasing.

British Islamists utilized the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, along with post September 11 anti-terror legislation, to imply that Western governments were engaged in a "war on Islam and Muslims," both in the West and in the Middle East. Western Muslims, according to the Islamists, were duty bound to stand up for their religion and fight back using non-violent methods. The above-mentioned "Stop Police Terror" lecture, given by Awlaki at the East London Mosque in 2003, was part of a broader campaign of the same name which ran until November 2006.[96] Among the listed supporters of the campaign was Awlaki himself, as well as the Muslim Association of Britain, the East London Mosque and a collection of British university Islamic societies. The stated aims of the campaign were to encourage Muslims to take action against "anti-terrorist police terror" and to raise awareness about "the deteriorating situation in the UK and the scale of arrests, raids and abuse meted out [against Muslims] by Anti-Terrorist Police."[97] The campaign statement also included a clear warning: "Britain's Muslims, as a community, will refuse to cooperate with the law enforcement authorities if this abuse continues."[98] In 2005, at the height of the campaign, then MAB director Anas al-Tikriti claimed that the West was engaged in an "ideological, idea-driven war against Islam."[99]

During this time, FOSIS ran its own campaign in conjunction with "Stop Police Terror." Their statements on this issue were even more explicit:

> The persecution of Muslims in Britain began even before 9-11 with the introduction of the Terrorism Act 2000. By the end of April 2005,

> over 750 Muslims had been arrested under the Terrorism Act. Just over 100 were charged with only three convicted of any terrorism related offence. In the same time, tens of thousands of Muslims have been stopped and searched; hundreds of homes have been raided, Islamic charities have been shut down, over a dozen Muslim men were interned without charge and are now under control orders, and the community has become demonized and ostracized by elements of the media and the government. Security services are making a concerted effort to recruit informers from the Muslim community particularly on campus.
>
> Whereas previously, it was Muslims themselves under attack, now the agenda [is] to attack Islam, its principles and values as well as its political system of *shariah* and *khilafah* are under attack. New laws making it an offence to associate with "wrongdoers" together with the government's policy of dividing the community into moderates and extremists aim to divide and weaken the Muslim community. The relative concept of 'extremism' is being used to condemn Muslims from very diverse political viewpoints.[100]

Although there was no call for violence, the notion of a Western "war on Islam" is widely identified as one of the primary recruitment tools of global jihadist groups like al-Qaeda.[101]

Abdulmutallab was thus immersed in an activist environment that appears to have given meaning and direction to his preexisting religious austerity and personal discontent. From his earliest days on the online forum, he had been looking forward to the camaraderie to be found on campus: "I hope to get over my loneliness when I go to university... where there are usually Islamic groups [and] clubs with good Muslims."[102] Once there, Abdulmutallab threw himself into the activities of the UCL Islamic Society. Within a year he was its president, and as such also led the UCL chapter of FOSIS.[103]

FOSIS was established in 1962 to "represent" and "serve" the needs of Muslim students in higher education across the UK and Ireland.[104] According to the memoirs of a former member, in the early 1970s FOSIS events featured regular appearances by Said Ramadan, son-in-law to Hasan al-Banna and a transformational Brotherhood activist, and Khurshid Ahmad, a leading light of Jamaat-e-Islami and the party's current Vice President. When in 1969 Abu al-Ala al Maududi, founder of the Jamaat, visited London, FOSIS organized a "huge reception" in his honor.[105]

FOSIS remains a vehicle for revivalist activism to this day. For instance, in 2006 FOSIS was heavily involved in an event which epitomized British Islamism at the

time.[106] The "IslamExpo" event in London was billed as the "biggest Islamic cultural event ever witnessed." The directors of Islam Expo included: Mohammed Sawalha, then director of the MAB,[107] and described by the BBC as a "fugitive Hamas commander;" Anas al-Tikriti, also then a director of the MAB[108] as well as the Cordoba Foundation;[109] and Azzam Tamimi, MAB spokesman and UK-based Hamas envoy who famously told the BBC in 2004 of his desire to carry out a suicide attack against Israel.[110] Billed to address the predominantly Muslim audience were leading Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami figures Jamal Badawi and Qazi Hussein Ahmed. Many of the panel discussions were centered on Islamist themes such as the former glories of the caliphate and the importance of wearing the hijab.[111]

In another example, the 2007 FOSIS Annual Conference, which Abdulmutallab might well have attended, also featured an impressive collection of Islamist leaders, not least Shaykh Rashid El Ghannouchi, head of the Tunisian Al-Nahda movement, who had previously signed a *bayyan* calling on the insurgency in Iraq to maintain its "honorable resistance" against "the filth of occupation."[112] The declaration had received national press coverage at the time.[113]

The UCL Islamic Society maintained close ties with FOSIS during Abdulmutallab's time at the University. They organized a week of joint charity events, and Abdulmutallab's friend and predecessor as president received a senior position at FOSIS soon after graduation.[114] More importantly, the Islamic Society toed the ideological line projected nationally by FOSIS. From the start, Abdulmutallab immersed himself in a culture that privileged almost exclusively Salafist preachers and activists influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami. In November 2005, the Islamic Society hosted a number of such speakers, most notably Abdur Raheem Green and Taji Mustafa.[115] Abdulmutallab's presidential tenure followed the same pattern: in December 2007, "Pearls of Wisdom Week" featured Abu Usama and Murtaza Khan, both of whom had figured in a high-profile television exposé screened earlier that year.[116] Secretly-filmed footage showed the former instructing a congregation that "Allah has created the woman deficient" and "take that homosexual man and throw him from the mountain." The same exposé portrayed the latter describing Jews and Christians as "enemies" whom "the wrath of God is upon."[117]

This brings us full circle to "War on Terror Week," the January 2007 climax of Abdulmutallab's presidency of the Islamic Society. According to an eyewitness account of the event, proceedings began with a video of the World Trade Center collapsing and gun battles between mujahidin and NATO soldiers in Afghanistan. Islamic Society members wore the orange jumpsuits of Guantanamo detainees. Speaking to *The New York Times*, the witness stated, "It was quite tense in the theater, because I think lots of people were shocked by how extreme it was. It seemed to me like it was brainwashing, like they were trying to indoctrinate people."[118]

Among the speakers were Asim Qureshi and Moazzam Begg, both senior members of Cageprisoners, a registered company that purports to exist "solely to raise awareness of the plight of the prisoners at Guantanamo Bay and other detainees held as part of the War on Terror."[119] Their spiritual heroes and campaign *causes célèbres* include convicted terrorist Ali Al-Tamimi, whom they refer to as "our beloved shaykh," and Anwar al-Awlaki himself.[120] At the time of their appearance at UCL, Qureshi and Begg were engaged in raising support for Awlaki, who was then incarcerated in Yemen.[121] Despite the recent revelations about Awlaki's connections to the last two terrorist incidents in the United States, at the time of writing Cageprisoners continues to provide favorable coverage of him on their website, including his Islamic book reviews, a video message censored for broadcast by the British Government, and an article describing "Imam Anwar" as an "inspirational" figure.[122]

Cageprisoners typifies the British Islamist penchant for the "defensive jihad" of the Taliban in Afghanistan, insurgents in Iraq, and Lebanese, Palestinian and Kashmiri militants. Qureshi, Senior Researcher at Cageprisoners, holds that the actions carried out by these groups are sanctioned by the Geneva Convention as well as religiously mandated. Speaking about the Israel-Palestine conflict to students at London's Queen Mary University in 2007, Qureshi insisted that the al-Aqsa mosque was "definitely worth dying for." When discussing the legitimacy of fighting jihad against Israel and in Iraq, he told his audience that "in terms of the law there's no problem with doing it whatsoever—and, in terms of Islamically, of course not."[123]

This is a view he has continued to propagate among British Muslims. In January 2010 he wrote:

> ...a common theme that the team at Cageprisoners has found is that many Muslims believe that our brothers and sisters in faith fighting for their survival in various parts of the world have a legitimate right to do so—that policy of self defense from an Islamic perspective is known as *jihad*.[124]

Qureshi argues that since this concept has been "recognized by the Western world" in 1980s Afghanistan and 1990s Bosnia, the time has come for "public debate"—"by those who have an interest in these issues"—to clarify and refine the "limitations and justifications" of jihad:

> Only then can there be a meeting of the opposing views—it is only through this mechanism that we have any hope of persuading, in light of the grievances mentioned by the 7/7 bombers, Abdulmuttalib and others like him, that the ends can never justify the means. It would

> seem common sense that an open and honest debate about jihad is very much required, indeed, the discussion on jihad is the solution.[125]

At a London Hizb ut-Tahrir rally in 2006, Qureshi explained his view of jihad in more bellicose terms:

> So when we see the example of our brothers and sisters fighting in Chechnya, Iraq, Palestine, Kashmir, Afghanistan then we know where the example lies. When we see Hezbollah defeating the armies of Israel, we know what the solution is and where the victory lies. We know that it is incumbent upon all of us to support the jihad of our brothers and sisters in these countries when they are facing the oppression of the west.[126]

Similarly, Moazzam Begg, director of Cageprisoners, compares contemporary young British Muslims who join the Taliban insurgency to mujahidin who fought the Soviets in the late 1970s. In an essay on jihad, published in the 2008 edition of the Cordoba Foundation's journal, he notes, "By consensus of the Islamic schools of thought, jihad becomes an individual obligation, like prayer and fasting, on Muslim men and women when their land is occupied by foreign enemies." Somewhat obliquely, he adds, "That obligation extends to neighboring lands until the enemy has been expelled."[127] Warming to his theme, Begg continues:

> Although in the West jihad is often seen as terrorism it is correct to describe it as tourism. Prophet Muhammad said, 'The tourism of my nation is jihad.' This is one reason why many Muslims from thousands of miles away travelled to places as far and wide as Palestine, Chechnya, Kashmir and Afghanistan.
>
> If resisting the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan was jihad, if the [sic] repelling the massacres by the Serbs in Bosnia was jihad, then how can resisting the current occupation of these Muslims [sic] lands be anything else?[128]

In the same essay, he praises the work of Abdullah Azzam, referring to his book *In Defense of Muslim Lands* as a "magisterial discourse."[129] Begg glosses over the ideological overlap between "defensive" and "offensive" *jihad*, failing to mention that Azzam also called for Islam to be spread throughout the world, violently where necessary.

Although Begg has not openly supported offensive jihad, Cageprisoners views

fighting in defense of an "Islamic" land as a core principle of Islam and an individual duty for Muslims. Increasingly, such views are widely espoused in Britain. In February 2009, a group made up predominantly of Ikhwanis, a large proportion of which were from Yemen, met in Istanbul under the banner of the "Global Anti-Aggression Campaign." Their statement was an unequivocal condemnation of the Palestinian Authority, for having "given up the choice of jihad in the way of Allah." Instead, it is incumbent on the *umma* to "carry on with the jihad and Resistance against the occupier until the liberation of all of Palestine." Yet, as we have seen, the implications of "defensive *jihad*" are elastic. The statement also called on the *umma* to "regard everyone standing with the Zionist entity, whether countries, institutions or individuals, as providing a substantial contribution to the crimes and brutality of this entity; the position towards him is the same as towards this usurping entity."[130] The statement was signed by four prominent British Muslims, including Daud Abdullah, Deputy Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain[131] and Mohammed Sawalha.[132]

Conclusion

EACH JOURNEY TO JIHADIST VIOLENCE IS UNIQUE: NO TWO TRAVELERS SHARE THE same path. But the diversity of the radicalized is set against one constant: extreme ideas that can form the basis for extreme actions. Ideas, of course, are fluid: subject to change and sometimes volatile fusion.

The distinction between violent and non-violent extremism—in this case "hard" and "soft" Islamism—can at times be reduced to no more than equivocation. On December 28, 2009, the Muslim Council of Britain issued a press release that condemned "the alleged attempted bombing aboard an airliner in Detroit" and "urged calm on all sides." Secretary-General Abdul Bari stated, "Terror and violence is not the way to convey a message however legitimate the cause may be. It is totally counter-productive."[133] Awlaki's words echo here: "the wisdom comes in on how the package is delivered." The implication might be that Abdulmutallab erred only in his chosen means to the agreed end.

The careers of Abdulmutallab and Anwar al-Awlaki remind us that individuals can slip beyond this porous boundary rapidly and very often unnoticed. That any particular strand of Islamist ideology can effectively block the shift to violence is at best uncertain. Rather, the evidence presented here suggests that religiously meritorious violence, once accepted under any circumstances, can take on a momentum of its own. Further, the shared principles of diverse forms of political Islam can, however innocently, provide an ideological firewall that obscures and underwrites the violent intentions of the minority.

NOTES

1. These definitions are derived from Joseph S. Nye's distinction between "hard" and "soft" power; see for instance: Nye, J. S., 'Soft Power, Hard Power and Leadership,' October 27, 2006, http://www.hks.harvard.edu/netgov/files/talks/docs/11_06_06_seminar_Nye_HP_SP_Leadership.pdf.
2. Abdulmutallab's online postings were first collated by the NEFA Foundation. Filed by date, they are available at: http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/farouk1986.zip
3. For a thoughtful treatment of a similar case, see: Cameron, C., "The Hasan Slide Presentation: A Preliminary Commentary," *Small Wars Journal*, November 15, 2009, available at: http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2009/11/the-hasan-slide-presentation/.
4. February 20, 2005. A note on transcription: minor spelling and grammatical errors in Abdulmutallab's writing have been corrected for the sake of accessibility. Thus "dont" has been rendered "don't," and "i" as "I," and so on.
5. March 25, 2005.
6. January 31, 2005.
7. March 24, 2005.
8. March 24, 2005.
9. "Then don't forget it is the [Saudi] government that allowed the US to come into the country to 'protect' them when Allah says in the Quran to not take the kafirs as Auliya [protectors]." May 9, 2005.
10. "Detroit terror attack: profile of Umar Farouk Abdul Mutallab," *The Daily Telegraph*, December 28, 2009.
11. January 28, 2005.
12. "...almost every good Muslim gets lonely at some point. This I believe is because really there are many Muslims but most are just Muslims by name who do not practice the *deen* [religion] earnestly, leaving the few good Muslims alone." (January 29, 2005); "I myself (originally [from] a Muslim country and schooling elsewhere with several Muslims) have met hundreds of Muslims but [have found] no good friend." (January 29, 2005); "...most of the Muslims around are just Muslim by name and do not sincerely practice their religion. Hence the few good Muslims are left lonely." (January 30, 2005).
13. May 7, 2005.
14. February 1, 2005.
15. February 13, 2005.
16. January 30, 2005.
17. January 29, 2005.
18. "...dreams could be from Shaytun and might deceive you" (February 16, 2005); "I read somewhere that at times, Shaytun plays about with our minds to make us uncomfortable..." (February 19, 2005); "It is true that the jinn exist as they are mentioned in the Quran, but realize that jinn can only do to you what Allah wills it to do." (February 20, 2005).
19. January 28, 2005; see also: February 17, 2005.
20. Roy, O., *Globalized Islam: the search for a new Ummah*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 1-6, 232-287.
21. "Sudais' Quran recitation is the best I think, but after you listen to it for long, and then comes Shuraim's turn, Shuraim's seems better. Just fantastic!!!" (March 23, 2005; see also February 19, 2005, May 9, 2005).

22. "I usually go to Central Masjid London in Regent's Park" (February 17, 2005). http://www.iccuk.org/page.php?section=about&page=history#.
23. April 19, 2005.
24. He passionately dislikes Arsenal, the London soccer team (February 16, 2005), and is not above debating Liverpool's reliance on Steven Gerrard (February 14, 2005) or Juventus' perennial underachievement (February 18, 2005).
25. February 20, 2005.
26. February 17, 2005.
27. This comment recalls the famous exhortation of Abdullah al-Faisal, a preacher mentioned by Abdulmutallab: "You have to learn how to shoot. You have to learn how to fly planes, drive tanks and you have to learn how to load your guns and to use missiles." See: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/2829059.stm.
28. "I think some instruments (I don't know which specific ones) are allowed to be used during festive occasions for women only. There is a hadith where the Prophet mentioned... [that] muslims will call certain things that are haram... among the things mentioned [are] wine and musical instruments. We all know wine is haram, so if musical instruments [are] also on the list, then it seems to be haram too. I fear we are at this time now as Muslims are calling it names like Art, interlude, background sound...and we have people saying it is permissible." November 15, 2005.
29. December 6, 2005.
30. February 14, 2006.
31. The film won the Silver Bear for Direction for Michael Winterbottom and Mat Whitecross at the 56th Berlin International Film Festival. It told the story of the "Tipton Three"—three British youths apprehended in Afghanistan in 2001 and held at Guantanamo Bay for three years. The youths protested their innocence, claiming that they had traveled to Afghanistan in 2001 for a mixture of humanitarian work, tourism and recreation: "Aid work was like probably 5% of it. Our main reason was just to go and sightsee really and smoke some dope." The film, which vividly conveyed the youths' suffering in Guantanamo but did little to challenge their version of events, caused an international outcry.

    In 2007, on the Channel 4 program *Lie Lab*, Ruhal Ahmed, one of the "Tipton Three," confessed that he had in fact undergone weapons training at a Taliban training camp in Afghanistan. The revelation received little media attention.
32. Ridley, Y., "Operation Moshtarak," *Counterpunch*, available at: http://www.counterpunch.org/ridley02152010.html; See also: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ruF3h_hZSE8&feature=player_embedded.
33. March 11, 2006.
34. January 26, 2007.
35. al-Awlaki, A., "The Islamic Education of Shaikh Anwar al-Awlaki," Anwar al-Awlaki's blog, August 12, 2008.
36. Zindani signed a 2004 International Union for Muslim Scholars' *bayyan* in support of the Iraq insurgency in his capacity as the head of the Shurah Committee of Islah.
37. al-Awlaki, A., "The Islamic Education of Shaikh Anwar al-Awlaki," Anwar al-Awlaki's blog, August 12, 2008.
38. "Imam From Va. Mosque Now Thought to Have Aided Al-Qaeda," *The Washington Post*, February 27, 2008.
39. According to its website, the Dar al-Hijrah Mosque must include on its board the current Secretary General of Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) and the current President of the Muslim

American Association (MAS): http://www.hijrah.org/mosque/aboutus/Constitution [accessed 7/19/2010]. ISNA and the MAS are two of the leading *Ikhwan* organizations in the United States. For more on this see: Merley, S., "The Muslim Brotherhood in the United States," Research Monographs on the Muslim World, Series No. 2, Paper No. 3, Hudson Institute, April 2009.

40. "The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States," 2004, p. 517.
41. al-Awlaki, A., "A Question About the Method of Establishing Khilafa," Anwar al-Awlaki's blog, August 29, 2008.
42. Islam Online "Live Dialogue' with Anwar al-Awlaki, September 17, 2001. This page is no longer accessible, but a cached version is available at http://209.85.229.132/search?q=cache:4UVoLD_ZAYJ:www.islamonline.net/livedialogue/english/Browse.asp%3FhGuestID%3DqE3g98+http://www.islamonline.net/livedialogue/english/Browse.asp%3FhGuestID%3DqE3g98&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk [accessed 4/10/2010].
43. "Open Letter to President Barack Obama," January 22, 2009, available at http://www.islamonline.net/english/news/2009-01/22/Letter_to_Obama.doc [accessed 4/10/2010].
44. Ibid.
45. Ibid.
46. al-Awlaki, A., "Tolerance: A Hallmark of Muslim Character."
47. al-Qaradawi, Y., *Priorities of The Islamic Movement in The Coming Phase*, (Swansea: Awakening Publications, 2000).
48. al-Awlaki, A., "Tolerance: A Hallmark of Muslim Character;" Abdallah ibn Umar al-Khattab, son of the second 'rightly guided' Caliph, was "one of the most prominent personalities of the first generations of Muslims" and one of the main sources of Hadith. See: Bearman, P., Bianquis, Th., Bosworth, C.E., van Donzel, E., Heinrichs, W. P., *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., Volume I, p. 53, column 2.
49. JIMAS is an acronym of Arabic words which translate to "The Association to Revive the Way of the Messenger." It is a British-based Salafi activist organization. For more see Hamid, S., "The Attraction of 'Authentic' Islam: Salafism and British Muslim Youth," in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, Meijer, R. (ed) (London: Hurst, 2009).
50. al-Qaradawi, Y., *Priorities of The Islamic Movement in The Coming Phase*, (Swansea: Awakening Publications, 2000).
51. al-Awlaki, A., "Lessons from the Companions: Living as a Minority," speech at JIMAS Conference in Leicester, August 2002.
52. al-Banna, H., *The Message of the Teachings* in Qutb, S., *Milestones*, al-Mehri, A.B. (ed) (Birmingham, UK: Maktabah Booksellers and Publishers, 2006).
53. al-Awlaki, A., "Lessons from the Companions: Living as a Minority," speech at JIMAS Conference in Leicester, August 2002.
54. In a talk given by al-Faisal during Awlaki's time as Imam at the Rabat Mosque in San Diego, he condemned Awlaki for his Ikhwani take on *takfir*. Awlaki had argued that only God could judge Muslims, thus rejecting the al-Qaeda interpretation that Muslims can apply *takfir* on those who are deemed apostates. Speech available at: http://www.archive.org/details/CiaIslam-SheikhFaisalsTakfeerOfAnwarAwlaki.
55. al-Awlaki, A., "The Story of Ibn al-Akwa: Shaykh Noor al-Din Shahaada," (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Ibn al-Mubarak, 2003).

56 Cited in Qutb, S., *Milestones*, al-Mehri, A.B. (ed) (Birmingham, UK: Maktabah Booksellers and Publishers, 2006).

57. al-Awlaki, A., "The Story of Ibn al-Akwa: Shaykh Noor al-Din Shahaada," (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Ibn al-Mubarak, 2003).
58. Ibid.
59. al-Banna, H., *Book of Jihad*, in Qutb, S., *Milestones*, al-Mehri, A.B. (ed) (Birmingham, UK: Maktabah Booksellers and Publishers, 2006).
60. al-Awlaki, A., "The Life of the Prophet Mohammed (Makkan Period)," Awakening Media, August 2003.
61. "Cleric in Yemen Admits Meeting Airliner Plot Suspect, Journalist Says," *The New York Times*, January 31, 2009.
62. "Born in U.S., a Radical Cleric Inspires Terror," *The New York Times*, November 18, 2009.
63. al-Awlaki, A., "Book Review 3: In the Shade of the Quran by Sayyid Qutb," June 22, 2008.
64. al-Awlaki, A., "A Question about the Method of Establishing Khilafa," Anwar al-Awlaki's blog, August 29, 2008. The appearance of Awlaki's official website in May 2008 roughly coincided with his transition to jihadism.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid.
67. al-Awlaki, A., "Salutations to al-Shabab of Somalia," Anwar al-Awlaki's blog, December 21, 2008.
68. al-Awlaki, A., "Al-Shabab: Reply to the Greeting and Advice of Sheikh Anwar," Anwar al-Awlaki's blog, December 27, 2008.
69. "A Call to Jihad, Answered in America," *The New York Times*, July 11, 2009.
70. For more on al-Maqdisi's interpretation of the *al-wala wa-l-bara* concept see Wagemakers, J., "The Transformation of a Radical Concept: *al-wala wa-l-bara* in the ideology of Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi," in *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, Meijer, R. (ed) (London: Hurst, 2009).
71. al-Awlaki, A., "44 Ways to Support Jihad," p. 14 (Victorious Media: 2007).
72. See section on Awlaki in the UK for more on his MB connections.
73. See for example, Bunglawala, I., "Muslims Must Combat Hate Speech," *The Guardian: Comment is Free*, 10 November, 2009.
74. al-Awlaki, A., "Tolerance: A Hallmark of Muslim Character."
75. See for example, Saeed, O., "Times run with Centre for Social Cohesion briefing," Rolled-Up Trousers blog, 12 November, 2009.
76. Peter Bergen and Paul Cruickshank describe the MAB as a "Muslim Brotherhood Group," see "The Unraveling: The jihadist revolt against bin Laden," *The New Republic,* June 11, 2008.
77. An April 2009 report published by the British Government's Department for Communities and Local Government notes that "the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) along with the Muslim Brotherhood were pioneers in developing student activism through the Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS)..." See: *The Pakistani Muslim Community in England: Understanding Muslim Ethnic Communities in England* (London: Department for Communities and Local Government, April 17, 2009).
78. In "Britain's Islamic Republic," a documentary aired on the UK's Channel 4 on March 1, 2010, secret filming within the IFE premises revealed that followers were taught from Maududi's texts. The IFE is a subsidiary organization of the ELM and, according to David Garbin, the ELM "has maintained close links with the Jamaat-e-Islami, largely through the Islamic Forum Europe." See Garbin, D., "Bangladeshi diaspora in the UK: some observations on socio-cultural dynamics, religious trends and transnational politics," Conference Human Rights and Bangladesh, June 17, 2005, School of African and Oriental Studies.
79. Parliamentary Business, *Hansard*, December 18, 2003.
80. The relevant information has since been removed from the MAB website, but is still available in

archived form at http://web.archive.org/web/20040601011457/www.mabonline.net/branches/events/-2bamuslim2003conf/images/londonconfposter.jpg [accessed 11/10/2009].

81. The relevant information has since been removed from the MAB website, but is still available in archived form at http://web.archive.org/web/20030605155801/www.mabonline.net/branches/events/2bamuslim2003conf/campus2003conf.htm [accessed 11/10/2009].
82. The relevant information has since been removed from the MAB website, but is still available in archived form at http://web.archive.org/web/20030603164257/www.fosis.org.uk/activities/camp/camp03.htm [accessed 11/10/2009].
83. Promotional Material for "ExpoIslamia" event, available at http://www.islamicforumeurope.com/live/conference/speakers5.htm [accessed 2/20/2010].
84. Audio available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GyCf25XujkM&feature=youtube_gdata [accessed 4/26/2010].
85. Saeed, O., "Imam Anwar arrested," Rolled-Up Trousers Blog, November 7, 2006. Since the increased awareness of Awlaki's extremism after Fort Hood, Saeed has removed this blog and copies are in possession of the authors. He now also claims that, at the time of writing this blog, Awlaki was not yet an extremist.
86. Ibid.
87. In the "Britain's Islamic Republic" documentary, Azad Ali is filmed teaching a class and saying to his students that "Democracy, if it means at the expense of not implementing the sharia, of course no one agrees with that."
88. Ali, A., "Iman, the new President and You!," available at http://blog.islamicforumeurope.com/?p=94 [accessed 11/9/2009].
89. Ali, A., "Defeating extremism by promoting balance," available at http://blog.islamicforumeurope.com/?p=98 [accessed 10/11/2009].
90. After Major Nidal Hasan attacked Fort Hood in November 2009 and Awlaki's connections with him were revealed, Ali's praise for Awlaki was given some scrutiny by the media. It was only when the London *Times* questioned him about this in November 2009 that he denounced some of Awlaki's views.
91. Muslim groups "linked to September 11 hijackers spark fury over conference," *Daily Telegraph*, December 27, 2008; "Councillor slams Muslim lecture 'New York in flames' poster," *East London Advertiser*, December 31, 2008.
92. "Response to article in the Daily Telegraph," East London Mosque press release, December 29, 2008.
93. In a March 4, 2008 speech at the Community Security Trust in London, British Conservative Party leader David Cameron referred to the Cordoba Foundation as a "front for the Muslim Brotherhood." Speech available at http://www.conservatives.com/News/Speeches/2008/03/David_Cameron_Speech_to_the_Community_Security_Trust.aspx [accessed 3/31/2010].
94. "Islamist preacher banned from addressing fundraiser," *The Observer*, August 23, 2009.
95. Saeed, O., "More on Awlaki," December 1, 2009, http://www.osamasaeed.org/osama/2009/12/more-on-awlaki.html [accessed 4/20/2010]; See also: Bunglawala, I., "Muslims must combat hate speech," *Guardian*, November 10, 2009, http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2009/nov/10/muslims-fort-hood-anwar-al-aulaqi [accessed 18/7/2010].
96. The campaign was later renamed "Stop Political Terror."

97. The website for this campaign has since been removed. An archived version is available at http://web.archive.org/web/20041021070015/http://www.stoppoliticalterror.com/aboutus.php# [accessed 11/10/2009].
98. Ibid.
99. Anas al-Tikriti speaking at the Doha Debates in Qatar, April 28. 2005, transcript available at http://www.thedohadebates.com/debates/debate.asp?d=26&s=1&mode=transcript [accessed 18/7/2010].
100. Campaign website available at http://oldsite.fosis.org.uk/committees/campaigns/silent.php [accessed 4/27/2010].
101. HM Government, *The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering International Terrorism*, March 2009, p. 154.
102. January 29, 2005.
103. "Few Clues to Student's Evolution into Terror Suspect," National Public Radio, December 29, 2009.
104. "About FOSIS," http://fosis.org.uk/about-us [accessed 4/22/2010].
105. Sardar, Z., *Desperately Seeking Paradise: Journeys of a Sceptical Muslim* (London, 2005), pp. 24-29. As recently as 2007, FOSIS distributed free copies of Maududi's *Towards Understanding the Quran* to university Islamic societies: http://oldsite.fosis.org.uk/resources/ [accessed 4/22/2010].
106. As well as providing volunteers to help run the event, FOSIS also held four different workshops and seminars, for more see http://islamexpo.info/images/stories/programme_2070617.30.pdf [accessed 4/26/2010].
107. 2006 Annual Return 363a (ef) for Muslim Association of Britain Ltd, Companies House.
108. Ibid.
109. 2008 Appointments Report for The Cordoba Foundation LTD, Companies House.
110. "Hardtalk," BBC, first aired November 5, 2004.
111. For full list of panels see, http://islamexpo.info/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogsection&id=16&Itemid=86 [accessed 4/26/2010].
112. Full translation in authors' possession. See: http://web.archive.org/web/20071024174724/http:/www.iumsonline.net/english/articles/2005/11/article01.shtml [accessed 4/20/2010]; "FOSIS Annual Conference 2007," http://oldsite.fosis.org.uk/FAC/FAC2007/docs/facprogramm2007.pdf [accessed 4/20/2010].
113. "British Muslims say troops are fair target," *The Sunday Times*, October 31, 2004.
114. UCL and FOSIS organized a series of charity events between October 22-28 , 2007: http://www.makeaneasywebsite.com/uclisoc/charity_week [accessed 4/20/2010]; "FOSIS welcome note 2009-10," http://m.wales.fosis.org.uk/resources/resource-pool/doc_download/48-getting-to-know-your-exec-2009 [accessed 4/20/2010]; "Close Friend of 'Underwear Bomber' Saw No Hint of Militancy," *ABC News*, December 30, 2009.
115. For event promotional material see http://www.uclisoc.com/list/index.php?f=archive&val=13&nl=1&opt=view [accessed 4/27/2010]. Abdur Raheem Green is a well-known Salafist convert. Taji Mustafa is a media representative for Hizb ut-Tahrir in Britain. The events also featured Murtaza Khan, for which see below.
116. For event promotional material see http://www.makeaneasywebsite.com/uclisoc/pearls_of_wisdom_week [accessed 4/27/2010].
117. "Dispatches: Undercover Mosque," Channel 4, January 15, 2007. Khan also stated: "This whole delusion about the equality of women is a bunch of foolishness, there's no such thing," and described the AIDS virus as a "conspiracy" orchestrated by the World Health Organization and "Christian groups."

118. "Lonely Trek to Radicalism for Terror Suspect," *The New York Times*, January 17, 2010.
119. "About Us," http://www.cageprisoners.com/page.php?id=2 [accessed 4/20/2010].
120. Qureshi, A., "A Prison in Palestine," August 3, 2005, available at http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=8843 [accessed 4/27/2010].
121. The relationship between CP and Awlaki dates back to 2006, when the former organized campaigns for Awlaki to be released from custody by Yemeni authorities: http://www.cageprisoners.com/campaigns.php?id=412 [accessed 11/9/2009].
    Among other things, the campaign asked CP supporters to "Write to the Yemeni Ambassador to UK, Mohamed Taha Mustafa, and urge him to work for the immediate release of Imam Anwar al-Awlaki," and "Write to the Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett to make representations to her Yemeni counterparts to work for Imam Anwar al-Awlaki's immediate release." In the "sample letter," provided by CP, Awlaki is referred to as a "prominent Muslim scholar."
    http://www.cageprisoners.com/campaigns.php?id=423 [accessed 11/9/2009].
    The relationship between CP and Awlaki appears to have strengthened after this, and in December 2007 CP announced Awlaki's release and told readers that any messages of congratulations they had could be passed to him through them—suggesting that CP was at the time in direct contact with Awlaki:
    http://www.cageprisoners.com/campaigns.php?id=630 [accessed 11/9/2009].
122. http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=25405 [accessed 11/10/2009];
    http://www.cageprisoners.com/media.php?id=1067 [accessed 11/10/2009]; Ansari, F., "Beyond Guantanamo—Review of Cageprisoners Fundraising Dinner,"
    http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=30493 [accessed 11/10/2009].
123. Audio in possession of the authors.
124. Qureshi, A., "Jihad—The Solution?," January 15, 2010, available at
    http://www.cageprisoners.com/articles.php?id=30900 [accessed 4/23/2010].
125. Ibid.
126. Video available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wpGn3VgNMA&feature=player_embedded [accessed 11/10/2009].
127. Begg, M., "Jihad and Terrorism: A War of Words," *Arches Quarterly*, Volume 2, Edition 1, Cordoba Foundation: Summer 2008.
128. Ibid.
129. Ibid.
130. A full translation of the *bayyan* is in the authors' possession.
131. The Muslim Council of Britain is an umbrella organization heavily influenced by Jamaat-e-Islami. For more see BBC Panorama, "A Question of Leadership," first broadcast Sunday, August 21, 2005.
132. "British Muslim leader urged to quit over Gaza," *The Observer*, March 8, 2009. Although he refuses to condemn the statement when challenged, Abdullah insists that he does not support attacks on innocent people or British troops. See Abdullah, D., "My reply to Hazel Blears," *Guardian*, March 26, 2009.
133. "Attempted Airline Bombing Condemned by Muslim Community," Muslim Council of Britain press release, Dec 28, 2009,
    http://www.mcb.org.uk/media/presstext.php?ann_id=381 [accessed 4/26/2010]; the statement was reproduced verbatim on the website of the Muslim Association of Britain: "Attempted Airline Bombing Condemned by Muslim Community," MAB, December 31, 2009,
    http://mabonline.net/?p=2099 [accessed 4/26/2010].

Profile: Hizb ut-Tahrir in the UK

By Houriya Ahmed and Hannah Stuart

Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT), or the "party of liberation," is a revolutionary Islamist party that is actively working in over forty countries worldwide to establish an expansionist state and, ultimately, a new world order based on Islamist principles. Like all Islamist groups—whether violent or non-violent—HT interprets Islam as a holistic socio-political system. HT's ideology, which sanctions military coups and the mass killings of innocent peoples to achieve its desired political objectives, has helped inspire jihadist terrorism and bears crucial similarities to the doctrines of al-Qaeda and its affiliates.

Established in 1952 in Jordan, HT's founder was Mohammed Taqiuddin an-Nabhani, an Islamist intellectual whose associations with Western-educated Palestinian nationalists and sympathy for Syrian Ba'thist anti-colonialism greatly inspired the party's revolutionary agenda and its focus on state-based politics and institutions.[1] These sentiments, combined with the experience of witnessing the destruction of the Ottoman Empire in 1924 and the creation of Israel in 1948, led Nabhani to call for Arab unification based on Islam as opposed to the secular ideology of pan-Arabism. His revolutionary ideology built upon the revivalist principles of the Muslim Brotherhood within a socialist framework. Unlike the Brotherhood, however, he believed that the HT's advocacy for change should be conducted outside of established political frameworks.[2]

In the Western countries where HT presently operates, one of the party's principal aims is to create a monolithic political Muslim bloc that could operate to aid its

global Islamist revolution and, ultimately, to subvert these societies. In Nabhani's seminal three-volume treatise, *al-Shakhsiyyah al-Isl miyyah*, or *The Islamic Personality*, he tells his followers: "If there resides disbelievers in the land within which he live [sic] and is ruled by kufr, it is obliged upon Muslims to fight its people until they become Muslims or pay the jizyah and be ruled by Islam."[3] However, in order to mainstream HT ideology among Western Muslims while simultaneously avoiding rejection by broader society, the party now seeks to play down its revolutionary and intolerant beliefs and presents itself instead as defending "true" Islam in the face of a perceived Western "War on Islam."

In the United Kingdom, where the movement has been especially active, HT's current strategy is one of grassroots activism and engagement with popular culture. It has created front groups and launched single issue campaigns to propagate its ideology. Although the party remains a fringe organization, it is striving to present itself to a mainstream audience, and increasingly it is seen as a non-violent political alternative to violent jihadist ideology. This analysis examines HT's radical ideology and presents a case study of the party's activities in the UK in order to expose its strategy in the West.

Overturning the International Order

HIZB UT-TAHRIR WORKS TO ESTABLISH AN EXPANSIONIST STATE, OR CALIPHATE—ruled by one leader, the caliph—in Muslim-majority countries, unifying Muslims worldwide and creating a single political bloc, or *umma*.[4] This vision of a caliphate is shaped by modern conceptions of statehood, incorporating a standing army, a constitution and a governing body.[5] The caliphate would enforce an intolerant strand of Sharia as state law, which HT claims is based on Islamic sources such as the Quran and Hadith.[6] The party's draft constitution, for example, discriminates against minorities and women.[7] HT's understanding of Sharia law and its rigid ideological framework informs all aspects of its projected economic, social and political governance.

All current states are regarded as *dar al-kufr (*land of disbelief) and *dar al-harb* (land of war) because HT's specific type of Islamic governance is presently not implemented.[8] HT's future state, on the other hand, would be considered as *dar al-Islam* (land of Islam).[9] According to HT, dar al-Islam, or a properly Islamic state, does not presently exist in the world because all forms of governance are products of Western (i.e., "infidel" or "kufr") ideologies, primarily capitalism and democracy.[10]

Inherent in HT's worldview is a clash between Western and Islamic civilizations. Liberal values such as secularism, human rights and pluralism are rejected as un-Islamic because they differ from HT's Islamist doctrine.[11] Communism and

socialism are also rejected as Western constructs, despite the fact that Nabhani heavily borrowed from socialist concepts to formulate party ideology.[12] HT sees Muslims who believe in "kufr" ideologies as apostates from Islam for whom the punishment is death, even if the apostates "numbered millions."[13]

Takfir, or excommunication, is a prelude to declaring jihad against democratic authorities or governments composed of Muslim believers, as they would all be considered apostates. HT therefore considers the influence of Western thought and physical presence in Muslim-majority countries as a threat to Islam that it wishes to "uproot" by first establishing a caliphate and then waging jihad, or warfare.[14]

HT's conception of jihad is based on its classification of the "lands of war." Both offensive and defensive jihad is seen as obligatory. According to the party, offensive war is "a war to raise the Word of Allah" which is "compulsory originally in order to spread Islam and to carry its message even if the disbeliever did not attack us."[15] The party believes that its future caliphate will wage war to annex all Muslim-majority countries in order to create a global Muslim umma.[16] It will then engage in war to colonize all non-Muslim majority countries.[17] HT believes that Muslims should engage in this war to convert all "lands of war" into the "land of Islam." Killing civilians to achieve this is permitted.[18]

In the absence of HT's caliphate, Muslims are sanctioned to engage in jihad in "occupied Islamic lands," which they define as any country that is Muslim-majority or was once "ruled by Muslims under the authority of Islam."[19] This jihad is seen as defensive, and it "has to continue till the Day of Judgement," irrespective of the fact "that the party does not use material power to defend itself or as a weapon against the rulers." Jihad becomes "compulsory" for Muslims when "disbelieving enemies attack an Islamic country." The party sees its members in such countries as "part of the Muslims and it is obligatory upon them as it is upon other Muslims, in their capacity as Muslims, to fight the enemy and repel them."[20] HT defines Israel as an enemy state occupying "Islamic lands," so killing Israeli Jews is sanctioned through tactics such as suicide bombings as well as hijacking and bombing Israeli planes.[21]

The Party's Revival in the Land of Kufr

HT UNEQUIVOCALLY BELIEVES THAT IN THE FUTURE ALL RELATIONS BETWEEN THEIR yet-to-be-established Islamic caliphate and Western governments would be dictated by the "demands of jihad."[22] Accordingly, HT's caliphate would sign temporary trade treaties with some Western states providing that they are in accordance with what HT understands as divine law. The party defines certain western "imperialist" states—notably the U.S., the United Kingdom, France and Russia—as potentially warring

nations, and this status precludes the conduct of diplomatic relations between them and the future caliphate.[23] Despite singling out these states for special hostility, HT considers all western as well as non-Muslim states as potential enemies of Islam and land for HT's expansionist Islamist state via jihad.[24]

Until the caliphate is established in a Muslim-majority country, however, HT actively seeks mass support for its Islamist revolution among Western Muslims. The party aims to create a monolithic bloc sympathetic to its brand of Islamism that will ultimately aid the annexation of non-Muslim majority countries to its caliphate. HT therefore seeks to transform Western mindsets into Islamic ones, insisting that Muslims—individually and collectively—must develop what the party calls a full "Islamic personality" that utilizes Islam as the "only criterion" for "concepts about life, practical and actual."[25] It advocates "the culturing of the umma with the Islamic culture in order to mould it with Islam and to purify it from the corrupted creeds, erroneous thoughts, and wrong concepts, and also to purify it from the effect of the kufr thoughts and opinions."[26] To this end, HT works to create a model Islamic community within—interacting with but not integrating into—wider Western societies.

One "wrong concept" within contemporary Islamic thought that HT explicitly rejects is *al-Wasatiyyah*, most commonly translated as "middle ground," which sees Islam as a religion of tolerance—or as a middle way between extremes. Al-Wasatiyyah, or "compromise," is seen by HT as a foreign term—an idea attached to Islam by Western states and a covert attempt to secularize the religion.[27] Integration and nationalism, therefore, are seen as deliberate kufr policies through which Western states oppress Muslims and restrict their identification with Muslims globally.

HT also rejects integration and commands that Western Muslims disengage from mainstream political systems. An HT central strategy communiqué to HT Britain's (HTB) national executive in February 2005 stated, "The members of the party in the West must not take part in anything related to governance in those countries, i.e. they should not take part in elections or participate in civil disobedience, etc."[28]

A central tenet for HT is that Muslims who are capable of initiating revolution in their society are obliged to do so.[29] For Western Muslims, this obligation takes on the form of opposing the established political order until the entire population converts to HT's Islam or accepts HT's authority by annexing itself to the caliphate: "If there resides disbelievers in the land within which he live [sic] and is ruled by kufr, it is obliged upon Muslims to fight its people until they become Muslims or pay the jizyah and be ruled by Islam."[30]

HT's mandate for Western Muslims to fight their country's "people" is a clear exposition of jihadist ideology, which reveals the internal contradiction in HT's worldview between its "nonviolent" political ideology and its jihadist conception of how to disseminate that ideology.[31] Furthermore, HT believes that Western Muslims must

infiltrate their societies and institutions not in order to "Islamize" them,[32] but rather with the aim of developing a bloc that would aid in a future revolution or "offensive" jihad in these states.[33]

The Party's Strategy in the West

WHILE THE AUTHORITY TO FORMULATE HT'S IDEOLOGY AND STRATEGY IS CENTRALIZED, the party's global leadership issues strategy communiqués to national branches, which are encouraged to interpret them in light of local circumstances and needs. HT instructs its national executives, "The tools to implement the strategy may change from place to place, and from time and time. Use what is best for that time and place."[34] So even as HT's core ideology stresses the indivisibility of the Muslim umma and rejects national identity, the party's nation-specific strategies reflect the ethnic origins and interests of the various Muslim communities within different Western states.[35]

While the party is widely banned in the Middle East, Central Asia and South Asia, HT operates freely in Europe—with the exception of Russia, where it is proscribed, and Germany, where the party's public activities are banned, although membership remains legal.[36] Outside Europe, HT held an inaugural conference in Australia in January 2007, and there appears to be a resurgence of HT activism in the US and Canada, with national conferences held in both countries in July 2009.[37]

In 1998, HT's central leadership issued a strategy document commanding the party's national executives in the West to incorporate localized international incidents—specifically the Middle East peace process, the Balkans conflict and continued US presence in the Gulf—into a narrative of a "War on Islam" and the West's "oppression" of Muslims.[38] In 2005 the strategy was updated centrally in response to 9/11, the American-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, and Western efforts to support democracy in the Middle East.[39] A second communiqué to HTB's national executive in February 2005 articulated a two-tracked strategy—for Muslims and for non-Muslims—designed to bolster support for HT's Islamism while undermining Western institutions.

Regarding Muslims in the West, the communiqué states:

> After September 2001, the West launched major attacks on the Muslim world ...They worked on cutting the links from Muslim communities living in the West so that they do not take part in establishing the Khilafa [caliphate], using the 'War on Terror' to put pressure on them ... *This requires that the party in the West fights assimilation of Muslims and make Muslims realise that they are part of the great Umma* [emphasis added]."[40]

Regarding wider society, HT's communiqué goes on to say,

> 9/11 exposed the weakness of Western capitalist regimes, especially in relation to democracy and human rights which they have infringed upon with impunity. This requires the party to highlight that the principles of Western culture do not solve the problems of society and are drowning in crime and corruption."[41]

Within Western Muslim communities, HT strives to present itself as the vanguard of Islam, promotes political identification with Muslims globally, and discourages any other sense of personal loyalty. Within wider society, specifically among intellectuals, journalists and politicians, HT works to mainstream its ideology. The party presents Islamism, the caliphate and the party's interpretation of Sharia as non-threatening and viable alternatives to current, Western-derived political thinking. To do this, HT seeks to highlight both real and perceived failures of Western institutions—democracy, secularism and capitalism—consistently offering its caliphate and ruling systems as a superior and more equal basis for society.

A Two-Tracked Strategy for the West

HT'S PLAN TO PROPAGATE ITS IDEOLOGY BOTH AMONG MUSLIMS AND non-Muslims in the West is described in 2005 communiqué, which states in full:

PART I: CARRY THE MESSAGE TO MUSLIMS IN THE WEST

Regarding the Muslim community:

- Interact with them, gaining their trust, educating them about their religion
- Highlight that they are part of the Ummah
- Mobilise them if the freedom of religious practice is threatened i.e. the veil
- Give importance to the 'Ulama,' i.e. scholars, as aides to the Khilafa in their knowledge and professional experience
- Prepare the community for the establishment of the Khilafa in Muslim countries

Regarding Muslims in the West for temporary reasons:

- Students, tourists, businessmen: encourage them to carry the message of the mission to the West and then ensure that they return to their countries.
- Pro-Western collaborators: try to hold protests to highlight how these collaborators have betrayed their Ummah.
- Political parties (in power or opposition), independent politicians and thinkers: try to connect with those influential people to relay the opinion of the party, highlight hot topics related to Muslims and highlight the greatness of Islam
- People of power visiting: give them information

PART II: CARRY THE MESSAGE TO NON-MUSLIMS

Promote the doctrinal call:

- Show that Islam is the religion of intuition and intellect where people can find comfort in this life and after—show that Islam is the true and right religion
- Educate those who convert to Islam
- Encourage those who convert so that they can carry the strong message

Interact with Western thinkers and politicians:

- Shake up the capitalist system and start debates about it
- Show the inability of the capitalist system to solve social problems
- Expose the collapse of the Western tenets of democracy and freedom, especially after 9/11
- Show the inequality of Western society
- Present Islam though its history and civilisation
- Provide examples from Western society and its discrimination against Muslims
- Provide examples from Muslim society and its equal treatment of everyone
- Monitor what is published by institutes, think-thanks, etc about Muslims and relay the information to those in power.[42]

Implementing the Plan

WHILE HTB ADHERES TO THE PARTY'S RIGID IDEOLOGY, THE STRATEGY AND TACTICS it uses to further its agenda have evolved significantly since it was founded in 1986.[43] During the late 1980s and early 1990s, for example, HTB worked to develop a core base of loyal members, establishing *halaqaat*, or study circles, across the UK, which operate to instill in its followers the party's ideology.[44] Initially, the party's focus was on Muslims who were living in the UK on a temporary basis,[45] and its protests targeted Middle Eastern or Central Asian embassies in London.[46] Although they organized regular seminars and published a fortnightly publication,[47] HT had not yet developed a coherent strategy for the UK and was virtually unknown outside of Muslim communities.[48]

Following the signing of the Israel-Palestine Liberation Organization Accord in September 1993, however, HTB began aggressively targeting young second generation British Muslims on UK campuses and at mosques. Some campuses instigated "No Platform" policies in response to HTB's public anti-Semitism and homophobia, while many mosque officials complained that they were besieged by increased HTB activism.[49] The party's rising profile led to the first efforts to ban HTB, though these were ultimately unsuccessful.[50] The party did, however, begin to censor itself: HT's former global leader, Abdul Qadeem Zallum, ordered then-leader Omar Bakri to end controversial public activity. Following his resignation in early 1996, Bakri formed a new group, al-Muhajiroun, and HTB regained and maintained its low public profile.[51]

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, HT began to reassert itself publicly. In accordance with the 1998 strategy document, HT actively worked with British Muslim communities to portray military operations and security measures taken in response to 9/11 as a pretence for Western governments to weaken the global umma by severing ties between Muslims in the West and those in the wider "Muslim world."[52] The party additionally started engaging with non-Muslim audiences in efforts to mainstream Islamism. In particular, HT sought to use the 9/11 attacks and their aftermath to expose the alleged weaknesses of Western capitalist societies; they also sought to present Islamism as a viable alternative to liberal capitalist democracy. HTB's two-tracked strategy toward both Muslims and non-Muslims proved successful: independent sources confirm that HT conferences in London in 2002 and in Birmingham in 2003, for example, attracted 6,500 and 7,000 people, respectively.[53]

"The War on Islam"

SINCE ITS ESTABLISHMENT, A CORE HTB TACTIC HAS BEEN TO INFLAME AND CO-OPT grievances within Muslim communities. The repression of political dissent by autocratic regimes in Central Asia, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and Israel's military action in Gaza, are all presented as part of what HT calls "the war America is waging against the Muslims."[54] HTB's War on Terror/"War on Islam" paradigm enables the party to package itself as the true guardian of Islam, presenting its call for an Islamist state as the only solution to problems in Muslim-majority countries. All of these problems, the party claims, stem from Western "kufr" policies.

An internal email briefing between female speakers at a 2005 HTB conference demonstrates this strategy. The first aim of the conference—"Establish the correct political understanding of the reality confronting the Muslim community in the west [sic] and globally"—creates and bolsters HT's paradigm. [55] The second—"Establish our political vision for Muslims in the west [sic] as the correct vision"—offers HT activism as the "correct" resistance.[56] The briefing further instructs speakers to stress to their audiences, "We must in the face of such fear and coercion, stand firm upon Islam, this means to practice Islam and maintain strong Islamic identities." [57]

The call to "maintain strong Islamic identities" is expressed in practice in HTB's anti-integration agenda. HTB has deliberately and opportunistically sought to manipulate the grievances of some British Muslims in a range of recent incidents—including the reprinting of the Danish Mohammed cartoons; the publication of *The Jewel of Medina,* a historical novel about Mohammed's wife Aisha;[58] discussions about wearing the *hijab* (headscarf) or *niqab* (face veil) in public spaces;[59] and government counter-terrorism/counter-radicalization measures.[60] In all of these instances, HTB called on British Muslims to assert the party's interpretation of their Islamic identities and lifestyles in response to perceived attacks on Islam: "All Muslims should join the call for the Khilafa, for it is the only way to ensure these matters are truly dealt with."[61]

As part of this strategy the party launched its "Stand for Islam" campaign[62] in April 2007 in response to what it called "relentless attacks on the Islamic laws, values and beliefs."[63] At the press conference launching the campaign, HTB's media representative Taji Mustafa conflated Islam with HT's political vision for an Islamist state: the West wants Muslims to "stop calling for the Khilafa of the Muslim world," he said, and therefore "Islam and Islamic identity in the West is threatened."[64] Since then, the campaign has consistently stressed the need for Muslim unity, the view of Islam as a comprehensive socio-political project, and the need to maintain a strong Islamic identity in the face of a perceived "War on Islam."

Thus far, the Stand for Islam campaign has met with some success in mainstreaming the party's brand of Islamism. HTB has organized a number of public events in municipal spaces, gaining the tacit support of the local government authorities who fund the public buildings that serve as venues.[65] HTB has also been given public platforms within Muslim communities—platforms that were previously denied during the 1990s due to the party's negative profile.[66] HT's "War on Islam" paradigm has also helped create the impression that public criticism of the party is symptomatic of this alleged conflict between the West and Islam, and that it is therefore incumbent upon Muslims in the UK to come to HT's defense. In part, as a consequence of this, the party has gained the support of less radical Islamist organizations, as well as Muslim groups in the UK that had not previously engaged with or supported HT.

In the wake of the 7/7 London bombings, for example, Prime Minister Tony Blair announced an array of anti-terrorism measures, which included the possible proscription of HT. Although HT was under investigation for support for terrorism and violence, a statement issued by Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB),[67] misrepresented the grounds for a possible ban, alluding instead to HT's activities in autocratic countries. On behalf of the MCB, Sacranie said, "We are seeking clarification from the government to ensure that expressions of support for people who are living under brutal military occupation is [sic] not to be outlawed."[68] The MCB statement effectively equates HT's activism with support for the rights of oppressed people, ignoring the inherent violence in HT ideology and the group's support for terrorist movements. Such support lends legitimacy to HT's "War on Islam" mindset, which is now also openly propagated by senior members of the MCB.[69]

Front Groups

IN RECENT YEARS HTB HAS ESTABLISHED A STRING OF FRONT GROUPS—INCLUDING a single-issue campaign group, an educational charity, and youth organizations—to disseminate party ideology within local communities. In 2009, HTB members founded SREIslamic, the single-issue campaign group, to campaign against elements of sex and relationship education (SRE) in the UK's primary schools.[70] While the campaign responds to worries raised by parents of a variety of religious backgrounds, some British Muslims have expressed concern that HTB's involvement could lead to increasing Islamist demands designed to segregate Muslim pupils.[71] The campaign has already facilitated an influential public platform for HT. In December 2009, the campaign's co-founder, an HTB member, spoke at the Muslim Education Conference in the UK, alongside a Conservative party member. Yusuf Patel's affiliation to HTB

was not made clear in the promotional material for the event; instead, he was described as an education "campaigner."[72]

At the HTB 2009 conference in London, Taji Mustafa emphasized the importance of young British Muslims retaining their "Islamic identity."[73] For members of HTB, "the National Curriculum [is] an insidious attack against core values of Islamic belief and practice" and the "correct" education is seen as key to maintaining an "Islamic personality."[74] A 2003 HTB magazine instructs parents to "take measures to ensure that their child is protected from embracing the kufr way of life" and recommends home schooling or "establish[ing] Islamic schools that are not deficient in providing a full understanding of the Deen [faith] about the broader affairs of life."[75]

In 2005, HTB members set up the Islamic Shakhsiyah Foundation (ISF), a registered charity which runs two primary schools in and near London. The schools' curriculum, written by Farah Ahmed, an ISF trustee and head teacher at one of the schools, was approved by the UK's educational inspectorate.[76] The ISF's 2006 curriculum focuses on instructing people in the need to establish the caliphate and its four prerequisites, which include the beliefs that 1) sovereignty belongs entirely to Allah; 2) authority belongs to the *ummah*; 3) there is one Khalif; and 4) only the Khalif can adopt Islamic edicts. The curriculum also includes lessons on the duty of jihad, or fighting in the path of Allah, as a form of worship; how democracy differs from HT's ideology or what is referred to as "our laws"; and understanding the ruling systems of Islam, as defined by HT, including gender segregation.[77]

Two of the four founding ISF trustees were HTB members—Yusra Hamilton and Farah Ahmed.[78] Following public revelations in October 2009 that the ISF had received £113,411 in government grants,[79] Hamilton resigned as a trustee. Ahmed—who had until then been a member of HT—publicly stated that she no longer belonged to the party but refused to answer questions about her previous membership.[80] Traditionally it has been HT policy not to deny membership. At the time, Ahmed's resignation appeared to be part of a new HT tactic of plausible deniability.

The UK's Charity Commission subsequently investigated the ISF due to concerns over trustee links to HT and the teaching of key elements of HT's ideology. Ahmed confirmed to the commission that she had previously been a member of HT and written a number of articles for HT publications.[81] While the investigation, published in July 2010, stated that "it would be of regulatory concern to the Commission if an educational charity was promoting a political or a predetermined point of view," it accepted the trustees' assurances that the charity was an independent organization. This, despite noting that former trustee Hamilton, an HTB member married to Taji Mustapha, "remains a volunteer at the Charity."

HTB has also set up community-based front organizations. For example, former activists, who were members of a dedicated HTB "Youth Team," attest that between

2004 and 2008, the party set up a range of youth organizations in different areas of Tower Hamlets—an East London borough that is home to a large South Asian population. One former activist, who set up an HTB front group, said, the "main purpose of all the organizations in Tower Hamlets... [was to be a] front for HT, to promote HT and its ideas and to have influence over youths in Tower Hamlets."[82] The tactic was a pre-emptive measure designed to circumnavigate the party's possible proscription: "also if HT gets banned in Britain then they still remain in the community."[83]

This former activist went on to say that HTB deliberately targeted young British Muslims, "between 15 and 18 mainly," using a range of activities from, "football to work shops, residential after school home work club and trips."[84] A variety of tactics were used to legitimize party activists: "We would use every opportunity to promote HT and pass on HT ideas. We would invite a local role model from the community like the councilor and amongst them we would include a member of HT. Just to make it look like HT members are role models."[85] Another HTB front group, set up in 2007 "to directly promote HT ideas,"[86] runs weekly "Friday Circles" for young Muslims in a local government-owned community center in Tower Hamlets.[87]

Campus Activism

HTB'S EARLY—AND OPENLY DISCRIMINATORY—ACTIVISM IN THE 1990S WAS WELL documented in mainstream media and academic circles.[88] However, after the National Union of Students (NUS) and the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education campaigned against the group,[89] the party began operating through front organizations.[90] In the late 1990s and early 2000s, party activists worked on selected campuses to control university Islamic societies (ISOCs). By getting members elected to ISOC committees, the party sought to impose its agenda and ideologies on other Muslim students.[91]

HTB was banned entirely by the NUS in 2004. Since then, the party's tactics on UK campuses have become more sophisticated. HTB has still tried to influence ISOCs, and it continues to operate covertly through front groups.[92] However, in contrast to its aggressively titled events in the 1990s, HTB now organizes more mainstream-sounding debates—for example, a panel called "Is Secularism Right?," which pitted university professors against HTB members.[93] Following HT's strategy directive to "shake up the capitalist system and start debates about it," HT presents its Islamism as an intellectual alternative to liberalism, secularism and capitalism. HTB's university front groups also work together to circumvent the NUS ban. For instance, it was advertised that on December 8, 2009, the Dialogue and Debate society at Queen Mary University, London, would host a debate titled "Shariah Law: Compatible in

the Modern World?" This debate was to feature HT's legal and economics spokesperson Jamal Harwood.[94] Following public pressure, the university authorities cancelled the debate at short notice.[95] However, the event was held a week later on another London campus, hosted by the University of Westminster Global Ideas society, which described Harwood as an "Islamic writer and economist."[96]

The Global Ideas society also invited Harwood to debate Swiss academic Dr. Jean Francois-Mayer in an event entitled "Islam and Europe – Identity and Anxiety" on February 12, 2010.[97] While the Global Ideas society described Harwood as only an "Islamic economist,"[98] HTB's online poster called Harwood "a member of Hizb ut-Tahrir's executive committee."[99] After the University of Westminster cancelled the "Islam and Europe" event the day before,[100] HTB found an alternative venue in East London, and released a statement accusing the university of failing to uphold the right to freedom of speech.[101]

The following day, Mayer participated in the same debate, "Islam and Europe – Identity and Anxiety," with Abdul Wahid, HT's executive chairman, at an event organized by the Muslim Community Representatives Camden and Islington Association (MCRCIA), a London community group with strong links to HTB.[102] HTB, the Westminster Global Ideas society and MCRCIA all advertised the events separately, using different posters, and did not acknowledge one another's apparent involvement. All, however, used the same language in their promotional materials—for example, they all described the 2009 Swiss referendum prohibiting the building of minarets as "a further attack on [Muslims] living in Europe whilst maintaining an Islamic identity [...which] illustrates just how fearful the ordinary European has become since the start of the War on Terror."

Mainstreaming Islamism

HTB ATTEMPTS TO MAINSTREAM HT IDEOLOGY AND PARTY REPRESENTATIVES BY adopting measures to disguise the party's intolerant ideology, and by engaging with politicians, local government councils and the media. Since 7/7, HTB has adopted a strategy known as "keep your ideology in your heart," whereby party members hide their political views and intolerant ideology.[103] HTB emphasizes "political" struggle and uses euphemistic language to hide its support for jihad, anti-Semitic beliefs and a totalitarian system of governance.

Between late 2005 and early 2006, the party removed the overwhelming majority of HT leaflets and other publications from its website, bringing the total from 256 down to 30, the oldest of which was HTB's statement in response to the proposed proscription of the party in August 2005.[104] Many of the leaflets removed were openly

anti-Semitic or anti-Western, with one alleging that the US government was complicit in the 9/11 attacks.[105] Abdul Wahid referred to the decision as "a considered response to the legitimate proposition that people who read it out of its context might see it as offensive."[106] One former HTB national executive member later confirmed that the party had not reformed, but rather deliberately sought to downplay the most combative elements of its foreign policy because it feared proscription. Similarly, HT branches in Denmark and Germany also sought to soften their public image, not in response to an ideological change of heart, but as a defensive reaction to increased scrutiny from their respective governments.[107]

HTB has also been careful to avoid or deflect accusations of extremism,[108] seeking instead to appear more representative of British Muslims by engaging with other Muslim groups, which it previously had not done. For example, HTB had a stall at an annual pro-Islamist conference in London in 2007.[109] In 2009, HTB helped set up a "Muslim Forum" in one London borough that gave a platform to two Islamists: Daud Abdullah, Deputy Secretary of the MCB, and Moazzam Begg, a former Guantanamo Bay detainee. In this instance, however, HTB's engagement strategy failed after a local councilor intervened and HTB was expelled.[110]

Within wider society, HT works to present its totalitarian ideology as a non-threatening and viable alternative to current political thinking. HTB presents itself as an "Islamic" voice and engages with the media, local authorities and policy-makers. For instance, between 1996 and the early 2000s, HTB members were reluctant to talk to journalists about party membership or funding.[111] More recently, however, HTB has sought platforms within the mainstream British press. Since 7/7, HTB members have been given the right to reply regularly, and have been provided with public platforms on influential BBC current affairs programs as well as on international media outlets.[112] Party members have been given a platform by mainstream newspapers and online journals as well.[113]

HTB has also sought to mainstream its ideology by participating in local council-sponsored events. In 2008, the party's chairman, Abdul Wahid, spoke at a debate, "Has political participation failed British Muslims?" This was funded by the government's Preventing Violent Extremism program.[114] Wahid followed HT's 2005 strategy directives, namely to "show the inability of the capitalist system to solve social problems," and "expose the collapse of the Western tenets of democracy and freedom, especially after 9/11." Wahid told his audience that Muslims should work outside the political system; Muslim MPs are "selling out" their morals by not defending Sharia law; the UK's moral crisis, exemplified by phenomena such as binge-drinking, can only be solved through the embrace of "Islamic values;" and religious obedience is more important than the right to freedom of speech.[115]

The party's engagement with MPs and political institutions reflects recent HTB

media tactics. Following the potential ban on HT, party representatives petitioned then-Cabinet Minister Clare Short MP, and secured a platform in the House of Commons in 2006.[116] HTB has also engaged in dialogue with the opposition: Jamal Harwood wrote to the conservative leader (now PM) David Cameron in August 2006, thanking him for his criticism of the Israeli bombardment of Lebanon. Cameron's office subsequently replied to Harwood, thanking him for his comments.[117]

While in opposition, Cameron repeatedly criticized the Labour government for failing to ban HT. However, HT's brand of Islamism is now becoming increasingly accepted by civil servants as a potential bulwark against terrorism. According to one senior official, a classified document presented to the Tory-led coalition in July 2010 put forward "a clear assessment that individuals do not progress through non-violent extremist groups to violent groups." The paper further stated: "extreme groups may also provide a legal 'safety valve' for extreme views."[118] Mohammed Abdul Aziz, a government advisor and one of the paper's authors, however, is an honorary trustee of the London Muslim Center (LMC), one of the largest Islamist institutions in the UK which hosts many British Muslim organizations inspired by the Islamist group Jamaat-e-Islami. During the 1990s, the LMC and its affiliates actively campaigned against HTB's influence in East London.[119] It is therefore a testament to HTB's mainstreaming strategy that the party has gained legitimacy among less radical Islamists as well as civil service circles in the UK.

HTB's implementation of the party's 2005 strategy document exemplifies the dual message inherent in HT's activism in the West. The party has not rescinded its neo-fundamentalist aims. But the image it presents to British Muslim communities and wider British society is one of a legitimate Islamic political party.

The Party of Liberation and Global Jihad

THE IDEOLOGICAL AFFINITIES BETWEEN HT AND MILITANT ISLAMIST groups like al-Qaeda are demonstrated in the fact that both view Islam as an all-encompassing socio-political system that has been absent ever since the Ottoman Caliphate's demise. Contemporary rulers are seen as apostates because they do not implement the Islamist project in its totality. Further, Muslim-majority countries, or those once ruled by Muslim leaders, are identified as "occupied Islamic lands."[120]

Despite sharing ideological similarities and aims, the two Islamist movements are distinguished by chosen tactics and strategies. HT, unlike al-Qaeda, does not currently engage in acts of terrorism to establish its caliphate. Rather, the party's main operational focus is on what it describes as "political struggle." From HT's perspective, armed struggle is not permissible until a caliphate has been established that can implement Islamic law and defend Muslims against perceived threats worldwide. [121]

Militant groups, such as al-Qaeda, believe in creating their own terror cells to engage in armed struggle. They justify this ideologically by merging Nabhani's call to implement an expansionist state with Sayyid Qutb's classification of all Muslim and non-Muslim societies as being in a state of *jahilliya*, or ignorance. Nabhani's Islamism therefore served as a precursor to the more "mature radicalism" developed in the 1960s by Qutb, whose writings are said to have heavily influenced Osama bin Laden, the leader of al-Qaeda.[122]

Instead of creating an armed force to establish its state, HT's primary method for gaining power is to infiltrate militaries in Muslim-majority countries in order to facilitate a coup. Failed attempts have already been staged by the party in Jordan, Iraq and Syria in the late 1960s and early 1970s.[123] HT infiltrates in order to seek *nussrah* (help), to "get protection for the party" and "to reach the government, so as to establish the Khilafah."[124] Seeking nussrah is advised as a tactic once HT activists believe they have successfully infiltrated sections of civil society (either with party members or those sympathetic to the party's cause), thus rendering that society ripe for revolutionary change.[125]

In preparation for revolution, HT calls for intellectual debate and seeks to build mass support for the party's vision at a grassroots level. As such, HT prescribes three strategic stages, including 1) "cultivating individuals who are convinced by the thought and method of the party" to form a group that is intellectually capable of propagating HT's message to the rest of society; 2) "interaction" aimed at encouraging wider society to embrace HT's version of Islam and to work towards the establishment of its Islamist state, while also seeking nussrah; and 3) establishing, via revolution, an Islamist government and expanding it.[126]

While HT doesn't prescribe violence until it judges that party activists are well-positioned in a society for mass revolutionary action,

subscription to HT ideology has acted as a conveyor belt to militancy.[127] For example, one of HT's founding members, Asad Baoud al-Tamimi, left the party in 1958 and in 1982 in Jordan set up the militant organization Islamic Jihad-Bayt al-Maqdis, a faction of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.[128] Another example includes Salih Sirriyya, an HT member in Iraq and Jordan in the early 1970s who was implicated in an attempted coup in Southern Iraq in 1972.[129] Sirriyah initiated a pre-coup attack in 1974 in Egypt as the first step toward overthrowing the country's secular regime under former President Anwar el-Sadat. Sirriyah led a group of assassins to capture Egypt's Military Technical Academy in order to help HT establish its state, believing that sudden political revolt was necessary. This strongly contrasted with HT's strategy of engendering popular support and seeking nussrah.[130] The assassins, who were taught and radicalized by HT member Salim al-Rahhal, also believed that they were helping HT to assume power.[131] They were later responsible for President Sadat's murder in 1981.[132]

HTB's Links to Asia's Unrest

HTB ACTS AS A VITAL ORGANIZATIONAL AND IDEOLOGICAL CENTER FOR THE PARTY'S wider international activities—and especially in South Asia. Evidence suggests, for example, that the current branch leader of HT in Bangladesh is British-Bangladeshi Zituzzaman Hoque, who HT admits is a party member.[133] One former HTB member further attests that HT Bangladesh was set up in the 1990s by UK members, and that the current leader of the UK branch, Nasim Ghani, was sent to Bangladesh in August 2000 to help develop the party's structure before being ordered back to the UK to look after HTB's leadership.[134] Other former HTB members claim that around 2003, a leading member of HTB's national executive committee went on to establish party activities in India and became the country's branch leader.[135] A source also claims that HTB has a dedicated India committee, similar to its Bangladesh and Pakistan committees, which focuses on recruiting Indian nationals presently studying at UK universities. Once these student activists finish their studies, the party hopes they will head back to India to continue HT's agenda there.[136]

Pakistan has been a special focus of HTB's activities. HT was officially launched in Pakistan in 2000. Allegedly, however, the party was set up in the late 1990s under

the direction of Imtiaz Malik, a British-born Pakistani, who is believed to be operating covertly in the country as branch leader.[137] One former HTB national executive member claims that UK party members were called upon by the global leadership to help establish the party in Pakistan in 1999. UK members have been planted in Pakistan's main cities, and HT Pakistan's leadership still contains a number of British Pakistanis.[138]

Members of HT Pakistan have stated publicly that the party is targeting the country as a base for HT's Islamist state. The former HTB national executive member claims that HT's former leader, Shaykh Abdul Qadeem Zallum, singled out Pakistan for HT operations because the country possesses nuclear weapons.[139] Part of HT's strategy to gain power in Pakistan has been to recruit military officers to instigate and lead coups.[140] Moreover, an HT Pakistan 2008 press statement, hosted on HTB's current website, encourages Pakistan's army to attack the U.S., since Pakistan possesses the "seventh largest Army in the World." The statement goes on to say that since Pakistan possesses "nuclear weapons, missiles technology and half a million brave soldiers who are ready to attain martyrdom for Islam, [it] is in a good position to injure and bruise an already battered America to an extent which she cannot afford to stomach right now."[141]

The party has sought to recruit Pakistani military officers as part of its strategy of seeking nussrah to obtain power. One former HTB member stated publicly that in 2003 the party recruited Pakistani officers while they were training at Sandhurst, the UK's premier military academy. HT sent them back to Pakistan to facilitate a coup, although the officers were subsequently arrested.[142] In January 2010, a military court in Pakistan indicted two army colonels, a former pilot for the Pakistan Air Force (PAF), and an engineer for being members of HT Pakistan. The two colonels were accused of providing sensitive information about military installations to HT, and the other two individuals were accused of planning to commit acts of sabotage at a PAF airbase in Baluchistan.[143] Despite being banned by the Government of Pakistan, HT has continued its recruitment activities in the country and regularly stages public demonstrations.[144]

The party's larger aim of establishing an Islamist caliphate in Pakistan has become a special focus of HTB. Within the UK, which has a large Muslim population of Pakistani descent, HTB has sought to propagate its agenda by reporting on and exploiting developments in Pakistan.[145] In one instance, HTB produced a campaign website dedicated to what it saw as "America's Undeclared War on Pakistan."[146] Former members claim that Muslims who join HT in the UK are mostly of Pakistani origin; some are of Bangladeshi origin while very few of its members are of Indian heritage.[147] This explains in part why developments in India are under-reported by HTB, compared to reports on Pakistan and Bangladesh.

HTB's focus on Pakistan is a function of the party's larger, long-term strategy for

fomenting Islamist revolution in South Asia. Pakistan is the primary target for HT, both because of its strong military capabilities and its status as a Muslim-majority country. However, India is militarily superior to Pakistan and will likely remain so with respect to a future Islamist caliphate. For these reasons, HT has begun to concentrate on advancing the party's agenda in Bangladesh—whose army reserves, when coupled with Pakistan's, could potentially shift the balance of power in favor of HT's future caliphate. India, too, has become a new target for HT. Former HTB members claim that by having a presence in India, the party aims to subvert India's large Muslim-minority into supporting HT's revolution.[148] If HT's caliphate is established in Pakistan, the party believes it would be able to mobilize Indian Muslims to act on behalf of the caliphate by inviting India to join; if Delhi refuses, they would help the caliphate in waging war to annex India.[149] Such an annexation is justified on the basis that the party is "reclaiming Islamic lands," since India was previously ruled by Muslims. In this respect, HT's approach towards Muslims in India is similar to its strategy in the West.

The Future of HTB

HT'S STRATEGY IN THE WEST AIMS TO CREATE A MONOLITHIC POLITICAL MUSLIM bloc that can operate to challenge societies from within and that will eventually serve the party's larger goals of worldwide Islamist revolution leading to the downfall of Western democracy. Nowadays within the UK, the party already acts as an effective nerve center for coordinating activities in Muslim-majority countries—most notably in Pakistan, which is increasingly seen as a revolutionary base for the establishment of HT's future expansionist state.

Following the July 7, 2005 London bombings, HTB has been forced to deal with increased public scrutiny, and the party has since developed a sophisticated set of strategies for mainstreaming its Islamist worldview. HTB's grassroots activism, which entails establishing front groups and securing public platforms, allows the party to embed its ideology within Britain's Muslim communities and to deliberately manufacture and inflame grievances within these populations. HTB has successfully capitalized on the "sense of attack" felt by some British Muslims due to post-7/7 efforts by British society to implement an effective counter-terrorism and counter-radicalization policy.[150] As a result, the party's War on Terror/"War on Islam" rhetoric, which was once rejected by most Muslims in the UK in the 1990s, is now common in public discourse.

While HTB's successes may be attributed in part to its new strategy, they are also a reflection of wider political circumstances. The increased and often confused

policy focus on Islam and Muslims in the UK following 7/7 has inadvertently helped to provide a public boost to a number of previously far less influential Islamist groups such as HT. This, in turn, has enabled highly politicized religious views to be ascribed to—and increasingly popularized within—Britain's Muslim communities.[151] The government's further acceptance of Islamism as an expression of religious rather than political convictions and its view of radical ideological groups as "safety valves" that can operate to defuse individuals and movements prone to violence has only worked to help mainstream and legitimize groups like HTB.

The future of HT in the UK is unclear. Despite threats to proscribe the party while it was in opposition, the new coalition government has not acted against HTB. The UK's counter-terrorism and counter-extremism policies are currently under review, and the outcome of this debate will determine the degree to which the state will tolerate HTB and kindred "non-violent" forms of extremism in the future. Meanwhile, HT has not rescinded its founding revolutionary worldview and agenda, and the party has demonstrated an astute ability to self-censor and adapt in relation to prevailing policies and public sentiment. Without accurately and squarely addressing the party and the challenges it poses to Britain's democracy, HTB will continue to seek out and use every opportunity to present its revolutionary ideology and agenda as the "true" Islam.

NOTES

1. Suha Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest: Hizb al-Tahrir and the Search for the Islamic Caliphate*, 1st ed. (London: Grey Seal, 1996), pp.3–6.
2. Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest*, p.191. Several sources claim that Nabhani was a member of the Muslim Brotherhood. However, Taji-Farouki states that HT sources deny he was ever a member. See p.6.
3. "Emigration from the Land of Kufr to the Land of Islam," in an-Nabhani, *The Islamic Personality ("al-Shakhsiyyah al-Isl miyyah")*, Vol. 2, 4th ed. (Lebanon: Dar-al-Ummah, 1995), p.225.
4. For HT, Islamic lands include Muslim-majority countries, "even if it had not been ruled by Muslims," and non-Muslim majority countries that were "once ruled by Muslims under the authority of Islam." For HT's definition of "Islamic lands" see Hizb ut-Tahrir, *The Ummah's Charter* (*Meethaq ul-Ummah*) (London: Khilafah Publications, November 1989), pp.19-20.
5. "Article 1" in "A Draft Constitution of the Islamic State," in Taqiuddin an-Nabhani, Hizb ut-Tahrir, *The Islamic State* (London: Al-Khilafah Publications, 1998), p.240.
6. "General Rules" in "A Draft Constitution of the Islamic State," in an-Nabhani, *The Islamic State*, pp.240–242.
7. "The Social System" in "A Draft Constitution of the Islamic State," in an-Nabhani, *The Islamic State*, pp.261-263; see also Hizb ut-Tahrir, *The Institutions of State in the Khilafah: in Ruling and Administration* (London: Hizb ut-Tahrir, 2005), p.23,64.

8. Hizb ut-Tahrir, *The Ummah's Charter*, p.18; see also Hizb ut-Tahrir, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, (London: Al-Khilafah Publications, 2000), p.66.
9. Hizb ut-Tahrir, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, pp.66-67.
10. Ibid, pp.2,39-41.
11. Hizb ut-Tahrir, *The American Campaign to Suppress Islam* (no publishing details), pp.11-12,15-16,20-23, available at http://www.hizbuttahrir.org/downloads/The%20American%20Campaign%20to%20Suppress%20Islam.pdf [accessed 02.28.2010]; see also Abdul Qadeem Zaloom, *Democracy is a System of Kufr: It is Forbidden to adopt, implement or call for it* (London: Al-Khilafah Publications, 1995), p.16.
12. Hizb ut-Tahrir, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, p.41. For more details on HT's ideological affinity with communism and socialism see Angel M. Rabesa *et al*., *The Muslim World after 9/11* (United States of America: Rand Corporation, 2004), pp.345-351.
13. Hizb ut-Tahrir, *The American Campaign to Suppress Islam*, p.13,21,27-28; see also Abdul Qadeem Zallum, *How the Khilafah was Destroyed* (London: Al Khilafah Publications, 2000) p.193,199.
14. Ibid, p.15.
15. Ibid, p.68.
16. Ibid; see also Zallum, *How the Khilafah was Destroyed*, p.193.
17. Hizb ut-Tahrir, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, p.67; Hizb ut-Tahrir, *The Ummah's Charter*, p.85.
18. Hizb ut-Tahrir, *Muqadimmat ul-Dustur aw asbab ul-Muwajjabbat lah* (*The Introduction to the Constitution or the Causes of its Obligation*) (Beirut, Lebanon: Dar ul-Ummah, 1963), p.450.
19. Hizb ut-Tahrir, *The Ummah's Charter*, p.19.
20. Hizb ut-Tahrir, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, p.26.
21. Ata Abu Rishta, HT's current global leader and former spokesman, stated that Israel is a warring nation because it is "occupying Islamic lands," and made it permissible to kill Israeli Jews. His statement is found in Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest*, p.162. HT's magazine *Al-Waie*, June 2001, includes an article stating that suicide bombings against Israel are permissible. An English translation of the relevant quote can be found in Zeyno Baran, *Hizb ut-Tahrir: Islam's Political Insurgency*, The Nixon Center, (Washington, DC: December 2004), p.50; HT's magazine *al-Fajr*, issue 12, April 1988, includes an edict from HT permitting the hijacking of Israeli planes and the killing of Israeli civilians on board. For a copy of this edict, see Houriya Ahmed & Hannah Stuart, *Hizb ut-Tahrir: Ideology and Strategy*, Centre for Social Cohesion (London: November 2009), pp.151-152.
22. Hizb ut-Tahrir, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, p.68; see also Hizb ut-Tahrir, *Muqadimmat ul-Dustur aw asbab ul-Muwajjabbat lah*, p.450.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid..
25 Hizb ut-Tahrir, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, pp.72-73.
26. Hizb ut-Tahrir, *The Methodology of Hizb ut-Tahrir for Change* (London: Al-Khilafah Publications, 1999), p.25.
27. Hizb ut-Tahrir, *Dangerous Concepts*: *to attack Islam and consolidate the Western culture*, 1st ed. (London: Al-Khilafah Publications, 1997), pp.28–32.
28. "Strategies for Action in the West," internal HT central email communiqué to HTB national executive, February 16, 2005. Obtained from HTB former member A, July 26, 2009, see Ahmed and Stuart, *Hizb ut-Tahrir: Ideology and Strategy*, pp.68–70. Arabic translated into English externally.
29. "For the one able to manifest his deen and perform the requested Shari'a rules where he is able to change Dar al-Kufr wherein he resided to Dar al-Islam; it is forbidden for him in this situation to

emigrate from Dar al-Kufr to Dar al-Islam." See 'Emigration from the Land of Kufr to the Land of Islam', in an-Nabhani, *The Islamic Personality*, Vol. 2, p.225.

30. Ibid.
31. "The duty of the Islamic State is to implement Islam and execute its rules internally and carrying the *da'wah* for it externally, and that the method for this is *Jihad*, performed by the State." See an-Nabhani, *Concepts of Hizb ut-Tahrir*, *(Mafahim Hizb ut-Tahrir)* (London: Al-Khilafah Publications, no year given), p.5.
32. HT's "fifth column" approach typifies its brand of revolutionary Islamism and sets the party apart from less radical entry-level Islamist groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-i-Islami.
33. "This is also obliged upon him in his attribute as a Muslim and in his consideration as one whom the disbelievers are next to and of those who are closer to the enemy." See "Emigration from the Land of Kufr to the Land of Islam," in an-Nabhani, *The Islamic Personality*, Vol. 2, p.225.
34. "Strategies for Action in the West," internal HT central email communiqué to HTB national executive.
35. For example, HT Denmark and HT Britain differ in their emphasis on international situations with the former focusing on the Arab-Israeli issue and the latter focusing on South Asian politics, reflecting the fact that in Denmark the Muslim population is primarily of Arab descent whereas in the UK it is primarily of South Asian descent. See Kirstine Sinclair, "Globale dromme, nationale virkeligheder. Hizb ut-Tahrir i Danmark og Storbritannien anno 2008'," *Den Ny Verden—Tidsskrift for internationale studier*, Vol. 41, No. 1 Kobenhavn, pp.9-17.
36. "Germany bans Islamic group," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 16, 2003. HT established branches in West Germany in the 1960s, in Denmark in 2000 (in part as a result of British activism) as well as in the Netherlands, France and Ukraine. See Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest*, p.170; see also "Defectors from Hizb ut-Tahrir," *Tidende Berlingske* (Denmark), October 28, 2007; see also HT Germany website, available at www.kalifaat.org [accessed 02.28.2010]; see also HT Denmark website, available at http://www.hizb-ut-tahrir.dk; see also HT Netherlands website, available at http://www.islam-projekte.com; see also HT France website, available at http://albadil.edaama.org; see also HT Ukraine website, available at http://www.hizb.org.ua [all accessed 02.28.2010].
37. "PHOTOS: Khilafah Conference 2009 USA, Hizb ut-Tahrir America website, available at http://www.hizb-america.org/activism/local/195-photos-khilafah-conference-2009-usa [accessed 02.28.2010]; see also "Open House with Hizb ut-Tahrir," invitation from Hizb ut-Tahrir Canada, available at http://www.torontomuslims.com/events_display.asp?ID=9232 [accessed 02.28.2010].
38. Interview with HTB former member A, see Ahmed and Stuart, *Hizb ut-Tahrir: Ideology and Strategy*, p.67.
39. "Strategies for Action in the West," internal HT central email communiqué to HTB national executive.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. HTB activism between 1986 and 2009 can be categorized loosely into four stages: foundation (1986-1996); retreat (1996-2001); post 9/11 (2001-2005); and post 7/7 (2005-present). For more details see Ahmed and Stuart, *Hizb ut-Tahrir: Ideology and Strategy*, pp.65-68.
44. A process known as stage one of the party's methodology. See Hizb ut-Tahrir, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, pp.21-22.
45. Taji-Farouki, *Fundamental Quest*, p.171.
46. For example, HTB organized a protest outside the Saudi embassy in London on August 10, 1990. See "British fundamentalist Muslims," *The Times*, August 11, 1990.

47. HTB started holding fortnightly seminars in London in 1989, and in the early 1990s published fortnightly and quarterly magazines in Arabic, *Al-Khilafa*, and English, *Al-Fajr*. See Taji-Farouki, *Fundamental Quest*, p.172.
48. In 1994, the *Guardian* newspaper reported, "For a kafr, or disbeliever, tracking down the Hizb ut-Tahrir [sic] party can prove a frustrating exercise [...] Party officials refuse to speak to the press, alleging bias against Muslims. See "Parents fear 'cult' influence in young,'" *Guardian*, February 7, 1994.
49. See "Extremists disrupt freshers fair," *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, October 13, 1995; see also "Ban urged on Muslim extremists," *Guardian*, October 31, 1995; see also "Politics and Prejudice," *Guardian*, November 7, 1995; see also "Radical Time-bomb under British Islam," *Guardian*, February 7, 1994.
50. In 1994, the Board of Deputies of British Jews, Jewish student leaders and a number of MPs petitioned the Home Secretary about the party's propaganda and John Marshall MP called on the government to prosecute party members. See "Racism and Antisemitism," House of Commons debate, *Hansard*, March 31, 1994, 1115-1120, available at http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199394/cmhansrd/1994-03-31/Debate-6.html [accessed 02.28.2010].
51. "Islamic radical party splits," *Guardian*, February 8, 1996; see also "Jews fear rise of the Muslim 'Underground,'" *Guardian*, February 18, 1996. Fuelled by HT's Islamist ideology and his recent embracing of Wahhabi social conservatism, Bakri believed that an Islamist state could be established in the UK: his group began supporting acts of terrorism abroad, holding rallies with terrorist sympathizers and continuing to organize combative university events. See Taji-Farouki, "Islamists and the Threat of *Jihad*: Hizb al-Tahrir and al-Muhajiroun on Israel and the Jews," *Middle Eastern Studies* (London: Frank Cass), Vol. 36, No. 4, October 2000, pp.21-46,30-32; see also Maajid Nawaz, *The Roots of Violent Islamist Extremism and Efforts to Counter It*, Quilliam Foundation (London: July 2008). Maajid Nawaz is a former member of HTB's national executive. He helped expand HT's international activities by setting up party branches in Denmark and Pakistan. He publicly resigned from HT in 2007 and has since renounced Islamism.
52. "The real motive for waging 'War Against Terrorism' is not to counter terrorism. The real motive is clearly to establish and strengthen US hegemony and influence over the Islamic lands, their people, and their resources in order to repress any semblance of Islamic political resurgence." See "Egypt/Uzbekistan 'crooked' partners in 'War against Terrorism,'" Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain Press Release, July 4, 2002. An internet archive search reveals this leaflet was posted on Khilafah.com. See http://web.archive.org/web/20050226075046/www.khilafah.com/home/category.php?DocumentID=4511&TagID=3 [accessed 02.28.2010].
53. "6,000 Muslims debate 'Islam and the West,'" *Press Association*, September 15, 2002; see also "Thousands attend Muslim conference," BBC *News*, August 24, 2003.
54. "Muslim women and the 'War on Terror,'" Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain Press Release, July 25, 2002. An internet archive search reveals this leaflet was posted on Khilafah.com. See http://web.archive.org/web/20050226075219/www.khilafah.com/home/category. php?DocumentID=4670&TagID=3 [accessed 08.20.2009].
55. Internal briefing for female HTB members, 2005 HTB conference. Obtained from HTB former member E (anonymous: 26 July 2009), see Ahmed and Stuart, *Hizb ut-Tahrir: Ideology and Strategy*, p.74.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. In response to *The Jewel of Medina*, HTB held ten events in October 2008 entitled "Another insult to

the Messenger of Allah." For a list of event summaries on HTB's website see http://www.hizb.org.uk/hizb/search/newest-first/Page-2 30.html?searchphrase=any&searchword=danish+cartoons [accessed 02.28.2010].

59. HT signed a joint statement with a number of leading British Islamists and Muslims in protest to comments made by then-Leader of the House of Commons Jack Straw in 2006 about the suitability of the face veil during meetings with his constituents. See "Joint statement about the veil from Muslim groups, scholars and leaders," Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain website, October 22, 2006, available at http://www.hizb.org.uk/hizb/in-the-community/working-together/joint-statement-about-the-veil-from-muslim-groups-scholars-and-leaders.html [accessed 02.28.2010].
60. According to HTB, the party's report, *Radicalisation "Extremism" & "Islamism:" Realities and Myths in the "war on terror,"* "describes how the language used in the security debate has become politicised to counter dissenting voices, particularly to falsely claim Islamic political ideas are at the part of the problem." See "Report: Radicalisation, 'Extremism'& 'Islamism:' Realities and Myths in the 'War on Terror." Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain website, July 12, 2007, available at http://www.hizb.org.uk/hizb/resources/htb-publications/report-radicalisation-extremism-&-islamism-realities-and-myths-in-the-war-on-terror.html [accessed 02.28.2010].
61. "Event Pictures: Another insult to the Messenger of Allah (saw)," Whitechapel, Community Events, Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain website, available at http://www.hizb.org.uk/hizb/in-the-community/community-events/event-pictures-another-insult-to-the-messenger-of-allah-saw-whitechapel.html [accessed 02.28.2010].
62. In April 2005, HTB launched a similar campaign, "Stand for Islam—Build our Community," whose manifesto stated that Muslims in the UK should focus on being self-reliant, carrying the "*Da'wah*" to the West and becoming a voice for the global "*Ummah*" in order to establish HT's state. The original manifesto is available at http://www.redhotcurry.com/pdfs/hizb_manifesto2005.pdf [accessed 08.25.2009].
63. "Press Conference: Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain launches 'Stand For Islam' mobilisation campaign," Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain Press Release, April 17, 2007, available at http://www.hizb.org.uk/hizb/press-centre/press-release/press-conference-hizb-ut-tahrir-britain-launchesstand- for-islam-mobilisation-campaign.html [accessed 08.25.2009].
64. Ibid.
65. For example, one lecture was organized on June 12, 2008 in three separate locations: Toynbee Hall which is supported by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets in Whitechapel; the Shalom Centre in East London which received £301,386 that year from the government funded Newham Community Education and Youth Service (Newceys); and the Angel Community Centre in Edmonton. See Ahmed and Stuart, *Hizb ut-Tahrir; Ideology and Strategy*, p.78; see also Shalom Employment Action Centre Report and Financial Statements year ended December 31, 2008, available at http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/registeredcharities/ScannedAccounts/Ends30%5C0000802730_ac_20081231_e_c.pdf [accessed 02.28.2010].
66. See Ahmed and Stuart, *Hizb ut-Tahrir; Ideology and Strategy*, pp.76-77.
67. Founded in 1997, the MCB is an umbrella group claiming 500 affiliates and an interlocutor between the government and British Muslim communities. The MCB is inspired by a narrow interpretation of Islam: many of the group's leaders and founders were formerly affiliated with Islamist parties in Pakistan and Bangladesh such as Jamaat-i-Islami. See "Radical Links of UK's 'Moderate' Muslim Group," *Observer*, August 14, 2005.
68. "Blair extremism measures: reaction," *BBC News*, August 5, 2005.

69. For example, Daud Abdullah echoed HTB's "Government sponsored War on Islam" rhetoric during a Campusalam/City Circle event, "Strings Attached? Government Funding and the Muslim Community," on August 19, 2009, attended by a Centre for Social Cohesion representative. See also http://www.thecitycircle.com/events_full_text2.php?id=573 [accessed 02.28. 2010].
70. SREIslamic was founded by Yusuf Patel and Farhad Khodabaksh, both of whom acknowledge their membership to HTB on the SREIslamic website. See "About Us," SREIslamic, available at http://sreislamic.wordpress.com/about-us [accessed 02.28.2010].
71. "Keep the faith: Should Muslim children receive sex education?" *Independent*, July 23, 2009.
72. See Upcoming events, al-Hijrah website, available at http://www.alhijrahacademy.org.uk/WebForms/Default.aspx [accessed 26.10.2009]; Councilor Les Lawrence, Birmingham Council website, available at http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/cs/Satellite?c=Page&childpagename=Member Services%2FPageLayout&cid=1223092734462&pagename=BCC%2FCommon%2FWrapper%2FWrapper [accessed 10.26.2009].
73. "The Struggle for Islam and the Call for the Khilafah," HTB 2009 Conference, London, July 26, 2009. Attended and recorded by the authors; see also "An address to the Muslim Youth," Taji Mustafa, video available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4dFFX7Bu2U&feature=channel_page [accessed 02.28.2010].
74. Jamil Rahman, "Education Dilemna," *Khilafah*, September 2003, Vol. 16, No. 9, pp.14-17.
75. Ibid, p.17.
76. Ofsted Inspection report Islamic Shakhsiyah Foundation School (Slough, DfES ref no: 871/6003, date of inspection: November 28, 2005), available from the ISF website at http://home.btconnect.com/ISF/Ofsted%20Report%20Dec2005.pdf [accessed 02.28.2010].
77. "Haringey Council Whitewashes Hizb ut-Tahrir Schools," Centre for Social Cohesion Press Release, December 11, 2009, available at http://www.socialcohesion.co.uk/files/1260791158_1.pdf; see also ISF curriculum, scanned copy available at http://www.socialcohesion.co.uk/uploads/1260554937isf_curriculum.pdf .

78 A 2009 Ofsted report of the ISF Slough school lists Yusra Hamilton as the school's proprietor and Farah Ahmed as the Head teacher. Former members A & E attest that Yusra Hamilton and Farah Ahmed are and were, respectively, members of HTB. See Ofsted Inspection report Islamic Shakhsiyah Foundation School (Slough, DfES ref no: 871/6003, date of inspection, January 30, 2009), available at http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxedu_reports/download/(id)/105649/(as)/134085_334617.pdf [accessed 02.28.2010]; see also 'Islamists who want to destroy the state get £100,000 funding', *Sunday Telegraph*, October 25, 2009.

79. Ahmed and Stuart, *Hizb ut-Tahrir: Ideology and Strategy*, pp.87–88; see also "Islamists who want to destroy the state get £100,000 funding," *Sunday Telegraph*, October 25, 2009; see also ISF Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended March 31, 2008, available at http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/registeredcharities/ScannedAccounts/Ends76%5C0001112376_ac_20080331_e_c.pdf [accessed 02.28. 2010].
80. Interview with Farah Ahmed, *BBC Newsnight*, November 25, 2009.
81. Regulatory Case Report: Islamic Shakhsiyah Foundation, *The Charity Commission*, 7 July 2010, available at http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/Library/rcr_isf.pdf.
82. Ibid.
83. Ibid.
84. Ibid.
85. Ibid.
86. Ibid; see also http://www.bricklanecircle.blogspot.com [accessed 08.30.2009].

87. See http://bricklanecircle.blogspot.com/2008/04/brick-lane-islamic-circle.html [accessed 31.08.2009]. The Montefiore Centre, formerly the Bethnal Green Training Centre, has been managed by the Spitalfields Small Business Association on behalf of Tower Hamlets council since 2001. See http://www.ssba.info/Workspace/montefiore.html [accessed 02.28.2010].
88. See for example, "Extremists disrupt freshers fair," *The Times Higher Education Supplement,* October 13, 1995; see also "Ban urged on Muslim extremists," *Guardian*, October 31, 1995; see also "Politics and Prejudice," *Guardian*, November 7, 1995. For an overview of HTB's early campus activism see Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest*, pp.172-177.
89. "Campus fears over 'anti-Semitic' lecturer," *Observer*, March 17, 1996; see also "Islamic extremist threat to gays," *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, August 16, 1996.
90. For example, the "1924 Committee" at SOAS and the "Muslim Education Society" at University College London were both HTB groups. See "Extremists disrupt freshers fair," *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, October 13, 1995.
91. Rashad Ali, former HTB national executive committee member, states that he "regularly visited and spoke at at least a dozen universities promoting Islamist thought." Similarly, as a young HTB activist at Newham VI Form College, Maajid Nawaz campaigned to get fellow activists elected to the student union in order "to recruit everyone in this college to Islamism." See "Don't deny campus radicalisation," *Guardian: Comment is Free*, 6 December 2008, see also "In and out of Islamism," a talk by Maajid Nawaz to City Circle November 3, 2007, video (part 2 of 4), available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Wh9m8dE5_A&feature=related [accessed 28.02.2010].
92. Bradford University ISOC, for example, was allegedly run by HTB until recently. See Rashad Ali, "Don't deny campus radicalisation," *Guardian: Comment is Free.*
93. See "Birmingham professor speaks at extremist Islamic group debate," *Birmingham Post*, May 13, 2008.
94. Also invited to chair was Reza Pankhurst, an HT member jailed for four years in Egypt for his political extremism. See "Hizb ut-Tahrir barred from London university debate," *BBC News*, December 10, 2009.
95. Ibid.
96. See "Shariah Law—Compatible With the Modern World" event page, December 17, 2009, Westminster Global Ideas Society, University of Westminster Facebook page, available at http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=235173006252&index=1 [accessed 02.28.2010].
97. See the University of Westminster Global Ideas Society Facebook page and the "Muslims in Europe: Myths & Reality" event page, available at http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=302731473531&index=1 [accessed 28.02.2010].
98. Ibid.
99. "VENUE CHANGE: HT leader in public dialogue on Islam in Europe [7pm Fri 12 Feb]," Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain Press Release, February 11, 2010 [updated from February 8, 2010], available at http://www.hizb.org.uk/hizb/press-centre/press-release/hizb-ut-tahrir-leader-in-public-dialogue-at-university-of-westminster-on-islam-in-europe.html.
100. Following public pressure the NUS contacted the University of Westminster Student Union (UWSU). "Westminster says 'NO' to Hizb ut-Tahrir meeting," *Student Rights*, available at http://www.studentrights.org.uk/2010/02/westminster-no-hizbuttahrir-meeting.
101. "VENUE CHANGE: HT leader in public dialogue on Islam in Europe [7pm Fri 12 Feb]," Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain Press Release, February 11, 2010; see also "By banning debate on Islam, Uni of Westminster demonstrates hypocrisy of 'freedom of speech,'" Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain Press Release, February 11,

2010, available at http://www.hizb.org.uk/hizb/press-centre/press-release/by-banning-debate-on-islam-uni-of-westminster-demonstrates-hypocrisy-of-freedom-of-speech.html [accessed 02.28.2010].

102. "Islam and Europe - Identity and Anxiety" event poster, hosted by MCRCIA, available at http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_Gs_FDf_uBOU/S2yT6hlSQzI/AAAAAAAAAD4/kg483o2Pv-w/s1600-h/event+2+no+pics.jpg [accessed 02.28.2010]; for more information on the links between MCRCIA and HTB see Ahmed and Stuart, *Hizb ut-Tahrir: Ideology and Strategy*, pp.78–81.
103. Written testimony of HTB former activist C: "I began my journey out of Hizb ut-Tahrir, when I began questioning the strategy of HTB when it began to adopt the slogan 'keep your ideology in your heart,' and hid its political views, as this was seen to me as an ideological deviation." See Ahmed and Stuart, *Hizb ut-Tahrir: Ideology and Strategy*, p.101.
104. "The Muslim Ummah will never submit to the Jews," Hizb ut-Tahrir Kuwait Leaflet, November 3, 1999. An internet archive search reveals this leaflet was posted on Khilafah.com. See http://web.archive.org/web/20050319231431/www.khilafah.com/home/category.php?DocumentID=94&TagID=3 [accessed 02.28.2010]; "Press Statement from Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain," Hizb ut-Tahrir website, August 6, 2005.
105. "Alliance with America is a great crime forbidden by Islam," Hizb ut-Tahrir Leaflet, September 18, 2001. An internet archive search reveals this leaflet was posted on Khilafah.com. See http://web.archive.org/web/20050220212159/www.khilafah.com/home/category.php?DocumentID=2246&TagID=3 [accessed 02.28.2010].
106. Abdul Wahid, "Hizb-ut-Tahrir's distinction," Open Democracy, August 15, 2005, available at http://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-terrorism/criticism_2755.jsp [accessed 02.28.2010].
107. "Defectors from Hizb ut-Tahrir," *Tidende Berlingske* (Denmark), October 28, 2007; see also "Statement regarding the false accusations levelled against Hizb-ut-Tahrir by the German press and German politicians to the members of parliament, the political wings, and to all the citizens of this country," Hizb ut-Tahrir Germany Leaflet, November 4, 2002. An internet archive search reveals this leaflet was posted on Khilafah.com. See http://web.archive.org/web/20050226073659/www.khilafah.com/home/category.php?DocumentID=5596&TagID=3 [accessed 02.28.2010].
108. In a 2006 interview on *BBC Newsnight* Taji Mustafa said of his party: "We don't ask anybody to commit action of criminality, we do not, in any way condone criminality." See Taji Mustafa, *BBC Newsnight* interview, November 14, 2006, audio available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icGRHt9dE68 [accessed 02.28.2010].
109. Observed by one of the authors, November 24-25, 2007, Global Peace and Unity conference organized by the pro-Islamist Islam Channel.
110. "'Muslim Extremist' to speak at Lampton School," *Hounslow Chronicle*, July 9, 2009; see also "Muslim debate goes ahead peacefully," *Hounslow Chronicle*, July 15, 2009.
111. A 2004 investigative piece for the *Guardian* reported, "Until recently, the leadership of Hizb was secretive and cautious, reluctant to release details of the scale of its membership, its leadership structure or its funding [...] in a sign that the group is changing direction, it has given the *Guardian* unprecedented access to its leadership." See "The west needs to understand it is inevitable: Islam is coming back," *Guardian*, November 11, 2004.
112. Taji Mustafa was also interviewed by the Today Program in response to Tony Blair's August 2005 proposed anti-terrorism measures. Women's representative Nazreen Nawaz appeared on a debate with Zulfi Bukhari, head of MPAC, on *BBC News 24* in August 2007 in response to HT's Indonesia conference in 2007. Video available at http://www.hizb.org.uk/hizb/multimedianew/video/bbc-news-24-debate-thejakarta-khilafah-conference.html [accessed 09.04.2009]. Nazreen Nawaz was also

interviewed on *Sky News* in October 2006 in response to Jack Straw's comments on the niqab, available at Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain's website, http://www.hizb.org.uk/hizb/multimedianew/video/dr-nazreen-nawaz-on-the-ukveil-controversy.html [accessed 09.04.2009].

113. For example, Taji Mustafa writes for the *Guardian*'s online "Comment is Free" and Abdul Wahid writes for the online journal Open Democracy. See http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/taji_mustafa/profile.html [accessed 02.28.2010]; see also http://www.opendemocracy.net/author/abdul-wahid [accessed 02.28.2010].
114. Islamist pressure group the Cordoba Foundation had received a grant of £19,000 from Tower Hamlets Council Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Fund to organize a series of debates, of which this was one. Following the group's unwillingness to disinvite Abdul Wahid, however, Tower Hamlets Council withdrew its support and funding of the event. See "Controversial Hizb ut-Tahrir debate to go ahead after all," *East London Advertiser*, February 22, 2008; see also House of Commons *Hansard* written answers for March 18, 2009, available at http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmhansrd/cm090318/text/90318w0009.htm [accessed 02.28.2010].
115. "Muslim pressure group wins anti-democracy vote," *East London Advertiser*, February 27, 2008.
116. "Radical Islamic group Hizb ut-Tahrir has won the backing of Clare Short," *The Times*, February 15, 2006.
117. "Hypocrite: Wednesday Cam blasts Brown for not banning extremists Yesterday revealed: He wrote them a polite thank you letter," *The Mirror*, July 6, 2007.
118. 'Hizb ut Tahrir is not a gateway to terrorism, claims Whitehall report', Daily Telegraph, 25 July 2010, available at http://www.telegraph.co.uk/journalists/andrew-gilligan/7908262/Hizb-ut-Tahrir-is-not-a-gateway-to-terrorism-claims-Whitehall-report.html.
119. See Ed Husain, *The Islamist: Why I joined radical Islam in Britain, what I saw inside and why I left* (London: Penguin, 2007).
120. "Al-Qaeda Training Manual," downloadable from the United States Department of Justice, http://www.usdoj.gov/ag/manualpart1_1.pdf [accessed 02.28.2010].
121. HT states that the current violent tactics used by militant Islamists only apply once HT has a state: "But the duty to raise arms against the ruler and to fight against him if he showed clear *Kufr*, this applies only if the *Dar* (land) is *Dar ul-Islam*, and the rules of Islam were implemented and the ruler subsequently showed open *Kufr*." See Hizb ut-Tahrir, *The Methodology of Hizb ut-Tahrir for Change*, p.22.
122. Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest*, p.75; see also Qutb's *Milestones* (1964). For more information on Qutb's writings and formulation of modern jihadism see Paul Berman, *Terror and Liberalism*, 1st ed. (US: W. W. Norton & Company, April 2003).
123. "*Uslub li-Kasb al-Umma wa Akhdh Qiyadatiha*," Hizb ut-Tahrir Leaflet, January 14, 1980, cited in Taji-Farouki, *A Fundamental Quest*, p.167: see also pp.27-28 of *A Fundamental Quest*.
124. Hizb ut-Tahrir, *The Methodology of Hizb ut-Tahrir for Change*, p.39.
125. HTB former member A (anonymous: interview 02.15.2010).
126. Hizb ut-Tahrir, *The Methodology of Hizb ut-Tahrir for Change*, p.32.
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130. Steven Brooke, "Jihadist Strategic Debates before 9/11," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 2008, Vol. 31, No. 3, pp.201-226.
131. Maajid Nawaz, *The Roots of Violent Islamist Extremism and Efforts to Counter it*, p.10.
132. For more information about the assassins forming jihadist groups before Sadat's assassination see Adnan A. Musallam, *From secularism to Jihad: Sayyid Qutb and the foundations of radical Islamism* (United States of America: Praeger Publishers, 2005), pp.183-198.
133. HTB former member A attests that Hoque is the current leader of HT Bangladesh. See Ahmed and Stuart, *Hizb ut-Tahrir: Ideology and Strategy*, p.57. See also "Bangladesh: Re-establishment of Khilafah is the most important duty of the Muslims," Hizb ut-Tahrir Bangladesh Press Release, August 6, 2008, available at http://khilafat.org/newPages/PressRelease/Resources/PR_ENG_080801_01.pdf [accessed 02.28.2010].
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135. HTB former members A, F and G (anonymous: interview 02.15.2010).
136. HTB former member A and F (anonymous: interview 02.15.2010).
137. "British Islamists plot against Pakistan," *Sunday Times*, July 4, 2009. HTB former members A and F corroborate the claim made in the *Sunday Times* (anonymous: interview 02.15.2010).
138. A claim made by Maajid Nawaz in "British Islamists plot against Pakistan," *Sunday Times*; see also Dawn News' *Newseye* interview with Maajid Nawaz, June 30, 2009, part 2 of 3 of video [0:55-1:19,7:46-7:58 min, available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X4QWV42voKQ&feature=related [accessed 02.28.2010]; HTB former members A, F and G corroborated this claim to the authors (A, F & G, anonymous: interview 02.15. 2010).
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140. "British Islamists plot against Pakistan," *Sunday Times*.
141. "It's America, not Pakistan, that is not in a position to fight another open war," Hizb ut-Tahrir Pakistan Press Statement, September 13, 2008, uploaded on Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain website, available at http://www.hizb.org.uk/hizb/press-centre/press-release/it-s-america-not-pakistan-who-is-not-in-a-position-to-fight-an-open-war-with-pakistan.html [accessed 02.28.2010].
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146. See the campaign website for further information: http://www.war-on-pakistan.info [accessed 02.28.2010].
147. HTB former members F and G (anonymous: interview 02.15.2010).
148. HTB former members A, F and G (anonymous: interview 02.15.2010). After studying HT ideology, the authors agree with this analysis, which would fit HT's line of strategic thinking.
149. HTB former members A, F and G (anonymous: interview 02.15.2010).

150. *THEMES, MESSAGES AND CHALLENGES A Summary of Key Themes from the Commission for Cohesion and Integration Consultation*, H M Government, June 2007, p. 6, available at http://collections.europarchive.org/tna/20080726153624/http://www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk/~/media/assets/www.integrationandcohesion.org.uk/themes%20_messages_and_challenges%20pdf.ashx.
151. Many Islamist groups successfully liaise with the British government and its agencies and are responsible for the delivery of the UK's counter-radicalisation strategy.See Shiraz Maher & Martin Frampton, *Choosing our Friends Wisely: Criteria for Engagement with Muslim Groups*, Policy Exchange (London: March 2009).

Gender Ideology and the Jamaat-e-Islami

By Niloufer Siddiqui

In early April 2009, the release of a graphic video showing a teenage girl being flogged by Taliban militants in Pakistan's Swat Valley sent shockwaves throughout much of that country and around the world. Appearing just weeks after a peace deal had been signed between the Government of Pakistan and Mullah Fazlullah's Taliban faction, the disturbing video footage confirmed widespread suspicions that settling with the Taliban could only mean continued human rights violations and the further propagation of extremist Islamist ideology in Taliban-dominated areas like Swat. The Taliban's explanation for the brutal beating did nothing to allay these concerns: "She came out of her house with another guy who was not her husband, so we must punish her," said one Taliban spokesman. "There are boundaries you cannot cross."[1]

As the incident focused the world's gaze on the Taliban's rule in Swat, most Pakistani government officials, members of political parties and women's rights activists rushed to voice their condemnation of the violence. They complained that Islam was being manipulated by the Taliban for the subjugation of women and the establishment of political control. Most ordinary Pakistanis roundly condemned the girl's flogging as well.

Yet not all Pakistanis were quick to join in the public outcry. Officials from the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Pakistan's most influential religious political party, almost instantaneously began issuing statements questioning the authenticity of the video, alleging, among other things, that it was part of a Western conspiracy to damage the image of Islam. The JI then sought to downplay altogether the significance of the video and the beating of the girl that it depicted. Atia Nisar of the JI's Women and Family Commission stated that the video-taped beating of the girl was merely "a small thing. We should talk about drone attacks, not minor things."[2]

At face value, Mrs. Nisar's insistence that the beating of a woman by Islamist vigilantes was a "small thing" would seem morally incredible—and perhaps especially so from a party official whose job is to advance women's rights. But Nisar's response—and the JI's dismissive attitude toward the beating of the young girl, a stance that diverged sharply from other, more "secular" political actors—also revealed the disunited and often deeply confused sociopolitical milieu of today's Pakistan. In recent years, Pakistani political discourse has found itself bitterly divided along numerous, cross-cutting cleavages, few of which fall neatly into liberal and conservative categories. Still, religion has again and again proven to be the primary fault line, and few issues have exacerbated this division more than those surrounding gender and women's rights.

This paper will provide an overview of the JI's changing discourse on gender. It will examine both the party's ideological underpinnings and its politically-motivated behavior with respect to gender. Given the presence of the JI's large and active women's wing, the Halq-e-Khawateen, this analysis will also examine women's evolving role in the party apparatus, exploring the reasons women join the party and what role they subsequently carve out for themselves. It will argue that women members of the Jamaat contribute to a political agenda that will ultimately erode the very rights currently available to them; thus, they work within a modern system but propose goals that, if achieved, would produce nothing less than anti-modern results.

Ideological Underpinnings

THE JAMAAT-E-ISLAMI HAS CONSCIOUSLY ORGANIZED ITSELF ON THE MODEL OF a modern political party, with clear lines of authority and a hierarchical structure, as well as a nationwide network of departments and locally-organized branches.[3] Much of the JI's membership and financial support stems from the newly urbanized lower-middle class of Pakistan's urban centers, and particularly from the youth, for whom the religious and political ideology of the JI is appealing.[4] College campuses have served as and remain prime centers for JI training and recruitment.[5] Student groups—including both the young men's Islami Jamiat Talaba and its female equivalent, the Islami Jamiat Talibat—while not officially linked to the JI, nonetheless maintain close linkages to the party and propagate the JI's core messages in universities across the country.

The JI first came into existence in Pre-Partition India as a socio-cultural organization; the movement's earliest adherents did not initially desire to become involved in politics at such an early stage.[6] The JI's founder, Maulana Maududi, had hoped to

train a cadre of "worker-activists" that would ultimately create an Islamic society and lead a worldwide Islamic revolution. However, with the creation of Pakistan, the JI soon evolved into a political party intent on establishing an Islamic state in Pakistan. Maududi, who in large part shaped the future direction of the JI, is credited with being one of the most influential thinkers of the larger Islamic revivalist movement around the world.

During his lifetime, Maududi wrote more than 120 books and pamphlets addressing a range of topics—from Islamic politics to Pakistani nationalism to social and economic issues. His most well-known book on gender roles in Islam, *Purdah and the Status of Women in Islam*, was first published in 1972 and provides the ideological underpinning for the JI's perspectives on gender. In that book, Maududi states that "the problem of men and women's mutual relationship is indeed the most fundamental problem of civilization."[7] He argued that a society's progress is determined by how effectively it solves the problem that exists between the sexes, and in particular, by how it defines the "appropriate" behavior of women. In his view, the proper role for women is to serve as guardians of the sanctity of the Islamic tradition. This role is routinely assigned to women in Pakistan today—especially by Jamaat activists.

Maududi argued that *purdah*, or the strict segregation of the sexes, is absolutely essential to societal justice and progress, as it permits women to fulfill their roles as Islam's guardians, and this, in turn, permits men to successfully carry out their jobs in society without being distracted by women. He cites the modern West's "moral decrepitude" as the "logical consequence of the movement which was initiated in the beginning of the 19th century for the rights and emancipation of women."[8] Maududi was categorical about the role he assigned to women in both the private and public spheres. For instance, in the final chapter of his book on *purdah*, which is entitled "Divine Laws for the Movements of Women," he makes it clear that women may leave the four walls of their house (*char diwari*) only if absolutely necessary. He asserts further that permission to leave the house is strictly limited, as women are forbidden from mixing freely with men in social situations. Exceptions are made, however, for the exigencies of war: Maududi asserts, for instance, that the purdah restrictions may be relaxed so that women may offer adequate support to male warriors, such as administering first aid to the wounded and cooking food for them.[9] While women are not obliged to wage armed jihad themselves, if the occasion demands, they may serve the fighters in the way of Allah.[10]

In assigning social roles to both men and women, Maududi was clear about where he thought women should fit in: "The woman's sphere of activity should be separate from that of man's. They should be entrusted with separate social responsibilities according to their respective natures, and mental and physical abilities." He acknowledged the problem plaguing the implementation of this "natural division of labor,"

such as women being deprived of their economic rights, including inheritance. The solution to this conundrum, as Maududi understood it, is not to be found in increasing women's economic independence, but rather in a fairer and fuller implementation of Islamic law. In fact, Maududi blamed what he saw as women's declining economic rights and fortunes in modern times on people's general neglect of their religiously-prescribed home and familial duties. He further argued that as traditional family units have disintegrated with the onset of modernity, women have been ineluctably forced to forsake their role as Islam's guardians and instead been forced into the workplace to earn for themselves. Maududi therefore presents women as the "victims of a vicious process of dewomanization,"[11] and as the unfortunate casualties in a series of modernizing societal changes that masquerade as women's empowerment. The challenge, as Maududi framed it, was for true Muslims to resist the creeping Western mentality and practices that purportedly conspire to undermine Islam's tradition.

Political Realities in a Changing Milieu

IN LIGHT OF MAUDUDI'S VIEWS ON PURDAH, IT MAY SEEM STRANGE THAT THE Jamaat-e-Islami movement that he founded has a long-standing women's wing that routinely produces members who stand for election and are represented in Pakistan's parliament. Known as the Halq-e-Khawateen, the Jamaat's women's wing was formed on February 15, 1948, and its role has evolved considerably since its creation. This evolution was made possible largely due to Maududi's changing views on gender. In 1971, for instance, following the JI's failure to gain seats in the previous years' elections, Maududi began to stress the importance of mobilizing women. In a speech before the activist-workers of the JI, Maududi blamed the party's dismal electoral performance on its narrow base of support, and acknowledged that the party had failed to direct sufficient attention to the less educated and poorer sections of society which, because of their numbers, were most likely to affect the vote.[12] Maududi saw a unique opportunity for the Jamaat among women in particular. Because women were provided 20 seats in the National Assembly and 23 in each provincial assembly, Maududi argued that women were an especially important target for the JI's outreach—a constituency that could no longer be ignored.[13]

As such, on the question of women, Maududi demonstrated a willingness to adapt his Islamist ideals to the political realities and opportunities of the day. In fact, despite his many claims of ideological consistency, Maududi modified his teachings frequently throughout the course of his involvement with the JI. His support for the creation of Pakistan soon after its independence, despite having actively advocated

for a united India, represented his first major turnaround. Maududi's support of Fatima Jinnah (the sister of Muhammed Ali Jinnah, Pakistan's founder) as a presidential candidate also demonstrated the malleability of his seemingly clear-cut views on women's place in society. Jinnah was an unmarried and unveiled woman, and the JI couldn't justify supporting her on the grounds of its ideology. In fact, as late as the summer of 1950, the JI had criticized Fatima Jinnah for appearing in public, on the grounds that this violated the norms of purdah.[14] Yet, Maududi, who had grown deeply suspicious about the direction Field Marshal Ayub Khan's regime was leading the country, ultimately allied the JI with the Combined Opposition Parties, and believed it was necessary to back their decision to support Jinnah. There was pressure to support the female presidential candidate from within Maududi's party as well: Jinnah was popular among the Muhajirs (the Muslim refugees from India who settled in Pakistan following the subcontinent's partition), who constituted a large share of the JI's support.[15]

There is little doubt that Maududi viewed his endorsement of the candidate Fatima Jinnah as nothing more than a necessary evil, and nothing suggests that he ever came to terms with the idea of women wielding political power. The action simply depicts Maududi's willingness to override, for the purposes of political gain, what many considered—and what likely had been—his strongly held, religiously-rooted convictions. Nowadays, JI members insist that the party's relationship to women is not merely consistent with Maududi's basic teachings, but that it is a "realization of his dreams."[16] They explain that the support he extended to Fatima Jinnah was made during extenuating circumstances. The Jamaat also insists that Maududi's support did not represent a compromise in their position, nor in Islam, both of which maintain a flexible position about the possibility of having a woman serve as head of state. The JI's Naib Amir (Vice President), Prof. Dr. Khurshid Ahmed, has acknowledged that support for Fatima Jinnah was an exception rather than a norm, and that it wasn't necessarily the ideal situation.[17] The party's leadership should be dominated by men, he argued, while women should play a supporting role.

But what has since become known as the JI's "monumental doctrinal compromise"[18] on the question of women and political power received widespread national attention. When the JI's leadership threw its support behind Jinnah's candidacy, it ultimately opened the door to criticism from other Muslim groups who claimed that the JI had forsaken the Islamic credentials and morality that the party had espoused from its founding. Some even accused the Jamaat of losing its standing as an Islamic social and religious movement and becoming just another political party.

The JI's stance also provided Ayub's government the opportunity to divide Pakistan's religious parties. Following the 1965 election, the government turned to its

newly-formed alliance with the ulama, calling on them to issue a fatwa denouncing the JI's justification for supporting a woman's candidacy as un-Islamic.[19] Thus, just as the JI compromised its hold on Islamic ideology as an underpinning for its action, Ayub's ostensibly secular government—which had earlier faced criticism from the ulama for its women-friendly reforms of Muslim family law—was quick to use the JI's reversal as an opportunity to declare its own supremacy on religious grounds.

Within the heated political discussion that emerged, Islam remained, at all times, the yardstick with which a party's loyalty to the country of Pakistan as a whole was measured. But while other members of the JI also questioned Maududi's support of Jinnah, with some even challenging his authority as the leader of the party, the majority of the JI "had become sufficiently pragmatic not to be shocked by Maududi's inconsistency in supporting Fatimah Jinnah."[20]

The JI's early support for a female presidential candidate did not represent, however, a permanent change in the party's views on women and political power. Between 1988 and 1990, Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) tried to secure the JI's cooperation to deny Nawaz Sharif influence on the street and to provide her government some measure of Islamic religious legitimacy. Even though it was in the JI's interest to reach an agreement with the PPP, the JI stated that it would, in principle, be willing to cooperate with the PPP but stipulated conditions for this support. One of these conditions was eliminating Benazir Bhutto and Begum Nusrat Bhutto from the party's leadership—solely on the basis of their gender.[21]

Clearly, the degree to which the JI's ideology on purdah is put into practice is at least partly determined by the political realities of the day. In fact, the JI has often found itself following the lead of women's rights' movements and implementing new initiatives in an effort to ensure that the party could lay equal claim to Pakistan's increasingly politically-involved women. For instance, the Islami Jamiat Talebat (Islamic Society of Female Students) was created in response to the emergence of a students' women's rights group in Lahore's Punjab University. The Islami Jamiat Talebat has always worked closely with their male counterparts, the IJT, to extend the latter's influence on university campuses. Like the Halq-e-Khawateen, most of the Talebat members come from families affiliated with the JI or IJT.[22] At Punjab University, the Talebat and the progressive women's rights group clashed over the JI's long-standing demand to create a separate women's university. The women's movement feared that such an institution would mean that coeducation at the university level would be done away with and that further segregation would only lead to increased discrimination.[23] The IJT emerged as a vocal supporter of a women's-only university, and lobbied for its creation. It joined its voice with a newly-formed Islamist women's organization, the Majlis-e-Khawatin.

Created in 1983, the Majlis-e-Khawatin had the backing of President Zia ul-Haq,

who led a government well-known for pursuing a broad-based agenda of Islamization within Pakistan. The JI was also quick to support the Majlis-e-Khawatin, and enabled the organization's president, Nisar Fatima, to become elected to the 1985 National Assembly, on the reserved women's seat.[24] In 1984, Fatima was also elected to the Commission on the Status of Women, where she wrote a dissenting note to the Commission's majority findings that the promulgation of Islamic laws within Pakistan had been detrimental to women's rights.

In 1986, as a Member of the National Assembly, Fatima sought to move a privilege motion demanding criminal proceedings against derogatory remarks about the Prophet Muhammed (pbuh), allegedly made by prominent lawyer and women's rights activist Asma Jehangir.[25] This move resulted in a heated battle between progressive women's rights organizations and so-called women "fundamentalists," led by Nisar Fatima, with both sides issuing a string of pronouncements denouncing the other. In fact, both groups employed similar methods in their bickering with one another; press statements, conferences, and public protests were common. Nisar Fatima organized a mass demonstration outside the National Assembly in response to an earlier Women Action Forum's (WAF) demonstration against the Sharia Bill.[26] Khawar Mumtaz described this as an "action and reaction pattern," explaining that "any action or statement of WAF or a 'non-fundamentalist' women's organization has invited an immediate and vitriolic response from women of the religious right, who accuse the former of being westernized, alienated, and non-religious."[27]

In fact, Fatima claimed to have represented the wishes and views of 90 percent of Pakistani women, and subsequently charged the progressive WAF with being elitist and too westernized. The progressive women's rights organizations responded to these charges by citing Pakistan's lack of support for the JI, Fatima's party.[28] That Fatima was able to use official parliamentary proceedings to publicly advance her agenda, rather than merely working outside the system, suggests the extent to which the JI's cooperation with her was necessary for both groups—groups that eventually melded to become one.

At the same time, thanks to the Islamists' intervention, the WAF became newly cognizant of its potentially-damaging reputation as a westernized, elitist organization. In response to this, the WAF and the progressive women's movement as a whole sought to incorporate Islamic rhetoric into their political activity to the extent that they could. Among other things, they sought to tactically counter the Zia regime's policies of Islamization, which threatened to marginalize the WAF and the progressive women's movement, by reiterating their loyalty to Islam and by introducing Quranic classes for their members. The WAF even solicited the support of the ulama, who had their own suspicions about General Zia and his government's Islamizing agenda.[29] However, as the political scientist Ayesha Jalal has explained, this effort

by the WAF "singularly failed to stem the tide of social conservatism. This gave the regime an opportunity to exploit the ideological divide between so-called "Islamic" and "secular" Pakistani women."[30] Once the argument became couched within an Islamic framework, [31] the JI's women's wing, the Islami Jamiat Talebat and the Majlis-e-Khawatin banded together and were able to successfully counter the progressive and more liberal ideals of the women's rights activists.

The Halq-e-Khawateen Today

THE CONFLICT THAT ERUPTED IN THE 1980S BETWEEN THE MAJLIS-E-KHAWATIN and the progressive women's rights groups over women and their political representation has lasted in important ways down to the present day, and reflects a central point of contention between Islamist and non-Islamist political movements within Pakistan. In *Transnational Feminism as Critical Practice: A Reading of Feminist Discourses in Pakistan,* Amina Jamal argues that the women's rights struggle in Pakistan should not be viewed as a struggle between Islam and modernity. Islamists, she argues, rather than denouncing modernity, are in fact attempting to Islamize it from within. Thus the conflict between the progressives and JI over gender must be viewed in terms of two competing visions of modernity, with both parties trying to shape the nation according to their own ideals.[32]

This is clearly on display in the actions and ideas professed by the female members of the Jamaat-e-Islami today. They don't dispute the essentially modern concept of "women's rights." Instead, they argue that the rights and interests of women will best be served through an Islamic state and the imposition of Sharia. They believe, or at least purport to believe, that the Jamaat represent the true advocates for women's rights, correctly understood. They further blame the societal ills that women face in Pakistan on failed efforts at westernizing the country that have denigrated the true nature of Islam. The Halq-e-Khawateen's website—which, like the JI's main website, is impressive in its scope and the frequency with which it is updated—has emerged as a major vehicle for spreading these Islamist perspectives on women. On the website, the Halq-e-Khawateen claims to be the "largest progressive women's organization in the world."[33] It asserts that for women's rights to be completely protected, Pakistan needs to adhere strongly to its identity as an Islamic state and must resist all attempts at westernizing society.

Today, the Halq-e-Khwateen operates as a separate, sovereign entity within the Jamaat's larger organizational structure. The women's wing is responsible for its own funding and decision-making, but it operates in conjunction with the main Jamaat body while working towards the same goals; it is governed by the same mandate

and has the same *amir* (currently Munawar Hasan). The vertical division within the women's wing is decided upon by the female members themselves, while the central wing provides "guidance" to the women.[34] Although they have no leader of their own, the women's wing has its own seminary, the Jamiatul-Muhsinat, or Society of the Virtuous, which trains women to be preachers and religious instructors.[35] One of the main functions of the women's wing is spreading the JI's message among Pakistani women. It also affords women an opportunity to participate in the political process, including serving in national and provincial assembly seats reserved for women. During the 2002-2008 government, when the coalition of six religious political parties—the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA)—had a strong presence in the parliament, the Jamaat-e-Islami had six female members in the national assembly representing their views.

The separate structure of the women's wing is enthusiastically endorsed by both male and female members of the JI, who commonly insist that it provides women the opportunity for complete decision-making and responsibility over their own affairs. Women members are insistent that they do not consider themselves "beneath" the main body, since they have their own *shura*, or deliberative council, and attend joint meetings with the JI's male members when necessary.[36] Yet the structure of the women's wing as a parallel, semi-autonomous body within the JI is seen by many as a means of separating women—and women's issues more generally—from the mainstream party rather than incorporating them. According to a report jointly compiled by UNDP-Pakistan and Aurat Foundation, "The women's wing of Jamaat-e-Islami is a totally separate entity, since women have no presence or representation in the main body, other than the general secretary of the women's wing, who is ex-officio member of the central consultative committee of the main party."[37] The report raises an important point: while perhaps not "beneath" the main shura, the women's wing is indeed merely a part of it. Thus, using the terms "male" and "female" wings—which a parallel system of governance would suggest—is inaccurate. However, to the Jamaat members, such a separation is not an indication of inequality but rather a sign of the implementation of religiously-mandated gender segregation—i.e., of purdah.[38]

The secretary general of the women's wing is on par with the secretary general of the main party, and she attends the party's main executive meetings. There are 25 executive members of the women's wing, and each province has its own female *nazim*. Estimates suggest that there are over 900,000 form-filled registered members, with the lowest rung of members comprising the "workers" (*karkun*), the second the "nominees" (*jamudwar*) and finally, the "pillars" (*rukun*). The 3000 rukun of the Halq-e-Khawateen form the nucleus, or core, of the party. The karkun are asked to focus their attentions on religious learning, and emphasis is placed on making them "better

Muslims"—that is, aware of Islamic fundamentals. After having arrived at a certain level of religious knowledge, Jamaat workers may be nominated to become rukun—but only after a thorough check has been made of their daily living habits and lifestyles. This lifestyle check includes such issues as whether or not the woman offers daily prayers, whether she is under purdah, and whether she can adequately demonstrate her belief in Islam.[39] The promotion from a karkun to a rukun can take many years and requires the Jamaat to monitor the women closely so as to ensure that their homes and mindsets are "ready" and do not transgress Islamic principles.[40]

The party's monitoring of a woman's personal life as a prerequisite for participation in the party is indicative of similarities between the JI's women's wing and other Islamist groups, such as the missionary movement Tablighi Jamaat. In fact, much of the JI's recruitment is achieved through *dars,* or an occasion in which religious principles are explained to an audience.[41] During parliamentary sessions, the JI's representatives in the National Assembly would even set up *darisat* (plural of dars) in the women's lounge of the parliament, and they would urge women parliamentarians of all parties to attend.[42]

The main role of the Halq-e-Khawateen consists of spreading religious knowledge among housewives. Its political role is secondary. This contrasts starkly with the Jamaat-e-Islami's central shura, where religion and politics are much more clearly intertwined. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that even though the JI is a political party, the central basis for participation in the Jamaat is religious belief. In her analysis of the Jamaat's influence among rural women in Bangladesh, Elora Shehabuddin argues that the Jamaat tried to improve its election record by convincing voters that a vote for the Jamaat was equivalent to a vote for God and Islam. By supporting the Jamaat, it was argued that the voters were guaranteeing themselves a place in heaven.[43] Similarly, in Pakistan, the Jamaat has been accused of being a party that acts not on behalf of the people or their material interests, but rather on behalf of what it determines to be God's interests.[44] Thus, religious belief remains a primary motivating factor for women who decide to join the JI. After their initial entry into the party, a woman's participation in politics, beginning at the provincial level, appears to be a natural corollary of the structure that has been set up.[45]

Male Proxies or Autonomous Individuals?

THE OTHER SOURCE OF HEAVY RECRUITMENT FOR THE HALQ-E-KHAWATEEN IS among female relatives of the JI's male membership. Many offer this as proof that the women's wing is simply a mouthpiece put in place to advance the JI's male-driven agenda. For example, an opinion piece in Pakistan's English newspaper *The*

Daily Times argued this point by suggesting that while the women's wing has "been accepting of its 'B' status and unapologetic for it ... they have historically taken very informed, radical positions on women's issues, particularly sexual oppression of women by men ... Unfortunately, when they were made proxies, they were unable to adhere to this ideological position, evident in their silence on the Mukhtaran Mai case" (involving a victim of gang rape whose ordeal became the focus of national attention—though not for JI). The article concluded, the JI's women's "agenda has not become any less regressive, yet they have learned the art of fitting in with a state that is likely to always remain patriarchal."[46]

Nonetheless, the women's wing of the Jamaat differs substantially from that of other political parties in Pakistan today, and has little in common with the country's other significant religious party, the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islami—Fazlur Rahman (or JUI-F, the rurally-based Deobandi movement). In fact, the JUI-F had no women's wing to speak of until 2004, and JI women parliamentarians take pains to distinguish themselves from the parliamentarians of their former coalition partners. While the general impression held by many political observers in Pakistan about women parliamentarians of religious parties is that they came "straight from the kitchen to the national assembly,"[47] this description is hardly accurate of the JI MNAs. Their women parliamentarians are mostly professional women with relevant educational backgrounds. Far from accepting the family connections inherent in Jamaat membership (of the previous female MNAs, four have been related to Qazi Hussain Ahmed, the former JI amir), Jamaat members hold up their internal structure as an indication of their party's true democratic nature—which contrasts sharply with the mainstream parties. The voting structure for *zila,* district, provincial and national representatives is democratic, with a ballot system in which secret and silent ballots are passed around.[48]

Even though women members have the right to vote and could potentially be seen as equal members in the Jamaat-e-Islami, they are nonetheless expected to act within certain boundaries, ever cognizant of their respective roles in the party's structure. Simply put, this means that the women's wing is limited to playing leadership roles only in certain facets of the JI's overall program. Of these, social work is high on the list. Even a cursory look at the Halq-e-Khawateen's publications would indicate that social work is the mainstay of the wing's role within the larger party structure. Indeed, the women's wing focuses its efforts in the fields of education (they run a number of schools and madaris), health, legal aid, the provision of inheritance, and providing a true picture of Islam through cross-cultural dialogue.[49]

Women's issues also comprise an important part of the Jamaat's mandate. Both the women's wing and the central secretariat routinely express their concerns over the economic exploitation of women, the lack of health opportunities provided to

them, as well as their frequent sexual exploitation. Parliamentary records indicate that both male and female JI senators have taken the government to task on the increased incidents of violence against women. A news report, for instance, stated that JI members "Babar Awan, Prof Khurshid Ahmed and Latif Khosa grilled the government on the growing trend of sexual harassment of women at workplaces, and for protecting police officials involved in such cases. They stated that not a single police official has been convicted in any such case so far."[50] Despite this advocacy, the Jamaat stands by its position that the problems women allegedly face in the country are widely exaggerated and part of a ploy against Islam by the West and westernized elements. When confronted with statistics and stories related to gang rape, honor killings and other societal ills, JI members routinely respond that while such instances may happen occasionally, the "reality isn't that bad."[51] More pointedly, they claim that the news reports and statistics on violence against women in Pakistan is nothing more than "NGO propaganda" with which the western-dominated media bombards Pakistanis.

In fact, Jamaat members argue that the situation of women is comparatively much worse in the Western world, where domestic violence, rape and sexual harassment in the workplace is purported by the Jamaat to be endemic. In a recent interview, a Jamaat rukun boasted that while only 20 percent of women in England are aware of their husband's incomes, 80 percent of women in Pakistan know about their husband's financial situation and this, to the JI, indicates a way that women are "dominant" over their husbands.[52]

According to a publication entitled "Human Rights for Women," issued by a JI-affiliated NGO called Women Aid Trust, "centuries old customs and traditions firmly entrenched in feudal and tribal culture" do occasionally result in "honor killings [happening] every now and then."[53] But on the whole, the pamphlet emphasizes the positive role played by the traditional Pakistani family structure:

> The brothers make sure that their sisters are given due respect and they are well protected, while fathers bend over backwards providing safe shelter to their daughters. As the sons leave no stone unturned to treat their mothers with deference trying to seek heaven under their feet and the husbands make every effort to fulfill their obligations towards their wives. Similarly, at public places it has been witnessed that on the whole women are treated with respect.[54]

The JI's agenda on women's issues, therefore, is predominately economic in nature; the lack of safe drinking water, for instance, is frequently cited as the number one problem facing women in Pakistan. Additionally, much of the JI's political work on

gender is reactive rather than proactive in nature; it is intended to counter bills passed by "westernizing" elements and that represent efforts to degrade what the party perceives as the essential Islamic nature of Pakistani society. Thus, the JI's emphasis on women, particularly in the political sphere, is largely a response to actions perceived to have a negative impact on family responsibility and "traditional" societal roles.

The JI's Women Parliamentarians

WHILE SOCIAL ISSUES REMAIN THE MAIN FOCUS OF THE HALQ-E-KHAWATEEN (and one which JI members as a whole appear most willing to speak about), their presence in the last parliament lent them a very visible political role as well. The 17 percent representation of women in Pakistan's National Assembly and Senate, as well as provincial government, and 33 percent in the three tiers of local governance, was widely hailed as a step forward in the eventual realization of women's rights in Pakistan. The 2002 government saw 60 women enter the National Assembly on reserved seats, while 12 were given general tickets. Of the 60 reserved seats, 13 were members of the MMA and six of these were Jamaat-e-Islami members.

In part due to their party's ideology, JI's women parliamentarians fail to acknowledge any explicit link between women's rights and women's political representation. In fact, most women members of the Jamaat-e-Islami insist that reservations of 17 percent and 33 percent in national and local levels of government respectively are unnecessarily high. Their arguments for this position range from the assertion that women's problems will not be solved simply by putting more women in parliament, to claims that are merely indicative of their party position—i.e., that women's political representation should not be a goal in and of itself. Why these women choose to seek these parliamentary seats, despite their beliefs, betrays a contradictory attitude; it also indicates the extent to which their representation has been party-determined and their mandate, once in office, party-driven. Jamaat members stand by their position that women's participation in political life should be a natural and gradual process, keeping in mind the norms of society and culture and the respective roles of men and women.

The JI's women parliamentarians have been accused of being biased and contradictory by members of other political parties. In 2005, for instance, the JI banned women from standing in local elections in Dir, prompting a human rights activist to complain that "If Jamaat-e-Islami chief Qazi Hussain Ahmad's daughter sits in the assembly, it is Islamic and 'very good,' but if a woman contests elections in Dir, this is un-Islamic and banned."[55]

Female MNAs of different parties have also clashed with JI parliamentarians over issues related to women's rights. Sherry Rahman, a well-known MNA from the Pakistan's People's Party (PPP), while speaking about the lack of support among JI and others for a progressive women's bill that she introduced, stated,

> While it is true that many women colluded in opposing my Empowerment of Women Bill or even our Honour Killings Bill, they did so as members of political parties, bound by the regressive political culture of their organizations. Some did it out of misplaced ideological commitments, like the MMA women for instance, who seem to have little voice in their own parties' decision-making bodies but are used as shock troops by their own male party leaders to attack progressive women and all the baggage of reform we try to bring with us into parliament.[56]

While Sherry Rahman's remarks may be debated, they bring to light a central issue: the need for women to play a leadership role within their respective party structures prior to their entering the political sphere. Dr. Farzana Bari has argued that a lack of training and experience leads women political members to rely on their male counterparts. She states, "In the absence of their own constituency, and political training, it is highly likely that they will be dependent on the male leadership of their political parties." These arguments are certainly tenable, and members of all parties have generally demonstrated a strict adherence to party policy. Nonetheless, if the party mandate were something in which women party members had a larger, more definitive say, then the question about whether or not they are carving out an autonomous role would nearly become a moot point. Their very presence would indicate that they are not mere party partisans or male proxies. Yet in the case of the Jamaat, questions about whether women have the authority to contradict or disagree with male members on party issues are easily countered: because the party is ideologically-driven, and because the source of authority for all JI members is the same (the Quran and Maududi's writings), there is no room for disagreement.

For their part, the JI's women parliamentarians have not been a silent presence in the National Assembly. Parliamentary records are replete with statements made by Jamaat MNAs and Senators. Because the JI's position is that women's problems in Pakistan are widely exaggerated, and because they are ideologically committed to resisting anything that smacks of "westernization," their positions in parliament have often been in counter response to other member's bills, and they have frequently behaved as adversaries to the other reserved seat women. For instance, birth control became a hotly debated issue in parliament, where "liberal" women were

pitted against "conservative" women of the JI and other religious parties. Dubbed a "nefarious plan by the West" to reduce the number of Muslims in the world, family planning was portrayed by the Jamaat as just another example of Pakistan's attempted emulation of the West.[57] Women JI parliamentarians loudly contested the provision of birth control methods at local chemist stores, and demanded that women seeking any of these be required by the chemists to show their *nikah namaah* (marriage certificate) as proof of their marriage.

In some debates, women's rights within the ambit of Islam were addressed by JI's female parliamentarians. While they accused "secular" parties of trying to get rid of Islamic influence in Pakistan, the Jamaat members tried to advance new policy proposals within the context of Islamic values. For instance, the Jamaat's MNAs tried to set up a system of providing transport for working women. This was aimed at giving women the support they need in an environment which is not necessarily suited to them. Rather than attempting to change the environment, which was hostile to women, the JI instead tried to ease the situation for women in the status quo.

During her time in the senate, the secretary general of the JI's women's wing, Dr. Kauser Firdos, proposed five bills, two of which related to women. One of them dealt with providing greater opportunities for women's employment on a part-time basis. According to Dr. Firdos, 70 percent of newly trained doctors in the country are female, but only a much smaller percentage of these trained medical personnel are joining the workforce. Therefore the Jamaat-e-Islami's position was that the state was investing in these women's education without reaping any social returns. Of course, by requiring women to work on a full-time basis, the state would effectively beencouraging them to neglect what the JI believes is the women's primary duty as homemakers. In line with their ideology, therefore, the Jamaat recommended increasing part-time employment opportunities (as opposed to full-time) so that women can work (if they so desire) while also fulfilling their home responsibilities as their first priority.

In this way, the women parliamentarians, like the women's wing, sought to bring the general discourse on women's rights and legislation within the ambit of Islam. Nonetheless, JI members made clear that the ideal situation was one in which men were the leaders, exceptions notwithstanding. The overall refrain was straight out of Maududi's texts: women's first priority is the home and her family and her political responsibilities shouldn not intervene with this responsibility. Women should remain within purdah—they should refrain from speaking loudly and out of turn in the presence of men, and they should avoid work unless it is necessary.

The disconnect between theory and practice, however, was obvious. Jamaat MNAs admitted that it was difficult to juggle both their party responsibilities and their family responsibilities. But they insisted that Pakistani culture and tradition allowed

for this because their female relatives were always present to help out in the home. In addition, parliamentarians routinely argued that their political work was essentially religious in nature and on these grounds, it was justified to spend time away from the home and involved in such activities. To justify the women's wing's frequent protests on various social and political issues on the streets of Islamabad and Peshawar, for example, Dr. Firdos was quoted as saying, "Quran allows women to come out of their homes to fulfill religious obligations, as guarding Islam is both the duty of Muslim man and woman so women in great number will come out of their houses to prove to the world that the US wicked action has hurt their feelings."[58]

The Women's Protection Bill

IN RECENT YEARS, ONE OF THE MORE CONTROVERSIAL BILLS DEBATED IN PARLIAMENT was what became known as the Women's Protection Bill. It was passed by the National Assembly on November 15, 2006, ratified by the Senate on November 23 and signed into law by President Musharraf on December 1, 2006. The bill was proposed to amend passages of the Hudood Ordinance, which, since its promulgation in 1979, has been a focal point of much agitation between religious parties and women's rights activists. The Hudood Ordinance is seen as particularly controversial for its failure to differentiate between *zina* (adultery) and *zina bil jabr* (rape). If a rape victim is unable to provide four witnesses to the crime, as required under the Ordinance, she can be tried for adultery. The punishment for adultery is lashings and stoning, neither of which has ever been implemented in Pakistan, although women continue to languish in jail because of this law.

The Protection of Women Act of 2006 was the first actual change ever made to the Hudood Ordinance, and although far from being a total repeal of the law, was nonetheless resisted fiercely by JI members and the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) coalition as a whole. Vowing to boycott the assembly if the bill was passed, the MMA created an uproar, taking two approaches. The Jamaat/MMA challenged the bill on the basis that it was a revision of the divine word of the Quran and therefore unconstitutional. It cited articles 2a and 227 of the Constitution of Pakistan, which state respectively that "Islam will be the state religion" and "No laws will be passed which are repugnant to the Koran and the Sunnah."[59] (If JI members admitted that problems did exist in the Hudood Ordinance, they were described as merely procedural and thus, the ordinance was harmful to women only in its implementation, not in principle. Members of the Jamaat were willing to acknowledge revision of some of the lacunae in the ordinance, as long as they served only to make procedural, rather than substantive, changes.)

Secondly, the Jamaat argued that there was, in the end, nothing in the proposed Protection of Women Act that was designed to "protect" the sanctity of women in their roles as guardians of Islamic tradition, and that, as a consequence, its passage would result in the creation of a "free sex zone" around the country. In this second line of argument, the JI cited procedural changes that were made to the Hudood Ordinance that would serve to worsen, in their minds, the plight of rape victims. For instance, the bill requires rape victims to register not with the police but with the courts, making it more difficult for women from rural areas to reach these courts. When they did, they would be faced with a much more bureaucratic system. Additionally, Jamaat members argued that changing the legal age of an adult to 18 years old meant that women who are raped below that age cannot file their cases as adults, making it much harder to protect their rights.[60]

Throughout the parliamentary debates, the JI steadfastly maintained its position that linking the Hudood Ordinance to the suffering of women in the country was unfair and that, in fact, violence against women in Pakistan was somewhat of a non-issue. The JI repeatedly denied the existence of violence against women, deeming such reports as products of a Western conspiracy against the Islamic tradition and identity of Pakistan. When questioned about honor killings, or instances of gang rape (such as the widely publicized case involving the gang rape of Mukhtaran Mai), JI women members were quick to argue that such instances are rare and hardly indicative of a general societal ill.[61] Blaming a Western-inspired "NGO conspiracy," JI parliamentarians also dismissed arguments that women were languishing unjustly in jail on the basis of the Hudood Ordinance. As one MNA argued, "Women are in jail for lots of other issues too. Drugs. Smuggling. And no one has gotten tried under the Hudood. There are other major laws, why not focus on those instead?" The bill to protect women, JI members argued, aimed to eliminate the Islamic character of Pakistan and divert public attention away from "real issues" faced by women, such as inheritance, price rises, unemployment and lawlessness.

The debate surrounding the Women's Protection Bill reflected the divergent worldviews between the religious political parties, on the one hand, and the so-called secular parties on the other. In effect, the debate over the Women's Protection Bill became a function of these two competing views: it was deemed important not because of the changes it made in the daily lives of women, but because of what it represented about the role of the West and modernity in Islamic Pakistan. The epicenter of the discussion was not what would be in the best interest of women, but whether the Hudood Ordinance and its modification was Islamically-sanctioned or not. A Jamaat MNA argued, "If we don't know about a law, we shouldn't talk about it."[62] During parliamentary proceedings, a male MMA senator similarly stated that they would be held accountable before God for the promulgation of anti-Islamic

laws. By bringing the practical discussion over how to improve women's lives so firmly into the realm of religion, therefore, the issue of how to advance women's rights was avoided entirely by the JI.

Conclusion

THE WOMEN MEMBERS OF THE JAMAAT-E-ISLAMI, AND THE VERY EXISTENCE OF women in Pakistan's religious right as a whole, pose a fundamental conundrum for feminists who would prefer to see the women's rights struggle as one between oppressed women and oppressive men. JI women seek to explain the problems facing women in Pakistan as a result of the creeping penetration of Western influence, and they routinely downplay abuses against women, pursuing instead an agenda steeped in the ideology of purdah, or segregation of the sexes according to an idealized view of the Islamic past.

The competition between these Islamist and progressive ideals, and the rise of women in the Pakistani religious right over the last several decades in particular, reflect a fundamental dichotomy of modernity and tradition that has deep intellectual roots. In his book *Purdah and the Status of Women in Islam*, Maududi argued that "the people who oppose purdah in our country and in the other Eastern countries have a somewhat similar concept of life in their minds."[63] He explicitly linked these so-called "modern" people in the East with a Western way of life and mentality that, as he saw it, was conspiring to undermine Islamic tradition. He further sought to establish the JI as the guardian of this idealized Islamic tradition, and thus placed the movement in stark opposition to the "Western" groups within Pakistani society who have, among other things, advocated for greater women's rights.

Throughout its history, the JI's relationship to women has remained largely contradictory, as it has been based more on responding opportunistically to various political developments than on strict adherence to its Islamist doctrine. The organization's recognition of the political utility of bringing women into their sphere of influence and providing a place for them within their religious ideology and political activities coincided with the growth of the women's rights movement. In this way, the JI has learned to operate, sometimes with great effectiveness, to advance its Islamist agenda within the context of the modern political system. Nonetheless, the JI tends to define these deviations from its ideology as necessary evils undertaken for the advancement of its Islamist agenda rather than as changes to its core belief system, including its ideology of purdah.[64]

The Islamist and progressive sides in debates over women's issues have since been involved in a tug-of-war, each attempting to stake their claim on the lives of

Pakistan's women.[65] Women's involvement in religious movements has historically taken different forms, not all of which are extremist in nature (as illustrated by the general case of JI). However, this involvement is reflective of a larger trend within Pakistani society toward a political orientation rooted in religious principles. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism—increasingly among women—is intricately related to a communal and collective failure to understand the motivations to join these ranks. In important ways, this struggle between Islamist and modern conceptions over women's roles and place in society is central to a much larger discussion over Pakistan's future. In a nation increasingly torn apart by disagreement about the relationship between religion and political life, much will depend on whether influential religious parties like the JI can rethink the manner in which they choose to function within a modern and plural political system.

In the end, by failing to hold Islamists accountable for their actions—as was clearly evidenced in the JI's response to the Taliban's violence against the teenage girl in Swat—the JI reveals that it is committed to a political course that effectively places Pakistan's modern achievements at risk. And moreover, by moving the public conversation away from one rooted in individual rights to allegations of Western conspiracies against Islam, the JI has also contributed to a wider Pakistani political culture of victimhood that habitually shirks responsibility for dealing honestly and effectively with the country's own problems. Ultimately, this kind of politics will deal nothing but more damage to the position of Pakistan's women, and to the nation as a whole.

NOTES

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The Primacy of Values

A Conversation with Ibrahim al-Houdaiby

THE IMPORTANCE OF EGYPT'S MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD CAN HARDLY BE exaggerated. Since its formal creation over eighty years ago, the Brotherhood (MB) has served as a definitive intellectual and organizational model for nearly all other manifestations of Islamism around the globe.

In Egypt today the Brotherhood exists as a quasi-illegal movement that portrays itself—and not without some truth—as the largest and most successful force of political opposition to the Egyptian regime. In 2005, the MB swept Egypt's legislative elections winning 20 percent of parliamentary seats. This was the biggest win ever for any opposition group—and it happened despite the repressive and fraudulent measures taken by the Egyptian regime and the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP) to thwart the MB's electoral campaign.

Yet over the last five years, the Brotherhood has been unable to capitalize on its electoral successes. A series of secessions and internal feuds over governance and the movement's future direction have taken the massive and moribund organization by storm. In light of this internal crisis, the transformation of the MB's structure and intellectual platform—and consequently, of Islamism within Egypt and elsewhere—would seem necessary if the movement is to survive as a political party with popular appeal.

Ibrahim al-Houdaiby has a unique perspective on this matter. His great-grandfather, Hassan al-Houdaiby, became the MB's second General Guide after Hassan al-Banna, the founder and theoretical godfather of the movement, was assassinated in 1949. Hassan al-Houdaiby, a reputable and revered judge, established within the MB a tradition of non-violent political engagement with the Egyptian regime; his seminal book *Du'atun la Qudah* (*Preachers not Judges*) is seen by many as the authoritative counter-

argument to the revolutionary ideas of the infamous Brotherhood ideologue Said Qutb. Mamoun al-Houdaiby, Hassan's son and Ibrahim's grandfather, would later become the MB's sixth General Guide during the turbulent years of 2002-2004.

Despite his family's heritage, Ibrahim quit his position in the Brotherhood as an editor of its English language website for reasons he did not wish to disclose. He has since emerged as one of the MB's most outspoken Islamist critics. Ibrahim, who was born in 1983, is widely seen as a rising Islamist leader who also represents a new generation in Egyptian politics that has become disenchanted with the established ways of doing things and keen on finding practicable alternatives. The conversation with Ibrahim al-Houdaiby (I.H.) that follows was conducted with Amr Bargisi (A.B.), an Egyptian journalist and senior partner with the Egyptian Union of Liberal Youth, an organization established to promote classical liberalism within Egypt.

The Brotherhood's Crisis

A.B. How do you characterize the recent feud over internal elections in the MB?

I. H. The crisis originates in the dispute over the general direction of the MB, concerning its composition, function and objectives. There are three contesting ideological schools in the MB. The first derives directly from Hassan al-Banna's intellectual foundation, which was an extension of a reform movement within Al-Azhar, the famous Sunni theological seminary based in Cairo. The second revolves around Said Qutb's ideas, and focuses mainly on political organization. The third, which invaded the Islamist movement and, indeed, Egyptian society in its entirety since the 1970s, is Wahhabism, which is essentially materialistic and externalistic in its approach to Islam.

The MB was always able to reach a compromise between competing ideological schools with the help of its historic leadership, which included a founding generation that derived part of its authority from the fact that it had worked with Hassan al-Banna in one way or another. In the past few years, two things have been going on simultaneously. First, the MB's founding generation is becoming extinct, while the process of institutionalizing the movement is still immature. The organizational bylaws of the MB were not published and virtually unattainable, even by members, until a few months ago. Without clear organizational rules, the decline of the leadership's historical legitimacy had to end in internal conflict over a new source of legitimacy.

Second, the strategic vision of the MB has been blurred by incessant compromises both within the organization as well as with the regime. There is no clear conception of the MB's ultimate objectives: is the MB a political organization seeking public office or is it a social movement with no interest in direct political engagement? Or is the MB at most a pressure group? All of these models exist indecisively in Hassan al-Banna's work, but the founder's writings remain ambiguous about which model is best for the movement.

This vagueness over strategic objectives has affected the MB's recruitment heavily, as it allows for an indefinite caliber of recruits being admitted to the organization. These recruits join for a range of personal reasons, with some looking for spiritual salvation, and others looking for political reform, for social alternatives or for material benefit, etc. This looks exactly like a man who is eating too much, putting on weight under the illusion that it's muscle where it is purely fat. Once the MB decides to move in any direction, it will have to lose a great deal of this weight.

This has led to the Brotherhood's adoption of a defensive strategy that aims at nothing else but the preservation of the organization. Said Qutb's ideas, stressing withdrawal from larger society, or "un-Islam," are vital to this tendency, but ideas thrive only in fertile soil. The monopoly the MB holds on the Islamist arena in Egypt has created a context where the unity of the organization takes priority at the expense of ideas and sometimes even ethics. I don't doubt these people's sincerity, but I can't accept oxymoronic concepts like "lying for God"—i.e. justifying lying to protect the organization—which a few members of the organization often resort to.

A.B. But the MB's monopoly over Islamism cannot explain the movement's tendency to prioritize the survival of the organization, since all other political groups suffer the same problem.

I. H. This is due to the highly restrictive social and political environment imposed by the regime, allowing for a limited number of political entities to legally exist. The MB is the one major entity that exists illegally, and the regime makes sure that it remains unified, violently crushing any potential Islamist alternative.

A.B. But the legal context also does not fully explain this trend. This might have been the case a while ago, when there was a desperate need to protect organizations from repressive measures. But now, especially with the new era of openness in

Egyptian society that was introduced with the political reforms of 2005,[1] this organizational protectionism is no longer a practical measure, but rather an irrational obsession.

I. H. I agree. A member of the Guidance Bureau has given us one peculiar example of this irrationality with a recent article. He wrote that "insightful people know that the MB is neither a means nor an end, it's a duty."[2] They are trying very hard to avoid any questions about the purpose of the organization.

A.B. Back to the MB's internal crisis: my intuition is that the fight is essentially ideological and not organizational.

I. H. This is hard to judge. For many people, the organizational questions define ideology. The Brotherhood's mentality—and the Egyptian mentality in general—has become unable to discern ideological contradictions, and therefore, ideas are not by any means a core issue. One Brotherhood legislator declared on TV that "the MB no longer adopts violence since the publication of *Du'atun La Qudah*." But fewer new MB recruits read *Duatun La Qudah* than those who read Said Qutb's *Maalim Ala At-Tareeq* (*Milestones*). More dangerously, those who read both are not able to grasp the contradiction between their different teachings. The official MB mouthpiece, *Ikhwan Online*, disseminates many contradictory messages, and you find commentators praising everything brainlessly. This is not to suggest the MB members adopt violence in any way. They don't. Their understanding of Qutb's writings does not include the use of violence, only detachment from the society, focus on organizational empowerment and building a strict Islamic organization.

A.B. The absurdity of Egyptian politics is not limited to the MB. Take the word "democracy," for instance. It has come to mean nothing at all—we know that it's something "good," but nothing else.

I. H. This is another good example. When a group of members defied one decision by the General Guide, they hailed this defiance as democratic, although it was, in this particular case, an outrageous breach of the organization's bylaws. However, assuming that the conflict is purely ideological between "conservatives" and "reformers" is superfluous. The division itself is naive; I am trying to come up with a more coherent classification. I would first divide members of the MB over religious views—including conservative or moderate; second, over political behavior—such as principled ideological or pragmatic organizational; and third on moral behavior—including ethical or utilitarian.

Revision or Conservation?

A.B. The MB at its earliest stages was in spirit closer to Western religious conservative movements; regardless of political organization, it was focused on the concepts of honor, integrity, chastity, honesty, etc. The major question facing the MB, before it fell victim to repression and took recourse to the aforementioned defensive and inward-looking strategy, was how to modernize while hanging on to *Turath*—that is, the heritage of Islamic scholarship and civilization. Today, this is still an important question, as a large sector of the MB audience is very similar to their predecessors in 1928, the year the MB was founded. The MB's penetration is highest in rural areas, small towns and college dorms. In a modern context, the MB member was for a long time "the stranger." There is, however, a new element of MB activists who are, like you, already modernized and globalized.

I. H. True. I once accompanied a senior member of the Brotherhood to a huge shopping mall in Cairo and asked him to take a look around and tell me if the MB knows how to talk to these people. He had no answer. But in the past few years, two developments of great importance took place. First, the greater openness of Egyptian society since 2005 has forced young Islamist activists—people who would, for instance, previously have refused to act alongside unveiled female demonstrators—to engage with society on new terms, and to participate in a new youth activist culture that involves all colors of the socio-political spectrum including unveiled women. Once these religious activists realized they were not angels and that everyone else were not devils, they had to rethink the preconceptions of the "God bless you community," as my shaykh calls it—i.e. the community of the sanctimonious and ever-pious. The second is the emergence of cyberspace transcending all social and economic barriers.

A.B. When I imagine you in Said Qutb's shoes on his infamous visit to America, I imagine you would behave differently than he did. There are certain things about modern life that you, just as others from the new generation of Islamists, appear to take for granted, and no longer see as alien as Qutb did. For example, you will not, as Qutb once did, visit a museum simply to observe how Americans react to art. You would go to enjoy yourself regardless of other people's reactions. The questions that you ask of yourself and of your society must be different as modernity for you is no longer a source of confusion—as it was for Qutb.

I. H. Absolutely. My major question is concerned with the "ultimate ethical reference" or the "guiding value system." For instance, despite my strong belief in *hijab* as an Islamic obligation for women, I have a very negative opinion of the recent prevalence of *hijab* in Egypt. Islamists attacked the West for its objectification of the female body, but the Islamists have reverted to the same exact discourse: instead of using the body as a commodity as they argue western society does, the Islamists call it a "jewel" that should be covered and safeguarded for the pleasure of the husband. Nowadays, the Islamists measure their success by the number of veiled women in the street, where the value system that forced these women to cover their heads is as far from Islam as public nudity is. What matters to me is to escape the materialism of Western Modernity that reduces Man to one dimension and robs him of his human dignity and individuality.

A.B. Do you consider this approach of yours, which I believe is appealing to many others, a revision of the MB's foundations or a return to them?

I. H. It's a mixture of both. First, Hassan al-Banna started the MB when he was twenty-two years old and died when he was forty-two. Like us, when he started the group his views were far from maturity or completion, and indeed, historical testimonies show that he was on the verge of a revision of his own work just before his assassination. So it would be an enormous mistake to read all his work as if it were one solid and fixed statement. On one occasion, he wrote to the MB as a whole: "You are a new soul to the body of the Muslim Nation that shall revive it by Quran;" on another he said, "We are Islam"—which is a scary slogan. I try, rather, to review his work in the light of his own guiding principles, which are by no means far from my own approach. On the other hand, Hassan al-Banna is one of the manifestations of a much larger movement. It is unfair to ask him to provide for everything.

A.B. You want to read him with the help of Mohammed Abduh[3] and Rashid Rida[4]?

I. H. I have some reservations with Abduh, Rida and Jamaluddin al-Afghani;[5] they all represent variations of revolution against *turath*, or the heritage of Islamic scholarship. They have been privileged in our reading of modern Islamic thought because they were the ones most spoken to and about by the West. There are other scholars whom we seem to forget: Ibrahim Al-Bagoury, Selim al-Bishry, Hassouna An-Nawawy[6] and Yousef El-Digwy,[7] among others. There is a complex network of *turath* that cannot be reduced to Hassan al-Banna, no matter how important and influential he was. It is absurd to believe—following the official MB

discourse—that people thought Islam was nothing but prayer until Hassan al-Banna came around wearing Superman's cape and changed everything. It is enough to read the works of major thinkers of al-Banna's time to see how Islam influenced enormously the way they approached politics, society and economy. The main difference about Hassan al-Banna is that he decided to start an organization, and it was one of his major mistakes that he assumed the role of both the theoretical godfather and the leader of the organization. He should have expanded the MB's theoretical base to include others and focused on building the organization. Another, almost fatal, mistake of al-Banna's was keeping the different aspects of his project totally disconnected, with him being the sole connector, the only one capable of putting together the different pieces of the puzzle. After his assassination—and therefore, with the disappearance of the one link tying everything together—this became a huge problem as each branch of the MB started acting on its own. The most prominent example is the MB militia—the "Special Apparatus"—who considered themselves to be the sole representatives of Islam. They refused to comply with Hassan al-Houdaiby's decree to dissolve the militias, so they broke into his house and put a gun to his head.

Reading the Brotherhood's History

A.B. In light of this revision/return, how do you read the history of the Brotherhood?

I. H. I think the MB has two major problems with history—especially their history during the Nasserist era. First, they refuse to admit to any of their mistakes past the 1940s. Even when they do admit to certain mistakes—like the assassination of Judge Al-Khazindar[8] and Prime Minister Al-Noqrashy[9] in 1948—they insist that they were based on "misinterpretations" by the Special Apparatus of instructions from civil leadership. They never admitted that the very existence of the Special Apparatus was a mistake. The existence of this outfit has twice allowed for the emergence of an armed wing, which has been loosely connected to the MB's leadership. In 1954, an attempt to assassinate Nasser was discovered and then manipulated by the regime to deal a hammer blow to the Brotherhood as a whole and consolidate Nasser's grip over power. Then, in 1965, exactly the same scenario occurred again when an armed group led by Said Qutb was infiltrated and arrested just one day after they had acquired weapons.

Second, there is a persistent tendency towards secrecy among those who witnessed those turbulent events. The number of testimonies available is very limited,

making it very difficult to grasp and evaluate what actually happened. Now I have to make myself clear here: this Special Apparatus was originally established for the most honorable and moral purposes: resisting foreign occupation. I have nothing against that. But, as Tarek El-Bishry[10] notes, when organizations have political and military wings, military wings usually go out of control and make decisions on their own. They have the guns at the end of the day.

A.B. But the image is somewhat clearer after President Anwar Sadat allowed for the unofficial return of the MB?

I. H. Not really. We know that Sadat allowed some space for Islamists, particularly in the universities, to pursue social activism in exchange for supporting him in his fight against the Nasserists and the Communists. But Sadat didn't really empower the MB in any way; he intentionally gave space for the Wahhabists to counter-balance the MB. This eventually cost Sadat his life—as a violent combination of the ideas of the MB, Qutbism and Wahhabism emerged—despite the president's mastery of pragmatic calculations. On the other hand, it is still unclear what Umar El Tilmisany, the MB's General Guide at the time, had in mind. Various testimonies assert that he refused to reintroduce the MB as an official political party despite welcoming gestures from the regime. Was this part of a deal? Was it some form of political shrewdness? Or had he reached the conclusion that the MB should not pursue a political agenda?

A.B. It could not have been the latter. Once the MB got the chance, they contested the 1984 parliamentary elections in a fragile alliance with the Al-Wafd Party,[11] which was based on each party's attempts to manipulate the joint electoral list rather than on a concrete and common agenda.

I. H. True, but even when the MB had formed a deeper alliance with the Al-Amal Party in 1987,[12] the original question remained: why is the MB running for parliament in the first place? I am not for or against it; it just seems too ambiguous to me. Even in the 1990s, when the regime permitted the Brotherhood a large space for social action and *dawa* in its campaign to counter Islamist groups professing revolutionary violence, the vagueness of the MB's political position persisted.

A.B. This takes us directly to the MB's stunning electoral victory of 2005—a period in which you personally took part. The MB won 88 seats, the largest opposition win ever—and then after that success, there was an equally stunning failure of the MB to rise up to the occasion.

I. H. It's even worse than that. According to recent statements by the former General Guide Mahdi Akif, the regime early in the elections struck a deal with two members of the MB Guidance Bureau—without anyone else within the MB knowing—for a smaller but still significant number of seats. The result was an uncalculated rush during and after the first phase of the election, as the MB broke the deal they were not aware of, thereby provoking the regime to resort to violent measures in the next two phases. This is not to suggest that the MB does not have the right to pursue more seats, but only highlights the lack of strategic thinking within the MB. The question remains: why does the MB need 88 law makers? Even if you take the typical defensive strategy argument that leads the MB to seek a minimal "legal frontline," or a degree of legitimate political representation necessary to protect its interests, 10 members of parliament would've been sufficient. Instead, the MB was lured by the potential of unnecessary success, failing to notice that they are offering the regime a perfect pretext for more repression by waving the scarecrow of Islamism in the face of international and domestic protesters.

A.B. I also want to talk about parliamentary performance. After five years, very few among the 88 Brotherhood parliamentarians have proven successful.

I. H. Even before parliamentary performance, it is ridiculous that the legislation they proposed had nothing to do whatsoever with either the MB political program draft or the reform initiative of 2004. Most of the MB parliamentarians are merely preaching, but this is again dictated by the political context. The typical candidate is either a businessman or an imam. You or I would not be able to get 50 votes. But you don't even have to work from within the parliament; with 88 lawmakers the MB could have revolutionized politics in Egypt. At one time, I suggested they should knock on ordinary people's doors and say, "Hello, we're the MB. These are our law drafts and the issues discussed in the next parliamentary session. If you have suggestions, please come by our office." My argument is that ordinary people must feel they have some interest in politics.

A.B. This is a general problem in Egyptian politics—that Egyptians are excluded from any calculation except as variables you seek to control, regardless of their actual needs and aims.

I. H. And the MB's chance to change that has been lost. A few months from now, at election time, the MB will be asked about their achievements since 2005 and they will have nothing to say. If they say they helped with local services, it will be self-defeating since they would be challenging the NDP in its own game.

The MB possesses a formidable organizational machine that so far has been poorly utilized. The MB failed to affect the 2006 constitutional amendments, as it was lured by the regime into a futile conflict over the almost-redundant second article stating that Sharia is the major source for legislation. They failed to appoint even two or three women to the group's legislative council—a move that would've saved them from the ridiculous reiterations on women's rights. They failed to fully adopt and lead the agenda of the Egyptian national movement, and transform themselves from a mainstream Islamic movement to a mainstream national movement. They have not properly addressed the West. The failures of the MB, and of the Islamist movement in general, are enormous.

The Totality of Islam

A.B. Despite the failures you have just depicted, the Islamists, I argue, have achieved substantial success in the field of political theory—not so much in the development of their own theory, but in shaping how everybody else thinks about politics in Muslim societies. The argument that societies in which Islam is the religion of the majority need a particular Islamic theory of politics, or what I call "the Islamic Society Hypothesis," has become predominant among Islamists and non-Islamists alike.

I.H. Any attempt to explain and prescribe for human behavior on the basis of religion alone is utterly superfluous. There is a basic humanistic ground that defines all human beings. Religion, among other factors, introduces various differences among groups and individuals—yet the common ground for all humankind is still very wide. Despite this, I still have a firm belief in the "totality of Islam"—i.e. that Islam has to do with everything in my life.

A.B. But this "totality of Islam" is a faith-based principle; you still need a rational grounding to introduce your ideas in public.

I.H. Rationality is not value-free. I have the right to ground my arguments in my own value system, and I don't have to seek a false common ground with anyone. This also applies to you as a liberal; you don't have to justify your opinions from within Sharia, and neither do I for that matter. I take from the ethical foundation of Islam that my only obligation is not to contradict Sharia, which is not all that difficult. The space for difference and diversity in *turath* is almost infinite when it comes to practical politics, not to mention intellectual

efforts. I believe that there is not a single issue where the present Egyptian regime contradicts an Islamic jurisprudence consensus.

A.B. Does this mean that a projected Islamic Regime is one that takes its legitimacy from popular consent and not from scripture or the principle of God's absolute and indivisible sovereignty, *Hakimiyya*?

I. H. There is no need whatsoever to put these two sources of legitimacy in contradiction. I totally believe in the rule of Sharia but I reject any argument for its imposition by an authoritarian regime against the will of the people. Politics is the final manifestation of ideas, so if the Islamists cannot face certain ideas, minor or major, on the intellectual and social levels, they must allow for them to take political form. A pre-defined political space on the basis of scriptural or even popular legitimacy ends—as in the Iranian case—with excessive repression.

A.B. So what do you think is the role of the state in the Islamist approach?

I. H. First, there is no such thing as *the* Islamist approach. I endorse the guided caliphate,[13] the Abassids and the present Turkish regime as examples of government by Muslims. Personally, I don't have a specific conception of the role of the state; I think it changes according to the demands of society. I accept both the socialist and liberal models as possibilities, though I am leaning more towards the former, considering Egypt's development priorities.

A.B. Do you believe the state should engage in social engineering—for example, by pursuing Islamic *dawa*? Should there be a ministry of information or of culture, as is the case in Egypt at the moment? Should the state supervise education?

I. H. Ministries for information and culture—no, that's preposterous. Education—yes, to the extent that it helps to preserve the convention, not the unity, among the members of society. But I don't believe the state should be the sole provider of education. As for *dawa*, it is by no means the role of the state. It used to be so in the time of the original guided caliphate, but that was at a time when the state was much less sophisticated and much less dominant vis-à-vis society. One of the major problems of Islamist thought at the moment is that it's locked up in historical models which are, in my opinion, reflections of their historical context and not necessarily applicable to the present day.

A.B. Once again, it's not only the Islamists who suffer from this problem. There are

no concrete normative models from the far left to the far right; everyone sets out from empirical models, historical or contemporary.[14]

I.H. Exactly. You can't even generalize from a successful contemporary model, let alone the ridiculous argument made by some Islamists for one caliphate and one ruler which was never realized empirically. Consider the present Turkish model which, despite all pressures and reservations, provides an excellent example of a modern Islamic state. However, I don't think Turkey's model is applicable or even achievable in Egypt. If post-Ataturk Turkey had a strong discriminatory stance against Islamism and its ideals, Egypt's regime has a stance against its *opposition*. It's always easier to work out solutions when the conflict is ideological as opposed to structural or constitutional.

On the other hand, an Islamist normative approach is yet to emerge because the Islamist project itself is not complete. There are many fundamental questions that haven't been asked by Islamists as they are always excluded as secondary. This is largely due to the prevalence of Qutbism, which considers intellectual debate over concrete and practicable alternatives to be evidence of Islam's psychological and spiritual defeat by the West.

Islamism's Future

A.B. How do you see the future of the Muslim Brotherhood?

I.H. It is impossible to answer this question at the moment. The MB is facing forthcoming involuntary changes with every decision and every statement it makes. There are major issues at hand, particularly the parliamentary and presidential elections, in addition to less urgent but more complex social questions. However, my expectations are lower than my hopes.

A.B. What about the Islamist movement in general?

I.H. I think that if more political and social openness is introduced, the MB, as well as the less significant Islamist groups, will be totally transcended, as the Islamic reference will remain and will be manifested in more sophisticated and mature organizations and movements.

A.B. You don't see yourself as part of this development?

I.H. I hope. Although I believe this sort of development is beyond the writings or actions of individuals. It's the context that brings about the ideas—as was the case with Said Qutb, whose parochial and inward-looking thinking reflected the fact that he lived under Nasser's repressive rule. Today, the regime is pushing the Islamist movement away from moderation, especially with its insistence on keeping the Islamists away from Al-Azhar. I believe that Al-Azhar is the one institution that could transform the Islamist movement. If this policy of the regime toward blocking Islamism at Al-Azhar is pursued, the Islamist movement will increasingly revert to ignorance, fanaticism and seclusion.

A.B. Is there something you'd like to convey to the serious Western reader interested in Islamism?

I.H. First, generalizations are almost always false; even the basic concepts—like Sharia and jihad—have widely diverse interpretations. Second, anyone who studies Islamism from outside must first drop all the illusions of supremacy; they must see the issues as the Islamists see them. They must accept that the differences between their systems of values and those of the Islamists are not the outcome of them being on a higher step on the ladder of historical progress, but are rather deep intellectual and conceptual differences, and should not, therefore, be expected to vanish. Islamism is the offspring of a different human experience in a different historical context.

NOTES

1. The Egyptian regime—under heavy pressure from the Bush administration, among other factors such as social and economic change—introduced a series of political reforms in 2005, allowing for multi-candidate presidential elections for the first time and granting a much larger space for public debate in the media.
2. "On the Balance between formation and movement or individual and group—1," Dr. Mohammed Abdel Rahaman, Ikhwanonline.com, December 13, 2009. Available at: http://www.ikhwanonline.com/Article.asp?ArtID=57708&SecID=0
3. Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) was an Islamic reformer and Egyptian nationalist, known for his attempt to rationalize Islamic jurisprudence.
4. Muhammad Rashid Rida (1865-1935) was one of Abduh's dedicated disciples, often considered a forerunner of modern day Islamism.
5. Jamaluddin Al-Afghani (1838-1897) is widely considered as the godfather of modern pan-Islamism. His political ideas were very influential in Egypt as well as the rest of the Muslim world.

6. Ibrahim Al-Bagoury(1784-1860), Selim El-Bishry(1832-1916) and Hassouna An-Nawawy(1839-1924) were influential Islamic scholars and former Grand Shaykhs of Al-Azhar.
7. Yousef El-Digwy (1870-1948) was a renowned Islamic scholar. His most famous work, "Messages of Peace: a treatise on Islam," is available in English.
8. Ahmed Al-Khazindar was an Egyptian judge, assassinated in 1948 by the MB's Special Apparatus in retaliation for sentencing a group of MB militants to life in prison for attacking British soldiers.
9. Mahmoud Fahmy Al-Noqrashy was twice Prime Minister of Egypt, assassinated in 1948 by the Special Apparatus during his second term. Al-Noqrashy had dissolved the MB in the aftermath of the Palestine War (Israeli Independence War).
10. Tarek El-Bishry (1933-) is an Egyptian historian, Islamist thinker and former judge. His writings are very influential and respected, especially among academics. He is considered one of the major "moderate" Islamist intellectuals.
11. Al-Wafd is the oldest still-existing Egyptian political party. It was a dominant political force in the years before 1952. After the restoration of political parties in 1978, Al-Wafd, which has often been deemed "liberal," has played a major role as an opposition faction, only to witness significant decline with the rise of the MB and, more recently, non-partisan opposition movements.
12. The Al-Amal Party's original left-wing agenda was overshadowed by a de-facto take over by the Islamists since 1987. The Labor Party has been frozen by the government since 2000.
13. The original Muslim caliphate, led by Prophet Muhammad and the four "Rightly Guided-Caliphs."
14. For instance, the human rights movement in Egypt grounds itself in the International Instruments of Human Rights, but fails to offer any normative argument for the universality or validity of Human Rights.

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