
Introduction

Hezbollah, the Shiite Muslim 'Party of God', has transformed itself from a radical, clandestine militia to a moderate, mainstream political party with a resistance wing in the 17 years since its activities against the Israelis began. Underlying all of Hezbollah's actions are its claims of deep faith and a literal interpretation of God's words as expressed in the Koran. This has resulted in the pursuit of objectives 'sanctioned' by Islam such as waging war against the usurpers of Muslim lands and serving the public and their community, and has made Hezbollah a formidable opponent on the battlefield and in the political arena. Yet Hezbollah's successes on both fronts still clash with the terrorist label that has been applied to it by its adversaries – most notably Israel and the United States of America. *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism* is specifically concerned with the dynamics and outcomes of the terrorist/resistance controversy and whether American anti-terrorist policies will succeed in settling old scores with the Party of God and tipping the strategic balance at the Lebanese/Israeli frontier in favour of its ally.

Ever since the heavy loss of American lives in Beirut in the 1980s through car and truck bombs and an airplane hijacking, the Iranian-backed Shiite fundamentalist organization, Hezbollah, has denied involvement and tried to distance itself from those events, attempting to cast off the terrorist label imposed upon it by the USA and its allies at that time. In fact, fracturing the 'terrorist myth', as Hezbollah leaders call it, was considered vital to the leadership's plans to continue and develop the *jihad*¹ against Israel after its troops invaded Lebanon in 1982.

As events showed, allegations of Hezbollah's use of violence against Israeli troops who had occupied a strip of Lebanese territory were used several times to provide Tel Aviv with a rationale for marshalling international pressure and raining considerable destruction on Lebanon to halt the Shiite fundamentalists' military operations.

Today, two decades after the Israeli invasion and over 12 years after Hezbollah transformed itself from a radical, clandestine militia to a moderate, mainstream political party with a resistance wing; the country Hezbollah called 'an abomination' in 1985 – the USA – has renewed terrorist charges against it and given them teeth. As part of its war against global terrorism, the USA has threatened Lebanon with economic sanctions if the party's bank accounts are not frozen, and hinted at more 'direct action' to enforce its anti-terrorist campaign against Hezbollah.

The world's only superpower thus seems determined to shut Hezbollah's military operation down and remove its forces from the volatile Lebanese/Israeli frontier once and for all. Hezbollah leaders therefore have their hands full defending their organization against this serious American initiative.

In this book, I examine the struggle between Hezbollah and the American administration over whether the former is a terrorist group or a resistance force fighting Israeli occupation. Since these terms are politically loaded I weigh each side's argument against facts I have been able to uncover as a result of my research into this controversy.

My thesis is that Hezbollah developed two major strategies to combat these charges and that the deliberate implementation of those strategies during the past decade has allowed the party to change its terrorist face. This being the case, present United States foreign policy toward the Party of God therefore is not driven by an effort to halt terrorist acts against the Israelis as purported, but is rather an attempt by the American administration to settle old scores and relieve pressure on its ally as it grapples with the ongoing Palestinian uprising.

This thesis is supported in various ways. During the course of Hezbollah's 17-year struggle with Israel along the Lebanese/Israeli frontier in southern Lebanon, it has never been established by any party directly involved (including the United Nations contingent on the ground) that the Party of God has perpetrated a single terrorist attack against Israeli civilians. Highly conscious of the fact that accusations of terrorism would be used by the Israelis to try to halt the war of attrition being waged against them, Hezbollah leaders adopted and pursued a military strategy against Israeli military forces inside Lebanon's borders in which attacks against civilians meant to demoralize the government – a common definition of terrorism – had no place. Instead, guerrilla warfare techniques were used by the Party of God to achieve its primary mission – the removal of an illegal occupation. This strategy significantly undercut Israel's capacity to generate outrage against Hezbollah as a terrorist organization, while its successes elevated the Party of God to almost heroic status in Lebanon and throughout the Arab and Muslim

worlds. This has prompted the USA to think twice about any 'direct action' against the Party of God it may have had in mind.

The military strategy used against Israel, however, could not succeed on its own. It required the development of an interrelated political strategy that would sustain popular support during the lengthy period when Hezbollah's hit-and-run missions were slowly taking their toll and beginning to provoke massive retaliations from Israel. This popular support was vital in terms of countering Hezbollah's terrorist image, which was also founded on its links with Iran and Syria. Since a certain section of the Lebanese population opposed Syrian influences in their country after the civil war ended and feared Iran's influence on Hezbollah, the Shiite leaders recognized that something like a sustained public relations campaign would have to accompany the ongoing confrontation in South Lebanon. In fact, the Lebanese population would have to be persuaded that Hezbollah was no longer a radical Islamic militia that might try to replace the state with an Islamic republic if given any leeway. Hezbollah would therefore have to take every opportunity to prove that its transformation into a mainstream Lebanese party was authentic rather than opportunistic. Since this was a difficult undertaking in a country with a large Christian population, where secularism was well advanced among religious groups, Hezbollah's integration process required careful management to overcome the obstacles in its way.

I argue that this process was aided by various factors. First, Hezbollah's transformation and integration advanced the foreign policy goals of Iran, Syria, and Lebanon and therefore the Party of God received a great deal of support of varying kinds from these governments. However, that support was not sufficient to effect the party's thorough integration into Lebanese society, since many Lebanese were unhappy about the arrangement between their government and Syria or were fearful of a fundamentalist group in their midst that might try to change their country's secular status.

Second, Hezbollah leaders tried to overcome this hurdle by developing simultaneous strategies and tactics of accommodation with the Lebanese authorities and other Lebanese groups, and militancy toward Israel. This approach was helped by the fact that Hezbollah leaders chose to use considerable ideological flexibility to allay the suspicions of the liberal component of Lebanese society, by presenting their organization as a moderate, national party while still retaining its Islamic appeal and pious supporters. Moreover, projection of Arab and Lebanese identities and goals in addition to Islamic ones attracted new and diverse sympathizers, while deeply religious convictions, acts and Islamic discourse retained the loyalty of core constituents.

Third, pragmatic Hezbollah leaders were also able to adapt their organization to Lebanese political traditions and exploit the realities that imposed themselves after the 1989 Document of National Reconciliation achieved peace.

Fourth, the adoption of modern political techniques and new technologies to spread their message and expand their reach in many domains of national life and on the battlefield suited the psychological and material needs of the varying constituencies Hezbollah wished to mobilize. This eventually earned the party tolerance and respect.

Fifth, Hezbollah's development of a Media Department and satellite-connected television channel allowed it to constantly beam its message of resistance in Lebanon and throughout the Muslim and Arab worlds, where popular support for its fight against Israel was needed to insulate it from terrorist charges.

Sixth, strict adherence to 'rules' established by Syria to govern state/Hezbollah relations during conflict periods were an important means of warding off Israeli and American pressures on the Lebanese authorities to halt the party's military activities.

This analysis leads to conclusions about the future of Lebanon, Israel, Syria, and Hezbollah and the role of Islam in the region. It also covers the nature of terrorism and US involvement in the Middle East, and the likely impact of Hezbollah's jihad on the Palestinian *intifada*.

Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism differs from other works on Hezbollah by dealing in depth with its strategic and foreign policy thrust and focusing on the interrelationship, dynamics and manifestations of the terrorist/resistance controversy. In contrast, most recent books on Hezbollah have focused on the interplay of Shiite religious doctrine on the Party of God's political positions, Hezbollah's origins and development during the first decade of its existence and the party's alleged involvement in the terrorist activities that followed the 1982 Israeli invasion.²

The interesting development of Hezbollah into a mainstream party is also covered here. In 1990, Hezbollah faced a dilemma common to all radical parties that decide that a moderate political approach is more useful: this dilemma centres on how that transformation can be accomplished without losing the allegiance of core constituents, who are likely to view any relaxation in doctrine and goals as tantamount to treason.³ At the same time, transforming radical parties must allay the suspicions of other groups in society that this change is not merely opportunistic.⁴ The discussion of how Hezbollah handled this process and how well it was received in Muslim and Christian circles in the Lebanese population is as relevant to radical Irish splinter groups and the Basque ETA as it is to Palestinian fundamentalist organizations such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

Finally, this book fills an information gap on the politics of Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in 2001 and on the military tactics and media campaigns designed by the Party of God to speed up this withdrawal. Similarly, an analysis of the political and strategic repercussions of Hezbollah's actions has been neglected and is found herein. The analysis provides information about Hezbollah's present status and the solidity of Syrian/Lebanese and Iranian support for its continuing struggle with Israel.

The book also provides insights into America's anti-terrorist goals in Lebanon and the various means used by the Bush administration to cripple Hezbollah's jihad activities along the Lebanese/Israeli frontier. Why American policy failed and why and how it might succeed in the future are also part of the book's important conclusions, with implications for regional stability that have not been previously addressed.

For these reasons this book should be useful to scholars, practitioners and those simply interested in acquiring a better idea of Israel's problems with Hezbollah and how they relate to the broader Arab/Israeli conflict. Above all, I hope to provide a greater understanding of why Hezbollah is lionized in the Arab and Muslim worlds and condemned as a terrorist organization in Israel and the West.

Chapter One

Hezbollah's Version of Political Islam

Islam', 'Muslim', 'fundamentalist', 'jihad' – these words resonated in the USA, Europe and around the world and were associated with mindless terrorism after the catastrophes of 11 September 2001. When America's most wanted terrorist list was published on 10 October, men identified by US intelligence units as Hezbollah members were given top billing with al-Qaeda operatives and other master criminals. When looking at the photos published of the 22 Middle Eastern men in the 'terrorist rogues' gallery', a western friend confided that he had seen in their faces 'the very incarnation of evil'.

This is not, however, how many of these men are viewed in the Middle East, where I live. Hezbollah, for instance, is considered a legitimate resistance force all over the Arab and Muslim worlds. This contradiction raises an important question: does a common and fervently believed faith – in this case, Islam – lead to the adoption of a single ideology and a common goal and practice? In other words, is Hezbollah motivated by the same issues that inspire al-Qaeda, the Palestinian organization Hamas and other radical fundamentalist groups, and are the practices it has adopted to achieve its goals similarly terrorist in nature?

Before this question can be adequately addressed some information about the Muslim faith and the several issues that spurred its resurgence in the Middle East during the 1970s will be helpful.

ISLAM IN PERSPECTIVE

Mohammed Ibn Abdullah, born in Mecca of a noble family in 570 AD, was a tradesman until he reached the age of 40. At that time, the angel Gabriel appeared to him with revelations that he was to pass on to his family. Later, however, God commanded him to deliver his message to

all mankind and Mohammed thus became known as God's Messenger – the Prophet. The Muslim holy book, the Koran, is a compilation of the truths revealed by God to Mohammed. Since these truths cover all aspects of human existence, the Koran functions as a spiritual guide. Faithful Muslims also try to emulate the *sunnah*, the exemplary behaviour of the Prophet, consisting of statements, deeds and judgements. Orthodox Muslims consider neglect or deviation from these norms and principles as a return to *al-jahiliyyah* – the time of chaos and idol-worship that preceded Islamic society.

For a pious Muslim, there is no thought of any separation between religion and other aspects of life or between church and state. Politics are deeply and explicitly embedded in Islam because they are believed to be a critical part of social existence and community well-being. In fact, the religious community (*umma*) formed by the Prophet between 622 and 632 AD serves as an everlasting model of virtuous governance and human society since God's rules and principles were put into everyday practice there. One of the energizers of the religious revival that swept the Middle East in the 1970s was precisely the fact that governments were compared to the Islamic model that was believed to be the only answer to the many ills afflicting Middle Eastern life.

After Mohammed's death, a controversy broke out over leadership of the community of the faithful, since the Prophet had not designated a successor (*khalifah*, or Caliph). Choosing successors based on a consensus among the leaders of Mohammed's tribe, the Quraysh, solved this problem. Nevertheless, conquest and materialism soon entered the picture. When the third Caliph, Uthman, was killed during a mutiny in 656 AD, Mohammed's cousin and son-in-law, Ali, succeeded him. This resulted in some companions of the Prophet and his wife, whose relatives belonged to another tribe and opposed Ali's succession, eventually leaving the community. These defectors preached that anyone who closely followed God's laws might become Caliph and that it was not necessary to keep the line of succession within the Quraysh. Ali's supporters, on the other hand, insisted on the sanctity of the Prophet's line through Mohammed and his daughter, Fatimah. When one of these opponents, Muawiyah, assassinated Ali in 661, a split occurred between his partisans and the rest of the community, who constituted the majority and are known as the followers of Mohammed's *sunnah*, or Sunnites. Those who comprised Ali's faction were known as Shiites (*shiat Ali* – the faction of Ali). Since members of the two sects regarded each other as heretics, the Sunnite/Shiite division within the Muslim faith caused serious problems for some Muslims. For instance, in light of the persecution often visited upon them by Sunnite authorities, Shiites adopted dissimulation and political passivity as safeguards.

Another important doctrinal difference between Shiites and Sunnites is the Shiites' belief that the twelfth Imam in the line of Ali has gone into hiding. The result of this belief is that the *maraji*, the high religious authorities that are believed to bear the divine testimony and succession received from Mohammed and the early imams, assume the dominant politico-religious role in the community.¹ Preoccupation with who should rule and the special qualities of the rule constitutes the main distinction between Shiite and Sunnite political thought.

THE ISLAMIC RESURGENCE OF THE 1970s

Like many other peoples, Arabs tend to turn to religion during crises.² The latest manifestation of this crisis-reaction phenomenon came to a head in the 1970s as a result of a number of interrelated crises that faced the Middle Eastern Muslim community at the same time.³ In addition to the crisis of secularism, others were government misrule and corruption, economic mismanagement and the uneven manifestations of modernization. Another potent factor that increased the aggravation energizing this politico-religious backlash was the abject failure of Middle Eastern governments to eliminate Israel – the country considered the usurper of holy Muslim lands and the latest manifestation of western imperialism in the region. These issues produced great anxiety among the Arab peoples, making them question their identity and place in rapidly changing societies.⁴

Islam's appeal was that it offered solid community attachments, a network of religious and charitable institutions to answer members' spiritual and material needs and an alternative model of governance. In its political sense, it thus held out a ray of hope that it might be possible to improve things.

The Islamic revival in various countries was led by religious leaders with different interpretations of the causes of and solutions to these crises. Those who believe in a literal interpretation of the Koran and espouse a return to the ideal model of society that Mohammed created are widely labelled fundamentalists. One expert on Islam defines fundamentalism as 'politicized traditional religion' and emphasizes that fundamentalist leaders of all religions use religion to construct ideology and organize movements aimed at purifying social existence.⁵ It should be emphasized, however, that Middle Eastern fundamentalist groups that exhibited extreme reactions to the problems mentioned above and urged radical Islamic solutions were in a minority. Moderate Islamists who interpreted the scriptures in a way that justifies working within non-Islamist governments to promote reform rather than undertaking jihad to overthrow them were far more prominent.

A classic example of the different interpretations of Islam and the solutions offered by reformist and fundamentalist leaders at different times and in the same society is found in Egypt. During the economic and political crises that arose between the two world wars, an Islamic movement emerged that had a lasting impact on that society, as well as on others in the Arab World. Hassan al-Banna founded that movement – the Muslim Brotherhood (*al-iqwan al-muslimin*) in 1929. Banna emphasized that his organization was ‘a new soul in the heart of this nation to give it life by means of the Koran...’⁶ Seeking reform of Egyptian society rather than the violent overthrow of the government, the Muslim Brotherhood contested elections whenever the government did not proscribe it. It campaigned as an Islamic and therefore universal party rather than as a purely Egyptian one.

Banna’s condemnation of Egyptian political parties was based on their wide-scale corruption and cooperation with the British colonial authority rather than on their neglect of religion. By the 1940s, the government found itself facing a well-developed opposition and took steps to deal with that threat. In 1949, Banna was assassinated and the movement was dissolved.⁷

The views on how to solve the problems of Egyptian society expressed by another member of the Brethren, Sayyed Qutb, contrasted radically with those of Banna. Reacting to the failures and corruption of the Abdul Nasser regime in the late 1950s and 1960s, Qutb advanced radical Islamic solutions. Considered the father of modern radical Islam, his views inspired militant Islamic groups everywhere by introducing the idea of militant jihad as a duty for all Muslims that was almost as important as the faith’s four basic pillars – prayer, charity, fasting during Ramadan and accomplishing the pilgrimage (*hajj*) to Mecca. According to Qutb, non-Islamic governments fit the category of *jahiliyya*, or pre-Islamic conflict and ignorance, and were thus fair game for Muslim radicals. Practising what he preached, Qutb was hanged in 1966 for plotting the violent overthrow of the Egyptian state.

These two men, Banna and Qutb, the ‘founding fathers’ of modern reformist and radical fundamentalism respectively, demonstrate the distinctions between these ideologies in practical terms. Banna was willing to work towards ending the various manifestations of Egyptian government corruption while the very fact of its secularism was, in Qutb’s view, enough reason to overthrow the regime. Crises of secularism and government corruption were common complaints suggesting that Islamic movements grow in the same socio-political hothouse regardless of the solutions they propose to solve crises and purify their societies. However, for an adequate understanding of the Islamic resurgence and its impact on today’s politics, this example

suggests that ideological and practical differences between one Islamic group and another cannot be ignored.

The following discussion demonstrates distinctions between one fundamentalist group and another based on varying reactions to the crises fuelling the Islamic revival in particular countries. As will be seen, these reactions are shaped by specific Islamist ideologies and the unique characteristics and experiences of the societies in which fundamentalist movements and organizations are embedded.

THE CRISIS OF SECULARISM AND FUNDAMENTALIST REACTIONS

Although secular trends and values were well advanced in the Middle East, the effects of these trends were more pronounced in some countries than in others during the 1970s. In Syria, for instance, the secularization of the political system caused a particularly violent reaction from the local branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. This occurred after a considerable period of political upheaval in that country. A series of military *coups d'état* and an abortive effort to form a union with Egypt in 1962 had followed Syria's crushing defeat in the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. In the 1960s, Jamal Abdul Nasser, Egypt's president, was leading a pan-Arab movement aimed at unifying the countries of the region along cultural rather than religious lines. The main purpose of this movement was to stand up against Israel and the USA and to put an end to western domination of the region, economically, culturally or otherwise. During the same period the formation of a secular organization, the Baath (Renaissance) Party, took place in Syria. The Baath's motto is 'Arab unity from the Atlantic to the Gulf'. The secular trend gathering steam in Syria along with other factors discussed below, spurred the Society of Muslim Brothers to a revolt in the provincial city of Hamah in April 1964. The government permanently outlawed the fellowship after the Syrian army crushed the rebellion.

Airforce General Hafiz al-Assad, a Baathist, came to power a few years after that incident, after Syria had suffered a second defeat by Israel in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.⁸ Destabilization of his government became the Muslim Brotherhood's goal and a series of assassination attempts against Baath Party professionals, government figures and security agents soon took place. In 1976, a protest against the assistance provided by the Assad government to Christian militias struggling against a Muslim-leftist coalition in Lebanon was launched and three years later, in June 1979, in a direct challenge to Assad, the Brotherhood struck again, killing 83 mainly Alawite artillery cadets in Aleppo. The following year, demonstrations and boycotts in the cities of Hamah, Homs and Aleppo occurred and were followed by severe crackdowns by government forces.

In July 1980, Law 49 made membership in the Sunnite fundamentalist organization punishable by death.

The final straw for the Baathist regime, as far as this jihad was concerned, however, was the three-week-long Hamah revolt staged by the Brotherhood in 1982: the armed fundamentalists held off army regulars until Assad ordered heavy artillery to level whole sections of the city where the fighters were concentrated.⁹ After this knockout blow, bulldozers razed the area and rapidly repaved it. Ever since this incident, the Syrian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood has kept a very low profile.

During the 1970s, the inroads made by secularism were also fanning discontent in Egypt, where Abdul Nasser's Arab socialism had failed to deliver economic development and social justice to the burgeoning Egyptian population. Anwar Sadat, another member of the Free Officer's circle that overthrew King Farouk's government in 1952 and who came to power after Nasser's death, was viewed through the same lens by fundamentalists. A series of kidnappings, murders, riots and fundamentalist-led attacks on Egyptian Christians began. The trip Sadat made to Jerusalem in 1977 and the subsequent peace treaty he signed with Israel furthered the decline of his popularity and created more unrest. In 1981, he ordered the arrest of thousands of people and placed all the country's mosques under his direct control. This action only poured more oil on the fire. Sadat was finally assassinated in 1981 by members of the Jihad Organization (*tanzim al-jihad*), a militant group based in Upper Egypt.

Hosni Mubarak, who succeeded Sadat as President of Egypt, ordered the fundamentalist perpetrators of the assassination hanged. Those that escaped either left the country or went into hiding like Ayman al-Zawahiri, subsequently Osama bin Laden's top lieutenant.

Prominent radical groups also operating in Egypt are the Islamic Liberation Party (*hizb al-tahrir al-islami*) and the Society of Muslims (*jam'at al-muslimin*). Both were born along with the Jihad Organization, in the crisis setting that followed the 1967 war with Israel. They are all direct descendents of the Society of Muslim Brothers, but they do not share the Banna wing of the Brotherhood's general objection to violence. Mohammed Atef, for instance, is widely considered to be al-Qaeda's second in command and head of its military operations. He is said to have planned the September 11 attacks with al-Zawahiri, who founded the Islamic Jihad Organization. These men appeared at bin Laden's side in the first video produced after the New York and Washington attacks. Five other individuals on America's most wanted terrorist list are also Egyptians, which gives that country the dubious honour of having produced more effective terrorists or, according to fundamentalist values, more valiant holy warriors, than any other country – eight out of 22.¹⁰

Manifestations and sporadic outbursts of fundamentalist violence against Christians who constitute a large minority in Egypt continue to plague the Egyptian government.¹¹ However, the Muslim Brotherhood tries to work around the government ban maintained on their organization's electoral participation by presenting their partisans as independents or negotiating alliances with other legal Egyptian parties. Signs of the Brotherhood's continuing influence are seen within the parallel economy and welfare system of a network of Islamic schools, medical centres and welfare organizations operating independently of the state sector. The growing influence of political Islam in Egypt is also measured by the proliferation of private mosques which grew between 1962 and 1982 from 14,000 to around 40,000 compared with an increase from 3,000 to 6,000 government-controlled mosques in the same period.¹²

Sudan's Islamists also reacted negatively to the inroads of secularism. As in Egypt, the appeal of secular movements such as Nasserism and Baathism had worn thin in Sudan by the 1970s. Experiments with liberal democracy had failed and military *coups d'état* began. Severe economic decline was another crisis affecting the country, as was the rebellion against the Arab government, which arose out of an African (Negroid) Christian and animist culture. These problems prepared the way for a religious revival similar to that occurring in other parts of the Arab world at the same time.

Interestingly, the midwife of the Sunnite Islamic Republic that emerged in the 1980s was the military establishment. However, the road was well prepared in advance by the Islamic National Front (INF), a coalition of Muslim groups led by Dr Hassan Turabi. Turabi had founded the Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood Society, a prominent part of the Front, in 1949. The popularity of the INF led Jafar Nimeiri, an army officer who had come to power in a coup, to try to co-opt it and use Islamic ideology and precepts to create his own power base. Nimeiri proclaimed an Islamic Republic soon afterward, but this experiment was short lived, since he was ousted by another coup in 1985. After that government also failed, General Omar Hassan al-Bashir, today's president, took the reins of power and, in June 1989, formally established the Sudanese Islamic Republic. Turabi was the *de facto* leader, the first Muslim Brother who had fully realized the Islamic ideal. Turabi accomplished this feat patiently, in the Banna tradition, through political groundwork and by his group's participation in elections.¹³

Unlike other fundamentalist movements, the Brotherhood's social base was drawn from the educated urban middle class, rather than Sudan's large amorphous underclass. Turabi himself was educated at the University of London and the Sorbonne and eschewed the robes and turbans worn by other fundamentalist leaders of the region for sharply

tailored western suits. Erudite and articulate, he appealed to reason and used moral persuasion rather than force to achieve Islamic goals. Taking a moderate position in comparison to most of the other fundamentalist leaders already discussed, he stressed that Islamic groups should participate in non-Islamist Arab governments as his party had done, in order to Islamize them and ultimately achieve both Arab and Islamic unity. Good relations with Iran, whose leaders provided military and economic assistance to Sudan, caused considerable concern to neighbouring states, which feared an Islamic domino effect.

Turabi's own moderate brand of political activism, however, did not preclude his support of fundamentalists from other countries who advocated violent action to purify their societies. In fact, he opened the door to Islamist exiles and Arabs who were training for revolutionary action against non-Islamist regimes such as the one backed by the Soviets in Afghanistan. Turabi's agenda during this period meshed well with United States interests in the region and received its full support.

Bin Laden was apparently sheltered at one time by the Sudanese authorities and is alleged to have recruited operatives for his al-Qaeda organization in that country. Turabi, however, flatly denied this link as well as any connection between his government and the five Sudanese nationals arrested for their involvement in the plot to blow up the New York World Trade Center on 26 February 1993. He also denied having invited Omar Abd al-Rahman to visit him and having been his host for two weeks. Rahman is the Egyptian cleric who blessed the New York operation and who was convicted of conspiracy in a New York court in January 1996. 'Carlos' – Ilich Ramirez Sanchez – who had been wanted for terrorist acts for more than two decades was also welcome in Sudan for several years. Bashir finally handed him over to the French authorities that wanted to try him for murder when he decided to make a gesture that he hoped would remove Sudan from the list of countries sponsoring terrorism.

When terrorist bombs destroyed the American embassies in Tanzania and Kenya in 1998, the USA staged retaliatory air strikes against Sudan as well as against al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan. Bashir, echoed by Turabi, vigorously denied any implication in those attacks.¹⁴

The prominent role Turabi had played in Sudanese politics ended in 1999 when Bashir stripped him of his power. The rift between the two leaders had arisen over the issue of how to deal with the confrontation still raging in the South with the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) – Turabi apparently backed a more conciliatory approach to the rebels. He was placed under house arrest in 2001. Recently, however, the Sudanese president did a 180-degree turn and opened talks with the rebels. An understanding might be being hatched under which the SPLA will drop its demand for a self-determination referendum in the South, in exchange

for Khartoum conceding over the issue of separating state and religion. As the Bashir government tries hard to end its reputation for terrorism to avoid US sanctions within the framework of the 'War on Terror', members of Turabi's Popular National Congress have been causing disturbances that have led the government to accuse the party of planning acts of sabotage to create a state of instability. On 29 August 2002, Turabi was moved from house arrest to the central prison, where he remains, 'for his own safety'. From these incidents it appears that Sudan's fundamentalists will not be taking their altered position lying down.

The problem of secularism also surfaced in Saudi Arabia, because of American forces stationed there during and after the Desert Storm military operation against Iraq of 1990–1991. Many pious Saudis believed that the continued presence of these troops – some of them women in what they considered inappropriate dress – polluted Islamic soil and would eventually introduce secular values and practices into the kingdom if the American presence there was not ended. While this issue is important, it is not the main problem facing 'establishment Islam' in that country as will be seen below.

Iran underwent a crisis of secularism akin to Syria's in terms of its importance and violent outcome, but in this case the fundamentalists triumphed. In 1979, the Shah's secular regime was replaced with an Islamic Republic. This successful revolution was partially the result of the close relationship of Iran's ruler with the USA (see Chapter 2). America viewed this oil-rich country, whose northern border fronted the Soviet Union, as an important ally during the Cold War and had thus attempted to beef up its armed forces and ensure its stability in different ways. The powerful Iranian Shiite clergy (*mullahs*) decried the country's growing dependency on the USA and viewed with concern the growing influence of America's secular culture on Iranian society. Moreover, to the mullahs, the Shah's efforts to modernize Iran along lines urged by the USA represented a serious threat to Islam and Islamic institutions. These men also realized that the rapid changes the Shah was promoting in the 1970s would undercut their own authority.

One of those mullahs, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, played the leading role in mobilizing resistance to developments in Iran. That resistance eventually took the form of a fully fledged popular revolution, which overturned the secular government and forced the Shah to seek refuge abroad. Khomeini then returned from his exile in France to huge popular acclaim. Within a short period of time, his Islamist partisans had eliminated the other groups in the revolutionary coalition that had brought down the Shah's government. Having fully consolidated his power with the help of the Revolutionary Guards – an officially recognized standing militia – Khomeini then took the steps necessary to

establish an Islamic republic, in which he became the all-wise Supreme Jurist (*al-wali al-faqih*) – the stand-in for the missing twelfth Imam. Henceforth, Iran would be governed in accordance with religious law (*sharia*), as interpreted by the Supreme Jurist in consultation with the mullahs, who were members of the state's governing institutions.¹⁵

The lessons of the Islamic Revolution rippled throughout the region, especially in the Gulf States, the West Bank and Gaza, but it had its most direct and profound impact on the circle of young Lebanese mullahs who formed Hezbollah, who identify with the Revolution's ideology and embrace the principle of government by the Supreme Jurist. This means that these Lebanese clerics profess complete allegiance to Iran's spiritual leader – first Ayatollah Khomeini and, after his death, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei – and consider their organization to be under his guidance.

Hezbollah's version of fundamentalism thus embraces the principles of Iran's Islamic ideology including its belief in the importance of struggling against secularism, injustice and the oppression of Muslims by foreign imperialists spearheaded by the USA and its regional manifestation, Israel.¹⁶ The Party's vision of the creation of a wider Islamic community beyond the boundaries of its own country follows Ayatollah Khomeini's goal of exporting the Islamic Revolution throughout the region. Removing the Israelis from Jerusalem and the Holy Land and restoring the rights of the Muslim community was a sacred imperative.¹⁷

The belief that armed struggle was not only justified but also a sacred imperative to erase oppression, usurpation of rights and restore Muslim lands opened Hezbollah to practices which had traditionally been rejected by Shiite leaders over the centuries in favour of passive political positions.¹⁸ The forceful expulsion of western forces from Lebanon in the 1980s and the jihad against the Israeli military forces that had been in South Lebanon since 1978 and established a 'Security Zone' there in 1985 were therefore fully justified on religious grounds provided by the radical Shiite ideology emanating from Iran. Hezbollah's leaders, all students of the same seminary in Najaf, Iraq, where Khomeini had studied, connected this ideology with their desire to deal real blows to their country's invaders. Since this struggle would also serve other, more mundane interests of the Iranian and Lebanese clerics and their adherents, cooperation between the two groups where these interests coincided was natural.

The direct and unprecedented cooperation that resulted between this revolutionary Islamic regime and its fundamentalist adherents in another country was a new phenomenon in fundamentalist and Middle Eastern annals. The USA and Israel considered the development an attempt by Shiite fundamentalism to put an entirely new face on terrorism.

But here the question arises as to whether Hezbollah's establishment occurred as a directive of Ayatollah Khomeini, a simple meeting of minds between the clergy of two countries on a political course of action, or whether it had its roots in some of the same crises that had triggered fundamentalist activism in other countries in the region. For instance, had the inroads of secularism, which had so dramatically destabilized Iran and Syria, had any effect on Hezbollah's rise?

In Lebanon, unlike other countries in the region, the issue of political secularism was specifically championed by Muslims and some Christians and was very important in fuelling the civil war that began in 1975. A brief look at the country's political system and the breakdown that led to what many believed to be intractable communal strife is instructive.

The political system set up after the French Mandate ended and the country's independence was achieved in 1943 was widely perceived in Muslim and Christian circles at the time as the most useful way of representing the 16 formally recognized religious sects residing in Lebanon. The 1932 census that served as the basis for the distribution of power revealed that among these sects Maronite Christians were in the majority while Sunnites and Shiites comprised the next two largest sects respectively. A gentleman's agreement between two prominent Lebanese leaders, a Sunnite and a Maronite, which became known as the 'national pact', produced a political arrangement where the most important government positions were determined on the basis of sect size while seats in parliament were determined on a presumed 50-50 ratio between Muslims and Christians.¹⁹

Although the national pact was widely supported at the time, many Christians and Muslims still had strong reservations about it. At issue was what sort of state Lebanon should be: a unique entity culturally and politically tied to the West, as many Christians and some Muslims wished, or a state attuned to its Arabic heritage and well integrated in the region, as desired by Muslims and some Christians. Here it should be noted that Lebanon had been part of Syria until it came under the French Mandate established by the League of Nations after the First World War. Both Muslim extremists and nationalists, including some Christians, believed that Lebanon should not have been removed from its Syrian matrix, while Christian extremists hoped that Lebanon would become an exclusive homeland for their members. These positions were never entirely abandoned.

As time passed, dissatisfaction with the effects of Lebanon's political system increased, since a political establishment composed of Muslims and Christians had arisen whose common interest lay in maintaining the status quo rather than addressing the problems its critics raised.²⁰ Moreover, no census was ever again taken to indicate whether a different

distribution of power among the sects should be undertaken. The secular arrangement of 1943 had thus ossified into a system that guaranteed Christian political domination regardless of that sect's size in comparison to that of the other confessional groups suspected of outstripping Maronite numbers over the years. Besides this grievance, the political elites of this system all derived their political authority from familial, confessional and location sources and maintained their influence by distributing to their constituents the resources available to them through government connections.²¹ The result was the almost permanent incumbency of a handful of powerful men in each sect who did their best to rebuff challengers and to pass on their positions to nearest eligible male relatives upon their death or retirement.²² Because of this situation, counter elites or regime opponents had little chance of ever replacing the 'establishment' through legal or normal political channels.

Besides political grievances with the sectarian system and its imbalances, rural citizens received a much smaller portion of the benefits of modernization. These benefits were clearly noticeable in the capital and its contiguous Christian areas. By all measurements, peripheral regions such as the Bekaa Valley and the South where Shiites are concentrated were severely deprived of even such basics as sewer networks and clean water distribution. Lamentably, that still remains the case. As a result of rising discontent in the 1950s and 1960s, the issue of social justice became another bone of contention between those who desired reform of the system and those whose interests lay in retaining it unchanged. The preference of most Muslims and some Christians for a pro-Arab position in regional and world affairs rather than the pro-western one desired by a majority of Christians only deepened the chasm dividing the two groupings.

A debate about Lebanon's identity – whether Arab or Lebanese – that had surfaced in the 1943 discussions and had been resolved by a compromise – neither too western nor too Arab – heated up soon after the establishment of Israel. Egyptian leader Jamal Abdul Nasser mobilized many Lebanese Muslims and leftists who sympathized with his views and regarded the Palestinian's plight with outrage. With the influx into Lebanon of thousands of Palestinian refugees, their mobilization and growing military strength acted as a catalyst for disgruntled Muslim-leftists who formed a coalition against the armed Christian forces that had sprung up in the 1970s.²³

These two coalitions fought each other without mercy for 17 years using kidnappings, assassinations, car bombs and random shelling of each other's areas to try to gain the upper hand. The Lebanese army almost disappeared as, over the years, officers and soldiers abandoned their posts to join the militia of their confessional affiliation.²⁴ However, while this

struggle was going on in and around the capital, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), an umbrella group that included a number of leftist and Muslim groups, had entrenched itself in the South and was attacking Israel by cross border raids. These attacks and Israeli retaliations spurred an exodus of Shiites from the area to an overcrowded suburb of Beirut – the *dahiyeh* – where they squatted with little if any government assistance. As far as many Shiites were concerned, the confessional political system prevailing had not offered much in terms of social benefits, political representation and security. These complaints were much like those that had been advanced by Muslims in secular states to justify system reform or radical change along Islamic lines. However, in this case, the Muslims thought their best chance for development and influence lay with taking the religious component out of the governing formula completely or at least reforming the system in their favour.

Hezbollah emerged in this tense and precarious atmosphere. Yet unlike other fundamentalist organizations, replacing the Lebanese government with an Islamic Republic was never the leadership's main preoccupation despite the emphasis placed on this issue by the leadership in the 1980s. However important it was for the mullahs that formed Hezbollah to resist the inroads of secularism by propagating Islam, Lebanon's structural restraints, the large Christian community, and the traditional antipathy between Shiite and Sunnite effectively precluded the achievement of this important goal.

Instead, Hezbollah leaders made their sacred obligation to conduct jihad against 'the usurpers of Muslim lands' – the Israelis – their top priority. Since that struggle would require broad national backing it was thought to be more important to soft-pedal the idea of a republic ruled by Muslim religious law for Lebanon and to accede to the kind of reforms the Muslim-leftist coalition was stressing. In this way, the campaign begun against Israel in southern Lebanon in 1985 would not be jeopardized by raising undue apprehensions about the party's radical ideology and ultimate goal for Lebanon.

Furthermore, and in contrast with other fundamentalist movements of the region, after Hezbollah's transformation into a mainstream political party, it actively sought accommodation with the Lebanese authorities and worked out a number of cooperative endeavours through which it could achieve thorough integration into Lebanon's socio-political life. This strategy is discussed in detail in later chapters.

Notwithstanding Hezbollah's limitations in achieving the power necessary to fulfil the Islamist dream in Lebanon, the expansion of fundamentalism in the Shiite community is well documented and a number of Sunnite fundamentalist movements also seem to be fairly well entrenched.²⁵

GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION AND THE PURIFICATION OF SOCIETY

As mentioned previously, secular governments generally failed to deliver on the promises of social justice and political modernization that they made. However, particular incidents or patterns of misrule and corruption in some countries stimulated Muslim discontent to a heightened degree. In reaction to these crises, fundamentalist leaders promoted the establishment of Islamic governance as the only way of purifying and healing their societies.

The Saudi group *al-salafiyyun* exemplifies this concern with political corruption but within a reformist framework. Osama bin Laden and other Saudis on America's Most Wanted list, as well as other 'neo-fundamentalist' groups operating in the Kingdom and outside it, are part of this political current, which aims at purifying the present Saudi regime and bringing it back to the principles of Islamic governance on which it was founded in the eighteenth century. Mohammed Ibn Saud, the tribal chieftain who unified most of the Arabian Peninsula, had achieved that feat with the man who was to give his kingdom its Islamic ideology, Sheikh Mohammed Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, at his side. Sheikh al-Wahhab accepted only the Koran and sunnah as guides and rejected all other interpretations or innovations. Emphasizing the 'oneness' of God (*tawhid*), his followers were *al-muwahhidun*, commonly known as the Wahhabis, the followers of Sheikh al-Wahhab. In later years, however, a current developed *within* the Wahhabi religious establishment known as *al-salafiyyun* – the followers of pious ancestors (*salaf al-salih*). The movement was composed of preachers, prayer leaders, Islamic professors and other pious individuals, mainly from the Najd region. This group wanted to return Saudi society to Islamic basics and accused members of the clergy of quietism concerning the excesses of members of the ruling royal family. The salafiyyun charged these rulers, whose numbers ran into the thousands, of looting the treasury, gambling, womanizing and other forms of corruption. What they wanted was purification of the government that guards Prophet Mohammed's birthplace and Islam's holiest shrines and a return to Mohammed's sacred and ideal model of governance. Prince Abdullah, who heads the government today as a result of King Fahd's disability, is a pious individual who is presently seeking ways to deal with opposition currents in his country. For its part, the Bush administration is pushing the Saudi government to crack down on Saudi citizens and charitable organizations it suspects of links to al-Qaeda. The fact that bin Laden and 15 of the 19 individuals directly involved in the September 11 attacks are Saudi nationals has caused Riyadh severe embarrassment, while Bush administration accusations that not enough

is being done by the Saudis to crack down on such terrorists is raising hackles in government quarters.

Across the Persian Gulf in Iran, the Shah was also widely criticized for corruption. Tyranny and profligate spending were some of the charges levelled against him. As opposition to his government grew in the 1970s, the Shah used his secret service – Savak – to savagely root it out. The mullahs and a large part of the Iranian population considered this behaviour as the absolute antithesis of all Islam stood for in terms of merciful and consensual governance.

The Shah's abuses of power were fully exploited by Ayatollah Khomeini in his campaign to mobilize and unite the opposition against his continued rule. According to Khomeini's plan, his ouster would usher in the epitome of clean and just rule since it would be based on interpretations of the Prophet Mohammed's own words and deeds as expressed in religious law. There is no sign that this system is wavering, although the mullahs face increasing public pressure for political reform.

In Syria, Hafiz al-Assad's illegal seizure of power, autocratic rule and repression of opposition forces were some of the other reasons that made his government a target of the Muslim Brotherhood. Another important factor that drew their ire was his membership in a sect considered heretical by Sunnites and his placement of co-religionists and family members in important positions within the state's security apparatus. Assad's attempt to create a political dynasty by arranging for his son Bashar to succeed him is also considered corruption in the eyes of the Brotherhood.

Government corruption also played an important role in the emergence of grassroots movements like Hezbollah and its secular Shiite rival, Amal. As explained previously, the political domination of a Christian sect that was thought to have lost its majority by the 1970s was a problem for many Lebanese and especially for the Shiites who believed their own community had become the largest group in the country.

Equally disturbing to the Shiites, an agricultural people concentrated in the South and the Bekaa Valley, was the collaboration of their elected representatives with a regime that short-changed the peripheral areas of the country.²⁶ The level of deprivation of these people as compared to those of other communities was one of the reasons many Shiites turned to secular leftist parties like the Communists, the Baathists and the Syrian Social National Party to try to improve their lot.²⁷

The plight of the Shiites was worsened by Israeli retaliations against Palestinian fighters that had entrenched themselves along the Lebanese/Israeli frontier. No compensation was forthcoming from the state for lost income or destruction of property suffered by the inhabitants of the area. This situation led to general Shiite political mobilization, of which the fundamentalist circles were a part. However, the impotence of the

Lebanese government was not the main reason Hezbollah took form. The trigger of the party's emergence had more to do with the disappearance of the leader of the mass Shiite movement that had evolved by 1974 – Imam Musa al-Sadr – than anything else.

Imam Musa al-Sadr, a Lebanese of Iranian origins who was helped by various religious groups in Iran to found a number of charitable institutions in South Lebanon during the 1960s, had, by the end of that decade, succeeded in establishing the Higher Shiite Islamic Council, an institution that for the first time gave the community formal recognition at the state level and looked after its interests. Al-Sadr was its first president. Later, as Israeli raids in retaliation for cross-border attacks by the PLO damaged or destroyed southern properties, the Imam voiced demands for government compensation to the individuals who had suffered such losses. In his book *The Imam*, Fuad Ajami, a Lebanese-American Shiite scholar, describes the emotional impact of this activist clergyman on youths who had never experienced anyone like al-Sadr, as nothing short of a revelation.²⁸

In 1974, al-Sadr established the Movement of the Disinherited (*harakat al-mahrumin*), a broad-based organization that stood for the reform of the present Lebanese system. The movement's goal was universally expressed as seeking social justice for all deprived Lebanese, although its Shiite social base was well known. In actuality, it was the first Shiite political organization.

The feverish arming of various Lebanese militias as the 1975 civil war approached encouraged the development of a fighting wing within al-Sadr's movement, the Battalions of the Lebanese Resistance (*afwaj al-muqawamat al-lubnaniyya* – Arabic acronym AL). Led by lawyer Nabih Berri, presently Speaker of the House, Amal acquired the resources necessary for collective action in the same way most of the other militias had – by assistance from an Arab state – in this case Libya, a client of the Soviet Union at that time.

Al-Sadr's abrupt disappearance on a trip to Libya in 1978, some say as a result of a dispute over funds with President Muammar Khadafi, and Berri's ensuing control of Amal wiped out the Islamic content of the mass movement. Hussein Musawi, a leading cleric in Amal, broke away from the movement to establish an Islamic counterpart of Amal in the northern Bekaa with the announced objectives of fighting injustice and the 'infidels' – the Israelis – in South Lebanon. Musawi's actions constituted the magnet that attracted a group of fundamentalist clerics, who had all studied under the Shiite religious scholar and theorist Baqir al-Sadr at a religious seminary in Najaf, Iraq – the same place where Ayatollah Khomeini and the Lebanese mullah Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah had also been educated. Other Shiite fundamentalist splinter

groups were also drawn to this movement out of which Hezbollah eventually emerged.

Musawi and the other leaders' goal of purifying Lebanon's corrupt system by radically changing it remained a cherished ideal but jihad against an enemy of the faith – Israel – took precedence, especially after the experiences of the 1982 Israeli invasion which spawned the Sabra-Shatila massacres in the refugee camps of Beirut's southern suburb.

COLONIALISM AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Another factor that added steam to the Islamic revival in the 1970s was a further defeat for Arab forces at the hands of the Israeli military in 1973.²⁹ The Israelis were thought to have muscled their way into the region through deceit and imperialist design and were blamed for forcibly displacing thousands of Palestinians – mostly Muslims – from their homes in 1948. In Arab eyes, Palestine was then illegally colonized by Zionists. That was not, of course, how the Israelis saw the bloody birth of their nation or the foundation on which their state was built.

Israel's foundations were laid in the latter part of the nineteenth century, when the founders of Zionism, the ideology whose aim is to establish a homeland for the Jewish Diaspora, decided on Palestine as its locale because of its ancient connection with the Israelite tribes. At the time – the late 1800s – the population of Palestine was Arab with a few minority groups including Jews living among them. Jewish agencies were established to raise funds to purchase land in Palestine and resettle Jews there from all parts of the world and immigration began. The hope of the organizers of the movement was that one day, as a result of the ingathering of millions of Jews, a Jewish state might arise in the Holy Land with Jerusalem as its capital.

During the Second World War, with the British Mandate over Palestine in place, conditions matured for this enterprise to take place and a state was declared in 1948 against the objections of the resident Palestinian Arab population, which, despite heavy Jewish immigration, remained in the majority. Arab citizens rejected a UN decision to partition Palestine into two states, one for each community, and they were supported by Arab and Muslim governments who went to war to stop what they considered was robbery backed by the West.

The story of the 1947–1948 war and its aftermath is well known and needs no elaboration here. The point is that, despite the *fait accompli*, Muslim fundamentalists continue to vehemently reject Israel's right to exist based on the deepest principles of the Muslim faith. They believe that no exceptions or trade-offs can be made where God's will is concerned and therefore insist that the millions of Palestinians whom they believe were violently driven from their homes by Zionist agencies

and armies must be allowed to return to their homes. Moderate Muslim leaders in the region, however, generally agree that this would be impossible, as it would alter Israel's *raison d'être* as a Jewish state. They believe that some other solution must therefore be found. As Arab governments for various reasons began to recognize Israel's right to exist, fundamentalist anger against the regimes willing to turn their back on jihad to recapture the Holy Land intensified. While secular Arabs viewed accommodation with the Hebrew state as unforgivable and a calamity, fundamentalists called it heresy. President Sadat paid for that heresy with his life.

Middle Eastern governments were also harangued by fundamentalists for collaboration with the United States of America, which had become Israel's main supporter. The latter was the case in Iran, where Ayatollah Khomeini not only blamed the Shah for the relationship he entertained with Israel, but also took him to task for the behaviour of his closest ally, the USA, in condoning and abetting crimes against Muslims in Palestine. After the Shah's defeat, the Islamic Republic sought to expand its influence in the region by exporting its revolution and involving itself in the anti-Israel/anti-USA struggle going on in the region. It found a means of accomplishing both goals in Lebanon, as we shall see in a later chapter.

The Saudi royal family's close connections with the USA are also condemned by religious conservatives on the basis of America's support for Israel³⁰ and the suspected perpetrators of the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks explained their operations as protests against American support of Israel.

Interestingly, while fundamentalist leaders of all colours and stripes have been protesting against the Israeli 'occupation' of Palestine for decades, Palestinian radical fundamentalists emerged somewhat later than those already mentioned. Palestinians had been active in the Society of Muslim Brothers and the Communist Party, but it was the organizations that formed outside the Occupied West Bank and Gaza, such as Yasser Arafat's Fatah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine formed by Christians George Habash and Wadih Haddad, that were the militants in the struggle against the Israelis using whatever locales and tactics were available. The stories of hijackings, murders and massacres are legion. In the end, however, it was the ineffectiveness of such organizations in addition to the inability of Arab states' to make any real change in the Palestinian situation that allowed radical Islam's entry onto the Palestinian political scene. Such Palestinian fundamentalist groups espousing jihad, established much needed networks of social support and proclaimed appealing activist ideologies. This fundamentalist trend was further energized by harsh Israeli policies and economic deterioration in the West Bank and Gaza in the 1980s.

Ironically, the Israelis themselves had nurtured fundamentalist groups like Islamic Jihad and Hamas by turning a blind eye to funds being sent from the Gulf area to the Islamists for the purpose of building mosques, sports clubs and community centres. Yet, while the Israelis succeeded in their plan to undercut the appeal of Fatah and other groups in this fashion, they also shortly found themselves confronting *mujahidin* (jihad warriors) ready to fight to the death.

Sheikh Abdul Aziz Awdah, for instance, left the more quiescent Muslim Brotherhood to become the spiritual guide of an activist organization – Islamic Jihad (Arabic title *jihad al-islamiyya*). In December 1987, his partisans surged onto the streets and began lobbing stones at the startled Israeli troops on duty. Fired by this unprecedented event, many other Palestinians joined the battle and a full-scale popular uprising (*intifada*) materialized. This demonstration of peoples' power directly led to the Oslo Accord that resulted in Yasser Arafat's return to Palestine, the establishment of a Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Gaza and the commencement of what turned out to be a much-troubled peace process.

The other Palestinian fundamentalist group – The Islamic Resistance Movement (*harakat al-muqawamah al-islamiyyah* – Arabic acronym HAMAS, or Zeal) – was formed by Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, the son of an impoverished family who was brought up in a refugee camp in Gaza. Yassin's family had fled their home in Askalan, Palestine during the fighting that led to Israel's statehood in 1948.

The resurgence of Islam in Gaza owes a great deal to the frail and crippled Yassin, since it was he who founded the Islamic Congress (*al-mujamaa al-islami*), an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood. Yassin was arrested in October 1984 by the Israeli authorities for his activities but was nevertheless released a year later on condition that he gave up politics. That was wishful thinking on the part of the Israelis, however, since his popularity had grown precisely because of his imprisonment. Hamas was born soon after his release. According to its founder, Yassin, the organization's explicit mission is the reclamation of all of Palestine – 'a religious trust assigned by God to the Muslims until the end of time.'³¹

Hamas and Islamic Jihad regard the peace process that got underway in 1993 as anathema. They completely reject the partial recovery of Palestinian lands that Arafat is willing to accept and that would doom a full return of all Palestinians who have been in exile since 1948. Nothing short of the complete dismantling of the state of Israel will do as far as they are concerned. They also regard Arafat's secular authority, tight grasp on power and corrupt cohorts as unacceptable in the eyes of Islam.³² The basic conflict dividing the two sides has nonetheless been held at bay by attempts to avoid open conflict with Arafat that could

weaken the struggle against the Israelis and alienate potential supporters.³³

In September 2000, frustration and bitterness resulting from the failure to halt new Israeli settlements in the West Bank – the area targeted to be the Palestinian state if and when final status agreements are reached – boiled over when the then Israeli Defence Minister, Ariel Sharon, a proponent of settlement expansion, visited the area of the al-Aqsa Mosque. All Palestinians, including Israeli Palestinian Arab citizens who took to streets in a protest that led to the deaths of 13 of them, considered this act provocative and deliberate. These events sparked another far more deadly intifada, in which stones aimed at Israeli soldiers by bands of Palestinian youths are supplemented by deadly attacks on soldiers and civilians alike, engineered and executed by Hamas and Islamic Jihad volunteers.

This tactic, in which explosives are strapped to the bodies of willing martyrs, dubbed ‘suicide bombers’ in the West, who then explode themselves in areas of civilian concentration, aims at causing political dissension and demoralization. They embarrass the Israeli military, security forces and government leaders by their frequency and randomness and the tolls they take in terms of numbers of dead and wounded. Furthermore, there is apparently no shortage of individuals willing to gain martyrdom by turning themselves into human grenades. This means that some attacks will always succeed despite the most rigorous precautions taken to prevent them. This permits Hamas and other organizations that have copied this tactic to send the message that no Israeli man, woman or child is safe while the occupation of Palestinian land continues. To be noted here is the fundamentalist rationale behind this tactic that stands at odds with the common belief that terrorists are raving lunatics who strike out blindly at those they hate.

As Hamas leaders have observed, martyrdom attacks are the means they have at hand to effectively confront the Israelis. They also add that if they had alternative weapons like the American-made Apache helicopter gun ships and F16 fighter planes used by the Israeli military establishment, they would use them instead.

The suicide/martyrdom attacks, carried out for the purpose of sowing widespread fear among the civilian population to reach political goals, are called terrorism. At the same time, Israel’s efforts to stop the attacks, for example the use of collective punishment – dynamiting of Palestinian homes and widespread arrests – are violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention for the protection of civilians during wartime and make them ‘state terrorists’ in the eyes of their opponents. America’s position is that the Israelis have the right to defend their population against these terrorist attacks and the Bush administration has been trying hard to get Arafat’s Palestinian Authority to help the Israelis crack down on the perpetrators.

A Hamas partisan provided me with the ideological underpinning for the organization's jihad tactics. Quoting the Prophet's words, he said that 'if there are twenty among you, patient and persevering, they will vanquish two hundred: if a hundred they will vanquish a thousand of the Unbelievers...' He also said that faithful Muslims are promised, 'Whatever you shall spend in the cause of God, shall be repaid unto you, and you shall not be treated unjustly'. (S. VIII, 65 and 60) Because secular Muslims also generally support the struggle to liberate Palestine, Hamas and Islamic Jihad have acquired broad public support as well as various types of assistance from interested regional state actors including Syria and Iran. This will be discussed in later chapters.

Hezbollah completely agrees with Palestinian fundamentalist groups on the use of force against the Israeli state to destroy it and takes every opportunity to spur Hamas and Islamic Jihad on. Both groups also struggle to remove Israeli occupation from Arab lands. Hezbollah's operations are meant to indirectly dislodge Israelis who have settled Syria's Golan Heights, seized during the 1967 war, and directly remove Israel's military presence from lands claimed by Lebanon. Hamas' efforts presently aim to force the Israelis – settlers as well as military – out of the West Bank and Gaza. The tactics Hezbollah fighters use in the struggle in South Lebanon against the Israeli military occupation, however, reflect the unique politico-military situation there as well as demographic and topographical conditions that are unlike those existing in the West Bank and Gaza.

Operating at first as an irregular force with no connection to the Lebanese government which was fighting for its life in the capital, Hezbollah, backed by Syria and Iran, began regularly attacking the Israeli soldiers and a local Lebanese militia assisting them – the South Lebanese Army (SLA) – in the 'Security Zone' the Hebrew troops had withdrawn to after the political aims of their 1982 invasion had fizzled. The tactics chosen to accomplish the campaign against the Israelis took into consideration the strategy's goals, battlefield conditions, resources available and likely Israeli and American responses. One dangerous response was pinning the terrorist label on Hezbollah, whom the Americans and Israelis considered an irregular mercenary force sponsored by two foreign states. Steps therefore had to be taken to avoid the onerous designation and therefore tactics of a different nature to those used by Hamas and Islamic Jihad were developed.

On the other hand, the earlier terrorist attacks against American and western civilians in West Beirut during the 1980s that the United States charges the Islamic Republic of Iran with sponsoring and Hezbollah with carrying out, do resemble the methods used by al-Qaeda, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, in that buildings full of people were destroyed by

suicide/martyrdom attacks using ordinary vehicles. No matter that the alleged Hezbollah attacks were aimed at pushing the foreign troops in West Beirut back onto their ships and getting them out of the battle – from America’s perspective fine distinctions between the aims and methods of these operations are not important. Terrorists are terrorists and these organizations are like peas in a pod no matter how their tactics evolve over time.

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that all the discontents and problems that had generated the wider Islamic resurgence – secularism, corruption, conflict and resentment of Israel – were present in Lebanon during the 1970s and were shared by members of the Islamic current developing there. Yet the doctrines and lessons of Revolutionary Iran had an unprecedented impact on the Lebanese Shiite leaders who formed Hezbollah and on those who gravitated toward its military wing. Furthermore, the particular conditions prevailing in Lebanon and the events precipitated by the civil war and the Palestinian/Israeli conflict in the South shaped Hezbollah’s ideology and practices in ways that also set it apart from other fundamentalist organizations. America’s charge of terrorism against Hezbollah and the Lebanese government’s resistance defence after 1990 rest on selective applications and interpretations of these commonalities and distinctions.