

Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas: Tehran's War against the West by Proxy?

Center for Middle East Policy
Hudson Institute
November 19, 2008

The Hudson Institute wishes to thank Legacy Heritage Fund for its support



“Iranian Ideology and Strategic Ambitions”

Meyrav Wurmser, Hudson Institute

Since Iran’s nuclear intentions became public in 2002, the US and its allies have focused almost exclusively upon those intentions. And they remain so focused on the issue that they almost completely ignore the question of Iran’s proxies, specifically Hamas and Hezbollah. Both terrorist organizations have been instrumental in attempting to destabilize the Levant in the past few years, whether by undermining Lebanon’s democratically-elected government or by using violent tactics, such as attacks on Israel.

Iran’s support for Hamas and Hezbollah embodies its commitment to jihad and to exporting the Iranian Revolution. Jihad is viewed by the regime as a fundamental Islamic duty, while exporting the revolution is a key tenet of the regime’s ideology, and it is enshrined both in the Iranian constitution and in the works of Ayatollah Khomeini. Iran’s targets are Israel and the West, against whom jihad must be waged, and other Muslims, to whom the revolution must be exported.

Iran uses Hamas’ and Hezbollah’s terrorism for both tactical and strategic reasons. The support of these organizations serves a number of goals. I am only going to mention a few of them:

First, supporting the terrorism of Hamas and Hezbollah helps Iran maintain its commitment to the doctrine of Khomeini, to the ideas of jihad, and to the export of the revolution.

Second, it enables Iran to pose a threat to Israel, both for ideological reasons, simply because it *is* Israel, and in order to deter Israel from harming Iran.

Third, it furthers Iran's national objectives of hegemony in the Gulf and the Sunni-Arab world by promoting Islamist opposition to pro-Western regimes in the region.

Four, it serves as a strategic deterrent against the US. As long as Iran lacks nuclear weapons, it needs to and it wishes to maintain the threat of inciting terrorism anytime against the US and its allies, thus deterring America from taking negative action against Iran.

Fifth, it enhances Iran's standing in the eyes of radical Sunni Islamist organizations as the only state in the region which is willing to stand up to the West and to Israel. It helps draw them into Iran's orbit, thus giving Iran a foothold in the heart of the Arab Middle East.

Our conference today attempts to address the following questions: What do Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas ultimately hope to achieve? How does Iranian backing for these two groups relate to their recent actions in the region? Can the next American administration and its diplomatic initiatives toward Iran influence the behavior of Iran's proxies? Do Iran and its proxies represent a threat to Israel alone, or to broader Western interests in the region?

Our first panel deals with the Iranian ambitions in the region. We have two leading scholars in the field to help us understand Iran's strategic and tactical goals.

Martin Kramer is the Washington Institute's Wexler-Fromer Fellow, and a senior Fellow at Shalem Center in Jerusalem and at the Olin Institute, Harvard University. He is presently at Harvard. He is the author of the bestselling monograph, *Ivory Towers on Sand: The Failure of Middle Eastern Studies in America*. If you have not read this book, get it and read it, it is wonderful. His popular website www.martinkramer.org offers alternative readings on Islam and the Arab world.

Our second speaker is Dr. Shmuel Bar. He is Director of Studies at the Institute of Policy and Strategy in Herzliya and serves on the steering team of the annual Herzliya Conference. He has also been an adjunct senior fellow at Hudson, and a distinguished Koret Visiting Fellow at the Hoover Institute at Stanford. He lectures on issues relating to Israeli national security, Islam, and the Arab world. Dr. Bar served for thirty years in the Israeli government, mostly in the office of the Israeli Prime Minister. We will begin with him.

Shmuel Bar, Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya

I will begin with an overview of the ideological basis of Iran's support of terrorism; its policy of exporting revolution. Some time ago, Rafsanjani, who was no longer president of Iran, said that if you take the export of revolution away from the Iranian regime, then it is no longer the Islamic regime. In other words, the *raison d'être* of the Islamic regime is exporting revolution.

In many revolutions this dilemma appears. Some of you may recall the argument in the former Soviet Union regarding socialism in one country, and the claim that Trotsky was actually against it. Why? Because a socialist country is no longer a revolutionary regime.

But in Iran, when we look at the underlying ideology and try to see what exactly the drivers are, interestingly enough, no matter how this ideology seems to be religious and pan-Islamic, it is very particular. It is very Iranian, very nationalist-Iranian, and very Shiite.

First of all, I think that one of the main drivers of Iranian policy is what I would call a perception of history that Iran was once a great civilization. Anybody here who has read the *Shahnameh* knows that Ferdowsi mourns the fact that eaters of lizards and drinkers of camel milk came out of the desert to demand the crown of the kings of Persia. The idea is that Iran was once a hegemon of the Middle East, that it now should be the hegemon of the Middle East, and that only some sort of conspiracy has prevented Iran from taking its rightful place.

So this sense of manifest destiny is a key driver in what appears to be, or is presented as, a religiously-based doctrine of export of revolution.

Another thing is Shiite revolutionary-ism. We have done some work on documents that we have found in South Lebanon – ideological documents which were actually given to Hezbollah by the Iranian regime’s Revolutionary Guard. When we read these documents, those of us who are very familiar with traditional Shiite teachings said, “This does not look like Shiism at all.” There are elements in the Shiite revolutionary creed of Iran which are very, very different from the traditional Shiite creed.

One of these things is an emphasis on Shiite supremacy. The Shiites have always said, “We are the believers, the others are Muslims, but we are the real believers. Eventually, the Hidden Imam will appear, and then everybody will be Shiites because everybody will realize that this is the true faith.” But the sense of supremacy now manifests itself in all sorts of ways within the ideology that is transmitted to Hezbollah, proxies of Shiite supremacy: anti-Sunni elements, the cursing of the companions of the prophet, and things like that. So the Shiite element is extremely relevant here.

Now, obviously, if you are Shiite, you want to become hegemon of the Moslem world. And it is going to be very difficult, unless you can present your Shiite features as something which I call “the export of Shiite Shia Lite”. Shia Lite is, in other words, a means of blurring the differences between Sunni and Shia, of convincing your Sunni proxies in the Arab world and beyond, in the general Muslim world, that there is not much of a difference. The Iranians have various instruments for doing this

Another thing which I think is extremely important is Iran’s doctrine of jihad. This is fundamental to the idea of exporting revolution, because the export of revolution is the export not only of the revolutionary regime of Iran to other Muslim countries, or to other communities, but it also includes a doctrine of when, where, and how you wage jihad. And the traditional Shiite doctrine of jihad was very clear: an offensive jihad cannot be waged as long as the hidden Imam has not appeared. A defensive jihad is under certain constraints permissible, but it has to be related to some sort of real and imminent threat.

Today the Iranian ideology has taken the criteria for a jihad, and broadened them to such an extent that actually almost everything can warrant a jihad. The concept of the jihad in a foreign place; the idea that the ultimate jihad is the jihad of somebody who is not within his own environment, and there, alone, he wages jihad; the idea that a jihad is warranted not only by actual physical occupation of a Muslim country, but also by cultural occupation of a Muslim country; by a cultural threat to a Muslim country; by the very existence of Muslims who are oppressed.

The definition of oppressed is very, very broad. When you read the writings of Khomeini on jihad, for example, you get the impression that if there are oppressed anywhere, it does not matter if they are Muslim or not, that warrants a jihad; it warrants an operation to fight the oppressor simply because it is the duty of the Muslims to fight the oppressor everywhere. If this is true, then actually you just have to say there is oppression somewhere, and this warrants a jihad, but now the question is whether you fight the jihad or not. And here, you enter the realm of who commands the jihad. Obviously, the Shiite problem with jihad was that if you do not have the Imam, then how can you fight the jihad? He is the commander.

So, in Iran they have developed the doctrine in which, the only person who can lead jihad is the *Ruchbah*, who is the leader of Iran. Any proxy of Iran, any organization which is a proxy of Iran and which accepts the tutelage of Iran, ultimately has to accept the idea that the buck ends with the supreme leader of Iran. He is the one who decides whether it is the interest of the Muslims to wage a jihad now, to perform acts of terrorism, or to do anything which has any sort of political implications.

And so, this brings us to the issue that proxyship between Iran and its terrorist proxies. This is very, very different from the sort of proxyship that existed between old terrorist states and their proxies.

Syria had all sorts of Palestinian organizations. There was a sort of agreement: “I will accept your patronage, you will give me a place to stay in Syria, you will give me money, and occasionally I will do terrorist attacks for you.” This amounted to a sort of give and take. The proxy – if we are looking at old proxy situations like Abu Nidal and the various Palestinian organizations – could move from one patron to another. They could say, “Okay, we are not happy with Iraq, we will move to Syria. We are not happy with Syria, we will move to Libya.”

This is not the case with the type of proxies that Iran is trying to develop. Hezbollah is an organization which must accept the Iranian ideology. The *sine qua non* for being an Iranian proxy or surrogate has to be total acceptance of the Iranian patronage. And so this is a completely different element. Here ideology is fundamental to the proxy\patron relationship.

I think that we have a tendency to downplay ideology as a driving factor. And I think that especially now, years after 9/11, slowly but surely even in the West, people are beginning to understand that ideology is a fundamental driver, and that looking for only the *realpolitik* in the policy of a country is not enough. And in Iran this is particularly true.

Martin Kramer, Harvard University

It is a privilege to be on the panel with my colleague Shmuel, who is done some of the work for me. I think the program as a whole is quite impressive, and I do not want to preempt things which will be said later by people who perhaps have more specialized expertise than I do. So what I am going to do is attempt something a bit different. The remarks I will make arise from work in progress devoted to the role of analogies in the making of US Middle East policy.

The argument that I will make very briefly this morning is that we have constructed an analogy to guide us on Iran. But far from guiding us, it is misleading us, and it is causing us to regard Iran as a virtual superpower in a way that intimidates us more than it intimidates the Iranians. The analogy, to anticipate my remarks, is between Iran and the Soviet Union.

Let me take you back thirty years in time to March 1979, after the triumph of Ayatollah Khomeini when he had just returned to Iran. A report in the *Washington Post* opened with these words, and I quote, "In the lobby of the Intercontinental, the main teatime occupation is comparative revolutions. Those who covered the Portuguese or Cuban revolutions argue over whether Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan is more a Suarez or a Castro. Those with a historical turn of mind seek parallels in the Russian Revolution, wondering if the Fedayeen will fill the role of the Bolsheviks. For those who fancy the French Revolution, there is the fun of identifying a future Napoleon from the ranks of obscure Iranian colonels."

From the very beginning, Americans sought to understand Iran's revolution through analogy. This mass movement, which was led by this wizened old man in a turban, was so foreign to American observers, and information on its workings was so thin, that analogies widely served as substitutes for analysis. There is some literature, very interesting literature, on the ways that

policymakers use and deploy historical analogies. At the risk of simplifying, it comes down to this – policymakers fall back on analogies most readily when information is not clear enough to allow them to eliminate options, or when time is very short, or when some current event stimulates the retrieval of a stored memory. And what is true for policymakers, of course, is just as true for journalists and pundits and others.

If these are the conditions in which analogies are invoked, certainly the case in Iran met all of the conditions. As the quote suggests, while the revolution in Iran unfolded, initially no one was sure which analogy to follow. For Americans, the French Revolution was, of course, too remote. The Cuban Revolution seemed too small in scale, too much the work of a small junta to provide guidance about a revolution which, after all, brought thousands of people into the streets, and overthrew a form of kingship which had existed in Iran from time immemorial.

But eventually, and with the help of the academy, one analogy prevailed over the others. The Iranian revolution would come to be regarded as a great revolution on the scale of the Russian Revolution. Now I say with the help of the academy, because it was students of Comparative Revolution who singled out the Iranian revolution from this jumble of third-world turmoil, as something different, something of world historical significance. This may have had to do with their expectations of the revolution as it unfolded. Many observers, especially those on the left, pinned very high hopes on a movement which dethroned America's puppet, the Shah of Iran. This was a movement that filled broad avenues in Tehran as well as the imaginations on college campuses. I was on the campus at that time, I remember it well. Of course, needless to say, the revolution quickly shed its leftist façade and revealed its true Islamic color, which was not red.

But the academics had already bought in, and had already made the analogy. Here was a revolution, they believed, which deserved a place in the pantheon of great revolutions. And it was a politically correct thing to do to add at least some Muslims to the pantheon.

In the 1980s, then, there grew up a considerable body of literature devoted to comparing Iran's revolution with the other great revolutions. Theda Skocpol, the Harvard Political Scientist, in 1979, published a very influential book comparing the French, the Russian, and the Chinese Revolutions. By 1981, she already had made a point of adding Iran. This was her rationale, and I quote her, "The Iranian Revolution has been so obviously mass-based, and so thoroughly transformative of basic socio-cultural and socio-economic relationships in Iran, that it surely fits more closely the pattern of great historical social revolutions than it does the rubric of simply a political revolution where only governmental institutions are transformed."

And on it went. In 1984, the Iran specialist, and my old friend, Marvin Zonis, told a State Department session, and I quote, "The message from Iran is, in my opinion, the single most impressive political ideology proposed in the twentieth century since the Bolshevik Revolution. And if we accept that the Bolshevism is a remnant of the nineteenth century, then I argue that we have had only one good one in the twentieth, and it is this one."

Here for variety, is my teacher, Bernard Lewis. I quote him, "The Iranian Revolution was a real revolution in the sense that the French and Russian Revolutions were real revolutions. It was a massive change in the country, a massive shift in power, socially, economically, and ideologically."

Then the journalists, of course, followed suit. From the right, here is David Price Jones.

“Khomeini’s ‘seizure of power’ in 1979 has proved as consequential as the Bolshevik coup of 1917.” And then on the left, Robin Wright wrote a book entitled, “The Last Great Revolution” about Iran, which of course makes the identical argument, even in the title.

Now, I do not think I have time to explain in full why I think this categorization of Iran’s Revolution among the greats, so close to its occurrence, may have been premature. Compare France, Russia, and even China with Iran thirty years after their great revolutions, and they became, of course, military and economic superpowers. Iran, clearly, has not. But first impressions matter, and from a very early stage, Iran’s revolution was deemed analogous to Russia’s.

America’s foreign policy community, combining their long Soviet experience with their patent ignorance of Iran, deliberately or unconsciously imposed a Cold War template on Iran. As a result, US policy discourse on Iran has become suffused with cold war analogies and references. It began in earnest after 1991, when the Soviet Union fell, and its collapse became the model of how America could win without war, with lots of bows, of course, to George Tennant and containment.

In 1993, both Iran and Iraq became subject to the policy of dual containment. Over time, of course, Iraq would be separated from Iran in US thinking, and subjected to another analogical template, which was Nazi Germany. But Iran seems to remain quite firmly embedded in America’s Cold War template, despite Ahmadinejad’s personal efforts to evoke Hitler.

This is not the preference of only one side in the Iran debate. Cold War referents are used by those who want the United States to take Iran as a serious challenge that needs to be confronted, as well as by those who think the United States should take Iran as a serious challenge, and therefore, engage it.

It is easiest to track this in journalism, so here are just a few examples. You might remember them. Tom Friedman, earlier this year, in the *New York Times*, and I quote, “The next American president will inherit many foreign policy challenges, but surely one of the biggest will be the Cold War. Yes, the next president is going to be a Cold War president, but this Cold War is with Iran.” The headline of that piece was, in fact, “The New Cold war.”

Again, Robin Wright, in a *Washington Post* article entitled, “U.S. vs. Iran, Cold War II.” I quote, “After three decades of festering tensions, the United States and Iran are now facing off in a full-fledged Cold War.” Full-fledged, no less. And we do not know what is in the secret policy briefs, but the same kind of message has come across, I think, in very subtle ways in public statements by US officials.

I will just give you a curious example. In beefing up the U.S. presence in Dubai to monitor the situation in Iran, Condoleezza Rice and Nicholas Burns both invoked Riga Station. This was Burns, and I quote him, “We sent a young kid from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1926, out to Riga Station, George Kennan. We said, ‘Go and learn Russian. Sit in Riga. You be our window into the Soviet Union.’ ”

That is what we are saying to these young kids today. “We cannot be in Iran, so you go to Dubai, you interview every Iranian you can find, you get to know them – all the Iranians who come out there to do their banking and spend their weekends there, and you tell us how we should understand Iran.” And had I more time, I could regale you with similar snippets, which I would label under the category of “Soviet Illogical Displacement”.

Now, the Soviet-Iran analogy has been extended, of course, to Iran’s regional role, which is the subject of this conference. It is a role *vis-à-vis* the so-called proxies – “proxy” is also, by the way, a Cold War reference – Hezbollah and Hamas.

During the Cold War, it was feared that the Soviets would do in the Middle East what they had done in Eastern Europe. Operating through proxies, and exploiting chaos, they would exploit a sphere of influence all the way down to the Persian Gulf; the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, as you will recall, was interpreted as the first move. Zbigniew Brzezinski called this the “arc of crisis”. You may remember the phrase. *Time Magazine*, in a very famous cover story almost exactly thirty years ago, dubbed it the “crescent of crisis.” It was illustrated on the cover of the magazine with a map of the Middle East which was dominated by this looming, hungry, Soviet bear.

In this Cold War template, Iran is substituted for the Soviet Union, and the Shiite crescent is substituted for the crescent or arc of crisis. This time it is Iran, which is already on the waters of the Gulf, that is seeking to establish itself on all sides of the Gulf, as well as on the

Mediterranean. Now as we will hear today, we have already heard this morning, Iran is certainly attempting to do this. The problem with the analogy is that it presumes Iran has the kind of superpower clout that the Soviet Union had, even though Iran cannot invade countries, or sell top-of-the-line weapons systems, or rattle, at this point, the nuclear saber.

And this brings me, really, to the key problem with the Cold War analogy. It hides Iran's weakness. And in doing so, it tilts the U.S. approach to Iran away from prevention and possibly preemption, and toward containment and deterrence; away from confrontation, and thus towards engagement. It thus works, paradoxically, as a self-fulfilling analogy.

Thanks to its hold on our imaginations, the United States is already in the process of resigning ourselves to the continued growth of Iranian power until, eventually, it does more closely resemble a major power in its capabilities. This really would allow Iran to create Cold-War-style crises and wage genuine proxy wars. By prematurely promoting Iran from the status of a third world upstart to a major power, and treating it as such, our policy elite has waged psychological warfare against ourselves.

Now, many of those who do this cite George Kennan as their hero. But for Kennan, a state like Iran could not possibly rise to the level of a power that had to be simply contained. It could be dealt with on an entirely different level. And we know that, because Kennan testified on Iran in 1980 before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. At the time, of course, Iran was holding hostages at the embassy in Tehran, and Kennan said that in face of what he called "unprecedented insults by Iran," the Carter Administration should go to Congress for a declaration of war, and then should seize – seize and not just freeze – Iranian assets, and in

turn, Iranian officials in the United States. He then added, and I quote him, “We should hold in readiness means of unilateral pressure on the Iranian regime, not excluding the military ones.”

And I think Kennan would have found preposterous the notion that the United States might ever be locked in a Cold war with the likes of Iran, a state with about one or two percent of the U.S.’s GDP, and one or two percent of U.S. military expenditure.

And there are people who have watched Iran up close and have reached the same conclusion. Last May, Ryan Crocker was asked this question in an interview. “So is there a new Cold War comparable to that with the former Soviet Union between the U.S. and Iran?” Ambassador Crocker answered, and I quote him, “I do not think so. The Soviet Union was a formidable force at its height with a massive nuclear arsenal. It had half of Europe locked in its grasp. Iran simply does not carry anything remotely like that weight, not internationally, not even regionally.”

So if this is so, then why do we demoralize ourselves and feed Iran’s ambition with flattering analogies?

The BBC recently reported all this Cold War II and containment talk in Washington, and then added this commentary, and I quote it, “How long Washington might wait over Iran is not at all clear. After all it took fifty years for the Soviet Union to fall. The Cold War approach, though, could buy time for Western policymakers.”

Well, in fact the opposite is true. The Cold War approach buys time for Iran which is why, I think, it is time to stop thinking analogically about Iran, and the alternative, friends and colleagues, is simple. It is to think logically. Thank you.

"Hezbollah and Iran: Destabilizing Lebanon and Israel"

David Schenker, Washington Institute for Near East Policy

Our second panel on Hezbollah and Iran will discuss “Destabilizing Lebanon and Israel.” Iran has been competing with Washington on several fronts in the Middle East, among them Iraq, Lebanon, and the Palestinian Authority. This panel focuses on the Lebanese arena and on the pernicious role Iran has been playing in supporting Hezbollah in its highly successful quest, to date, to control Lebanon and attack Israel.

I just returned from a week in Beirut, and Iran is everywhere. And not only in Douair, the southern suburb, where Iran is taking credit via extensive signage for rebuilding Lebanon in the aftermath of the Summer 2006 War. In May 2008 there were reports of Iranian flights arriving in Beirut International Airport filled with revolutionary guards to assist in Hezbollah’s takeover of Beirut. The influence of Iran has also seeped into the discourse and advocacy of the Christian community in Lebanon. Take, for example, Hezbollah’s political ally, General Michel Aoun, head of the KR party, who last week submitted a paper proposing a Lebanese national defense strategy in which all Lebanese people are part of the resistance. So Lebanon, essentially, has become a resistance state. This is a page straight out of the Iranian playbook.

Iran’s gains in Lebanon and its partnership with Hezbollah have not been lost on the pro-March Fourteenth Coalition. In an effort to counter Iranian Hezbollah gains on the ground, March Fourteenth leader, Saad Hariri, traveled to Najaf in July to meet with Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, who is said to be the most popular religious figure among Shia in Lebanon. This was

nothing less than a bold attempt to stem the tide of the Hezbollah and Iranian gains on the ground.

We are very lucky today to discuss the issue of Iran and Hezbollah with several top experts on Hezbollah, Iran, and Lebanese politics. We have Tony Badran, who is a research fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, where he focuses on Lebanon and Syria. Mr. Badran is the author, or the Webmaster, of “Across the Bay,” which is probably the best Website on developments in Lebanon and Syria today. What is the URL on that, Tony?

Tony Badran, Foundation for the Defense of Democracies

It is www.beirut2bayside.blogspot.com If you just do a search for Across the Bay, you will find it.

David Schenker

Tony is also one person I know who reads the news on Lebanon and Syria in Arabic, French, and English. He is really remarkable. We also have with us Gilad Danenberg, who is a senior researcher on Islam and Middle Eastern affairs at the IDC in Herzliya. We have Shmuel Bar, who is presenting a paper by Yair Minzily, who is a senior researcher on Middle Eastern affairs also at IDC in Herzliya, and who has published a broad array of studies on political and economic and Islamic issues. And finally, we have Hussain Abdul Hussain, who is a Washington correspondent for *Al Rei*. Prior to joining *Al Rei* he worked at *Al-Ahram*, and at Beirut’s *Daily Star*. He also reported from Iraq, and he is a remarkable expert, full of insight on Lebanon and Syria and Hezbollah.

Tony Badran

It is a pleasure to be here. In thinking of what to speak about today, I think it's still useful to go through what Hezbollah's agenda in Lebanon is. In recent years, it's become commonplace to read and hear speculation about what that agenda is. The broad lines of the narrative, which has become common wisdom for reporters and experts alike, roughly revolve around the following points, all of which neatly dovetail with official Hezbollah propaganda.

Number one, Hezbollah has "evolved" from an Iranian-backed militia in the 1980s to a "nationalist insurgent/resistance group" in the 1990s, and finally, into a mainstream political party.

Number two, this evolutionary scheme is usually directly related to the theory of Lebanonization, which was peddled by Augustus Richard Norton in the 1990s. The idea was that during the 90s, Hezbollah began a process of integrating into the Lebanese Parliamentary democracy and political process by adopting a policy of openness to other political actors in the political process, paving the way, presumably, to jettisoning its broader regional agenda which is tied to Iranian and Syrian agendas.

As Norton himself put it in 1998, "Hezbollah has been transforming itself, preparing for life after resistance." All this was premised on the unproved notion that an organization created, built, and financed by a particular state, simply moves away from all this and becomes a normal domestic political force. This did, however, fit with the passive conception of resistance and

the politics of grievance that many of these experts adhere to, whereby the resistance would simply end once the grievance had been addressed.

Number three, it was important for the proponents of this theory to distance Hezbollah from regional and international associations, not only to bolster the Lebanon-ization theory, but also in order to deny the party's terrorist label, and to deny its capacity for global reach. As such, the academic literature systematically and virtually without exception, adopted the official party line in denying or underplaying ties to terror masterminds, as that would undermine the entire argument.

Finally, we were also told that part of this Lebanon-ization was the decision by Hezbollah to forego the program of an Islamic state in Lebanon.

Essentially, all of these premises have fallen apart despite the great covering act of the 1990s. The organic ties with Iran, which never went away, are once again as clear as day. Hezbollah's apotheosis of the recently-assassinated Imad Mughniyeh trashed the compliant literature and expert literature. News of its involvement in Iraq, its networks in Latin America, and Africa, intelligence monitoring of cells in places like Germany and Canada, its tentacles in the Gulf states, in Kuwait and Bahrain have also all shattered the claim that Hezbollah has no global reach. The notion that it was "integrating into Lebanese Parliamentary politics" was exposed for the sham that it always was when the militia attacked Lebanese civilians in their homes, and for months before that, paralyzed the political process through violence and intimidation, making a mockery of the concept of democracy.

As for its voluntary disarmament after the Israeli withdrawal? In reality it was precisely after the Israeli withdrawal in 2000, and within the Syrians' warm embrace – for those who harbor the lunacy that free reign for Syria and Lebanon would check Hezbollah—that Hezbollah secretly built the massive bunker infrastructure and rockets arsenal that was displayed in the summer of 2006.

More importantly, the notion that Hezbollah was preparing for life after resistance has been shown to be hollow, and that premise has been revealed as flawed. In fact, that idea got Hezbollah's agenda exactly backwards. The Islamic resistance – which was intentionally put forward in the early 1990s to replace the overly Khomeinist logo, the Islamic revolution in Lebanon – has shown itself to encompass a much bigger and more ambitious program. Once that is understood, all of the shenanigans of the 1990s, which were interpreted as linear and evolutionary by the experts, would be seen in a different light entirely, and would help us understand what Hezbollah holds for the future.

In June of 2007, Naim Qassem the deputy head of Hezbollah, wrote a very important article in the country's leading newspaper. The title of the article really said it all. “How does the rest of society integrate into the resistance?” The question, Qasim said, no longer was whether the resistance will remain or not. Rather, the question is how does the rest of society integrate into the resistance? And in the service of which project do some not want it to remain? Qasim laid out what his vision of a “resistant society” entailed, and it is worth noting that in his description of the party's vision for a Lebanese state, (as Hussain noted in a rebuttal that he wrote in the

same paper) “The word democracy never once appeared in the entire article, not even the term ‘consensual democracy,’ which is used to describe the Lebanese system. Resistance for us is a societal vision in all its dimensions, for it is a military, cultural, political, and media resistance. It is the resistance of the people...it is the resistance of the ruler...and the nation. We have always called for building the society of resistance, and we never settled for a band of resistance. Those who would be chasing the band of resistance would tire because they would be facing the society of resistance.”

In other words, this was a totalitarian vision encompassing society on every level. Qassem also made sure to impart timelessness to the resistance, emphasizing repeatedly that it was not a “passing or temporary/circumstantial and reactive act.” Rather, the historical context he placed it in extended back, in his words, “to the prophets and the apostles, acquiring an eternal religious mandate,” something that [foreign word] himself emphasized in one of his speeches when he described it as a heavenly law.

A year later, in June of 2008, Qassem repeated his synthesis, which effectively undercuts the passive grievance argument. “The resistance is not an armed group that wants to liberate a piece of land, nor is it a temporary circumstantial performance that ends when the pretext disappears. Rather, the resistance is a vision and a method, and not only a military reaction. The building of the society of resistance provides strength for Lebanon and enhances its independence and sovereignty in the way we want, not in the way they want to impose on us.”

Resistance, therefore, is its own *raison d'être*, or, as Nasrallah alternately put it in May, as he gave the order to his militia men to invade civilian neighborhoods in Beirut, “The weapons are there to protect the weapons.”

Both Qassem and Nasrallah – indeed, this is a standard talking point for all Hezbollah officials, posit the resistance as standing “at the side of” the state. Or, if you like, parallel to the state. Both inside and above the state. And this, too, has been a standard talking point – that the state would coordinate with the resistance. That is ultimately Hezbollah’s vision for the defense strategy and the resistance project, and everyone is “invited” to join in and accept the state of affairs.

Here is where I propose understanding this as an integral part of Hezbollah’s Islamic state agenda. The Islamic state in Hezbollah’s understanding always was a cloning of the Iranian Islamic revolutionary regime, and as such it stands under the command of the Supreme Leader and his doctrine. The Islamic Republic, after all, has elections, and it respects religious minorities and guarantees their representation in Parliament. It even has a regular army, but it also has an entirely parallel structure with the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), Hezbollah’s parent organization. And they insure, as Hezbollah did in May, that the revolutionary agenda is secure, and that society remains in order behind it.

Viewing it in this broader sense of a Khomeinist structure allows one to appreciate the steady steps Hezbollah continues to make towards its declared goal, which it has never disavowed. Just because the Islamic revolution in Lebanon was altered to the Islamic resistances in Lebanon, it does not mean the agenda has changed. The resistance in Lebanon now encompasses the Islamic revolutionary structure.

As for the religious aspects, as Hussain, I am sure, will discuss, those are already underway in areas Hezbollah controls within the Shiite community. Seen in this light, the openness policy should no longer be understood as Hezbollah's integration into the Lebanese political system, like everyone else. Rather, it is about integrating others into Hezbollah's project. This is where people like Michel Aoun fit in. That is the point of the memorandum of understanding between him and Hezbollah. Indeed, in a recent session of the roundtable dialogue, he presented a paper that was essentially a carbon copy of the aforementioned 2007 article published by Qusim.

It is important for the party and for its patrons in Iran to showcase Christian window dressing for its agenda, which lends cross-religious cover and social legitimacy to the resistance agenda. Aoun's proposal, like Qusim's, essentially establishes a Basji order in Lebanon, and advances what I suggest is an essential aspect of Hezbollah's Islamic state, redefined as a resistance society.

More important to Hezbollah and Iran, however, is the co-opting of Sunnis. The benefits are multiple, bestowing cross-sectarian Muslim legitimacy, especially in the so-called street. Both the Iranians and Hezbollah are consistent in maintaining a strict separation between peoples and states, posing as the champion of the former against the weakness, corruption, and illegitimacy of the latter.

This affords Iran an entry point to undermine Sunni leadership, especially in the Gulf and in Egypt. It allows it also to pose as the leader of Islamic dignity and militancy, and as the defender of the Arab-Muslim cause of Palestine. As such, Hezbollah and Iran's policy has long sought to reach understandings with Sunnis that would co-opt and neutralize them by securing their support for the resistance agenda. Under the Syrians, this was easy, as the Sunni leaders

were emasculated, and simply played cheerleaders to Hezbollah's program. After Rafiq Hariri's assassination in 2005 and the Syrian withdrawal, and most recently the attack on the Sunni neighborhoods in Beirut, Hezbollah's standing among Sunnis has plummeted to subterranean levels. It has become a liability for even pro-Syrian Sunnis, like the former prime minister, to take an unqualified pro-Hezbollah stand.

Hezbollah and Iran have cultivated ties with militant Islamist Lebanese and Palestinians alike from decades ago. And today, for instance, figures like Fathi Yakan of the Islamic Action Front, who is at once an open Bin Laden and Zarwaheri supporter, a proxy of the Syrians, and a beneficiary of Iranian largesse, was received in Iran and he had a great reception there. And it turns out, he is also training his fighters with Hezbollah. Twenty-one of his men were recently arrested where they told the authorities that they were en route to training with Hezbollah.

Hezbollah interfered on their behalf as comrades in the resistance, and got the state to set them free. It is also done the same with marginal Druze figures such as Wi'am Wahhab, who now openly boast of being a client of Iran besides his status as a Syrian message conveyor.

Aside from the strategic purpose, this has a tactical element to it as well, which is to squeeze and emasculate Hariri with the elections looming. Ultimately, however, Hezbollah would like to force Hariri to get with the program, as his father was forced to. Nasrallah has laid forth his offer to Hariri, which he also did tellingly in his press conference after the cross-border operation on July 12, 2006, which is to return to the status quo of the 1990s and the April understanding of 1996. This legitimized Hezbollah not just as a resistance, but as a recognized interlocutor where the state was not allowed to negotiate with Israel directly or indirectly. And

it also provided a cover for its military activity with Syria as the guarantor, much to Syria's delight, as it eliminated the Lebanese state entirely as an actor.

This is what the Syrians seek to restore as well, and unfortunately, there are some who think that this is a good idea despite its disastrous consequences and track record, and despite its termination in 2006. Nasrallah's offer was euphemistically presented as a marriage between the agenda of development and of reconstruction, which is Hariri, and resistance, which is Hezbollah. In other words, Hariri and his money and connections would be allowed to play around, but Lebanon's security and foreign policy would be in Hezbollah's hands.

In essence, this was a reformulation of the pre-2005 order, and it is precisely what Syria is looking to restore. Hariri has rejected this. Nasrallah also made sure to introduce a dichotomy to insure that his militia is not tied down, even rhetorically, to a defense strategy, with the emphasis on defense, implying an end to offensive operations. He thus added a liberation strategy alongside it, leaving the door open for future operations. Nawaf Moussawi, the head of foreign relations in the party, has made recent statements rejecting the blue line as an international border. These statements could be read in this light, as could Hezbollah's adamant rejection of any proposal for indirect negotiations between the Lebanese government and the Israeli government, to settle the territorial dispute around Shebaa Farms. And Hezbollah also rejects the clause regarding the revival of the armistice agreement with Israel, which would end all offensive operations. All of this functions to preserve Hezbollah's margin for offensive maneuverability as well as to affirm Hezbollah's doctrinal rejection of any accommodation with the State of Israel.

However, given the Israeli government's declaration, regarding how it would respond to any provocation from Hezbollah, one ought to consider what the domestic repercussions would be for another Hezbollah adventure, especially in the post-May 2008 environment with sectarian tensions running extremely high. The consequences on inter-sectarian relations, in the estimation of several astute observers, could be dire and violent.

In the end, it is worth revisiting a definition for Hezbollah given by Bilal Saab in his book, that "first and foremost, Hezbollah is a Jihadi movement that engages in politics and not a political party that conducts jihad." Indeed, as I hope to have shown, everything for Hezbollah – society, culture, economy, politics, alliances, media, and so on – is in the service of the totalitarian vision of the resistant society. Hezbollah uses ambiguity to tactically navigate towards a strategic goal without having to abandon any of its options, which is precisely what the Syrians managed to do in the 1990s, having their cake and eating it, too, and affording Hezbollah the same.

If we are to believe Hezbollah's [foreign word], Hezbollah cannot be anything else and remain Hezbollah. As such, the Iranian-sponsored militia will continue to pose a challenge for Israel, although Israel is well equipped to deal with it. The challenge is far more severe and perhaps fatal to Lebanon. Lebanon's system, dysfunctional as it may be, has prevented the rise of a totalitarian regime, save for the Syrian era. But the challenge Hezbollah poses is new in certain key respects. The experience of the Palestinian parallel state of resistance in the 1970s led to war. This may well be in store once again, as Hezbollah, by its very nature, will prevent the

rise of a normal, peaceful state in Lebanon, and will continue to be a source of much misery for its population. And on that bleak note, I will stop.

David Schenker

Now we turn to Shmuel Bar, who is going to give Yair Minzily's paper on Iranian indoctrination in Hezbollah.

Shmuel Bar

We conducted a year-long study of Hezbollah ideology and indoctrination, covering a wide variety of sources, and what I have here is just a very, very short summary of a very extensive and complicated and convoluted issue.

First of all, our understanding of Hezbollah, after looking through hundreds and even thousands of Hezbollah documents and material, is that Hezbollah basically is the Lebanese Arabic-speaking arm of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. In other words, it is Lebanese, because it suits Iran for it to be Lebanese. But its loyalty, its ideological makeup, its composition, its decision-making are actually completely in line with Iran. The question would be, given a situation in which ideologically, Hassan Nasrallah and the Lebanese members of the deciding council were told by Khamenei, the supreme leader of Iran, "It is time for you to open fire on Israel, because we have been attacked by Israel. Now we know that if you start a war with Israel, you are going to be destroyed, because Israel will retaliate, and we know that it is not a good time for that, and we know that you are not prepared. But this is what you are made for."

So what would they do? We believe from looking at the ideology and the indoctrination that there is no way whatsoever that the leadership of Hezbollah would make a decision in favor of Hezbollah's survival as a Lebanese organization, in contradiction with the obedience to Iran. And this is a clear conclusion which I will explain.

What are the components of the ideological elements of the relationship? One is *Wilayat al-Faqih*, the principle that the sole deciding political figure is the Supreme Leader of Iran. In Lebanese ideological documents, it is stated that the Supreme Leader is not only the leader of Iran, he is not only the leader of the Shiites, he is not only the leader of the Muslims. The principle of his leadership is a principal which should encompass the entire world, because he is the only figure who has the capability to really understand what should be done. He is the remnant of the Imam on earth, he is the shadow of the Imam on earth, he has some sort of mystical influence from the Imam, and so his decisions are not pure political decisions. His decisions are divinely inspired.

Deriving from that is exclusive obedience to his leadership. Looking at Hezbollah indoctrination, what we see there is the amount of effort that is expended in dealing with obedience. Obedience to your superiors, discipline, obedience to the Supreme Leader. In training for Hezbollah's *Imam al-Mahdi* scout movement, young participants learn that if their parents do not seem to be loyal to the Supreme Leader, the youngsters must report their parents to their superiors. I translated one of the booklet's chapters, and I showed it to a good friend of mine who's an expert and has written a fabulous book on the Third Reich. He went through his

papers, and he found, in the booklet of the Hitler Youth, exactly the same thing. Almost word for word, just in German.

These are the trappings of fascist movements, the way that they work up from below in their indoctrination. I spoke about the principle of jihad before – jihad in a much wider sense, in a different sense, and I do not think we can go into this quite a lot – but in a completely different sense than the Sunni concept of jihad. The jihad of Hezbollah, as it is being taught, is a jihad which is completely managed and directed and commanded by a leader. And the leader is the leader of Iran. Unlike Sunni Islam, in which the jihad is a most important personal duty and so a person, even if he is alone somewhere, and he does not have anybody to tell him how to wage jihad, he must still wage jihad. But this is not so in Hezbollah. Jihad is waged in obedience to your commander, and in obedience to the Supreme Leader. There is a military line of command. Martyrdom means the willingness to sacrifice yourself for the Supreme Leader.

Again, let us go back half a century and look at the indoctrination regarding the role of the Islamic revolution, and the identity between the Islamic revolution and the Islamic resistance. The only difference, according to these documents, is that the Islamic revolution exists in a state, and the Islamic resistance exists within a movement – a movement which exists within the Lebanese state. When they talk about the government of Lebanon, they talk about it as a separate entity. They explain how you should behave in relation to the Lebanese state. This is a phrase which reflects the notion that “It is not part of us and we are not part of it.” From what sources did they draw this - from the writings of Khomeini.

Hezbollah has two trinities. The father, the son... the two trinities are Khomeini, the father of the revolution; Khamenei, the successor, who is also very fondly – they look at Khamenei more as not only the successor of Khomeini but as one who has a more intimate relationship with Hezbollah. One document says, well, Khomeini gave us general instruction, but Khamenei is much more specific. And, third, Hassan Nasrallah, who is defined as light out of light, and whose pictures represent – again, let us look at pictures. A picture tells a thousand words. You have a picture of Nasrallah and in the background some sort of psychedelic lights. You get the feeling that this person is supernatural. The description of children’s coloring books titled *Why We Love Hassan Nasrallah*. You can color the various pictures, some of which show Israelis being blown up. That is why we love Hassan Nasrallah. Why we are willing to die for Hassan Nasrallah.

Is not Nasrallah challenging the Supreme Leader by developing his own personality cult? I think that the Iranians understand that they need a strong leader in Hezbollah, because this is Lebanon, you cannot have some Persian there in who is going to be the leader image, even though the books and the pictures, all of the pictures of Khomeini have the caption, “[foreign word]. My leader.” I do not want to say that I am drawing an analogy to Mein Fuhrer, but [foreign word] basically means “My Leader.”

Nasrallah is the personal representative of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic revolution. I mean, last year, at the height of the debate, Iran was trying to Shiitize the Muslim world. He argues that Mubarak says a Shiite cannot be a true Arab, et cetera. And then he gets up and he begins his speech, and he says I declare, I testify. And you expect him to say, “I testify that

there is no god but Allah, and Mohammad is his prophet... “No,” he says, “I testify in the name of the supreme leader of the Islamic revolution.” And the Sunnis look at him and say, “What? He does not testify in the name of Allah, he testifies in the name of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic revolution?” So how can he say he is not Iranian? Because many of the documents were explicit writings of the IRGC, which were simply translated into Arabic.

Here is an analogy (with apologies to Martin Kramer). I recall that in 1973, we caught all sorts of military doctrine documents in Egypt and Syria. We read them in Arabic. And we asked ourselves, what are these phrases? Until somebody said, “No, translate them into Russian and then translate them back into Arabic.” Because basically, the Russians said, “You are getting our tanks, so you are also getting our doctrine.”

So here we have Iranian ideology translated into Arabic. But they just did not fix it thoroughly, because instead of saying “the member of Hezbollah,” it still says the “Guardsmen;” in other words, the member of the Revolutionary Guard. There are things that you can really tell were translated, because an Arab does not write like that. It is Farsi.

So the pictures, the videos, the slogans, the media, the Websites – the very structure of Hezbollah is a reflection of the structure of the Iranian state. Jihad, the various charities, the martyrs’ fund. All of these are a reflection of exactly how it exists in Iran. The youth movement is a very important. And there is one more thing which I think I should have noted before regarding the content of the ideology.

The other trinity is the axis of evil: the United States, Britain, and Israel. And they never mention France, even though France was the colonial master of Lebanon and Syria. They deny Israel's right to exist, and they say "resistance," but they also say very clearly that their goal is to destroy Israel. And they also have made very clear statements that if anybody attacks Iran, then it is the duty of Hezbollah to retaliate if such a thing happens.

So putting all of that together, the Iranians understand that they have to accommodate Lebanon because it is part of the dissimulation. But in the final analysis, Hezbollah is an Arabic-speaking IRGC contingent. Thank you.

David Schenker: Thank you. That is very impressive. Now, Hussain Abdul Hussain.

Hussain Abdul Hussain, Al Rai (Kuwait)

Thank you, David. I think we're trying to figure out what Hezbollah really is. To me, Hezbollah is three things. First it is what it says it is: a resistance movement. Second, it is a Shia group that is part of the Lebanese domestic bickering, vis-à-vis the Christians groups, along with other sectarian groups. And third, Hezbollah is a Shia school of thought vis-à-vis the more traditional Sunni view of jihad.

I will start with the first part, with the resistance movement. I used to live in Baalbek between 1982 and 1987. That was the time when Hezbollah was being formed, and there was no such thing as "resistance." Hezbollah was the Islamic revolution in Lebanon. That was on the flag, "Islamic revolution in Lebanon," and, since Lebanon was divided into Eastern Christian

Lebanon and the Western Islamic Lebanon, their slogan at the time was, “No East, no West, an Islamic Republic.” That was the slogan and there was no mention of resistance.

At the time Baalbek was being transformed into another Teheran, and the public facilities such as the hospital, and the public schools were being taken over. Even the military barracks were being overrun by Hezbollah, and were being managed by Hezbollah. That was the time of the creation of the Islamic Republic of Hezbollah in Lebanon. Again, at the time, there was no such a thing as resistance.

Well, granted, when they first announced the formation of Hezbollah – that was in September 1982 – they defined five parties as being the enemies. Of course, America came first, then Britain, then France was there at the time, and of course Israel, and the Lebanese Phalangist Party. And that was the order as far Hezbollah was concerned.

Now, by the time I became a teenager, Hezbollah has changed into the Islamic resistance.

They changed the flag, and it became the Hezbollah Islamic Resistance in Lebanon. I think the first military operation that Hezbollah conducted against Israel was in 1989. Before that, most of the militia operations against the Israeli presence in Lebanon since 1982 were through the secular parties – the Syrian secular parties such as the Lebanese Communist Party and the Syrian Social Nationalist Party.

So Hezbollah, so to speak, was a latecomer to resistance, and even though the “official” version talks about Hezbollah being created as a resistance movement, I disagree. I think it was created

as an Islamic Republic first, and then by 1988, when the Iraqi/Iranian War was concluded, the Iranians were looking for other ways to vent their anger, and so the resistance started. And it took some time until the Syrians and Iranians figured out who would be in command of fighting the Israelis in Lebanon. And it took some rounds of fighting inside Lebanon between the Syrian Groups, such as NLM, the Communist Party, and Hezbollah on the other side. But finally they decided that Hezbollah would be the resistance movement.

Now, by the time I became a reporter, I was reporting about Hezbollah's fighting in the south. Hezbollah had become a totally Lebanese resistance movement. And this was until the year 2000, when Israel withdrew from the south of Lebanon. When that happened, because it had focused so much of its resources on its propaganda on being the resistance movement, Hezbollah became unemployed. If you are the resistance, and whoever is occupying your land withdraws, then you are out of business. So it was at that point when Hezbollah first came up with the Shebaa Farms excuse. We all know the story: it is that tiny sliver of land in the middle of nowhere, no one lives there, and it is supposed to be part of Syria. Everyone is talking about it these days.

So they came up with the Shebaa Farms, but they knew that Shebaa did not qualify as Hezbollah's *raison d'être*. Since they had to have some other functions, being the resistance movement, they abducted three Israeli soldiers in the Shebaa Farms area. That was the first time they did it. That was in 2002. And then there was an exchange deal, and that was a big success for Hezbollah, but after the exchange deal, Hezbollah again became unemployed. And that went on until 2005.

UN Resolution 1559 said in its first part, “All foreign troops should withdraw from Lebanon,” meaning the Syrian occupation of Lebanon. And the second part was about the disbanding of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias in Lebanon. I think this resolution was a big mistake. Not because I am opposed to either one of these two items, but I think these two items should have come in two separate resolutions. Because by combining them, the international community actually forced Hezbollah and Syria to be linked and therefore they both have interest in saying “no” to the same resolution.

But after the Syrians were forced to withdraw, Syria had to depend on Hezbollah. Hezbollah was getting more involved in politics, and they had to protect their Syrian protégés in Lebanon. Meanwhile, Hezbollah was increasingly becoming a Shia party - a role which it had never played before 2005. And the more Shia Hezbollah became, the more Sunnis it had to lose, and that was the bargain. Because the Sunnis were on the other side, the Sunnis of Lebanon were opposed to Syria. Hezbollah was standing behind Syria, so it was losing Sunnis.

I do not think that the July war in 2006 was planned to be a full-scale war from the part of Hezbollah. According to the Hezbollah leadership, they thought “maybe we can abduct a few soldiers and just win some credit from the Sunnis across the Arab world once again.” And if you go to Nasrallah’s first press conference after the abduction by Nasrallah, he said, “I advised Israeli leadership not to go to war; we are ready to negotiate and talk to the Israelis about exchange of prisoners and Israeli soldiers.

I think this was the original intent of Hezbollah. But by now we all know that this thing went into a full-scale war, and to me, this full-scale war pushed the Shia away from Hezbollah. Because the Shia of Lebanon, as far as I am concerned, support Hezbollah as long as Hezbollah is a Shiite party vis-à-vis the Sunnis ... and the Christians. When Hezbollah plans to liberate Palestine or Jerusalem or fight Americans, I do not think the Lebanese Shia are interested in this business. You have to keep in mind that the liberation of Palestine, since old times, has been a Sunni issue. And this is how Nasrallah gains credit with the Sunnis in the Arab world. But for the Shia, until this moment, they are not convinced that the Shia of Lebanon should liberate the Sunnis of Palestine. And with this division in mind – because we all know that everyone is talking about the division, the dichotomy between the Sunnis and the Shiia across the Arab world – I think this counts.

Now, my third point is about the Shia school of Hezbollah. As we know, the Shia have an Imam, the Twelfth Imam, who went into occultation in the tenth century. And since that time, since that Messiah figure went into occultation, the Shia have not practiced politics per se. I know my grandfather in Iraq used to bury whatever tax he collected in his garden waiting for the Imam to come back. And this was in the 1960s.

For centuries the Shia have been waiting for the Imam. However, Ruhollah Khomeini had a different idea, and ironically under the sponsorship of Saddam Hussein in 1976 in Najaf, he came up with a series of lectures talking about the Islamic government. According to Khomeini, the Shia used to have many *masjids*, because in the absence of Imam, as you know, you certainly need religious guidance, and to find it you go to a senior cleric, you pick one of

them, you stick with one of them until they die. And this guy is supposed to give religious counsel on religious matters only – no politics, no state affairs.

What Khomeini did was, first of all, to say, “We cannot have more than one masjid, we should have one and only one masjid, and this masjid will have a role in politics. And this is how the Islamic government came into existence. And this doctrine, *Wilayat al-Faqih*, is the line of Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Iranian line. And this is not supported by everyone. Mind you, Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah does not support this. He is opposed to *Wilayat al-Faqih*, and he has the biggest following in Lebanon, and I think he is erroneously been placed on the list of terrorist individuals, but that is only my opinion. I think, you know, we should talk to the Shia, because not all Shia are on Iranian payrolls. And since not all Shia are on Hezbollah’s payrolls, there are so many Shia with different thoughts.

Finally, just to conclude, I have one personal experience with Hezbollah, because my maternal family is from Baalbek. There is a shrine there for one of the daughters of the third Shiite Imam. My maternal family, the Mortada, had been custodians of this shrine since probably the year 1700, and the last one of the custodians died in the mid-90s. And according to tradition, he was buried in the garden surrounding the shrine.

After that, my cousin was supposed to become the custodian. But Hezbollah forcefully took over the whole shrine, built a Persian mosque, and as it stands, the shrine became theirs. So we have a war, and the family is trying to fight this war with Hezbollah. They talked to Hezbollah, they tried to convince Hezbollah to give back what they would had since 1700, and what’s

rightfully theirs. And so we have a dynamic fight inside the Shia over what belongs to Hezbollah and what belongs to the rest of the Shia. Thank you very much.

“Iran, Hamas, and the Palestinians”

Hillel Fradkin, Hudson Institute

Earlier in our program, the question of certain forms of conventional wisdom was at issue, and the problems of that conventional wisdom. It seems to me this panel belongs with that, insofar as they will call into question various bromides of the past concerning the possible or actual relations between Shiites and Sunnis. Those people who have followed these subjects have heard over many years that such and such in the Middle East can never happen; that there are a variety of things you could discuss that will never happen. Almost all of which have happened.

One of the things that was considered to be, in particular, extremely unlikely was a relationship between Iran’s Shiites and not only Sunnis, but radical Sunnis in particular. That's to say parts of the Salafi radical movement such as Hamas. We will find out more about this from our panelists.

We are very fortunate to have three wonderful panelists today. Let me indicate the order in which they'll speak and the subjects about which they will speak. We'll hear first from Jonathan Schanzer, who is currently Director of Policy at the Jewish Policy Center, and he's going to speak to us about the Iranian role in the Palestinian Civil War; that is to say the civil war between Hamas and Fatah.

We will hear from Shmuel Bachar, who is currently a Research Fellow at the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya. And he will speak about how Iran conducts proxy relationships to Sunni organizations, in particular, the case of Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

And finally, we will hear from Matthew Levitt, who is currently at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. He is a Senior Fellow there and also Director of The Washington Institute's Stein Program on Counterterrorism and Intelligence.

All of them have much longer and more distinguished resumes, but I think I'm going to limit it to that except that I want to plug some publications.

We have, first of all, a new book by Jonathan Schanzer called *Hamas Versus Fatah: The Struggle for Palestine*. Secondly, we have from Matthew Levitt two things actually. One has been out a little while. It's a publication of The Washington Institute for Near East Policy called *The Money Trail: Finding, Following, and Freezing Terrorist Finances*. But, more substantially and, in particular for me, very welcome is his new book on *Hamas: Politics, Charity, and Terrorism in the Service of Jihad*. We have been badly in need of a very new and good book about Hamas, and it's really a pleasure to have this.

In the service of earlier speakers, let me mention that – well, first of all, we publish a journal here entitled *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, and that's available outside if you would like to pick up a copy. I can say it's the leading journal on radical Islam because it's the only journal on radical Islam.

We also publish some monographs, one of which was written by one of this morning's speakers, Shmuel Bar. It is entitled *Sources of Islamist Strategic Thought*. Let me invite Jonathan to speak to us first.

Jonathan Schanzer, Jewish Policy Center

Good afternoon, everyone. It is my pleasure to be here at the Hudson Institute and to sit on a panel with these distinguished gentlemen.

As Hillel mentioned, my new book is on the Hamas-Fatah Civil War. In the book, I trace 20 years of animosity between these two Palestinian organizations. This animosity really started out as a political struggle and eventually turned into a very bloody one as we've seen since the 2007 coup that took place in the Gaza Strip.

Leaving finances to Matt and leaving some of the other Iranian dynamics to Shmuel, today I would like to discuss the role that Iran has played in this conflict, this Palestinian Civil War.

I would argue that the conflict is a creation of Iran in many ways, and this is something that I don't believe has been addressed either in academia or in the media. Indeed, I think most of the attention has been placed on the financing that Iran has provided to Hamas without really looking at what that has done to the intra-Palestinian dynamic. Over the years, Iran has been

talking about the need for Palestinian unity, while at the same time driving a wedge between the two largest Palestinian organizations.

We can begin the narrative in 1979, which was the year that the Phillies began to put together their first real run for the World Series. [Laughter] It was also was the year of the Iranian Revolution when Ayatollah Khomeini succeeded in ousting the Shah from power and, of course, launched the Iranian Revolution.

In mid-February, just days after the revolution was complete, Khomeini invited Yasser Arafat, then leader of Fatah and the PLO, to visit Iran. During this meeting – and pictures are available of it –and in very typical Yasser Arafat fashion, they're holding hands and hugging and all the things that Yasser Arafat was very known for. But apparently Khomeini lectured Arafat on the need to drop the revolutionary approach that he had, this sort of quasi-socialist approach to Palestinian liberation, and to embrace Islamism.

Khomeini had been receiving assistance from Yasser Arafat. In fact, Arafat had been providing military training and weapons to what was the precursor to the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, the IRGC. And for that Khomeini decided to reward Arafat by closing down the Israeli Embassy, turning over the keys to the PLO, flying the Palestinian flag, and installing an Ambassador. In so doing, Iran had essentially embraced the Palestinian cause.

The honeymoon, however, was a short one. Soon thereafter, the Iran-Iraq War broke out in 1980; it lasted through 1988. The Palestinians threw their support behind Iraqi President

Saddam Hussein and Khomeini rejected all of Arafat's attempts to mediate this conflict. It was, in the end, Arafat's decision to accept the State of Israel in December 1988 that ultimately led to the unraveling of the Fatah-Iranian ties.

In 1989, Khomeini's successor, Ali Khamenei, dubbed Arafat, who had just begun the Madrid process, “a traitor and an idiot” for engaging in talks with Israel. It is at this point that Iran began to truly influence the Hamas-Fatah Conflict.

It was in 1988 that the Hamas organization was formed. Hamas, of course, is a spinoff of the Muslim Brotherhood Organization – the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood Organization.

Designed as a resistance movement, its sole purpose, according to its charter and according to all of its speeches, sermons, and so forth, was essentially to destroy Israel and create an Islamic Palestine. This was clearly more in sync with the Iranian approach to Palestinian liberation. In other words, this was more in line with what Khomeini had been lecturing Yasser Arafat about back in 1979.

By December 1990, Hamas leaders paid an official visit to Iran, along with a number of other rejectionist groups, for a conference in support of the uprising – the 1987/1988 Intifada.

Hamas was instantly a success on the streets of the West Bank and Gaza. It was revered for its steadfast rejection of Israel, standing in sharp contrast to Yasser Arafat, who recognized Israel and had begun negotiating for peace. Hamas really filled a vacuum that had been left open by Arafat when he decided to engage in the peace process.

So Iran threw its support behind Hamas, and after Hamas began its suicide bombing campaign in 1994, Iranian support became more overt. In fact, there were questions about whether Iran had really influenced Hamas to begin to adopt this tactic. This had been, of course, previously a Shiite tactic, something that was more commonly associated with Hezbollah and the marine barracks bombing of 1983, et cetera.

In December 1994, hundreds of Iranian demonstrators occupied the PLO Embassy; the aforementioned Embassy that Khomeini had provided to the PLO back in '79. They destroyed property and held the Embassy for five or six hours calling Arafat and chanting that he was “the biggest collaborator with Israel and the United States.” In other words, the tide was beginning to turn by 1994/1995.

The Iranians distanced themselves from this incident, of course, although as all of us know, really nothing very much happens inside Iran without, you know, mullah say-so. But, at the same time, Iran was now actively offering its support, financial and otherwise, to PLO members in Tunisia who rejected the Oslo process. So, in other words, they were actively undermining Arafat at this point.

There were even press reports at the time of Iranian sponsored attempts to assassinate Yasser Arafat. And one Iranian representative by the name of Osama Hamdan actually gloated publicly, as early again as 1994/1995, that the ties between Hamas and Iran were getting stronger and they were getting stronger at the expense of the Fatah organization. So, here you

begin to see this conflict, let's say, as two brothers who are fighting for the attention of their father.

As early as 1992, Yasser Arafat had begun to openly complain of Iranian support to the Hamas organization. He complained in 1992 that he knew of \$30 million that Iran had transferred to Hamas. This seemed to corroborate Lebanese reports, at the time, that about \$10 million a year was coming into the Hamas organization through oil sales and other means.

And then, of course, there were reports in the press of Iranian training of the Hamas organization in Lebanon, and in Sudan, where growing ties were reported between the new Muslim Brotherhood-backed government and Iran.

It is at this point, I think, that the United States truly began to get alarmed. The United States sought to take action to mitigate the growth of the Iran-Hamas relationship, which essentially confirmed the fact that this had been a growing problem for the first five to seven years of the Oslo process.

It was the Clinton administration, in its attempts to bolster the Oslo process, that imposed the 1995 U.S. Trade Embargo on Iran, followed by the 1996 Iran-Libya Sanctions Act. This was not solely in response to Iranian support for Hamas, but certainly was part of the plan, part of the strategy. It was an attempt to weaken the number one opposition to the peace process, the number one organization responsible for suicide bombings and disrupting progress towards peace.

Meanwhile, on the streets of the West Bank and Gaza, a conflict was brewing. The United States and Israel were providing Fatah and Yasser Arafat with weapons, with money, with assistance, and with training. And they basically exhorted the Fatah organization to crack down on Hamas.

As a result, hundreds of Hamas members were put in jail. There were reports of torture. There were reports of conflicts in the streets, rock throwing, and sniping. These things were usually reserved for Palestinian activities against Israel. But all of a sudden, in the 1990s, there were small reports of Intra-Palestinian conflict. Of course, this was egged on by the United States and Israel, not necessarily because they sought a conflict within the Palestinian Authority, but because they wanted Fatah to gain control. And in fact, Hamas recognized that every time it carried out an attack against Israel, it was a demonstration that Fatah did not have control of the streets within the Palestinian Authority.

Every time a suicide bombing happened, it was a clear signal to the rest of the world that the Palestinians were divided on the question of peace and negotiating with Israel. It also showed that Fatah did not, in fact, have full control over both territories as it claimed to have; Fatah was not the sole representative of the Palestinian people as Yasser Arafat had always claimed.

Without rehashing a well-worn narrative, suffice it to say, that support for the Palestinian Authority dwindled rapidly in the mid-to-late 1990s. Yasser Arafat's inability to produce a Palestinian State had worn on the patience of the Palestinian people. On the streets of the West

Bank and Gaza, fighting continued between the two factions. The P.A. was accused of corruption. All of the money that it had been receiving from the United States, from Israel, from the international community, had been squandered.

All the while, Hamas was seen as a much more effective organization. It was actually giving its money back to the Palestinian people and making sure they were fed, clothed, that they were receiving education, et cetera, all while Arafat could not make those claims. So, Hamas was gaining support very quickly within the territories.

When the Camp David 2 talks collapsed in 2000, Yasser Arafat made a decision to launch a war against Israel. We now call this war the Al-Aqsa Intifada. What I would argue, what I argue in the book, is that this was a decision not based solely on the fact that he couldn't achieve peace and that he had really realized that he had reached the end of the road. It was also clear that his strategy of gaining control of the Palestinian street had failed. Hamas was gaining popularity steadily and it would be up to him to change tactics. He could no longer support the secular state that he had long ago decided to support. He had to reclaim his role as a revolutionary.

So, Arafat launched an Islamist uprising in honor of the third holiest site in Islam. And at the time, Arafat told Iranian President, Mohammad Khatami, "We choose the way that Muslims have entrusted us."

What did this mean? It basically meant that Arafat seems to have given over the Palestinian cause to Islamism. He has essentially realized that Hamas' approach of steadfast resistance to Israel in the form of Islamism is a more credible strategy for the Palestinians. At least this is what it appears to have happened.

And as the result, Arafat created the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, which was essentially a mirror image of Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, carrying out suicide bombings, quoting the Koran, and invoking Islamic principles in its attacks against Israel. This was something relatively new for Yasser Arafat. And from all appearances, Iran supported Arafat's change in strategy. According to U.S. Intelligence, Iran provided funding to the Brigades, "mostly through Hezbollah," the Iranian backed proxy.

One West Bank leader, Zakariya Zubeidi, said, "Without the help of our brothers in Hezbollah, we would not have continued our struggle. They give us money and weapons. We coordinate our military operations." So, here we begin to see coordination between Fatah, Hamas, and Hezbollah.

Iranian support for Fatah's activities was also confirmed in the capture of the Karine-A, a naval vessel carrying 50 tons of Iranian supplied weapons through the offices of Hezbollah. This obviously angered the Israelis. The Israelis had already reached the boiling point with Arafat and Hamas and had turned their back on the peace process, and on Arafat and Fatah.

Now we begin to see joint operations taking place between Hamas and Fatah, while Israel mostly carries out its reprisal attacks against the Palestinian Authority. So, even when Fatah stops attacking Israel or the attacks begin to slow, Israel continues to bombard the Palestinian Authority infrastructure. In other words, no matter who attacks Israel in the 2000 to 2004 period, the P.A. is getting clobbered time and time again. This accelerates to the point that Arafat is sequestered in his Mukataa compound, and Israel essentially plays into the hands of the Hamas organization.

Hamas knows that every time it carries out a suicide bombing, yes, there may be some reprisals against it within the West Bank or Gaza. But, more importantly, the P.A. will continue to be clobbered by Israel. Hence, you've got the growth of the Hamas organization, and you've got the dwindling of the Palestinian Authority.

Things continued to go that way for Fatah for the next four years. The fighting on the streets carried on between Fatah members and Hamas members. In fact, there were fights for swaths of territory in both the West Bank and Gaza – territories which had been controlled by families, clans, and tribes before the 1967 transfer of power from Jordan and Egypt to Israel. Before 1967, there had been more of this kind of influence. Now, all of a sudden, it was resurfacing again, but the allegiances were to Hamas and Fatah, and they were fighting directly in the streets.

As this went on, I think it's very important to note that the reporting here in the United States was almost entirely about Israel and the Palestinians, always about *that* conflict. So, even as

Hamas and Fatah were fighting each other in the streets, even as the death tolls were mounting – by a certain point, the numbers of Palestinians killed by other Palestinians exceeded that of the number of Palestinians killed by Israelis – the reporting still continued that it was a Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

By the time Yasser Arafat died in 2004, and as Saudi funding dried up – and I'm hoping maybe Matt can address that – it was very clear that Hamas had a very important role to play, and that Iran got squarely behind it. And there was an up-tick in funding that increased over the next two years.

Iran was gradually giving more support to Hamas. Then fast forward to January 2006. Then Hamas' electoral victory confirmed, in my opinion, Iran's belief that Hamas has a very important role to play for Iran in the Levant. In other words, when the majority of Palestinians elected Hamas as their leader, it was a clear sign to Iran that although they had been supporting the Hamas organization in a piecemeal way over the years, now was the time to start flooding the funding in.

Iran continued to say throughout the following year that it was prepared to cover the entire deficit of the Palestinian budget, which had been cut by the international community in response to the Hamas elections. So while Western sanctions against Hamas were put in place, Iran announced that it would fill the gap.

December 2006, and Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh visits Teheran. It is announced that Iran will pledge \$250 million in aid to compensate for the western boycott. In other words, again, we're just seeing more and more money coming in, and more overt Iranian support for Hamas. Then, of course, the political standoff continues between Hamas and Fatah carries on through 2007, and finally a bloody coup takes place inside the Gaza Strip.

Within days of this conflict's end, the Palestinian Authority – or perhaps I should say the former Palestinian Authority – alleged, "It was a joint program with Iran." The allegations begin to fly that Hamas was somehow a transplanted organization, not an organic Palestinian movement any longer because of the amount of support that it receives from Iran. In fact, in the West Bank, there were reports of school children chanting and yelling, "Shia!" as an intended insult to the Hamas organization.

All the while, Iran has continued to insist that it seeks a reconciliation of the Palestinian conflict. Clearly, the conflict is a black eye on the Muslim world and Iran has called for resolution, for seeing the Palestinians join together in the liberation of their homeland. But, all the while, Iran continues to supply weapons, training, funding and so forth to Hamas. And this only exacerbates the sharp divisions that we now see between Fatahland in the West Bank and Hamastan in the Gaza Strip.

In other words, by funding one and not the other, and by not truly offering its offices of diplomacy, the Palestinians have divided into two distinctly separate entities to the point that much of the world, at this point, really has two policies vis-à-vis the Palestinians, one for the

West Bank and one for Gaza. I get into why that is in my book, but suffice it to say, there are economic, cultural, even linguistic differences between these two territories that I think Iran has only succeeded in exacerbating.

What we now see is concern over whether this will happen in the West Bank; whether a Hamas takeover, like the one that exploded in the Gaza Strip will now take place in the West Bank.

According to Condoleezza Rice's testimony last year, this is something that America is watching. But, you know, more importantly, I think there are some other policy implications that I'd like to just briefly touch on for a minute before I sit down. One is that I believe that Jerusalem and Washington have not done enough to explain the Iranian role in this conflict. This conflict is extremely troubling whereas neither Iran's nuclear ambitions, nor its continued funding of terrorism, has raised an eyebrow at the UN.

There are people who are tremendously upset about seeing this Palestinian turmoil. I think that the United States and Israel can do a lot to try to explain what this conflict has been about, and Iran's role in it, as a means to try to bring more diplomatic support in the effort against Iran.

The other thing that I think is important for Washington and Jerusalem also to recognize is that regional peace will not be achieved until Iran is removed from this equation. Iran continues to drive this wedge between the West Bank and Gaza and, in fact, as long as the wedge exists, as long as the two territories are as sharply divided as they are now, there is no way to move forward. There is no Palestinian interlocutor.

We continue to hear from President Obama and his administration about intentions to jump start the peace process again. My question is, and I pose this in the book, who is the interlocutor? Who will we begin to work with? Gaza has something like 1.5 million people controlled by Hamas, and the West Bank has 2.5 million people controlled by Fatah. And we're not even sure how much control Fatah has in that territory. So, first, Iran needs to be removed from this equation, and then the interlocutor needs to be identified.

Finally, I think it's important to recognize that Iran is playing a masterful game of chess on Israel's side of the board. Iran has successfully created a proxy or a client to Israel's north, with Hezbollah, which you heard about in the last session. Then over the last 20 years, it has successfully created a proxy to Israel's southwest with Hamas in the Gaza Strip. And we're now hearing reports from both the United States military and the Israeli military that if their military forces were not in place, there is a very good chance that Hamas would be able to take over in a similar lightning coup.

So, the question is what steps should be taken right now to make sure that Fatah is propped up enough – not because we think that it's a wonderful organization or that it doesn't support terrorism in some way or another – to remain a buffer to Hamas as it tries to put yet one more piece down, one more pawn down, to Israel's east, until the country is surrounded. So, with that I'll close and hand over to my distinguished panelists. Thank you.

Hillel Fradkin

Now we will hear from Shmuel Bachar, who is going to speak on “Iranian Proxyship to Sunni Organizations: The Case of Hamas and Palestinian Islam Jihad.”

Shmuel Bachar, Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya

In recent years we have witnessed a rising fear among Sunni-Arab elements about intensifying Shiite-Iranian involvement in the Sunni and Arab theaters. It seems that the words of *Asharq al-Awsat* Saudi columnist, Hussein Shobokshi from October 2006, reflect quite well the feelings in the Arab and Muslim world concerning this phenomenon which he defines as Iranian involvement in more than one theater in this region.

Shobokshi maintains that in the aftermath of the 2006 Lebanon War, Iran has been seeking maximum gains from the war's ramifications. This has been especially true in light of the ascendance of a new legendary Arab hero, Hassan Nasrallah, who gained enormous popularity in Arab public opinion during the war and in its aftermath.

According to Shobokshi, "Shiism per se has never been a project that aims at spreading its ideology and dividing Sunni and Shiites apart. Responsibility," he goes on to say, "lies solely in the hands of Iran." He expresses dismay in light of what he terms "Iranian penetration" into the depths of the Sunni sphere saying, "It creates instability and shakes the face of the earth."

This statement is one of many that attest to the intensification of the Arab discourse on what is perceived to be a Shiite-Iranian danger to the Middle East, and the creation of a shared crescent led by the Islamic Republic. Recent research I've conducted deals with one of the more

complicated dimensions of Sunni-Shiite relations: trying to typify the nature of the relationship between a Shiite patron and a Sunni client.

The case study I've chosen to analyze revolves around Iran's relations with two of the most prominent Palestinian-Islamic organizations, Hamas, and PIJ, or Palestinian Islamic Jihad, focusing on the time period between the 2006 Lebanon War and spring, 2008.

My aim was to see whether or not the Sunni organizations that operate under Iranian tutelage and finance are influenced by Iran, not only in the political and military dimensions, but also culturally, religiously, ideologically, and dogmatically, thus becoming protégé organizations in every sense of the word.

One conclusion can be stated right away. Iran's influence upon Hamas and PIJ is far from being identical or even similar. While PIJ has, since its foundation, been identified with Iran, the principles of Khomeini's Islamic Revolution and the organization's leaders – both Fathi Shaqaqi and Ramadan Shallah have always expressed enthusiasm and an ideological fervor toward the revolution – Iran's relationship with Hamas has been and still is much more complicated.

Hamas is a much larger movement and by far much more popular than the PIJ among a Palestinian society that is almost entirely Sunni. Therefore, Hamas' leadership has, since its foundation, considered itself to be heading a prominently autonomous, social, and ideological

movement, both in terms of the Palestinian national struggle for independence and the implementation of Sunni-Islamic doctrine after the anticipated liberation of Palestine.

Hence, while Hamas has become closer than ever before to Iran in recent years politically, economically, and militarily – particularly in the aftermath of Hamas' landslide victory in the January 2006 parliamentary elections – it is harder to assert that Iran's influence on the organization has also been manifest in the religious, cultural, and ideological arenas. It seems that so far Hamas has been able to set up some ideological and religious boundaries between Iran's influence and the organization's creators and supporters. Nevertheless, it is already clear that Iran's influence upon Hamas is getting stronger and blunter as time goes by, since Iranian financial, military, and political support is not given to Hamas free of charge. Hamas has already been asked for payback and will be asked for more in the future under Iranian conditions.

Payback mainly refers to decision making processes in the organization, and Hamas' need to adhere to Iranian dictates. Iran significantly contributes to radicalization in the organization's policies and statements, especially regarding the continuous negotiation on the release of the Israeli kidnapped soldier, Gilad Shalit, who has been captive in Hamas' hands since June 2006.

The tightening of relations between Iran and Hamas, especially in the past two years, reflects a meeting of interests in both sides. The alliance with Hamas serves the interests of Iran, which strives to tighten its grip over another arena besides Lebanon, where it may act both directly and indirectly against Israel through Palestinian terrorism and the utilization of Palestinian

radicalization. This not only applies in actions against Israel and its interests, but also against any tendency for resolving conflicts in the region under American mediation.

Iran has also been taking advantage of what it pretends to be its constant concern for the fate of Jerusalem and its involvement in the Palestinian issue. It does so in order to taunt the Arab regimes that have joined the embargo on Hamas and have refused to back the organization. This way Iran can claim that it is the only Muslim country that is genuinely concerned about Jerusalem and Palestine, thus legitimizing its pretentious aspiration to become the leader of the Muslim world and blurring the differences between the Sunnis and Shiites.

Meanwhile, on its behalf, Hamas regards Iran an ally. Iran's support and political backing are tremendously important in light of the international isolation under which Hamas and its Gaza-based government have been operating in the past three years.

We've already seen how the Iranian hug can have a restricting effect upon Hamas' moves. After each visit of the organization's officials to Teheran, or after a meeting with Iranian leadership in Damascus, Hamas' leaders tend to come up with a harsher tone and even more radical statements against Israel. For instance, during Mashaal's visits to Teheran in August 2005 and in December 2006, Iran's strategic depth in Palestine was discussed.

It has been reported that the Supreme Leader of Iran, Khameneyi, sent his emissaries to Damascus in order to see to it that the Shalit deal was thwarted and to give Mashaal \$50 million, provided that he toughened his position and demanded the release of dozens of

Palestinian prisoners, many of whom are considered taboo in Israel, knowing that otherwise Israel would never set them free.

In the aftermath of the 2006 war, Hamas and Iran grew much closer both openly and clandestinely, especially in the military spectrum. So much so that it seems the organization is becoming more and more identical with the IRGC and has turned, in terms of intelligence and military affairs, into a full fledged operative of Iran, similarly to Hezbollah.

Iran has set up an infrastructure of informers and collaborators to facilitate the activity of its terror network and to smuggle weapons to the Palestinian organizations. Hezbollah has also been helping Hamas in exporting long-range missiles and in guerilla warfare training. It has been teaching Hamas how to build underground bunkers inside Gaza similar to those that have been built in Southern Lebanon.

During the months following Hamas' takeover in Gaza, the results of Iran's and Hezbollah's efforts to upgrade Hamas' military power were already discernible, not only because of improved weapons, but also thanks to a thorough studying of the Lebanon War's lessons. The presence in Gaza of terror experts, who had been trained both in Lebanon and Iran, helped Hamas set up its command and control system.

In every sector of activity, Hamas has set up a chain command that operates observation posts, infantry and AT units, just as Hezbollah had done in Lebanon. Hamas' military organization operates similarly to an infantry division combined with AT capability, ready both for attacking

its adversary and for defense response. The division is made up of six territorial brigades that cover the entire Gaza Strip. Each brigade has its own battalions, companies, and special forces for destruction, sniping, signaling, intelligence collection, and observation.

Hamas holds a wide-range network of underground fortifications with all the diggings carried out beneath buildings located in the midst of a dense population. Hamas has prepared underground pit traps loaded with explosives, and a surface-obstacles network with charges aiding ambushes, soil embankments, and so forth.

In March 2008, it was revealed that hundreds of Hamas fighters were training in Iran. These fighters left via Egypt and then Syria from where they reached Teheran – approximately 300 men. The most brilliant minds in the organization, so to speak, have been sent in the past two years to Iran to be trained in the IRGC facilities, where they learned how to make explosives and Qassam rockets, and how to improve their destruction capability. All this training is identical in both level and quality to the training provided by Iran to Hezbollah fighters.

Militarily speaking, Iran's support of Hamas and PIJ has not cost Iran too much money or effort. The Iranians mainly focus on military training in various facilities in Iran, Syria, and Lebanon, and they supply the organizations with advanced weapons, including different kinds of rockets with upgraded ranges, explosives, et cetera. However, the value of Iran's and Hezbollah's support for Hamas is enormous. Hamas has profoundly upgraded its operational capabilities against Israel since the ousting of Fatah from Gaza in June 2007 and the

intensification of battles between Hamas and the IDF, at least up until the recently broken cease fire of June 2008.

Religiously and culturally speaking, the Iranian missionary activity of exporting the revolution in the Palestinian arena has led a few hundreds of Palestinians to convert to Shiism in recent years. Other than Iran's active role in encouraging this phenomenon, there were other factors leading people to sympathize with the Shia enough to make them convert.

One reason is Iran's strengthening position in the Arab and Muslim world. This has happened because of what is perceived to be the Islamic revolution's victory. Iran's leadership in anti-western, anti-American camps reflects its ambition to achieve regional hegemony that will turn it into a world power.

Another reason for the Shiite-Iranian religious cultural influence stems from the perception in the Arab and Muslim public opinion, according to which Hezbollah is thought to have defeated Israel both in the May 2000 withdrawal and the 2006 war. In recent years, there seems to have been a certain Shiite-Iranian influence on Hamas, at least on the rhetorical level and perhaps beyond that. Khaled Mashaal traditionally attends ceremonies held by Hezbollah in Lebanon. On February 26, 2006, he attended a meeting in Cairo with Khomeini's grandson, Hassan. On another occasion, in an article he wrote in memory of Khomeini, Mashaal defines Khomeini as the man by whom Allah has revived the Islamic nation and removed the infidels from their seat; a man who was shining like the sun in order to cast aside the oppressor's darkness and to light up the defeated and the oppressed.

However, despite these references, anti-Shiite sources maintain that Mashaal's declarations do not indicate conversion to Shiism. This was also indicated in Jordanian and Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood leaders' statements expressing their sympathy with Hezbollah as a political gesture not out of ideological identification.

Furthermore, Iran is well aware of the fact that Hamas is deeply connected to the Sunni world and dogma and, therefore, converting the organization would be very complicated and much harder. Therefore, Iran has chosen to rely more on the PIJ in order to disseminate its Shiite agenda in Palestine, the most important theater on the Arab world's agenda.

It seems that Iran has put most of its financial and military efforts in Hamas' basket due to, among other things, the fact that Hamas is the strongest, most important organization in the Palestinian arena, but also because the PIJ's support of Iran is somehow taken for granted.

Contrary to Hamas, PIJ is perceived as a more independent body than one that is identified with the Muslim Brotherhood. Additionally, the PIJ's bonds with Iran and the Shiite-Islamic Revolution preceded Iran's approach to Hamas and date back to the early days of the revolution. In many ways, PIJ has been the advance guard force in its support for the Iranian Revolution.

PIJ leaders may admit that there are theological differences of opinion between Sunnis and Shiites, but they also point to the fact that even the strictest religious scholars have not excluded the Shiites from the Islamic nation. PIJ's affiliation with Iran is very strong

ideologically, culturally, politically, and militarily. PIJ receives financial aid, a part of which is transferred to families of members of the organization who are killed, as well as to families of prisoners. Similarly to Hamas, PIJ activists also take part in military training courses held by Iran and Hezbollah and get military equipment and weapons.

The Iran-Syria Hezbollah, Hamas, and PIJ act within what sometimes seems like a religiously impossible set of alliances: Hamas is a Sunni-Islamic organization that associates itself with Shiite Hezbollah and operates as a proxy of Shiite-Iran and the secular Ba'ath regime of Syria. Iran, striving to become a regional superpower, is not discouraged by any ally, be it Shiite, Sunni or secular, that can be utilized as its surrogate or proxy, in order to help it fight against its multiple adversaries and destabilize them.

It is possible, therefore, to conclude that Iran's affinity with the various Palestinian organizations and other regional elements represents a Shiite patron's success in spinning a web of multifaceted alliances. As a part of the above-mentioned network of alliances, Hamas helps its Iranian patron undermine the legitimacy of governments throughout the region and is therefore a major threat not only for the P.A. government in the West Bank, but for the regimes in Egypt and Jordan as well.

Hillel Fradkin

Thank you, Shmuel. For the last few years and from 2005 to 2007, Matt Levitt was a Senior Official at the Treasury Department. He has very intimate knowledge and experience regarding

what has allowed these kinds of politics and military activities to float on a pool of money.

Matt?

Matthew Levitt, Washington Institute for Near East Policy

The secret to Hamas' success is its *da'wah* – its social welfare infrastructure, which enables it to raise and launder and transfer and access funds with great cover and a built-in money-laundering mechanism. It also enables it to have a not only a financial but a logistical support network available at its disposal to carry out attacks and to engage in political activity.

We know that, for example, leading up to the election, Hamas used the same people who were receiving small and large amounts of money and support to go out and campaign. The *da'wah* is the key, not only to Hamas' financial success, but to its political, social, and military and terrorist success. My book is not unrelated to this theme.

Every year when the C.I.A. and State Department testify, they say that Iran is the foremost state sponsor of terrorism. My former boss at Treasury, Under Secretary Levy, announced that we believe that Iran is the central banker of terrorism, and there is declassified information to the effect that Iran maintains a nine-digit line item in its annual budget to support terrorism. And we know that Iran uses all of its national institutions including, which we revealed over the past year and a half, its support not only to WMD and proliferation programs, but also its terrorism program.

Bernard Lewis has famously said that our adversaries often tell us what they're doing, what they're going to do, and we just have this uncanny ability not to listen. Long ago, we were hearing not only from Iran about how important Hamas was to them – and John covered the history brilliantly. Ziad Abu Amr, a Palestinian legislator, who at one time served as a non-Hamas Fatah member, and not just a member but a minister in the Hamas-led government, in 1994 wrote a fantastic book about Hamas and Islamic Jihad published by Indiana University Press. He specifically talked not only about the way the Hamas' *da'wah* serves the organization, but also how Iran provides, and I quote, "logistical support to Hamas in military training to its members."

In 2002, declassified versions of 1994 Canadian intelligence (forget American or Israeli intelligence!) came out talking specifically about Hamas training camps in Iran, Lebanon, and Sudan. They revealed in 2002 how, back in 1999, it was reported that Palestinian police had discovered documents attesting to the transfer of \$35 million to Hamas from Iranian Intelligence Services. All this really shouldn't come as a surprise.

But, the fact is that not under every circumstance does Iran want to finance Hamas, and not under every circumstance does Hamas want Iranian funding. It's actually very, very interesting and – I'll explain what I mean by that in a minute – parallel with that is the fact that, unlike the vast majority of funding that comes to Hamas, especially through international charities and primarily through the Gulf (which continues today), Iranian financing for Hamas is largely operational.

You don't have that kind of veneer of legitimacy of money going to charitable institutions, some of which will go to buy grass-roots support for the organization, while some might actually be charitable and just geared to their own people, with some skimmed off for military. Iranian money tends to go through these banks, through Hezbollah, specifically for Hamas military activity. This says a lot about what Iran wants out of this relationship. Iran wants, to be perfectly blunt, continued violence. Iran wants a front that is unsettled much like what it also wants today in Afghanistan and in Iraq.

I just returned a week and a half ago from the Gulf and got very long lectures from some very senior Gulf officials about how concerned they are that the United States government could, potentially, come to some type of deal with Iran. I think that is extremely unlikely. But in that case they, the Gulf States would be the ones who are sold out. "You need to understand," they said to me, "That Iran has wanted for many, many years to project its power in this region, in the Gulf and the Levant, and it will continue to want to do so." And what Iran wants is continued areas of unrest.

Therefore it shouldn't surprise us that in multiple instances we've quite clearly seen that the reason and the way Iran provides money is on a pay-for-performance scale. It's really quite cold and calculated. We saw in the Weinstein vs. Iran case – one of the more important civil cases here in the United States. Testimony in that case revealed that 1995/96, which was the period of the Hamas attack the case was focusing on was, and I quote, "a peak period of Iranian economic support for Hamas because Iran typically paid for results. Hamas was providing results by committing numerous bus bombings such as the one that was in question in February

25, 1996.” This pay-for-performance calculation explains when, and under what circumstances, Iran will provide funding. And, frankly, it's not just to Hamas. Perhaps the best case is the Islamic Jihad.

After the assassination of Fathi Shikaki in Malta, the Islamic Jihad – according to one of my favorite quotes, which was in the *Jerusalem Post* – “became all but nonexistent.” It was like the Keystone Cops [Laughter] of terrorist originations. Everything they tried failed. It was just comic.

Well, they are no longer comic. They resurrected themselves. They became extremely adept at suicide operations. They were the ones who militarized not only the First but the Second Intifada. We have learned that shortly after the 2000 uprising, which is now called the al-Aqsa Intifada, after they demonstrated their ability to carry out very successful attacks, Iran announced its intention – and, in fact, we believe it did – not only to increase Islamic Jihad's budget by 70 percent, but to bifurcate it from Hezbollah.

Traditionally, Iran has provided almost all the money for the Palestinian organizations: Hamas, Islamic Jihad, as John noted, and now the al-Aqsa Intifada and others through Hezbollah. That money continued to go through Hezbollah, but it wasn't part of Hezbollah's budget. It was a separate and dedicated amount of money.

We see that this has happened several times. U.S. officials note that in the period following the onset of the violence in September 2000, Teheran also instituted a special incentive system, and

not just for Hamas' Islamic Jihad. It was actually mostly used by Fatah-affiliated terrorist groups: Tanzeem, al-Aqsa Intifada, and so forth, in which millions in dollars in cash bonuses went to these groups when they carried out successful attacks.

Iranian funding of Hamas is also affected by the affairs of other states. This is true in part because, as I said, Iran has its interest in funding if and when these groups effectively carry out attacks, therefore making sure that there is continued unrest.

But, there's also the other calculation: When will these groups accept the funding? Islamic Jihad has often derided the Palestinian territory as Shia, even though the vast majority of them are not. This happens because they are so closely tied to Iran, since the vast majority of their funding comes from Iran. And as Shmuel noted, they only have a small number of social welfare institutions – you can basically count them on one maybe one and a half hands – whereas the Hamas social welfare institutions are much more diverse, much broader, and bring in much more money.

Without Iran's support, PIJ becomes nothing. Without Iran's support, Hamas is still something, though much less. And so, we saw, for example, in the wake of the 2003 and 2004 bombings in Saudi Arabia, as Saudi Arabia began to crack down on financing for Salafist elements operating within the kingdom in 2004, the Israeli authorities were among the first to note that they, too, saw a severe drop in the amount of money coming from KSA for Hamas.

Absolutely unintended, but it's kind of logical. If you have a radical Islamic financier, and you're giving to al-Qaeda and their affiliated groups, there's no doubt that you're also going to be giving to the Palestinian cause – an animating cause for most Muslims and Arabs of radical and non-radical persuasion alike.

But, who are you going to give to if you are a Salafist? Are you going to give to Fatah, which is insufficiently Islamic and completely corrupt? Are you going to give to Islamic Jihad? They are dismissed as Shia. They're close to Iran. You're going to give to the Muslim Brotherhood element with which you have some ideological connection. And that element is Hamas.

Therefore, when the Saudis shut down the ability to send this money outside the kingdom, the Israelis saw, for a period of time – it has since, we believe, risen up again – a pretty sharp decline in the amount of funding that was able to go out to Hamas. Why? Because the same individuals they were cracking down on were financing al-Qaeda and Hamas. And where did Hamas go in this period of desperate need when the money from the Gulf was being sharply curtailed? They went to Iran.

We know that when the U.S. forces overthrew the Saddam regime again, there was an up-tick in money coming from Iran. Ze'ev Schiff, the Dean of Israeli Security Commentators – he should rest in peace – wrote about this explicitly. He wrote about seeing an increase in money coming to Hamas from Iran in the wake of those events. And there were also events within Hamas that caused Hamas to be more willing to take Iran's money.

For example, after the 2004 assassination of key Hamas leaders Sheik Yassin and Abdul Aziz Rantisi, there was a very discernible leadership vacuum within Hamas, which was extremely empowering for the outside leadership of Hamas, based in Damascus. Khaled Mashaal and others are traditionally more hard-line because they don't have to suffer the consequences in the West Bank and Gaza following suicide bombings when Israeli (and sometimes Palestinian) security services crack down. And Khaled Mashaal who was more than willing to make one of his well known trips to Teheran and say, "Okay, we're ready. Give us the money."

When you have Hamas performing to get Iranian money, you have a very, very bad situation, a very, very dangerous situation. And we should note that this is markedly different from the 1990s, when Hamas famously tried to keep the amount of money they got from Iran to no more than about 10 sometimes 15 percent of their budget. They had always said, "We do not want to be like Islamic Jihad. We don't want to be a complete proxy whereas Iran says 'Do this now' and we have to do it." In those days Hamas wanted their independence. Today they have lost some of that independence, as Shmuel said, and that has made them even more radical.

The money from Iran especially comes from military activity because this is what Iran is interested in. And there are lots of things that we have seen, especially from documents that the Israeli forces seized in the West Bank, not only in Hamas offices, but in the offices of Palestinian Intelligence Services. So, we are hearing this not just from the Israeli side, but you can actually read the Palestinian documents.

These documents report meetings in Damascus in May 2000, for example, and October 2001, between the Iranian Ambassador in Syria and leaders of Hamas and Islamic Jihad. They also reveal meetings between other Iranian leaders, and leaders of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, about the need to increase attacks within the territories. Sometimes in their own names, sometimes without claiming responsibility for these attacks, but always specifically, they seek to maintain a level of disturbance. I quote, “to make sure that they must not allow a calming down of the situation and the ground in the West Bank and Gaza.”

By the way, it is come out now in trials here in the United States that Hamas leaders here in this country in 1994 tried to figure out how to deal with the onset of the Oslo Peace accords – how to respond to them. They met in Philadelphia and their answer was just this, “We give money, but we give the money to our own. Let the United Nations take care of everybody else. The most important thing is that this peace process not succeed, because if it does people will not be willing to engage in the resistance.”

So you will hear the public statements of Iran talking about how horrible Israel is and how much the Palestinians are suffering, but that is not the issue. Iran does not actually care about the suffering of the Palestinians. It is simply an extremely effective tool for them to use, and I will get back to that in a minute.

Back in 2002, it was Jordan's King Abdullah who complained that Iranian's activities in support of Hamas and Islamic Jihad were not just affecting things in the West Bank and Gaza, but also in Jordan. You will recall that the Jordanians kicked the Hamas offices out of Jordan in 1999.

But King Abdullah talked about 17 attempts by Palestinian groups to launch rockets and mortars, provided by Iran at Israeli targets, from Jordanian soil. You had senior Jordanian diplomats talking about how nervous they were about Hamas and Jordan. The dirty game Iran was playing was on their soil, and they spoke of their extreme concern about the Iranian influence of Hamas in the West Bank and in Jordan.

You already heard about the Karine-A weapon smuggling ship. That was significant not only because the quantity, but the quality of the weapons. I would argue that this was completely paid for and conjured up by Iran. But it was absolutely 100 percent operationally carried out by Hezbollah. Imad Mughniyeh's Deputy, Hajj Bassem, completely oversaw the operation.

Nor was this, by the way, the only example of this type of activity. We also had at least two other ships like it; the Santorini, the Calypso, and then, more recently, the Abu Hassan, on which you did not have a whole lot of arms, but you had CDs with how-to manuals for making explosives out of stuff you could regularly get in Gaza. Perhaps more disturbingly, a Hezbollah commando, Hamad Abu Amra, was captured on the Abu Hassan.

Iran provides training, as you have heard. The training takes place in Lebanon, through camps directed by the al-Qods Force. It happens in Syria as well.

But, it also happens, and as you heard, it is continuing to happen today in Iran itself. We have seen this time and again. We have names of specific camps: the MM-Ali Garrison in Teheran, the Bahona Garrison run by the Qods Force north of Teheran. We know that people are taken

from universities all over the place; in Uganda, for example, where Shia were recruited, and were sent to Mashaad University for training alongside Palestinian and Hezbollah recruits.

We know that Iran does all this nasty stuff. We know that it continues to do it. We should not be surprised now that Hamas is in control of Gaza. Iran will continue to do these things, and will take advantage of every opportunity to increase its activities. But why and under what conditions? The first panel talked a lot about Iran's purposes under the title of "Ideological and Strategic Ambitions." I liked the title because it gets to both.

I do not think you can address why Iran does things if you ask the either/or question. Is it ideological Islamism, or is it strategic ambition? These two are not mutually exclusive. There are Islamic ideological issues. There are also strategic ambitions in terms of power projection. They seek to have unrest and instability of such a nature that the west and the United States, in particular, will have to deal with it whether it is in Iraq, or Afghanistan, or in the Palestinian arena. These are all levers for propaganda, for radicalization. It is an extremely effective and, as you heard, it is a very inexpensive asymmetric tool against the West in terms of regional influence and projection of power.

We need to focus not just on the fact on the ideological and strategic ambitions are not mutually exclusive, but that they are complimentary. What I did not hear from the morning panel that I really wanted to hear about was the fact that if you are going to try and understand the rationality behind Iran's actions, there are rational reasons for doing what they do. Their

tactics comprise a tremendously effective and cheap asymmetric tool. That is a rational calculation.

But if you want to understand the rationality, who are you going to analyze? I do not think it does us a whole lot of good to analyze the rationality, or lack thereof, of the President and the elected elements of Iran. It does not matter whether you call that system democracy or not, given the fact that you have to get approved by the Mullahs to run in the first place. The real source of power is not the elected element.

The real sources of power in Iran are the Supreme Leadership who control the weapons program, the missiles program, the intelligence services, the militia, the military, and oversee the relationship with all of these groups through the IRGC Qods Force, the media, the judiciary – what am I missing? They control every element of national power. And that is why I think we tend to misunderstand Iran. We tend not to look at the real source of Iranian power. And if we want to be able to have an impact on Iran, looking at the real source of power has to be the focus on our attention. Thank you very much.

"The Iranian Threat in the Levant: An Israeli Perspective"

Michael Oren, Georgetown University

I am daunted to be following such a august panel – many of my colleagues – and to be presenting the Israeli perspective on this issue. I am very honored indeed.

Early last spring, the leading contender for the Democratic nomination, Barack Obama, made a comment during a press conference that really did not make much of a splash in the American press, but made headlines in the State of Israel. Asked what he thought of Iran, Barack Obama said that Iran did not pose a strategic threat to the United States. That he regarded Iran as more of a nuisance in the league of Venezuela and Cuba.

Although it did not receive much attention here in the US, his statement made the front page in Israel and ruffled some feathers among supporters of Israel and this country as well. Obama reversed himself pretty fully at the AIPAC Convention last May where he was again asked what he thought of Iran. This time he said that Iran was a major threat to the United States, an immediate and urgent threat. He said that all options were on the table vis-à-vis Iran including a military option. He had come quite a distance.

But fears or discomfort about Obama's positions on Iran continued in Israel and were only largely allayed during the candidate's visit to Israel last July. He came to Israel after having visited other countries in the region. He spoke with representatives from the Israeli left, the Israeli center, the government, and the Israeli right. And what he heard basically was the same

message from all corners of the Israeli political spectrum – namely that Iran poses an existential threat on several levels to the State of Israel.

There is the obvious level of Iran acquiring a nuclear weapon and having a leadership in Teheran that vows, almost on a daily basis, to wipe Israel off the map. In fact, they vow it so often that it is no longer reported in the US press, although it gets reported in Israel. It has been said that the classic Cold War calculi of mutually-assured destruction, of what accounted for unacceptable damage on the other side, does not apply to Iran. There is even an intelligence figure – it actually came out of the Mossad – floating around that the current Iranian regime is willing to give up 50 percent of its population in order to fulfill its vision of wiping Israel off the map. Given that type of situation, whether or not Israel has a viable second strike capability is largely irrelevant to us because there would not be anybody around to witness it.

But that was only the beginning of the existential threat that Iran posed to Israel. According to, again Israeli left, right, and center, there is the danger that once Iran acquires nuclear capabilities, they will then pass on those capabilities to third parties in the Middle East, particularly two terrorist organizations, and that the Israeli border cannot be sealed hermetically. There would be ways of smuggling in these weapons and Iran could destroy us through one of its several proxies in the region.

Another threat that Iran would pose to us is that once they acquire nuclear capabilities, Israel's ability to respond to terror – whether it be Hamas terror/Hezbollah terror – would dwindle dramatically almost to nothing. For example, Hezbollah would fire Katyusha rockets into

Northern Israel. Israel would want to respond. And Iran would go onto nuclear alert and immediately deter Israel. This would give Hezbollah and Hamas almost a free reign, perhaps moving Katyusha rockets into the West Bank in which case they would pose very much an existential threat to us.

They could also destroy us economically. Iran would go on a permanent state of nuclear alert. We would be forced to go on a very high state of nuclear alert. The tourism industry which broke all records this year – May 2008 was the most tourist-laden month in Israel's history – would retreat. We would go back to the situation that we experienced in 2000, 2001, and 2002, when our hotels were empty and the tourist business was breaking. Foreign investment would flee the country. Maybe even Warren Buffet would flee the country in the face of a permanent Iranian nuclear alert. Iran could kill us without firing a single shot, without ever pressing that button.

And then – I am not done yet – the Iranian nuclear threat would impel our neighbors, 13 in number as of last count, to acquire nuclear power as well. Presumably some of them would also try to acquire nuclear power not only for peaceful purposes. Israel would then inhabit a nuclear neighborhood, which would be prohibitive to us. And no less a figure than Ephraim Sneh, then the Deputy Defense Minister, went on record saying once Iran acquired nuclear weapons and our neighbors acquired nuclear weapons – Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen said they were going to get a nuclear weapon as well – any Israeli who could would simply pick up and leave, and the country would empty out. So, there are different ways that Iran poses this nuclear threat to Israel.

Obama further heard during his visit about the Israeli timetable. Now, the Israeli timetable had always differed substantially from the American timetables. Strangely enough, it is much closer to the French timetable for Iran's production of an actual nuclear weapon. Israel has for several years now talked about the course of 2009. Now, we are talking about the latter part of 2009. American Intelligence Services had talked 2010 to 2014, if at all. Obama heard this and the impression of people who talked to him – and I did not talk directly with him, but I talked with his aides – was that he was profoundly impacted by what he heard. And part of this impact was evident in subsequent remarks that Obama made about his intention to dialogue with Iran. The words “without preconditions” were more or less dropped. Most of the preconditions are now being posed by the Iranians on the administration.

Now, even with that, there is still a sense of unease in Israel about what the next administration intends to do about Iran. The timetable situation still remains a major issue. In the latter part of the summer, Israel was visited by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Mike Mullen, and by Anthony Cordesman, who was on a speaking tour that was sponsored by the American Embassy. And the messages of both gentlemen to their audiences was, “Do not do it.” Do not do it, in the sense of do not make any preemptive strikes against the Iranian nuclear program. Very impressive presentation, I must say, lots of PowerPoint facts and figures.

The upshot of it was that Israel lacks the intelligence necessary to do it, Israel lacks the ordinance necessary to do it, and lacks the weaponry necessary to do it. Israel lacks a *casus belli* because Iran will not be able to do it for many years to come. Even if Iran develops a

nuclear weapon, it will not be able to deliver that nuclear weapon in any meaningful way.

"Only 80 to 100,000 Israelis might be killed in a nuclear weapon blast over the City of Tel-Aviv."

Israeli audiences listened to this, but we were – and I speak not just for myself –we were rather surprised to hear that nobody was really raising the question before us: what would the Middle East look like the morning after Iran acquired a nuclear weapon? How would it change the strategic balance of the region? How it would impel, for example, other states to acquire nuclear weapons? And what would mean for the continued survival, for the well being of the Jewish State.

There is further concern over the question of linkage between Iran and Iraq. And I think this linkage, from American perspective, has been give added impetus by the economic crisis here; that has created a greater pressure on the incoming administration to seek ways of withdrawing from Iraq. Ideally, America would withdraw the Iraq through an accommodation with Iran.

What exactly America could offer Iran to induce it to accommodate America's peaceful withdrawal from Iraq is unclear, at least to this Israeli. But, there is a sense that one of the things that America could offer would be some slack, not just of the sanctions regime, which I am going to talk about in a second, but also some type of permission to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes. And that is also a source of discomfiture.

Last year, Yossi Klein-Halevi – a colleague of mine at the Shalem Center and at the Adelson Center for Strategic Studies in Jerusalem – and I undertook a research project for the *New Republic* on Israel's response to the burgeoning Iranian nuclear threat. The article was published. It is on-line if you would like to see it. We spoke with a number of people from Israeli military intelligence as well as from the Mossad. Our findings were enlightening, if not terrifying.

We found, without exception, and I stress *without exception*, that all the security officials and experts we talked to regarded the Iranian threat as existential – existential on multiple levels – and that Israel could not coexist with an Iranian nuclear threat, period. And nobody in office, nobody of any great responsibility, was saying that.

There were deep differences, however, about how Israel would go about meeting these multiple existential threats. Without overstating or over-generalizing or simplifying it, there was a basic divide among the people who were coming out of military intelligence, and people who were coming out of Mossad and Shin Bet type of intelligence, regarding the ability of Iran to counterstrike.

There was no difference about the degree to which Israel could mount a military operation either in conjunction with its allies or unilaterally. Israel does not possess strategic bombers, does not have the ability to mount a sustained bombing campaign. It cannot take out Iran's nuclear facilities. At most, Israel could render central facilities inaccessible or uninhabitable. And that term would repeat itself very often in our interviews, *inaccessible or uninhabitable*, and delay Iran's nuclear program for whatever period, five or ten years.

The big difference of opinion was with some security officials over Iran's ability to counterstrike. Many from the military branch said that Iran had a limited ability to strike back at Israel. It has a limited amount of Shahab-3 missiles that can carry different types of warheads into Israel. They said that Syria would not join the campaign; that Hezbollah might fire off some its 40,000 rockets, but that Israel succeeded in taking out most of the middle and long-range rockets in 2006 and that it would have a solution for the short range rockets as well, should they try it again. And that Israel could deal with any possible Iranian counterstrikes. It is important to note that Israel has destroyed two nuclear reactors in the Middle East and there have not been reprisals from those two.

But, a different school of thought existed, and that different school maintained that Iran has a great number of missiles with a array of interesting warheads and that these could inflict devastating damage on Israeli cities. They could, in fact, do damage almost as devastating as a nuclear strike. Syria would join with thousands of SS-21 rockets, would be reigning down on Israeli cities. You would have the 40,000 Hezbollah rockets. And that if Israel were perceived – and listen to this one – if Israel were perceived to be on its knees by the Arab world, that the populations of Jordan and Egypt would also demand that their governments intervene. So, the possibility of a regional conflagration was very, very great. This was sort of the doomsday scenario, and we heard it from more than one source at the time.

But, be that as it may, even the people who gave the doomsday scenario did not disagree with the assertion that Iran poses the existential threat and that Israel could not coexist with that

existential threat. There was no difference of opinion on that. It is interesting that many of the individuals we interviewed who painted this doomsday scenario were the people who were most avid about seeking a separate peace agreement between Israel and Syria, with the objective of knocking Syria out of Iran's orbit.

Now, there was a direct line. Everything was Iran-based, which is interesting. How exactly they were going to induce Syria, beyond the Golan Heights, of getting out of Iran's orbit? And would Iran actually let Syria slip from its orbit? These were two different considerations.

There is another dimension of Israel's dealing with Iran and countering the Iran existential threat, and that is the possible ramifications for Diaspora Jewish communities. This is unique in Israel's decision making process. Iran has proven its willingness to strike Diaspora Jewish communities in the past. And when Israel makes a decision on Iran, it is going to have to take that element into consideration.

Perhaps the biggest divide among Israeli strategic thinkers and security experts in dealing with Iran is the question – and the question exists in this country as well –whether the Iranians are rational or irrational. And my general impression among Mossad people, and I am sure my colleagues on the panel have something to say about this, there is a strong feeling that Iran, the Iranians, at the end of the day, are rational. They will not take steps that will lead to the destruction of their cities, and they have no desire to see the ruination of their economy, to see the Middle East up in flames.

People I have spoken to in the military disagree with that. Though, they would assert that though Iran occasionally makes rational decisions, that these rational decisions are geared toward reaching irrational ends. And at the end of the day, there is no way of knowing whether the Iranians are willing to give up major cities in order to wipe Israel off the map.

We are coming down to something of a wire in Israel. Iran has long replaced Egypt as the predominant Muslim power in the Middle East. It has been on an almost inexorable roll of successes in our region and has succeeded in Iran-izing the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. It has succeeded in extending its influence, gaining primacy in Lebanon, of course, and in Syria through Iraq.

There does not seem to be a way, at this point, of inducing the Iranians to reverse their process toward regional hegemony. And I personally do not see a way of averting a major clash between us and the Iranians. Nobody we spoke with, *nobody*, I stress, believed that the sanctions would be effective. Amos Yadlin, the IDF Chief of Intelligence, came out yesterday and said that he was in favor of Obama's dialogue with the Iranians, but only as a way of exhausting all possible diplomatic options before moving toward a more forcible response to Iranian nuclearization.

Our colleague, I should say our ex-colleague, at the Adelson Center, Moshe Ya'alon –is the former IDF Chief of Staff, and is now running for office on the Likud ticket. And while running he was recently asked at the meeting of Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, “Well, you speak often about the ‘stick’ in relation to Iran. How about the carrot?” And General Ya'alon's

response – and I will not try to imitate him here because it was just too good – he says, “Well, the carrot is that we will not use the stick!”

Now I think that is reflective of a lot of Israeli thinking on the official level, on the security level, about how Israeli views Iran. I have yet to hear a responsible individual say, or certainly explain, that there is a way of averting this coming crash with Iran. And the big differences, I stress again, are over the extent of Israel's ability to delay the program, to impair Iran's ability to make nuclear weapons. And, by the way, the obvious one about the airplanes, refueling and all of that, is not the only means Israel will have at its disposal, or other intelligence services might have at their disposal.

But, Israel's ability to completely eliminate the program is limited. The biggest difference of opinion is the degree to which Iran can inflict unacceptable damage and even existential damage to Israel in response to any Israeli attempt to prevent the Iranians from going nuclear.