

Wilberforce Quarterly

Strategic Analysis of Terrorism and Global Security

Center for Defense and Security Policy Wilberforce University Fall 2006

IN THIS ISSUE:

AVERTING WAR WITH IRAN By Robert E. Hunter	1
HAMAS: THE LAST CHANCE OF PEACE By Henry Siegman.....	4
ISLAM, JIHADISM AND DEPOLITIZATION IN THE FRENCH BANLIEUES By Anouar Boukhars.....	13
SOMALIA'S REGIONAL PROXY WAR AND ITS INTERNAL DYNAMICS By Anouar Boukhars.....	17
IRAQ'S DIVERSE SHIA By Peter Harling and Hamid Yasin.....	20



Wilberforce Quarterly seeks to publish thoughtful analysis and balanced information on a broad range of security and strategic issues confronting the United States and its allies. The journal's goal is to satisfy the need for independent research on important security issues and generate scholarly discussion and greater public awareness of the changing patterns of international relations. The journal was founded by Marshall Mitchell, Executive Vice President, Anouar Boukhars, Director of Wilberforce Centre for Defense and Security Policy, and Reverend Dr. Floyd H. Flake, president of Wilberforce University and former member of Congress. The opinions expressed within are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Wilberforce University.

Averting War with Iran

By Robert E. Hunter



The war in Lebanon has brought Iran back to the center of US attention. Indeed, some experts have argued that this was a “proxy war” between Iran and the U.S., with Hezbollah fighting for Teheran and Israel fighting for Washington. Be that as it may, the issue of Iran now requires new thought and action by the United States, if our long-term interests are to be served. These are not simple calculations.

U.S.-Iranian relations have had a curious pattern over the years. Iran went from being a “regional influential” serving American interests to a hostile presence after the 1978-79 Islamic revolution in which the Shah was replaced by Ayatollah Khomeini. Since that time, the two countries have had no official contacts, and the U.S. has sought to isolate the Islamic regime as much as possible – in hopes that, over time, it would “mellow” and either become a “normal” government or be overthrown from within.

In the process, the United States has done virtually nothing to encourage those in Iran who have wanted it to steer a less hostile course, perhaps even to seek a rapprochement with the U.S. Thus Washington supported Iraq in the 8-year war which Saddam Hussein launched against Iran and, following the 1991 Persian Gulf War, in which Iran supported U.S. efforts to eject Iraqi forces from Kuwait, developed a doctrine of the “dual containment” of both Iran and Iraq.

This situation of uneasy non-relations between the United States and Iran entered a new phase following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11, 2001. During the U.S. military campaign against the Taliban in Afghanistan, Iran provided a good deal of political support, but this produced no willingness in the U.S. to seek a change in the overall relationship. In the run-up to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, there was a prevailing view in Washington to prevent the emergence of any regional hegemon, in the Persian Gulf or elsewhere, that could be a challenge to U.S. interests and influence. That view was one of the major reasons for the Iraq War; it has also been an ambition of many officials in Washington to reduce, if not eliminate, any competition from Iran for power and position in the region. This was the basis for a policy of seeking regime change in Teheran, in the hope that a different government would be less hostile, less assertive, and more willing to behave like a “normal” nation – i.e., one inclined to cooperate with the United States.

The contest between the United States and Iran was intensified by Iranian efforts to develop the technology to produce civilian nuclear power. Begun by the Shah, the program advanced steadily under the Islamic regime.

By the early part of this decade, however, the United States became increasingly concerned that Iran was, in fact, working to create the capacity to build nuclear weapons, either with plutonium produced as a byproduct of electrical power generation or

through the centrifuge enrichment of uranium. Meanwhile, in light of a range of Iranian activities and attitudes that the U.S. found unacceptable, President George W. Bush included Iran in the “axis of evil” he named in his January 2002 State of the Union message.

Following the Iraq War, some officials in Washington considered taking pre-emptive action against Iran, seeing it as at least as great a challenge as Iraq to the U.S. position in the region. That option rapidly came to be seen as infeasible, however, as the post-conflict crisis in Iraq intensified, developing into a full-scale insurgency. The U.S. military was particularly reluctant to take on another major task in view of grave difficulties it was facing in pacifying Iraq. With U.S. relations with several key European countries at near rock-bottom after the invasion of Iraq and with the severe costs that would likely be posed by military action against Iran, the U.S. administration acceded to a European desire to try diplomacy, at least as a first step, as a means for trying to induce Iran to abandon all activities that might lead to nuclear weapons and to provide total transparency for all of its nuclear programs.

Three years of nuclear diplomacy with Iran, conducted by Britain, France, Germany, and the putative “foreign minister” of the European Union, Javier Solana, produced almost nothing, and this lack of progress increased suspicions in Washington that Iran was simply playing for time, in order to get its nuclear programs even more established and, to the extent possible, buried underground where they would be less vulnerable to military action.

At the same time, however, the United States chose to ignore feelers from the Iranian government concerning a so-called grand bargain – namely, a trade for Iranian good behavior on nuclear and other

issues, including Iran's ending support for Hezbollah in Lebanon and its opposition to Arab-Israeli peace efforts, in exchange for U.S. security guarantees for Iran – along the lines of guarantees given (at least verbally) to North Korea, which said it had already built a few nuclear weapons. Nor would the United States permit the European states to put on the bargaining table the possibility of security guarantees, which would be meaningless unless the U.S. agreed to them.

Iran played its own negative role. The presidential elections in June 2005 returned to power a surprise victor, the Mayor of Teheran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who soon demonstrated a “no quarter” attitude toward the U.S. and, more directly, Israel, which he said should be “wiped off the pages of history.” This seemed to validate U.S. criticisms and concerns of Iran and also called into question whether someone of this temperament could be relied upon to reach any positive agreement on the nuclear or other issues.

The recent war in Lebanon opened a new phase in the US-Iranian confrontation. There will likely be debate for some time whether Iran instigated Hezbollah's seizure of two Israeli soldiers and the killing of 8 others on July 12 or whether Hezbollah acted on its own. Nevertheless, it was clear that Iranian-supplied rockets formed the mainstay of Hezbollah's attacks on Northern Israel, and Iran clearly benefited politically from Israel's failure to defeat Hezbollah after a month's conflict, despite the large-scale use of some of the world's most modern weaponry and wholehearted U.S. support for Israel.

The war also seemed at the time of the August cease-fire to validate two other points: first, that any U.S. military action against Iran would likely pose serious risks and costs in terms of potential attacks by Hezbollah on Israel. Rather than removing that threat and thus at least some of Iran's ability to deter a U.S. (or Israeli) military attack by showing that its ally, Hezbollah, could retaliate against Israel, Hezbollah's survival gave greater currency to that possibility in the event of a U.S.-Iranian conflict.

Second, however, the course of the war and the way it was represented, in terms of the Iranian role, served to solidify U.S. attitudes of opposition toward Iran, underscored Iran's obduracy regarding Israel, and made less likely any U.S. compromise with Iran on other issues, including that of the latter's nuclear programs. Thus war between the two countries might have been made even less likely than it had been before the Israeli-Hezbollah conflict, but so too has any reconciliation between the U.S. and Iran – or even amelioration of their confrontation – also become less likely.

This development is not necessarily to America's benefit. At one level, the U.S. role in the Lebanon war – especially its unwillingness to use its influence to stop the conflict even after it had become clear that Israel could not achieve its goal of disarming Hezbollah – has reduced its political and moral standing in the Middle East even below the historically low levels it had already achieved as a result of its invasion of Iraq and inability to stop the ensuing insurgency and sectarian violence verging on civil war. At another level, while the U.S. is still looked to by virtually all parties in the region as the most important power both regionally and globally, the demands on it to assert its position have been increased, not decreased, by Israel's failure and Washington's obvious passivity in trying to bring the conflict to a halt. This increases the burden on the United States to prosecute successfully (with its allies) the effort to extirpate the Taliban in Afghanistan; it also makes imperative that the U.S. take a formidable lead in seeking to lead Israel and Palestine to a final settlement, even though, for Israel, the outcome of the Lebanon war will make it more difficult for any government to make compromises even for a prospect of genuine peace, even in the (unlikely) event one should emerge.

It will also be more difficult, following the Lebanon war and the renewed demonization of Iran, for the U.S. administration to shift gears on the nuclear issue and consider seriously the merits of the possible “grand bargain” mentioned earlier.

It thus will find itself back in the middle of a serious dilemma: not willing to reach an accommodation with an Iran that is not feeling any inclination to moderate its rhetoric if not some of its actions; yet facing clear evidence that a military attack on Iran offers little prospect of success either in eliminating its nuclear programs, taming its government, or leading to a downfall of the regime in Teheran. This dilemma is heightened by renewed concerns in most of Europe lest there be yet another conflict in the Middle East.

At the same time, it should not be inferred from Hezbollah's relative success – that is, it was not destroyed by the Israeli military – that Iran has gained much greater influence in the region, especially among Sunni Arab governments; certainly that Iran has any more chance now than before of becoming the “regional hegemon.” So long as the U.S. continues its military, political, and economic presence in the region, that role belongs to it, and no one in the region has any illusions on that score, even though the U.S. has much to do to translate this situation of power into influence.

This is therefore one of those moments in history where two countries – the United States and Iran – find themselves confronting one another, in part for reasons of history, but with neither having the capacity to defeat the other, in war or in peace – yet lacking the political will and imagination to change fundamentally their relations with one another. Yet both have an opportunity to live in relative tolerance if not harmony with one another; both have a chance to get off the path to unwanted conflict; and both could find some complementary interests in the future, as they did on occasion in the past. But to achieve such a *modus vivendi* – or better – will require levels of statesmanship on the part of both countries that neither seems able, at least for now, to attain.

Robert E. Hunter is a senior adviser at the RAND Corporation, a nonprofit research organization. He was U.S. ambassador to NATO from 1993 to 1998.

Hamas: The Last Chance for Peace?

By Henry Siegman



The rising tide of Muslim anger at the US and the West—as recorded by the Pew Poll and other opinion surveys— and the recent successes of political Islam have given many Israelis a newly urgent sense that they are under siege. Sever Plotzker, a well-known Israeli columnist, recently wrote in *Yedioth Ahronoth*, Israel's most widely circulated newspaper, that the Palestinian vote connects with the chilling phenomena taking place in the Arab world, whose resonant echoes penetrate every household in Israel... Israel finds itself an inch away from an erupting volcano, on the frontlines of the "clash of civilization." [1]

In Iraq, the Shiite parties defeated not only the Sunnis but also secular political parties; in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood's representation in the parliament increased fivefold; and in Palestine, legislative elections were swept by Hamas. The anti-Semitic rantings of Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his government's determination to develop nuclear weapons have only further exacerbated Israeli fears.

Israel is facing not only the threats of Hamas, an organization that has affirmed the right to violently resist Israel's occupation and has denied Israel's right to exist, but also the more general anger from the larger Muslim world toward the West. The two are often conflated, but it is a dangerously misleading conflation, for it gives a confused view of both the dangers and the opportunities created by Hamas's election victory, however meager the latter may appear to be.

The anger of the Muslim world toward the West is fueled by the humiliations of their Palestinian fellow Muslims who live under Israeli occupation; by what

Muslims consider the theft of Palestine, land that is part of Dar al-Islam, the eternal domain of Muslims, in which the West has been complicit; by the war in Iraq and its aftermath; by the horrors that have occurred, and continue to occur, in US military prisons; and by the hypocrisies of America's plans to install democracy in various parts of the world. This hostility is seen as evidence of the religious and cultural confrontation between Islam and the Christian West that Samuel Huntington has famously argued has become the new global fault line that has replaced the cold war. Paradoxically, the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is the lesser of the two threats, because it is political rather than religious in character, and Palestinian society is among the most secular in the Arab world.

Even for Hamas, the national component of its struggle (ironically at odds with the "globalism" of traditional Islam that recognizes no national borders within the Domain of Islam) generally takes precedence over its religious imperatives when the two conflict. This is so not only because most Palestinians oppose Hamas's religious goals, particularly efforts to regulate their personal religious behavior, but more importantly because Hamas itself is as much a Palestinian national movement as it is a religious one.

In response to a call by Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda's second in command, to Hamas to continue a violent jihad to recover every last "grain of soil from Palestine which was a Muslim land that was occupied by infidels," a Hamas official pointedly stated that "Hamas believes that Islam is completely different [from] the ideology of Mr. al-Zawahiri." He added, "Our battle is against the Israeli occupation and our only concern is to restore our rights and serve our people." [2] Now that Hamas has taken control of the Palestinian Legislative Council and the office of prime minister, the difference between Hamas and political Islam outside of Palestine defines what may be an opportunity that only a Hamas-led government may hold for Israel.

In the choice of candidates for the Palestinian Legislative Council, Hamas's "pragmatists," led by Ismail Haniyeh, the new prime minister, and Abed al-Aziz Duaik, the new speaker of the council, have visibly prevailed over those who are identified as Hamas's hard-liners. And many hardliners themselves have adopted an increasingly moderate tone. Even hard-liners know that Hamas won the elections not because of their uncompromising ideology but because they ran on a moderate platform of clean government and better services. [3] In a post-election opinion poll, only one percent of the respondents said that Hamas's priority should be to implement Islamic law in Palestine, while 73 percent said they still supported a peace deal with Israel and a two-state solution. [4]

If Hamas's advocates of moderation were to prevail and a long-term coexistence were achieved between a Hamas-led Palestinian Authority and Israel, the implications of such an accommodation could be far-reaching indeed—for Israel's relations not only with the Palestinians but with the larger Muslim world as well. For Hamas's imprimatur on such an arrangement would provide Israel with an "insurance policy" of the sort that Fatah is not able to provide.

In his recent book, *Scars of War, Wounds of Peace*, Shlomo Ben Ami, a former foreign minister of Israel, writes of Arafat's passing from the political scene as a "tragedy" because he was "the only man whose signature on an agreement of compromise and reconciliation, which would include giving up unattainable dreams, could have been legitimate in the eyes of his people," and he took this legitimacy with him to the grave. [5] The possibility of an Israeli-Palestinian agreement that enjoys comparable—indeed, perhaps even greater—legitimacy than Arafat could have conferred on it may have been revived by Hamas's entry into Palestinian political life.

Is such an optimistic outcome at all possible? At the least, it is too early to rule it out before the political and ideological trajectory of Hamas's new government can be discerned.

The likely direction of that trajectory was recently described to me by a prominent senior member of Hamas's Political Committee in the following terms:

- Members of Hamas's political directorate do not preclude significant changes over time in their policies toward Israel and in their founding charter, including recognition of Israel, and even mutual minor border adjustments. Such changes depend on Israel's recognition of Palestinian rights. Hamas will settle for nothing less than full reciprocity.
- Hamas is not opposed to negotiations with Israel, provided negotiations are based on the provision that neither party may act unilaterally to change the situation that prevailed before the 1967 war, and that negotiations, when they are resumed, will take the pre-1967 border as their starting point.
- Hamas will not renounce its religious belief that Palestine is a *waqf*, or religious endowment, assigned by God to Muslims for all time. However, this theological belief does not preclude accommodation to temporal realities and international law, including Israel's statehood. [6]
- Hamas is prepared to abide by a long-term *hudna*, or cease-fire, which would end all violence. Here again, complete reciprocity must prevail, and Israel must end all attacks on Palestinians. If Israel agrees to the cease-fire, Hamas will take responsibility for preventing and punishing Palestinian violations, whether committed by Islamic Jihad, the al-Aqsa Intifada, or its own people. Hamas understands that it cannot demand recognition as the legitimate government of Palestine if it is not prepared to enforce such a cease-fire, in the context of its responsibility for law and order.
- Hamas's first priority will be to revitalize Palestinian society by strengthening the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary, the separation of powers between various branches of government, and the professionalizing and accountability of the security services. It will aim to end corruption in government and implement new economic and social initiatives that are appropriate to the Palestinians' present circumstances.

(My Hamas informant told me that well before the recent legislative elections, Hamas had commissioned teams of experts to prepare detailed plans for the economic and social recovery of Palestinian society; he said that the implementation of these plans would be Hamas's highest priority, but he did not discuss their content.)

- Hamas will not seek to impose standards of religious behavior and piety on the Palestinian population, such as the wearing of the veil or the *abaya*, although Hamas believes that certain standards of public modesty— but not of religious observance— should be followed by everyone.

These views are exceptional only in their comprehensiveness. Similar views have been expressed for some time by other Hamas moderates as well. Ismail Abu Shanab (assassinated by Israel) said that Hamas would halt its armed struggle if "the Israelis are willing to fully withdraw from the 1967 occupied territories and present a timetable for doing so." [7]

The Hamas leader Mohammed Ghazal said last year that Hamas's charter is not the Koran. "Historically," he said, "we believe all Palestine belongs to Palestinians, but we're talking now about reality, about political solutions.... I don't think there will be a problem of negotiating with the Israelis." [8] It is a sentiment echoed by Hasan Yousif, the Hamas leader in the West Bank who is now in an Israeli jail: "We have accepted the principle of accepting a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders." [9]

More recently, and by far more importantly, Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh said that not only did he approve a meeting between Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Ehud Olmert but added that if Abbas brings back something that the Palestinian people approved, Hamas would change its positions.

These sentiments are in striking contrast to the odiousness of Hamas's founding charter (of August 18, 1988), which relies on an extreme anti-Jewish

reading of Islamic religious sources and on classical anti-Semitic defamations such as the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. Such hateful language was not entirely absent from PLO documents and statements in its pre-Oslo days, and one can find comparable demonization of Palestinians by some Jewish groups, including official Israeli political parties that advocate ethnic cleansing of all Palestinian residents of the West Bank. As noted by Henry Kissinger in a recent Op-Ed article, [10] rejection and demonization are all too common in ethnic and political conflict, as is unexpected moderation by former extremists after they enter a political process and assume responsibility for the well-being of those who brought them to office.

The leaders of Israel's current government claim that no peace process is possible with a Hamas-led Palestinian government. But some of the best-informed observers of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict believe that no lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians is possible *without* Hamas's participation. Nearly three years ago, well before anyone anticipated that Hamas might be running the Palestinian Authority, Efraim Halevy, former head of the Mossad, Israel's CIA, wrote the following:

Hamas constitutes about a fifth of Palestinian society. Because they are an active, engaged and aware group, they have more political weight. So anyone who thinks it's possible to ignore such a central element of Palestinian society is simply mistaken. Anyone who thinks that Hamas will one day evaporate is similarly mistaken. Abu Mazen [Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian prime minister] will not kill thousands of Palestinians in order to overcome the Islamic movements. In my view, then, the strategy vis-à-vis Hamas should be one of brutal force against its terrorist aspect, while at the same time signaling its political and religious leadership that if they take a moderate approach and enter the fabric of the Palestinian establishment, we will not view that as a negative development.

I think that in the end there will be no way around Hamas being a partner in the Palestinian government. I believe that if that happens there is a chance that it will be domesticated. Its destructive force will be reduced. [11]

Whatever one's reading of Hamas's intentions as it takes over the leadership of the Palestinian Authority, the notion that its sweeping electoral victory spells "the end of the peace process" is nonsense. The peace process died when Sharon was elected prime minister in 2000. More correctly, it was killed—with malice aforethought—by Sharon's "unilateralism" with which he implemented the disengagement from Gaza, which in turn provided cover for his continued unilateralism. That he was bringing off the disengagement against the wishes of the settlers helped to divert attention from his refusal to have any negotiations with the Palestinians.

Unilateralism continues to serve as the euphemism for Israeli policies that are expropriating half of what was to have been the state of Palestine, and are concentrating the Palestinian population, about to outnumber the Jewish population, in territorially disconnected Bantustans that make a mockery of the promise of an independent, sovereign, and viable Palestinian state made in the "road map" of 2003, which was put forward by the Quartet of the US, the EU, the UN, and Russia.

This unilateralism remains the policy of Kadima, the new party founded by Ariel Sharon, and headed by Acting Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, which is now forming the next Israeli government. In fact, Kadima's goal has largely been achieved. According to *Haaretz*,

The Israeli government has over the last few years, almost totally severed the West Bank from the Jordan Valley and transformed the Jordan Valley into a Jewish region.... Between the eastward

expansion of [the large Israeli settlement] Ma'aleh Adumim, the westward expansion of the Jordan Valley communities and the expansion of the settlement blocs toward the Green Line, the Palestinians are left with no territory on which to establish a state. [12]

Ehud Olmert and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni have led Israel's international campaign to isolate and bring down Hamas unless it clearly forswears the right to violent "resistance" to Israel's occupation and recognizes Israel's right to exist. Ironically, the appropriateness of both demands is compromised when they are advanced by Olmert and Livni, for both are Likud "princes"—the term applied to politically active sons and daughters of the founders of the Irgun who owe their positions of leadership in large part to that fact. What distinguished the Irgun was its resort to terrorism in the cause of the Jewish struggle for statehood and its complete rejection of Palestinian claims to any part of Palestine. In these two respects, at least, the Irgun closely resembled Hamas.

Indeed, according to the historian Benny Morris, it is the Irgun that established the precedent of systematically targeting civilians. In his book *Righteous Victims*, Morris writes that "the upsurge of Arab terrorism in 1937 triggered a wave of Irgun bombings against Arab crowds and buses, introducing a new dimension to the conflict." While, in the past, Arabs had "sniped at cars and pedestrians and occasionally lobbed a grenade, often killing or injuring a few bystanders or passengers," now "for the first time, massive bombs were placed in crowded Arab centers, and dozens of people were indiscriminately murdered and maimed." Morris notes that "this 'innovation' soon found Arab imitators." [13]

So far as I know, neither Olmert nor Livni have criticized or repudiated the Irgun's terror activity, which gives their condemnation of Hamas a certain whiff of hypocrisy. This is not to suggest that Hamas's suicide bombings have been anything less than barbaric (as was the Irgun's targeting of Arab civilians); and if such terrorist acts are not discontinued this would be a sufficient cause to quarantine the Hamas government and bring it down. It is to say that the Likud's own history argues that terrorists can transform themselves if they have reason to believe that legitimate national goals can be achieved by political means.

What skills Israeli governments lack in peacemaking have been more than compensated for by their skill in devising new euphemisms intended to deceive their own citizens and many others about what they are really up to. The latest such euphemism is the "conversion of large settlement blocs," a process of officially integrating large settlements into Israel while withdrawing from others. This will supposedly result in a permanent Israeli border and President Bush's two-state solution.

Prime Minister Olmert and members of his cabinet now speak frequently about this "conversion." Israeli commentators are celebrating the defeat of the settlers and the end of their Greater Land of Israel dream. That all of this can be achieved unilaterally by Israel is attributed to Olmert's clever leadership and to Hamas's ascendancy, since surely no one could suggest they are likely partners for peace.

In fact, as pointed out by the *Haaretz* commentator Gideon Levy, "while pundits and opinion polls indicate a shift leftward, with a majority for the establishment of a Palestinian state and evacuation of the settlements, the real political map has taken a sharp turn to the right."

The "new consensus" about keeping the large settlement blocs on Israel's side of the border comes on top of a previously alleged consensus not to allow Palestinians access to any part of East Jerusalem. The result is a claim that Israel must hold on to Palestinian territories amounting to half the West Bank. And this, Levy notes, is considered in Israel a defeat of the settlers and a move to the left:

Those who say the "Greater Israel vision" has given way to "dividing the land" are deceiving the country. So are those who airily assert that Israelis now recognize the need to end the occupation. The truth is much worse: The Israeli discourse continues to foster Israel's most deeply rooted national aspiration—to have the cake and eat it. [14]

None of this is to say that even a genuinely peace-seeking Israeli government would not have reason to fear a Hamas-led Palestinian Authority, in view of its formal opposition to the existence of the Jewish state and its resort, until recently, to barbaric suicide bombings. But an Israeli government that values peace above the acquisition of additional territory would not have prepared the ground for a Hamas victory, something that Sharon's government surely did with its unilateralism. More to the point, it would not have dealt with such fears by threatening to put Palestinians "on a diet." Dov Weissglas, Olmert's senior adviser (and previously senior adviser to Sharon), made that humiliating proposal, explaining to his colleagues—who reportedly were greatly amused by his cleverness—that he wanted to help Palestinians lose weight. [15]

Haaretz contrasts this mocking and contemptuous behavior to Hamas's behavior, which it describes as "more responsible" than Israel's government, according to a *Haaretz* editorial. "[Hamas's] representatives speak of a new era, of a transition from terror to politics, of continued opposition to occupation via other means, and of aspirations to a long-term *hudna*." [16]

As if determined to confirm *Haaretz's* indictment, the former head of the Shin Bet, Avi Dichter, now a star in the supposedly centrist Kadima party, announced that when the next terrorist act occurs, Ismail Haniyeh would be an appropriate target for assassination by the IDF. Not to be outdone, Israel's defense minister, Shaul Mofaz, declared afterward that every one of Hamas's seventy-four newly elected members of the PLC would be candidates for targeted assassination as well.

With rare exceptions, Israelis believe that if Hamas is to be accepted as a "partner for peace," Hamas must first recognize the State of Israel, since Israel long ago accepted the Palestinians' right to a state of their own in the West Bank and Gaza. But this is not true. That even so well-informed a journalist as Sever Plotzker believes this lie indicates how deeply it has taken hold of the Israeli imagination. In the article cited previously, Plotzker writes that the basic assumption that has guided Israelis since the Oslo accords is that while they may have a debate with the Palestinian people over borders and Jerusalem, they have no debate over Israel's very right to exist as a Jewish state and the Palestinians' right to exist as a Palestinian state. According to Plotzker, this fundamental assumption has now been "completely shaken" by Hamas's victory.

Apparently it has not occurred to Plotzker that "the debate" over borders and Jerusalem is not a rhetorical exercise for Palestinians, who have seen the ground literally removed from under their feet as Sharon's unilateralism is annexing to Israel large parts of what was to have been the state of Palestine. Plotzker maintains that the Palestinian people have handed over, through democratic elections, the reins of power to a movement that advocates establishing an Islamic kingdom from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River, where the Jews will be permitted to remain as a religious minority with limited rights. This takes us not fourteen years backwards, but one hundred forty years backwards.

In fact, Hamas does not advocate an Islamic kingdom, or caliphate—an al-Qaeda program from

which Hamas has explicitly dissociated itself. More to the point, with only minor changes, Plotzker's statement is one that Palestinians—given their actual experiences since the 1967 war—might make, and with far greater justification than Plotzker:

The Jewish people have handed over, through democratic elections, the reins of power to a movement that is establishing a Jewish kingdom from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River, where Palestinians would be permitted to remain a religious minority with limited rights. This takes us not fourteen years but a thousand years backward.

In fact, the State of Israel has enlarged its borders by over 50 percent beyond the areas assigned to the Jewish state by the UN in 1947, while the area assigned to Palestinians has already been diminished by nearly 60 percent—and all of this before any of the settlements and the other Israeli expropriations in the West Bank are taken into account.

If Hamas were to declare that it accepts the legitimacy of Israel, but on only half the territory that made up the Jewish state before the 1967 war, its statement would surely not be taken seriously by anyone in Israel as recognition of Israel's right to exist. Yet that is exactly what Israelis have found to be an acceptable declaration by their own government with respect to the legitimacy of a Palestinian state, one that obliges Palestinians to recognize not half but all of pre-1967 Israel, and considerably more. That is why Ismail Haniyeh has said that Palestinian recognition of Israel will depend on "what kind of Israel" is demanding that recognition. Is it an Israel within its pre-1967 borders, or is it an Israel that has taken over half of the Palestinians' remaining territories? If it is the latter, Hamas will not recognize Israel. He added that until Palestinians are told which of these two Israeli demands Palestinian recognition, it is not a demand Palestinians need respond to. [17]

What is unreasonable about such a Hamas position? What is the basis of Israeli and US criticism of a Hamas policy that is the precise mirror image of Israel's policy toward a Palestinian state? To pose these questions is to recognize what will be the central organizing principle of a Hamas-led government, which is not the removal of the Jewish state, something that various Hamas leaders have already said is not an abiding Hamas principle (and is in any event beyond Hamas's capacity to achieve—only self-destructive Israeli policies can bring that about), but rather its uncompromising demand for reciprocity.

The demand for reciprocity is also Hamas's answer to the two other conditions put forward by Israel for dealing with a Palestinian Authority led by Hamas—acceptance of all previous agreements and renunciation of violence. But surely Israelis cannot believe Hamas is unaware that Israel has not accepted its previous agreements with the Palestinians. Whenever speaking of Israel's alleged acceptance of the road map to President Bush and other international leaders, Sharon invariably added the qualifier "as accepted by Israel's government," which at the time of its "acceptance" of the road map added fourteen conditions that gutted its main provisions. For example, the road map explicitly demands that both sides proceed immediately with the implementation of their respective obligations—in the case of Israel, ending settlement construction and removing illegal outposts, in the case of the Palestinian Authority, ending terror—without regard to the state of the other side's implementation. Israel's government stipulated that it will not carry out any of its obligations until Palestinians have ended all violence and incitement against Israel and have "dismantled the terrorist infrastructure."

Not only the European Union but the US government is on record that Israel's expropriations of large parts of the West Bank violate international law, the road map, and UN resolutions. It was not a Hamas spokesman but Condoleezza Rice who said, at a press conference following her recent meeting in Washington with Israel's Tzipi Livni,

that "the United States position on [Israel's unilateralism] is very clear and remains the same no one should try and unilaterally predetermine the outcome of a final status agreement. That's to be done at final status." Rice added that President Bush's letter to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon endorsing the need to take into consideration "new population centers" in the West Bank does not provide a license for anyone to "try and do that in a preemptive or predetermined way, because these are issues for negotiation at final status." [18]

As to the issue of violence, Hamas declared a "calm" (*tahdiyah*) over a year ago, and largely observed it, despite Israel's resumption of targeted assassinations, which Israel had suspended in response to Hamas's initiative. Hamas has now offered to observe a long-term *hudna*, and is waiting for an Israeli reply.

Whether or not Hamas disbands its terrorist wing, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, it is highly likely that a Hamas responsible for governance and the well-being of the Palestinian people will be a very different entity than a Hamas that acts in opposition to a Palestinian government. Hamas is now the government, and it is aware that it cannot govern and act as a terrorist force at the same time.

The truth is that if Hamas were to recognize the State of Israel tomorrow and dismantled its "terrorist infrastructure," there still would not be the slightest prospect for a resumption of a peace process without major US pressure on Israel and there is little prospect for such US pressure. Israel has gone too far in its unilateralist decisions to suddenly reengage in a peace process that would require Palestinian assent to any continuing Israeli presence in the West Bank. And Hamas would not agree to a peace process that abandons the principle of Palestinian assent established by previous agreements, and reconfirmed by President Bush and the European Council. [19]

And yet, paradoxically, as a consequence of Hamas's electoral victory, the possibility of a *modus vivendi*, and ultimately an agreement between Israelis and Palestinians, may have improved rather than receded. Both Hamas and Israel's government believe their respective interests are best served not by a quick return to a peace process, but by an extended period of unspoken and unacknowledged coexistence. Respite from pressures to resume a peace process would allow Israel to pursue its stated intention of carrying out additional unilateral disengagements from some of the West Bank areas under Israel's control, thus assuring a Jewish demographic majority on Israel's side of the border. For Hamas, further Israeli withdrawals would provide the space it requires to resume Palestinian institution building and a rehabilitation of the Palestinian social and economic life that has been destroyed by Israel's occupation.

For Israelis, a protracted cease-fire would be consistent with Sharon's insistence that a long-term interim arrangement must precede permanent status negotiations. For Hamas a cease-fire would be consistent with its position that it is not prepared at this time to offer Israel much more than a long-term truce. As Rami Khouri, a leading Lebanese journalist, recently noted, it seems possible that there will be an "accord [between Israel and Hamas] that dares not speak its name," the title of one of his recent columns. [20]

If such an informal arrangement holds, it could lead in time to bilaterally negotiated and more openly acknowledged agreements, and perhaps even a peace treaty, but only if several conditions are observed on both sides. Hamas must enforce the truce it has offered, and prevent terrorism not only by its own militants, but by Islamic Jihad, the al-Aqsa Brigades, and other terrorist groups as well. But for Hamas to be able to pull that off, Israel must stop its targeted assassinations and incursions into Palestinian areas. Even more important, Israel must publicly declare that the lines to which it is withdrawing as a

consequence of its unilateral disengagements are not permanent borders, which will only be determined in negotiations with the Palestinians. And if such a declaration is to be at all credible, Israel must cease adding to its presence on the West Bank in order to assure the irreversibility of its "temporary" lines.

Ironically, such an arrangement, leaving the door open to a more formal resolution of the conflict some years from now, is probably possible only under a Hamas-led Palestinian Authority. For Hamas can credibly explain its acceptance of a transition period as consistent with its ideological refusal to make formal concessions to Israel that are not based on Israel's recognition of Palestinian rights and on Israeli reciprocity. Meanwhile Hamas can concentrate during this transition period on cleaning the Palestinian stables that have been soiled by Fatah's corruption. In direct opposition to Fatah's insistence that the reform of the Palestinian Authority's institutions must await the creation of a Palestinian state, Hamas, as well as non-Islamic Palestinian reformists, has always maintained that honest and effective Palestinian governance is a precondition for the achievement of Palestinian national goals.

Perhaps expectations of Hamas moderation will turn out to have been mistaken. If so, there will be time enough for Israel and other nations to impose sanctions that Hamas and the Palestinian Authority would then fully deserve. But recent statements by various Hamas leaders about their new priorities strongly indicate that changes in their thinking are already underway. For example, Dr. Nasser Eddin Sha'er, the deputy to Palestinian Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, told *Haaretz* on March 27 that "the new government does not reject coordination and cooperation to resolve routine problems, with anyone, including Israel." The haste with which Israel's government is seeking to discredit and topple Hamas is undermining the possibility of finding out the truth. It also threatens to foreclose what prospects for Hamas moderation may in fact exist.

Israel's General Shlomo Brom, who until recently served as deputy national security adviser for strategic planning in the IDF, has warned that if the failure of Hamas's government is brought about by an Israeli policy to isolate Hamas and bring about its downfall, the failure and the hardships suffered by the Palestinian population will not be attributed to Hamas but to Israel and the West. This is likely to widen the rift between the US, the Palestinians, and the Islamic world. On the other hand, an Israeli and Western policy of engagement and negotiation with Hamas could encourage fundamental changes in Hamas's policies, and eventually in its ideology. One great advantage of a strategy of engagement with Hamas over a strategy of isolating and undermining it is that Israel would be able to move from a policy of engagement to one of confrontation if it becomes clear that engagement has failed. A movement in the opposite direction will not be possible. [21] And the cost of failure is likely to be the end of a two-state solution to the conflict, with all that implies for the future of the Jewish state that is situated within a region whose "clash of civilizations" may just be getting underway.

This article first appeared in The New York Review of Books and is reprinted here by permission of The New York Review of Books Business management.

Henry Siegman is a Senior Fellow on the Middle East at the Council on Foreign Relations. He is a former executive head of the American Jewish Congress and the Synagogue Council of America, and has served as general secretary of the American Association for Middle East Studies.

Notes

1. Sever Plotzker, "Beyond a Bad Dream," *Yedioth Ahronoth*, February 26, 2006.
2. Associated Press, March 5, 2006.
3. Jackson Diehl, "Caught Between Ballots and Bullets," *The Washington Post*, February 13, 2006.
4. "The Palestinian Political Pulse," Near East Consulting, February 28, 2006.
5. Shlomo Ben-Ami, *Scars of War, Wounds of Peace: The Israeli-Arab Tragedy* (Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 324.

6. Both the problem and the solution parallel the situation on Israel's side. Religious Jews believe that God promised all of Palestine to the Jewish people for all time. And, they will not agree to relinquish that religious claim. However, they are prepared to defer its implementation to a messianic era in God's own time.

7. Matthew Gutman, Nina Gilbert, and Herb Keinon, " Hamas Official Has a Vision of Living Next to Israel," *The Jerusalem Post*, June 25, 2003.

8. " Hamas: We'll Rethink Call to Destroy Israel," Reuters/*Yedioth Ahronoth*, September 21, 2005.

9. "Enter Hamas: The Challenges of Political Integration," International Crisis Group, Middle East Report No. 49, January 18, 2006, p. 21.

10. Henry Kissinger, "Sharon's Legacy and Hamas," *International Herald Tribune*, February 15, 2006.

11. Ari Shavit, "The Waiting Game" (interview with Ephraim Halevy), *Haaretz*, September 4, 2003.

12. "Obsolete Security Asset," *Haaretz*, February 14, 2006.

13. Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims* (Vintage, 1999), p. 147.

14. Gideon Levy, "A New Consensus," *Haaretz*, March 19, 2006.

15. Gideon Levy, "As the Hamas Team Laughs," *Haaretz*, February 19, 2006.

16. "Diet Instead of Wisdom," *Haaretz*, February 21, 2006.

17. "We Do Not Wish to Throw Them into the Sea," *The Washington Post*, February 26, 2006.

18. "Remarks with Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni After Their Meeting," State Department transcript from Rice–Livni joint press conference in the Benjamin Franklin Room, Washington, D.C., February 8, 2006.

19. "President Bush welcomes Palestinian President Abbas to the White House," transcripts of joint press conference in the Rose Garden, White House Press Releases, May 26, 2005; Presidency Conclusions of the Brussels European Council (March 25–26, 2004), Section V, Nos. 53–54.

20. Rami G. Khouri, "Accord That Dares Not Speak Its Name," *The Daily Star*(Beirut), March 8, 2006.

21. Shlomo Brom, "A Hamas Government: Isolate or Engage?," United States Institute of Peace briefing, March 2006.

Islam, Jihadism and Depolitization in the French Banlieues

By Anouar Boukhars



A growing number of French citizens fear that France faces "a Muslim problem." The global ravages of Denmark's cartoon jihad, triggered by offensive cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad as a terrorist and lecher, coupled with the recent alleged plot to blow up U.S.-bound airliners have made more people fear not only Europe's homegrown radicals but Islam itself, a religion increasingly seen as posing a direct threat to Western liberal democracy. In France, fear of Islam and its extremist elements is not a new phenomenon. The 1995 bombings in the Paris metro alarmed the French to the threat of Islamist extremism [1]. The French authorities' subsequent sweeps revealed the nexus between drugs, crime and radical Islamism and the discrete patterns of terror networks like the "gang of Roubaix," a collection of militants of Algerian descent led by Christopher Caze, a 25-year-old convert who had traveled to Bosnia to work as a hospital medic only to return as a dangerous jihadist. The dreadful events of September 11 heightened this fear of radical Islam. The main culprits are, of course, the Muslim youth of the suburbs, suspected of sympathizing with jihadist.

The feeling that France is under siege has been propelled by a wave of xenophobia and populism already spreading across the European continent. The series of terrorist attacks on the Madrid rail system and London's underground and bus system, compounded by France's restive Muslim enclaves, have invoked troubling questions about the roles of race, Islam and ethnicity, and highlighted

the challenges to European states' integrationist models. In the French context, ethnicity, culture and Islam tend to be conflated and are portrayed as the main causes of social and economic marginality. The youth of the suburbs are usually "equated with thieves" and labeled as "veilers" (Le Monde, November 7, 2005). This "symbolic ghettoization" of poorer neighborhoods known as cités or quartiers difficiles in the political discourse and the media has hyped the threat of illusory concepts like communitarization or communalism of ethnic ghettos living parallel lives to French uniqueness and the ideology of the republic; in reality, French Muslims are far more depoliticized and individualistic.

Yet the 2005 November riots in France were neither an Arab intifada against French republican ideals nor Muslim jihad against Europe. In fact, neither Islam nor Islamism—with its three different types (jihadi, missionary and political)—instigated the riots. There were no Palestinian or other Islamic green flags, nor were there any anti-Semitic arson attacks against Jewish synagogues, schools, or cemeteries. Arafat-style keffiyehs were noticeably absent as well as the usual suspects: the bearded provocateurs [2]. There were no shouts of "Allahu akbar!" erupting from the rioters. Most importantly, the riots did not spread outside the suburbs nor did they extend to the universities where students feel the same grievances and resentments against the system [3]. The spontaneity of the riots and lack of radical religious leaders contrasts with the theories of self-segregating Islamic communities fueled by Islamic radicalism and other simple cultural arguments that abound in media commentaries and popular discourse.

Interestingly enough, neither the politically-minded Islamist organizations, like the Union of Islamic Organizations of France (UOIF), nor missionary Islamists, like the Tabligh or the Salafis, managed to calm the rage of male youth rioters, aged between 12 and 25 years old [4]. Shortly after the outbreak of the spontaneous riots, the leaders of UOIF rushed to defuse the crisis hoping to prove their influence over second generation migrants and hence score points with the authorities and the public at large. They failed to accomplish either objective. Appeals for

calm in the mosques on November 4 fell on deaf ears as did the "Anti-Riot Fatwa" issued on November 6 by UOIF. The failure of one of France's largest Islamic groups to lower tensions and break the chain of violent events speaks volumes about the disconnect of political Islamist movements with the social base they claim to represent. The UOIF lost the deprived French banlieues because of the leadership's failure to develop a discourse attuned to the realities of the Muslim enclaves. French-born Muslims denounced the structural weakness of the UOIF and their deliberate marginalization from decision making and leadership positions within the movement. The UOIF structure suffers from an over concentration of power in the hands of foreign-born leaders, such as the case of the 47-year-old Tunisian, Mohammed Ateb, who is at the same time a representative of the UOIF in Bourgogne region, imam of the Dijon Mosque, president of the regional administration council of CRCM and editor-in-chief of a magazine [5]. The resignation in June 2005 of Farid Abdelkrim, the only member in the administration council born in France, is a direct result of this growing disenchantment with the leadership's political orientation (Le Monde, December 13, 2002).

The UOIF and other political Islamist organizations thought that by taking advantage of existing possibilities to participate in a political system usually fraught with politically motivated resistance that they would maximize their influence with the authorities and attenuate fears of politically minded religious groups. Yet the groups' calculus, as well as those of the authorities who co-opted them, backfired. The UOIF's image was severely tarnished in the suburbs because of the perception that the group was co-opted by the authorities at their own expense. The UOIF's low-profile critical posture vis-à-vis the French law banning the hijab in state schools in 2004 and the Danish cartoons of the Prophet Muhammed in 2006 has given the impression that the organization's leadership has succumbed to the French authorities. This loss of faith in political Islamists, exacerbated by political under-representation and the disengagement of

French Muslims from the institutional space, has created a dangerous void and an organizational vacuum similar to that of the 1980s when several movements of Muslims strove to provide social organizations for Muslim deprived neighborhoods.

The vacuum created by the failure of political Islamism and the decline of the associative network of the movement of young Muslims in French suburbs paved the way for the emergence of increasingly disturbing phenomena like the random violence of the November 2005 riots and the radicalization of a segment of indignant Islamic youths, angry at their social and economic exclusion and outraged over the bloodshed in Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine. While it is true that there is little evidence of widespread religious radicalism, there are signs that Salafi groups that focus on a punctilious adherence to morals and to the strict dictates of dogma and preach an irrevocable break with family, local authorities and society are on the ascendance.

Abdel-Hâdî Dûdî, the imam of the al-Sunna al-Kebira Mosque in Marseille, is the icon of the Salafi movement in France. A graduate of al-Azhar University in Egypt and a former mentor of Ali Benhadj, a former high school teacher known for his militant views of the role of political Islam, Abdel-Hâdî Dûdî belonged to the Algerian Salafi movement that helped create the Front Islamique du Salut (FIS) in 1989. Condemned to death by the Algerian regime for his involvement in Mustafa Bouyali's Armed Islamic Movement (MIA), he took refuge in France with the tacit approval of the Algerian authorities. It is Abdel-Hâdî Dûdî's teachings that birthed and fermented the Salafi movement in Marseille [6]. His influence spread rapidly with the endorsement he received from Rabî'al-Madkhalî, the foremost authority in Shaykhiste Salafism in France [7]. According to the International Crisis Group, the conversion of Abdel-Hâdî Dûdî from radical political Salafi into apolitical Shaykhiste Salafi is in line with the transformation that the Salafi movement underwent

in the second part of the 1990s. The first return of French students from Saudi Arabia in 1995 contributed to the development of a quietist Salafism strongly influenced by Saudi theologians, namely those that belonged to the madkhaliste current, named after Rabî'al-Madkhalî [8]. The arrival of Saudi preachers on French soil at the end of the 1990s strengthened this movement (Le Monde, February 22, 2005).

The rise of the ultra-strict but quietist Salafi Islamism has laid the groundwork for a re-Islamization that delinks Islam from ethnic cultures and disconnects the religious from the political in a way that reflects individualist concerns. The movement's success can be attributed not only to the failures of political Islam in Algeria and France, but also to the emergence of a modern trend of the culture of the self in the suburbs whereby cynical, disempowered and alienated young French Muslims opt out of politics to become social, political and moral isolationists, paralyzed by their disdain for society. Rather than organizing the Muslim community into a model of citizenship consecrated to fighting social exclusion and Islamophobia and strengthening Muslim social cohesion, Salafism activates the depoliticization of the religious.

Salafists, as French scholar Olivier Roy correctly pointed out, play on the deculturation and individualization of youth, and provide a substitute cultural paradigm and a new Islamist tradition that is similar to the model of the "born again" in that it does not promote a return to traditional Islamic customs but a (re)Islamization of individuals within a de-territorialized ummah disconnected from traditional cultures and societies. Unlike political Islamists who aspire to create a model of integration through citizenship, contemporary Salafis advocate the creation of a new and purely Islamic religiosity that focuses on salvation, moral values and self-realization while maintaining a general aloof attitude toward the social and political issues that triggered the riots in France.

Yet since neither pietistic movements like Salafis or Tabligh nor politically minded Islamist groups like UOIF are capable of or interested in organizing a Muslim youth underclass, the banlieues have slid into a dangerous confusion and organizational vacuum where political and social demands have been increasingly expressed through rioting and, to a lesser extent, through jihadism. Jihadism in France is increasingly a product of the diaspora, a marked shift from the past when violent Islamism was strictly linked to foreign Islamic militants who internationalized and externalized their long-running disputes with their authoritarian governments into France with a wave of terrorist bombings. Since the mid-1990s, a high percentage of French jihadists were born in France, detached from any given culture and stimulated by a "de-territorialized" Islam that promises the uprooted Islamic diaspora a transnational Islamic identity forged in anti-imperialist discourse. This global jihad obsesses no longer about the creation of particular Muslim states but at a mythical final battle between the ummah and the forces of Western evil. "The issue for jihadis," as the ICG noted, "is not Western licentiousness but Western imperialism" [9].

Rioting and Salafi-Jihadism result from serious problems of political representation in contemporary France rather than from a religious radicalization of the new Muslim generations. Undoubtedly, the discovery and disruption of terrorist networks in France reveals an unsettling picture about the scope of France's homegrown radicals. Yet the point of connection between al-Qaeda and the destitute banlieues of France no longer comes via Algeria nor does it come from the "communitarization" of the banlieues. Instead, it comes from France, where a small proportion of disenfranchised French born Muslims embrace transnational jihadism in the name of a holy war against global imperialist aggression.

This article first appeared in Terrorism Monitor Volume 4, Issue 18 (September 21, 2006).

Anouar Boukhars is Visiting Professor of Political Science and Director of the Center for Defense and Security Policy at Wilberforce University. He is also editor of Wilberforce Quarterly Journal, New Insights, and Disaster Preparedness.

Notes

1. The attacks carried out between July and November 1995 killed eight and injured around 150.
2. Olivier Roy, "The Nature of the French Riots," Social Science Research Council, November 18, 2005.
3. Ibid.
4. The UOIF was founded in 1983 by Tunisian intellectuals, namely Abdallah Benmansour and Ahmed Jaballah, to serve as the French branch of the Islamic Tendency Movement, which would later become known as Ennahda of Rachid Ghannouchi. The UOIF leadership would assume another direction under the leadership of the more moderate Moroccan Fouad Alaoui and Lhaj Thami Breze.
5. Samir Amghar, "L'Union des organisations islamiques de France: la gestion politique de l'islam," *Maghreb-Machrek*, n. 182, 2005.
6. "La France face à ses musulmans: Émeutes, jihadisme et dépolitisation," International Crisis Group European Report, n. 172, March 9, 2006.
7. Shaykhiste Salafism stands for an apolitical and non-violent version of Islam that draws heavily from the fatwas of Saudi theologians. Like Salafiyya 'ilmiyya, it is fundamentalist in its doctrinal outlook, eschews politics and is primarily concerned with the preservation of the Islamic faith and moral order in society.
8. It was quietest because it was heavily influenced by the teachings of Sheikh Rabî'al-Madkhalî and two of his contemporaries—Ahmed Ramdanî al-Jaza' irî and Sâlih al-Fawzen. All three condemn political Islam as a perversion of religion and preach an apolitical, puritanical and backward-looking wave of new fundamentalism. See also International Crisis Group European Report, March 9, 2006.
9. International Crisis Group European Report, March 9, 2006.

Somalia's Regional Proxy War and its Internal Dynamics

By Anouar Boukhars

The scramble for power in Somalia's violent and contorted clan-based politics is occurring at every new stage of development, opening up fresh possibilities and opportunities as well as new risks and dangers. The stunning victory of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) over CIA-backed warlords left more than 300 people dead and more than 1,700 injured in what was by far the deadliest fighting Somalia has seen since the ousting of Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991. It also took the United States, Ethiopia and all the other players in Somalia's convoluted affairs by surprise and opened a new chapter in the country's troubled political history. Basking in their stunning victory, the ICU has the possibility of becoming a more effective force that transcends clan politics. This will not happen, however, until the movement confronts many of the difficult questions and muddled issues it now faces. Clearly, the ICU is not a homogenous organization and does not possess well-defined political and social principles on the issues of primary concern to its diverse constituency.

There are palpable differences within the different Islamic courts—made up of many interests—about the movement's internal identity and its possible future challenges. The struggle to clarify some of the driving issues within the organization regarding its relation to politics and the social and political alternatives it advances threaten to sharpen the divide between moderate sheikhs led by Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed and hard-line radical Islamists headed by former army colonel Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, 71, and Afghanistan-trained militia commander Adan Hashi Ayro, who would like to take Somalia down the Taliban road.

The recent promotion of Aweys to lead the ICU governing council has raised fears of the growing dominance of the radicals and their determination to impose Taliban-style rule in Somalia.

As head of the legislative council, Aweys has been entrusted with making the main decisions, leaving to Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed the task of implementing them in his capacity as head of the executive committee. The courts' critics saw this promotion as a harbinger of incoming Taliban-style legislation. As proof, they cited the recent incident in which the ICU planned to stone to death five rapists, which was recently postponed.

The similarities between the ICU's rapid ascent to power and the Taliban's rise to leadership in Afghanistan are troubling. Both movements came to power under the banner of religion and gained public support across the religious spectrum as a result of their promises of order and security. Both groups claim that their victory proves that Islam is the solution to their societies' problems and is the only way out of the anarchy and bloodshed that the defeated regimes had brought upon their peoples. Mohamed Ali Aden, 19, an associate of Adan Hashi Ayro, insists that the courts would accept nothing less than the establishment of a true Islamic state. "We've neglected God's verses for so long," said Aden to reporters. "We want our women veiled and we want them at home. We men have to grow our beards." Sheikh Sharif is also said to have pledged that the ICU struggle will end only with the construction of an Islamic state. Aden's conception of an Islamic state, however, differs significantly from the moderates' conception.

The transformation of Somalia into a new version of Afghanistan under the Taliban is highly unlikely even under the nightmarish scenario in which the ICU radical wing manages to tighten its grip on the courts at the expense of the moderates. Many Somalis are secular in outlook. Equally important, moderate Islamists make up the majority of the Union's supporters.

With the exception of a few renegade courts, the ICU practices a moderate Sufi form of Islam that can act as a counterweight to the radical militancy of Ifka Halane and Shirkoola courts. Much, however, will depend on whether the moderates can capitalize

on their numerical superiority by cementing the Union's internal cohesiveness and initiating negotiations with other competing political tendencies on the formation of a national unity government.

Regional powers are watching restlessly as unwelcome events unfold on their doorsteps. Most support a fast deployment of peacekeepers. Ethiopia, troubled by the promotion of Aweys and what it claims is the preponderant dominance of *al-Itihaad al-Islamiya* members within the ICU, is pressing hard for some sort of AU intervention to prevent the emergence of an Islamist state in nearby Somalia. Such a move, which would most likely be a cover for Ethiopian intervention, would surely alienate the courts, kill all hope for peaceful negotiation between the government and the courts and further contribute to the emergence of Somali nationalism. It is the revelations of Washington's support for the warlords and Ethiopia's complicity that have angered many Somalis to the benefit of the ICU, which judiciously exploited this nationalist fervor. Somalis are naturally suspicious of any outside intervention. Most regional players had backed various Somali factions and can hardly claim that they have Somalis' best interests in mind. Somalia had been a theater for a proxy war between Eritrea and Ethiopia for well over a decade. Asmara supports the Islamic courts while Addis Ababa backs Washington and its policy of siding with any party that promises to cooperate in the war on terrorism. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a seven-country regional development organization in Eastern Africa, which includes Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda, had its reputation tainted due to its members' competing geopolitical interests. As such, IGAD is ill equipped to play an honest power broker between the Transitional Federal Government and the Islamic Courts Union.

Even a Sudanese and Ugandan peacekeeping force would not escape Ethiopian influence, whose prime minister, Meles Zenawi, has signaled at numerous occasions his determination not to see an Islamic state established on his borders.

The prime minister is reportedly anxious of the potential creeping influence of Somali Islamists on Ethiopia's 40 percent Muslim population. The ICU and many Somalis are suspicious that interim Somali President Abdullahi Yusuf and his Ethiopian allies, in complicity with the United States, have designs on their land and would use the peacekeeping mission to take control of the country [1]. The transitional government—the 14th attempt at central rule since the collapse of the central government in 1991—is supported by the African Union, the United Nations and IGAD. Yemen is also known to back Somalia's transitional government; a number of reports have emerged recently detailing how Yemeni planes have been arriving in Baidoa, bringing arms and ammunition. The Islamic courts, however, are funded by influential local business communities. Nevertheless, it is still unclear how and where the Islamic courts received their weaponry and substantial financing in spite of the embargo on Somalia. The courts' detractors claim that they have the financial backing of rich individuals in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states.

Eritrea is also known to support the courts through the provision of arms and ammunition, although this is strongly denied by the Eritrean authorities. A United Nations report directly accused Asmara of arming the Islamic courts. The same report pointed fingers at Djibouti, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia and Yemen for their competing efforts to supply military equipment to the Somali warring groups during the later part of 2005 and the first quarter of 2006. "Arms, military materiel and financial support continue to flow like a river to these various actors," the report said. "On 28 March 2006, 10 metric tons of arms, including mortars, PKM machine guns, AK-47 assault rifles and RPGs (anti-tank weapons), arrived in Jowhar from Ethiopia..." Sources in the region reported that Ethiopia had supplied the Somalia Anti-Terror Alliance when they were in Jowhar with trucks loaded with military supplies brought from Feerfeer on the Ethiopia-Somalia frontier [2]. Djibouti, where the United States has built a military base at the abandoned French Foreign Legion camp, is said to have supplied the TFG with military uniforms and vehicles [3].

The United States and other Western powers, however, are still leery of placing all their bets on the Transitional Federal Government. They are also still reluctant to acknowledge the obvious fact that the success or failure of any initiative to stabilize Somalia is dependent upon the cooperation and inclusion of Somalia's Islamists [4]. After all, the ICU is the only political force that has proven its capacity to provide security, justice and social services. Its dramatic rise as a national military and political force offers the best chance for the construction of a credible and legitimate representative government in Somalia [5]. Washington and its regional allies have tried hard to prevent the emergence of such a scenario on the grounds that the Islamists are associated with local jihadists, who are linked to a string of assassinations, and foreign al-Qaeda militants, implicated in attacks on the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam simultaneously in 1998 and an Israeli-owned hotel near Mombasa in 2002.

Washington's narrow focus on the capture of these foreign al-Qaeda operatives, who are accused of launching a number of deadly attacks throughout East Africa, backfired and ended up empowering the very same group it sought to undermine [6]. Without any strategic framework, the Bush administration followed a counter-productive strategy that turned Somalia into a proxy war in its campaign against Islamists. According to Africa expert John Prendergast of the International Crisis Group, the United States had channeled about US\$100,000 per month to the warlords [7]. This operation, conducted from the CIA's station in Nairobi, failed miserably because of the Bush administration's underestimation of Somali nationalism and its lack of understanding about the complex politics of the country and its shifting allegiances.

State Department counter-terrorism coordinator Henry Crampton acknowledged that the Bush administration failed to correctly assess the heterogeneity of the ICU, their power and the popular support they enjoy.

Rather than promote stability and reconciliation, any foreign intervention could trigger an action-reaction cycle that could only spiral out of control. Anti-Ethiopian feelings resonate very deeply in Somalia and it would be very difficult to assemble a coalition of peacekeepers that would be acceptable to Somalis. The deployment of foreign troops would certainly anger the newly dominant Islamic courts movement and their supporters, who have everything to lose by foreign intervention [8]. If the United States and other regional powers continue to discount this resurgence of Somali nationalism, witnessed strongly in the last few months, it could once again backfire. The best move that the United States and the international community can take to ensure that Somalia does not slide once again into anarchy is to increase its aid to the Somali people and facilitate a diplomatic solution between the ICU and the transitional government. The U.S. initiative to form a group of stakeholders and potential donors is an encouraging start. Also, the fact that the State Department seems to be taking the lead on dealing with Somalia is another promising sign that Washington is finally recognizing the importance of pushing the political process forward.

This article first appeared in Terrorism Monitor. Volume IV, Issue XIII (June 29, 2000).

Notes

1. The New Vision, June 21, 2006.
2. Shabelle Media Network, May 24, 2006.
3. Puntland Post, May 12, 2006.
4. Eritrea Daily, June 22, 2006.
5. Daily Trust-Abuja, June 22, 2006.
6. Shabelle Media Network, June 2, 2006.
7. Reuters South Africa, June 14, 2006.
8. Hiiraan Online, June 19, 2006

Iraq's diverse Shia

By Peter Harling and Hamid Yasin

EVERY day in Iraq brings more sectarian violence between Sunni and Shia factions. Such attacks have become routine events, killing dozens of people and injuring hundreds. They are now much more frequent than operations targeting the occupation forces. In Baghdad the river Tigris forms a dividing line between the largely Shia left bank, al-Rusafa, and the mainly Sunni right bank, al-Karkh.

There are certainly large enclaves on both sides, especially the districts of major religious significance, the Shia al-Kadhimiya and the Sunni al-Adhamiya. But the process of polarisation, with the emergence of genuine front lines, "presages increasingly violent and well-organised fighting", according to a representative of the Sunni Jeish Ansar al-Sunna armed group (1).

Inside Iraq and abroad the predominant view is that two communities are competing for power: Sunni Arabs, supposedly loyal to the previous regime, who have lost their longstanding monopoly of central government; and Shia Arabs, traditionally excluded from politics, for whom the allied invasion seemed a historic chance to gain the influence they deserve as the demographic majority.

This view has the advantage of being straightforward, but it overlooks the multiple objectives pursued by the various players in the Iraqi political arena. Above all it helps to maintain a dynamic that needs to be checked rather than encouraged, reducing to their lowest common denominator communities that are in fact highly diverse (2).

The temptation to see the Shia as a homogeneous community is perceptible in the current debate on whether Shia loyalties are restricted to Iraq or may be offered to Iran. In December 2004 King Abdullah of Jordan warned of an emerging "Shia crescent" and presented the Shia communities in the Gulf, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon as a fifth column that was controlled by Tehran and threatened Sunni interests.

Egypt's Hosni Mubarak went further, claiming that historically the Shia of the Arab world had shown greater loyalty to Iran than to their home countries. Noted academics have turned such generalisations into a theory. Vali Nasr, a leading US expert on Islam, believes the Shia victory in the Iraqi election last year will remobilise all the Shia in the region, promoting common demands and identity, which in turn will serve Iranian interests (3).

Another school of thought rejects this analysis, maintaining that Iraqi nationalism will prove a much stronger force. One experienced Iranian observer said: "Solidarity between Shia groups will not transcend the basic division separating Arabs and Persians. Everyone seems to have forgotten that the Iraqi Shia *fought* their Iranian counterparts for eight long years during the Iran-Iraq war, the bloodiest conflict of the second half of the 20th century. The information we are getting from Iraq suggests that Iraqis, even those who lived in exile in Iran, do not welcome Iranian influence in their country."

This is an important debate. The resurgent Shia theory tends to influence policies adopted by the United States, Arab regimes and particularly Gulf monarchies, which see any Iranian ambition as inevitably hostile. The theory fuels hatred of the Shia, which is becoming widespread in Sunni circles, regardless of their politics. Few Sunni preachers in Iraq now refrain from referring to the Shia as *rawafidh* (heretics), a pejorative term which has long been associated with jihadists such as Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was the leader of al-Qaida in Iraq until his recent death.

Not just nationalism

Although nationalism is a factor to be taken into account, it is not enough to explain the behaviour of Iraqi Shia during the war with Iran. At the time the process of nation-building that had started in the first half of the 20th century still held some promise. In the 1970s the Ba'athist regime was actively re-allocating resources to Iraq's south, and this was reflected in the large numbers of police and army recruits contributed by such towns as Diwaniya or Nasiriya. Farmers welcomed the extensive agrarian reform initiated in the wake of the coup and the regime's progressive policies won the support of many poor Shia.

However, the regime's totalitarian methods led to the disappearance of the religious communities in Najaf and the elimination of rival political forces, particularly communism and Islamism. A people's army more than 500,000-strong was a far from negligible factor in mobilizing the Shia against Iran.

The turning point came with the first Gulf war in 1991 and the revolts that followed, heralding a period of increasing differentiation in collective identities. Kurdistan achieved a measure of independence and began to flourish after the civil war, at least economically. Elsewhere the model of a provident government based on patronage was dropped, and replaced by a predatory economy rooted in privilege, family networks and blind loyalty to the regime.

This change particularly affected members of the Shia community — officials, soldiers and small traders — who had benefited the most from the opportunities for social advancement offered by the regime. It also affected Sunni Arabs and Christians, although they generally found it easier to access resources thanks to family networks in Iraq or abroad.

In the south a policy of economic reprisals against Shia localities involved in the 1991 uprising aggravated the deepening poverty. But the idea of a martyred "Shia community" only really gained credence after the collapse of the Saddam regime in 2003, which was described by many as the overthrow of Sunni power. Under the political process initiated by the US administration, sectarian considerations governed the allocation of jobs, leading to competition between victims. Each party based its claims to a share of power on the scale of the suffering it had endured.

Supporters of the Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (Sairi), led by Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, drew attention to the number of anti-Saddam martyrs in his family and his key role in the 1991 insurrection. Militants loyal to Moqtada al-Sadr accused the Sairi supporters of having chosen to go into exile, having tortured Iraqi prisoners of war on behalf of the Iranians and having abandoned the rebels in 1991 by retreating too soon to Iran. Sairi responded with accusations that al-Sadr supporters had served the interests of the regime and provided it with many informers.

The rewriting of Iraqi history to allow for a Sunni-Shia dichotomy dispelled any idea of Iraqi nationalism. Iraqis of different origins have lost the points of reference they once shared. The key events of the recent past, such as the end of the monarchy in 1958, the Ba'ath takeover in 1968, the first Gulf war of 1991 or the Anglo-American intervention of 2003, are now giving rise to bitter disputes reflecting sectarian divisions.

There is no longer any attempt to redistribute national resources. Everyone is shamelessly trying to corner them for their own ends, with public bodies being broken up and privatised under the control of specific groups. People still say Iraq will surmount its divisions, but it is no longer clear what its national identity means. In practice, the arbitrary violence, nepotism and unprecedented corruption all demonstrate how important non-national loyalties have become.

Nevertheless this does not mean that Iran is the nation, by default or by adoption, to which Iraqi Shia turn. People in the south still have mixed feelings about their "Persian" neighbors. Al-Sadr exploits the Iranian origins of Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani in order to criticise him. The citizens of the town of al-Amara refer to their Kut counterparts as "Persians", which they consider a contemptuous term. Portraits of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and his successor, Ali Khamenei, are seen more often, but few Shia politicians recognise the Iranian concept of *velayat-e faqih* (guardianship of jurisprudence), which is a pillar of the Islamic Republic. Statements by al-Sistani about his Iranian counterparts have always been diplomatic, carefully staying within certain limits, yet firmly independent. Indeed he seems to rank more highly in Iran than its own supreme leader, Khamenei, when it comes to the interpretation of the holy scriptures.

Iran is playing its hand in Iraq with great subtlety, spreading its influence through many channels. Tehran has encouraged its allies to take part in the political process, the better to direct it. But it has also sought to establish links with all the political players, including al-Sadr, the sworn enemy of its ally, Sairi.

At a local level Iran sponsors smaller groups, such as Tha'r Allah in Basra, without exposing itself

directly. It has given only limited support to attacks against the coalition, and held back from providing insurgents with the anti-tank weapons that Hizbullah has received in Lebanon. The Khamenei establishment provides scholarships and books in Najaf. The high standard of reporting on the Iranian satellite television channel al-Alam has won a large audience among Iraqi Shia.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has also made good use of humanitarian work and economic investment to create a positive image for itself. Unlike the Gulf emirates, it welcomes tourists and pilgrims. Its comparative prosperity and tranquility has made a big impression, revealing a more friendly and open country than many expected.

Surprisingly, Iran's strategy is not based on a sense of allegiance but on its understanding of the Shia, whose diversity it recognises, along with their different collective identities. Iran realises that there is a deep social divide between conservative Shia (the religious community in Najaf, traders in the holy cities, urban middle classes) and the "revolutionary" masses who support al-Sadr (4).

Each of the southern towns has specific characteristics and problems. Kut is a small provincial centre that distances itself from the devolutionary demands of much of the south. Various groups are keen to command the holy city of Najaf, currently controlled by Sistani and Sairi. In Basra, several Islamist parties and their militias are struggling to gain control of resources, especially contraband oil.

The further you get from Baghdad, where confrontation between the Sunni and Shia communities makes it easier for each side to maintain a semblance of unity, the more the potential for violence between Shia groups becomes apparent. This is in stark contrast to the constant talk of reform and new initiatives in the capital.

"Iraq's diverse Shia" by Peter Harling and Hamid Yasin was first published in the September 2006 issue of Le Monde diplomatique's English language edition. Copyright Le Monde diplomatique. To subscribe to Le Monde diplomatique in English visit www.mondediplo.com

Notes

1 For an analysis of the main armed opposition groups, see International Crisis Group, "In their own words", *Middle East Report*, n° 50, Washington, 15 February 2006.

2 See Ahmad Salamatian, "Arab spring: late and cold", *Le Monde diplomatique*, English language edition, July 2005.

3 Vali Nasr, "When the Shiites rise", *Foreign Affairs*, vol 85, n° 4, New York, July-August 2006.

4 International Crisis Group, "Iraq's Moqtada al-Sadr", *Middle East Report*, no 55, Washington, 11 July 2006.