

**LEBANON AND PALESTINE AND 50 YEARS OF U.S.
MID-EAST BLUNDERS
WHO ARE THE HEZBULLAH?**

KORTEPETER, Carl Max*
ABD/USA/CIIIA

If we translate the term “Hezbollah” it means “The Party of God.” But actually the Hezbollah is a complex organization running schools, medical clinics, soup kitchens for the poor, and general community services for the Shi’ite Muslim community. It also supports a defense force. The Hamas organization in Palestine, though largely Sunni or Christian Arab, operates community services in similar fashion and won the last Palestinian election because of its social services, its reputation for honesty and its stand for Palestinian independence. The Shi’ite community, including many Druze, represents almost 50 % of the Lebanese population, and more than 80% of the Shi’ites in Lebanon support the Hezbollah. As a result of the Israeli bombing of Lebanon in July and August, 2006, a high per cent of the Sunnis and some Maronite Christians also support Hezbollah. The Hezbollah was formed after Israel’s illegal invasion and occupation of southern Lebanon, 1982-2000.¹ The ill-conceived U.S. and British advocacy of the disarming of Hezbollah and of the Hamas military in Palestine would entail the killing of a high per cent of the male populations of Lebanon and Palestine.

What is a Shi’ite?

The Islamic Religion is divided into two major groups, Sunnites and Shi’ites. Both groups take the inspiration for their daily lives from the Holy Quran that was presented to the Muslims in the Seventh Century A.D. by the Prophet Muhammad (570-632). But two factions developed very early after the Prophet’s death. The question was: Who should succeed to the leadership of Muslims, designated as the Caliph or “Successor?” The Sunnites, though related to the Prophet’s family, were not his direct descendents. Montgomery Watt, **(See his: Muhammad, Prophet and Statesman)** a respected Islamic scholar from the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, has called the Sunnites “the Constitutionals” because traditionally they accepted the Quran like a

* N.Y. University. **e.mail:** cmaxkortepeter@post.harvard.edu

¹ This invasion took place in part because the prominent Maronite Jamayel family and the Maronite guard units, the Kataeb, schemed with the Israeli government of Menahim Begin to form a league against the Muslims of Lebanon, the Palestinians and Syria. In a country that has not had an accurate census, it is surprising that The Economist in error estimates that the Shi’ites and the Sunnites each represent 30 % of Lebanon’s population (18-24 Nov., 2006, 48-49).

constitution and believed that the leader should be chosen from the broad Muslim community (Ummah). (“Sunna” from Arabic means “traditional behavior,” “orthodox,” “the example of the Prophet.”)

By contrast, upon the death of the Prophet in 632 A. D., he left only one descendent, his daughter, Fatima, who was married to the Prophet’s first cousin, Ali. Around Ali and Fatima and their children, Hasan and Hussein, another political party formed. This group, known as “the Party of Ali” (Shi’at Ali) firmly believed that Ali and his descendents should be the rightful rulers of the Muslims. Clearly through English translation the word for “faction” or “party”, **Shi’at**, *also was used for followers*, Shi’ite. To give some clarity to the new party, Montgomery Watt called the Shi’ites “Monarchists” because they believed that the dynasty of Muhammad’s descendents should be the rightful Muslim rulers. The Sunnites did not want Ali and Fatima’s descendents to have an exclusive right to rule the Muslims; hence, for long periods of Muslim history, Shi’ite descendents of the Prophet Muhammad (called “Imams”) were kept out of power and sometimes, killed.

But as Shi’ites did not like to follow Sunnite leaders, who discriminated against them, and because their leaders, the descendents of Muhammad, were sometimes killed, they developed a doctrine that basically held that highly trained religious leaders, such as “Ayatullahs”(Deputies to the Imams) should be followed as leaders until their rightful leaders re-appear (presumably with God’s intervention). Thus Shi’ites often give special, even worshipful, allegiance to their religious leaders and to military leaders acceptable to their religious leaders. The closest parallel in Christianity is the allegiance given to the Pope by devout Catholics.

Who are the Shi’ites of Lebanon? – a Brief History

The Shi’ites of Lebanon are the most-populous religious community of Lebanon. They are estimated to be about 50% of the population. In the past, because they were poor and largely uneducated and living in mountainous southern Lebanon, they were kept out of political power by the two other leading communities of Lebanon, the Maronite Christians and the Sunnite Muslims.

Lebanon had formerly been a province of the Ottoman Turk Empire, but as the Imperial governments of Britain, France, Austria and Russia began to involve themselves deeply in the politics of the Ottomans, in the Nineteenth Century, they began to carve out spheres of influence. Lebanon and Syria fell under the influence of France, and after World War I (1914-1918), when the Turks were defeated, France was given a “mandate” (that is, full control under the League of Nations) over Lebanon and Syria. Thus, even today, the French language is often heard in Beirut and Damascus.

During World War II (1939-1945), the allied imperial powers, including the United States, came under extreme pressure from their various mandates and

colonies to liberate their lands from imperial rule. Thus, to calm their subject nations, the Allies, with the exception of the Soviet Union, established parliaments and constitutions.

Under the French-dictated Constitution of 1943, a myth was generated stating that Lebanon was half Christian and half Muslim. But because the French General Gouraud had expanded Lebanon to “Greater Lebanon” in 1920, at Syrian expense, a large Muslim population was incorporated into Lebanon’s boundaries, especially in the Beka’a Valley, destroying any Christian-Muslim balance. Nevertheless the Constitution reserved the Presidency and Head of the Army for Maronite Christians, the Prime Ministry for a Sunnite Muslim and the Speaker of the Parliament for a Shi’ite Muslim. Basically the Parliament has been very weak, dominated by the President-elect, who controls appointments and who may dissolve parliament. The French were forced to leave Lebanon in 1946, but kept a lingering presence up to the First Israeli War (1947-48).

The Establishment of Israel (May 14, 1948)

At the end of World War I (1918) and the Versailles Peace (1919), Palestine and Jordan were given to Britain as “Mandates.”² A Mandate placed full powers in the hands of the overlord government to “educate” and to “lead” all aspects of the subject country. But before Mandates were established, the British during their war in the Middle East against Ottoman Turkey and Imperial Germany (1914-1918) had been so hard-pressed that they had, at various times, promised parts of Palestine to the French, to the Arabs and to the Jews.³ At the end of World War II (1945), Britain experienced so much pressure from the Arabs and international Jewish organizations that they turned the problem over to the United Nations in early 1947. On November 29, 1947 the United Nations, under pressure from the United States, decided to partition Palestine between the Arabs and Jews leaving Jerusalem as an international entity. The Arabs felt this division was grossly unfair because many thousands of hectares of Arab land were thrown into the area being divided. Warfare thus broke out between the Jews and Arabs. Only Iraq and Egypt had regular armies because the Arabs in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan were still controlled by colonial powers, and the Palestinians had only a ragtag guerrilla force. By contrast, the Jews had painstakingly organized a defense force during World War II because of the Nazi German efforts to exterminate them. Also many Jews from Palestine and other countries had gained serious military experience in Allied Armies and in Palestine in the British police units. They later used their expertise to form

² Initially Iraq was included with similar arrangements but after the Iraqi Rebellion in 1920 the British were forced to offer Iraq her independence under the Hashimite Prince Faysal, son of King Hussein of the Hijaz.

³ To France, the Sykes-Picot Agreement; to the Arabs, The McMahon Letters; to the Jews, the Balfour Declaration, even though the Jews were about 25, 000 or about 1/3 of the Palestinian Arab population.

efficient military units.⁴ The Jews consequently won this first encounter taking as much land as they could, but they were not fighting “five Arab armies” as their propaganda claimed.⁵ Iraq did help Jordan hold on to the West Bank and Egyptian forces occupied the Gaza Strip. Israel did all it could to encourage the Palestinians to flee from the territories they had conquered using terrorist tactics like the massacre of the village of Deir Yassin. Thus, tens of thousands of Palestinian refugees ended up in Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Syria and the West Bank. Ben Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel, did not wish to make a lasting peace with the Arabs, essentially because Zionist Doctrine held that Israel should extend its borders to the Tigris-Euphrates River and north to the Litani River. The Arabs in 1948, according to the writings of Simha Flapan and Benny Morris, Israelis, and Jewish/U. S. scholars like Alfred Lilienthal and J. C. Hurewitz, were willing to sign a lasting peace.⁶

Mosadegh and the Iranian Oil Crisis, 1951-1953

Iran was under the autocratic rule of Mohammed Reza Shah, who had been made Shah in 1944 after his father, Reza Shah, was exiled to South Africa by the British. (He was deemed a Nazi sympathizer having hired German military advisers.) A democratic election in 1951 brought to power Mohammed Mosadegh, a member of the Iranian parliament and a relative of the former ruling Qajar dynasty, who campaigned against the dominant role of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company in Iranian politics. Soon after becoming Prime Minister, Mosadegh nationalized the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in 1951. The major oil companies loudly complained that Iran had broken an international agreement and helped to place a worldwide boycott against the sale of Iranian oil. By 1953, Mosadegh was seeking aid from the Soviet Union and had forced the Shah to flee Iran. The U. S. C. I. A. and the British M. I. 6, with the help of the Iranian military, later in that year, overturned the Mosadegh government and returned the Shah to power. This act was so despised by the Iranian people, particularly because of the Shah’s harsh rule and his use of the secret police, the SAVAK, that it led to the takeover of the Iranian government in 1979 by the Ayatullah

⁴ It is important to note that during the Palestinian boycott of Britain, 1935-39, the British used young Jews in their police force and thus they carried weapons legally. Any Arab with a weapon could be imprisoned or shot. This policy is essentially being followed by the U.S. in Iraq. It trains the police and army that are mostly Shi’ites. Thus, they can carry weapons legally that they use against the Sunnis. The Sunnis are in double jeopardy because U.S. forces mainly are shooting up Sunni towns seeking the insurgents.

⁵ Bernard Lewis, the well-known Islamic scholar, continues to repeat the Israeli myth of “5 Arab Armies.”

⁶ Flapan, *The Birth of Israel, Myths and Realities* (NY, 1967), 1-28; Lilienthal, *What Price Israel?* (NY, 1953), passim; Hurewitz, *The Struggle for Palestine* (NY, 1949), 267-331; Morris, *1948 and After: Israel and the Palestinians* (Oxford, 1990), 1-28. Hence, 400 Arab towns and villages were overrun and erased from the map. Hurewitz estimates that after the war, 850, 000 Palestinians were reduced to about 150, 000 within the armistice lines of Israel. For details, read Ilan Pappé, “State of Denial, Israel, 1948-2008,” in *The Link* 41/2(Apr-May, 2008), in which Pappé, an Israeli, describes the Ethnic Cleansing of the Palestinians.

Rohullah Khomeini, a leading Shi'ite cleric. Iran is almost completely a Shi'ite country.

Colonel Nasser in Egypt and the Revolutionary Command Council (1952)

The basic impact of the Free Officers' Coup in Egypt in 1952, that removed from power King Farouk and the ruling Wafd Party, was a wave of Arab national pride. The Wafd and the King were broadly viewed as acquiescing in British interference in Egyptian affairs. Gamal Abd anNasser, the leader of the young officers, together with Anwar Sadat, his deputy, soon managed to force Britain to peace negotiations in 1954. This led to the evacuation of British troops from Egypt after an occupation lasting from 1882 to 1954. After Palestinian refugees in Gaza had made raids into Israel in the spring of 1955, Israel conducted a massive attack into the Sinai killing many police officers. Nasser begged the United States for good-quality defensive weapons, but when the U.S. refused, he turned to Czechoslovakia for an arms shipment in September, 1955. This move angered the Eisenhower government, and consequently, Eisenhower, with the advice of John Foster Dulles, his Secretary of State, refused to support Nasser's pet project, the building of the High Dam at Aswan to supply Egypt with greater electric power. This denial was the major reason Egypt henceforth turned to the Soviet Union and the Non-Aligned Nations for political support and weapons.

As Nasser's popularity in the Middle East increased and also his military prowess, Israel, France and Britain decided to make a preemptive attack on Egypt in 1956. Britain and France were particularly troubled when President Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal in 1955 to gain funds for the Aswan Dam. This invasion had been planned by Anthony Eden, Guy Mollet and Ben Gurion, but the U. S. had not been consulted and, hence, with the Soviet Union, they supported the United Nations, forcing Israel, Britain and France to withdraw from Egyptian territory.

Nasser's defiance and his temporary support by the U.S. and the Soviet Union in 1956 greatly increased his popularity in the Middle East and among the so-called Non-Aligned Nations. Eisenhower's government did, however, issue the Eisenhower Doctrine, stating that the U.S. would intervene if a Communist takeover of any country was threatened.⁷ Hence, the Lebanese Christians were pleased that President Eisenhower sent Marines into Lebanon in 1958 because President Chamoun claimed that Nasser would foster a Communist takeover! (Actually Chamoun wanted to change the constitution to extend his presidency!) Nasser and his nationalist cause of course lost much

⁷ Dulles and his brother, Alan, head of C. I. A., eventually took up Britain's anti-national approach to Nasser and placed funds with the Muslim Brotherhood. See Robert Dreyfuss, *The Devil's Game* (N.Y. 2005), 98-99 and 204-205 citing the former C. I., A. agent, Robert Baer, *Sleeping with the Devil* (N.Y., Crown, 2003), 98 ff.

prestige with his defeat by Israel in the 1967 Six Day War. Nasser had got along pretty well with the Kennedy government (1959-1961), but President Johnson (1961-1969) despised Nasser's independence, and consequently, he equipped Israel with F-4 Phantom jets in 1966 that were used to destroy the Egyptian air force on the ground in the 1967 Six-Day War. Quite obviously Nasser's friend, General Amer, had not prepared the Egyptian Air Force for a sneak attack from Israel at a time when both Egypt and supposedly Israel had committed themselves to negotiating in Washington, D.C. . Even President Eisenhower and his Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, were concerned about Nasser's growing ties with the Soviet Union and began pouring funds to the Muslim Brotherhood, a conservative religious group, that sought political power to lead Muslims back to the glorious days of their ancestors. **But the financial support of Islamic movements by the Eisenhower government and subsequent U. S. governments with the object of overthrowing national Arab and Persian leaders contributed decisively to present-day crises with Muslim radicals.**⁸

Black September, 1970, and the Move of the PLO. from Jordan to Lebanon

"Black September", is the term used to describe King Hussein of Jordan's defeat of a P. L. O. rebellion in Jordan in September of 1970. (The Palestinian refugees had become the majority of residents in Jordan and presented a challenge to the Jordan government.) This defeat led to the mass movement of P. L. O. (Palestine Liberation Organization) fighters and their families from Jordan to Lebanon. In fact the influx of Palestinians after the '67 war had sparked a Constitutional crisis in Lebanon. The earliest refugees from Palestine in 1947 and 1948 had already brought much prosperity to Lebanon and to the Palestinians. By and large they were a well-educated group of merchants and professionals who set up banks, merchant houses and medical facilities.

With the influx of new refugees, many of whom were displaced farmers and craftsmen, the Palestinians began to dominate many facets of Lebanese life, much to the chagrin of native Lebanese. Most controversial were the Palestinians who took up armed positions against Israel along the Lebanese border. Israel continued to conduct air raids and bombings of Palestinians in border cities as far north as Tyre.

The Ramadan-Yom Kippur War of 1973

In 1970, Anwar Sadat, Egyptian Vice President and confidant of Nasser,

⁸ Dreyfuss, loc. cit. citing also Baer, 204 ff. The Muslim Brotherhood, much like the present Hezbollah, was started as a community and political organization in 1948 by Hasan Al-Banna, supplying medical and social assistance to Egyptian villages. Later they fell afoul of Nasser's government because they organized resistance to Nasser and to Israeli attacks on Palestinians. The Brotherhood was popular among Muslims and branches developed in other countries. As they opposed President Hafez al-Asad in Syria, they were crushed in Hama in 1982. Both the Israelis and the Jordanians (and the U.S.) had supported the mayhem that the Brotherhood caused in Syria. See: **Donald Neff, Fifty Years of Israel** Wash. D.C. 1998), 242-246.

succeeded Nasser. Sadat did all he could to negotiate the withdrawal of Israel from the Sinai Peninsula, occupied in 1967, and from Palestine and the Golan Heights of Syria, but Golda Meyer, Israeli Prime Minister, refused negotiations and even said there are “no Palestinians.” Sadat finally in 1972 planned a secret attack on Israeli forces. He pointedly asked the Russian military advisers (about 3,000) to leave Egypt in 1972, but was assured that his own troops could operate the Sam-3 Soviet anti-aircraft missiles against Israeli aircraft. He then feigned several attacks by his army up to the Suez Canal in 1973. Meanwhile the Israeli army felt safe behind the 60 foot sand barriers along the canal and flame throwers at the Suez waterline. The Nixon government and Henry Kissinger, Secretary of State, felt no urgency for promoting peace negotiations.

Suddenly the Egyptian army, during the month of fasting (Ramadan) and the Jewish Yom Kippur holiday (September, 1973), placed pontoon bridges across the canal, destroyed the flame throwers, moved the Sam-3 launchers near to the canal and used fire hoses to open holes for tanks and troops to pass through the sand mounds. Israel’s Minister of Defense, Moshe Dayan, and the Israeli armed forces were caught completely by surprise. Sadat knew that Golda Meyer would call up the Israeli Air Force for a first strike, this gave the Sam-3s the chance, and they destroyed an estimated 300 Israeli fighter aircraft. But the Egyptian army failed to take and guard the Mitla Pass in the Sinai and General Sharon of Israel was able to break through, bottle up the Egyptian Third Army and cross the canal to knock out the Sam-3 missile sites. The U.S. also stripped its bases in Europe to replace Israeli tanks and aircraft. When Soviet Russia threatened direct intervention, Kissinger started his “step-by-step diplomacy” and the first phase of the Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai took place. Later in 1979, as a result of Sadat’s bold trip to Jerusalem to seek a final settlement, the Camp David negotiations of President Carter, Sadat and Menahim Begin brought peace between Israel and Egypt but little more than platitudes regarding a peace agreement for occupied Palestine and the Golan Heights. Shortly after the peace was signed, President Sadat was assassinated in 1981 by a radical Islamic group.

The Israeli Invasion of Lebanon (1982) and the Destruction of the U.S. Marine Base

Finally in 1982, without any specific provocation because the borderlands had been relatively quiet for months, General Ariel Sharon, now Israeli Defense Minister, with a nod from the U.S. Secretary of State, General Hague, had claimed that the Israeli army was making a short preemptive strike against the Palestinians on Lebanon’s border, but the Israeli army ended up killing thousands of Lebanese and moving the Israeli army up to the center of Beirut. Essentially the Lebanese infrastructure had been destroyed by Israeli bombing and the intense fighting between Israel and the Syrians, Palestinians and

Shi'ites.⁹ The fact that Israel subsequently occupied most of southern Lebanon from 1982 to 2000 led to the formation of the Hezbollah.

During 1982 an international peace was negotiated with Israel and the PLO after Sharon's forces had invaded Lebanon. The U. S. Marines joined a neutral, multi-national force to separate the PLO and Israel but the U.S. quickly withdrew. It had been agreed that the PLO fighters would settle in Tunisia if the Marines would protect the remaining Palestinians refugees. But after the Marines were called home by President Reagan, the Israelis had permitted the Lebanese/Maronite army, the Kataeb or Phâlângists¹⁰ to kill unarmed men, women and children in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila in September, 1982. After the massacre of about 3000 unarmed Palestinians, President Reagan sent back a larger detachment of Marines to help with the evacuation and general protection of Lebanese civilians. Initially the Marines had a great deal of trouble with the Israeli army which tried to penetrate through the Marine lines at the Beirut airport into central Beirut. Gradually, as the Marines came under attack from pro-Syrian Druze forces, another Shi'ite religious faction, the U.S. Marines began firing back, thus more and more becoming associated with the invading Israelis and the Maronites.¹¹ The frigate, the USS Bowen and the battleship New Jersey, joined the fight by firing heavy artillery into the Druze and other Muslim positions in the Shouf Mountains. In the end 14 U.S. Warships began shelling, not just the Druze, but also many Muslim villages, hence they were viewed as supporting the Maronite Christians and Israelis. The Shi'ite Muslims were now also on the receiving end of the naval bombardment. The Marine colonel, Timothy Geraghty, advised against the shelling because he knew it put the Marines in the position of supporting the Maronites and Israelis. On 23 October, 1983, according to the official version of the U.S. government, a Muslim truck driver drove past some Marine guards and detonated 12, 000 pounds of dynamite under the building housing the Marines. 241 Marines were killed and at the same time 58 French troops were killed at another location. (See the note below regarding the explosives used on the Marine barracks and the murder of Rafiq Hariri.) **This bombing introduced**

⁹ It is estimated that between 1982 and 2000 about 18,000 Lebanese were killed and some 90, 000 wounded.

¹⁰ Pierre Jamayel, from a leading Maronite family, had founded the Phâlângists as the armed wing of the Maronites to protect and further their interests. Pierre's son, Bashir(1947-1982) was elected President of Lebanon at the time of the Israeli invasion and had formed a compact with Israel to weaken Syrian influence and the Palestinians. He was killed by a car bomb twenty-two days after taking office. More than 2000 women, children and old people were massacred in Sabra and Shatila. For the gruesome details, see Neff, 134-141. For details of the Israeli invasion, see Hadas Their, "The 1982 Invasion of Lebanon" **International Socialist Review** (Nov.-Dec., 2006), 59-64.

¹¹ The Druze practice a secretive Shi'ite faith based on the 10th Imam while the Hezbollah follow the 12th Imam. Please note: the Shi'ites call the direct descendents of Muhammad through Ali's children "Imams."

the U. S. forces to a new kind of guerrilla warfare in the Middle East where guerrilla forces challenged the weapons of modern warfare. By 1984 there was an all-out campaign by the Shi'ites to remove the Americans from Lebanon because they were continuing their support of Israel. Thus, the Americans had started as a neutral force to enforce a peace but, by ignoring past experience in Lebanon, once again had openly supported Israel and the Maronite Christians against the Hezbollah, a home-grown, native defense force.¹²

U.S. Foreign Policy and the Trade Center Attack of September 11, 2001

The U.S. Government in July, 2006, took action against the actual native defense forces in the Middle East by calling such organizations as Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Palestine “terrorist organizations.” In other words, the U.S. was saying that national guerrilla forces have no right of self-defense or retaliation against foreign armies invading their lands and killing their people. Obviously most news reports discount the mass killings of civilians in the Middle East that are attributable to the U. S., Britain, Israel and other well-equipped national armies. **One may well wonder why national forces, after killing thousands of civilians, are not also called “terrorists.”**

One could say that the Al-Qaeda attack on the United States on September 11, 2001 began with the overthrow of the Iranian government in 1979 by Ayatollah Khomeini. Not only was this a direct assault on U. S. foreign policy, it also deeply affected the Soviet Union's relations with millions of its Muslim citizens in Central Asia. It is not surprising that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan quickly followed in December, 1979. The Soviet Union erroneously assumed that the population would welcome Soviet rule as a protection against the Shi'ite threat from Iran. With U. S. support, Afghans and their al-Qaida allies drove the Soviets from Afghanistan only in 1989. It is also to be remembered that President Sadat of Egypt was murdered in 1981, by the same newly forming radical Islamic force instructed by the writings of Sayyid Qutb. The U.S., by equipping and training the al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, gained some short-lived acclaim from conservative Muslim governments such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, but at the same time were training a new generation of Muslim Jihadists that would take up arms against the U.S. and her surrogates around the world. Such a turnabout of a military intervention is now referred to as a “BLOWBACK.”

The U.S., from 1982 to 1988, supported Saddam Hussein's war against Iran by supplying arms and intelligence. At the same time, Israel ran a back door operation supplying Iran with strategic weapons. This operation later led to the Iran-Contra scheme hatched in the Casey-led C.I.A. that deeply embarrassed the Reagan government. Casey planted the idea, as a staunch Roman Catholic, that conservative Muslims should be the natural allies of conservative Christians.

¹² See footnote 19, regarding the explosives used against the Marines and P. M. Rafiq Hariri.

This erroneous idea persisted in U. S. government circles for at least a decade, thus insulating from close scrutiny the plans against the U.S. being hatched in Afghanistan and elsewhere.¹³

Meanwhile the U.S. gave no credence to Saddam's claims to Kuwaiti territory. Only after the invasion of 1990 into Kuwait and a possible threat to the Saudi oil fields did President George Bush, the Elder, gain international support for a war against Iraq, January-April, 1991. Iraq, before its war with Iran, was one of the most advanced and prosperous of Middle Eastern states. At the same time, the minority Sunni government ruled the country with an iron fist and put many disabilities upon its Kurdish and Shi'ite citizens.¹⁴ Saddam miscalculated about how much importance the United States and Europe gave to the control of the oilfields of the Perso/Arabian Gulf.

Once again, however, both in the conduct of the war and the years of blockading Iraqi imports for rebuilding its ruined cities and infrastructure and feeding its population gave to the U.S. a black eye among Muslim populations. Moreover, the U. S. insisted on maintaining bases in Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrein and Saudi Arabia, angering the conservative members of those countries. Many of the world's population have viewed the films taken by British filmmakers of the U.S. Air Force strafing hundreds of civilian cars leaving Kuwait City for Basra in Iraq. Also an article was published in the *New Yorker* (May, 2001) indicating how General McCaffrey, after the Iraqi army had surrendered, attacked the retreating soldiers from Kuwait with a full armored brigade. Such injustice and cowardice brought no honor to our U. S. Forces! In spite of the fact that some arrangements were made with the Iraqi government from 1992 to the second Gulf war in 2003 to import food in exchange for limited oil exports, the "Doctors Without Borders" estimated that between 500, 000 and a million Iraqis died from lack of chemicals for water purification or the rebuilding sewage plants, the blockage of adequate medicines, the destruction of electricity for refrigeration and hospitals and also the use of armor-piercing spent uranium shells that spread cancer.

Meanwhile the attempts to negotiate a settlement in Palestine by various "Road Maps" had failed.¹⁵ This led to the first attempt to blow up the World Trade Center by a Palestinian group in 1993. It was a near miss, but the U.S. read incorrectly the determination of many Muslims to "make Americans aware" of their highhanded support of reactionary Arab regimes and Israel in

¹³ See: Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall, Israel and the Arab World* (NY 2001), 439-442. Cf., Dreyfuss, 284-5.

¹⁴ There has never been a complete census held in Iraq. Thus, it is unknown how much a minority the Sunnis actually represent. There was a census taken in the province of Mosul around 1935 and it was found that the majority of the inhabitants were Turcoman, that is, Turkish speaking.

¹⁵ The 1978 Camp David Accord called for Israel's withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza. The 1993 Oslo Agreement called for a settlement of all grievances in 5 years, but Israel continued its settlement policy.

order for them to have full access to Arab and Persian oil resources. The same Islamic Jihad group, led and supported by the blind Sheykh Omar Abdul Rahman, that had killed President Sadat, also had aided the first attack on the World Trade Center.¹⁶

In spite of a number of warnings that the al-Qaeda, formed by Osama Bin Laden, a Saudi adventurer, and Ayman al-Zawahiri, an Egyptian physician, were training Mujahideen fighters in the ruins of Afghanistan and planning attacks against American targets, only President Clinton had taken the warnings serious enough to have known al-Qaeda bases bombed. Even the warnings of Robert Baer in 2001, the C.I.A. agent within the government of George W. Bush, that Bin Laden's Al-Qaeda, was a direct threat to the United States, were ignored by Bush, Condolezza Rice, his national security adviser, Vice President Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense and his deputy, Paul Wolfowitz and a host of Neocon advisors.¹⁷

Even to this day, the families of the victims of the 9/11 attacks are doubtless unaware of the million or more deaths that U.S. actions in the Middle East have brought to Lebanon, Palestine, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan. For some reason, as with all governments, they accept no blame for the cataclysmic events they cause. They seem to have no idea that the chickens eventually will come home to roost.

Is it Only the Hezbollah that Serves as a Surrogate of Foreign Interests?

Another issue harped upon by the Press is whether guerrilla forces in the Middle East receive armaments from Iran, Syria and other countries. Actually Israel has received billions of dollars of armaments gifted from the United States every year.¹⁸ Opposing nationalist or guerrilla forces would naturally try to obtain arms from any source including Russia and China. This writer does not go along, however, with the Hezbollah shelling of Israel with the largely ineffective Katyusha rockets from Gaza. These only serve to provoke Israel with virtually no assistance to the Hezbollah defending their homes in southern Lebanon. It would seem more rational for the Hezbollah to purchase anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons to protect their people, not offensive weapons. Note the difference, however: Israel is gifted every year with weapons from the United States while Muslims, to defend themselves, must largely purchase their weapons. Do we suppose that Muslims are so naïve as to not observe our one-sided actions?

As regards the taking of two prisoners from an Israeli guard post, the evidence for how this happened is still unresolved. It has been suggested in

¹⁶ See: Dreyfus, pp. 320-322.

¹⁷ Robert Baer, *Sleeping with the Devil* (NY, Crown, 2003), passim.

¹⁸ With regard to the enormous sums the United States has paid out, mostly to Israel, one should consult Thomas M. Stauffer, "The Cost to the American Taxpayers of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: \$3 trillion", *Washington Report on Middle Eastern Affairs*, June 1, 2003.

some reports that Hezbollah took the prisoners from a guard post in the Sheba'a Farms, a part of the Lebanese border territory that Israel has occupied since 1982. One should also not forget that Israel holds in her prisons more than 9,000 Palestinians including hundreds of children and also more than 1000 Lebanese.

Israel and the Economy of Lebanon: Business, Tourism and Water

One additional observation is worth making. Israel has always looked with envy on the Lebanese economy because the Lebanese, being an Arab country with both Christian and Muslim elements, has always had access to the vast markets of the Arab and Muslim World. Some experts have observed that whenever Lebanon is once again prosperous such as in 1982 or today, 2006, it is also quite attractive for the tourist trade. Could it be that Israel, by targeting the business centers in Lebanon and the airport, is once again destroying an economic rival? For sure, Israel, during its previous occupation of Lebanon, was quite keen to destroy business centers and to draw down into Israel the waters of the Litani River. Perhaps it is no surprise that Israel once again wants to occupy southern Lebanon up to the Litani River. It is of course shameful that Israel dropped more than a million cluster bombs on Southern Lebanon in the last days of its recent war against Lebanon (July-August, 2006). This violent act made it almost impossible to harvest the olives, and more importantly, it has led to the deaths or maiming of a large number of children and other civilians. It did not go unnoticed in the U.S. Press and elsewhere that the U.S. supplied these cluster bombs in the middle of the war and also gave Israel hundreds of blockbuster bombs only in 2005.

The Murder of Rafiq Hariri, Prime Minister of Lebanon (14 February, 2005)

One must also wonder how much Israel was complicit in the murder of Rafiq Hariri. According to some accounts, the popular prime minister, who had advocated the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon, was blown up by men close to the secret police of Syria. So far the issue is unresolved but clearly it was not in the interest of Syria or of the Hezbollah to have Hariri assassinated. The Maronites, always close to Israel, gathered in Central Beirut calling for the Syrian withdrawal, the so-called "Cedar Revolution". This outcry was picked up by the Press and by Western Governments, and they virtually forced Syria's withdrawal. A much larger rally by supporters of the Hezbollah and Syria was virtually ignored by the Press. In the short run, in view of the recent Israeli invasion of Lebanon, only Israel benefitted from Syria's withdrawal because Syria was a strong supporter of the Hezbollah in the Beka'a Valley.¹⁹

¹⁹ Recently Ralph Forbes, a former Marine, has studied the type of explosives employed to destroy the Marine barracks in Beirut and to assassinate Prime Minister Hariri. His research has produced this shocking conclusion: The truck that blew up the Marine Barracks was loaded with 666 pounds of enhanced RDX "rag bombs". In 1983 this explosive was only available to

The Net Result of U.S. Policy in the Middle East: A Shi'ite Coalition

It is essential to recognize that the United States does not want sovereign, independent governments in the Middle East anymore than did the European Powers prior to the end of World War II in 1945. Chaim Weizmann [an influential Zionist and later first President of Israel] as far back as World War I (1917), urged Lord Balfour, the British Prime Minister, to set up a Jewish state in Palestine as a check on Arab nationalism. In fact, the underlying concern of U. S. foreign policy until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 was to block the independent action of any state that cooperated with the Soviet Union.

The U.S. showed its antipathy to an independent voice in Iran when it fostered the C.I.A. plan to overthrow Mohammed Mosadegh in 1953. Once again the U.S. demonstrated its discomfort with Egypt under Nasser by putting funds into the coffers of the Muslim Brotherhood, an opposition group fostering Islamic purity and rule according to the Shari'a, Islamic law. As noted, President Johnson equipped the Israelis with F-4 jets to destroy the Egyptian air force in 1967. The gifting of F-15 and F-16 aircraft and the latest U.S. tanks to Israel, by Secretary of State, Kissinger, in the 1970s enabled Israel to give the final blows to Sadat's Ramadan/Yom Kippur War of 1973 and the defeat of the Syrian air force in 1982.²⁰ The U.S. support of Saddam Hussein's Iraq in its war against Iran, 1982-1988, was designed to weaken both parties. It was thus easy "pickin's" for the U.S. to defeat Iraq in 1991 and to foster the massive invasion of 2003.

As a result of the U.S. invasion of Iraq and subsequent arrangements, including a faulty Iraqi Constitution, the U.S. has turned over the control of Iraq to the Shi'ites. This move has surprised many, well-informed Mid-East specialists because the Shi'ites are closely allied with the exclusively Shi'ite government of Iran and the Hezbollah of Lebanon. Moreover, the government of Syria, controlled by the Alawi faction, is also closely allied to the Shi'ites. Clearly the U.S. has erroneously set up a coalition of Shi'ite governments stretching from the Mediterranean to Pakistan. And it should also not be overlooked that China and Russia are closely allied to this coalition.²¹

One often hears from Washington commentators that "Hezbollah is the proxy for Iran." Yet no one seems to realize that **Israel is the proxy for U.S. policy**. In fact, as is widely recognized: Israel, because of unfettered U.S. support for the crushing of Palestinian aspirations, has become the engine of

Israel in the Middle East. The murder of Pierre Jemayel, grandson of his namesake, was murdered on November 21st. Once again Syria was superficially blamed. This has sparked a concerted attempt by the Hezbollah to overthrow the pro-U.S. government of P. M. Siniora. See **The Economist**, Nov. 25-Dec. 1, 2006, 44-45.

²⁰ See: Stephen Budiansky's **Air Power**, Viking/Penguin (NY, 2004), especially pp. 401-405.

²¹ Please note the important comment in Footnote no. 4 on how much the U.S. has placed full power with Shi'ites in Iraq. The Russian Foreign Ministry announced on 18 January, 2007, that it will supply anti-aircraft weapons to Iran. (**NJN Public Radio** – 18 January, 2007).

anti-Americanism around the globe.²²

Will the U.S. and Israel Retaliate Against Syria and Iran?

Underneath the surface of Middle East politics still lies the burning issue of Israel's destruction of Palestine. The whole world, with the exception of the ruling circles in the United States, has watched the systematic destruction of Palestinian cities or their encirclement by barbed wire, walls and check points. They have watched the systematic confiscation of territory, the destruction of orange and olive groves and the taking of all water supplies from a people who were essentially an agricultural community. Moreover, the Israeli army has made every effort to humiliate men and women of Palestine and has systematically killed or imprisoned young people and children who have opposed the occupation. The fact that an estimated 9,000 Palestinian young people are held in Israeli jails and perhaps another 1000 Lebanese alone accounts for the desire, on the part of Hezbollah and of Hamas, to take Israeli hostages. As the letter to various newspapers, signed by 18 famous writers, has noted, Israel abducted a physician and his brother from Gaza the day before the Palestinians picked up an Israeli at a guard post. The Israelis used this incident as an excuse to once again destroy a number of alleged "terrorist" cells in Gaza and to seize and jail a number of Hamas legislators and the deputy prime minister.

Who are the "terrorists," the Israeli army destroying hundreds of homes and killing thousands of civilians, or a few ragtag guerrilla forces trying to get their comrades out of Israeli prisons?²³ This pattern was repeated in Lebanon against the Hezbollah. The difference has been, as we have noted, that the Hezbollah was a well-armed resistance force.

According to the latest **Blogs** and backed up by Seymour Hersh's latest article in the **New Yorker** (August, 2006), the U.S. and Israel are currently selecting targets in Iran and Syria to make "First Strike Attacks with Cruise Missiles." In Sidney Blumenthal's Article, "Neocons' Next War"²⁴, the National Security Council's Eliot Abrams and Dick Cheney's M. E. staff are fostering a plan for Israel to bomb targets in Syria and Iran on the pretext that they supplied the Hezbollah with arms.--this plan supposedly has not received the approval of the State Department as if that makes a difference! One must wonder why Neocon American Jews and Born-Again Christians are so eager to undermine the security of the United States, the one country which has slavishly protected Israel from all criticism and has supplied unlimited military

²² Note the concern of the Anti-Defamation League in the article of James Traub, "Does Abe Foxman Have an Anti- Anti-Semite Problem", **N.Y. Times Magazine** (14 January, 2007) 30-35.

²³ On this topic see the August 28, 2006 issue of *The Nation*.

²⁴ **The Progressive Populist** (September 1, 2006).

resources?²⁵ **New military adventures in the Middle East would court national disaster for the United States.**

The U.S. Government and Israel, Still Thinking Inside an Outdated Box

One wonders how many more U.S. soldiers and how many more glaring mistakes in foreign policies, both economic and political, it will take to foster changes in the U. S. and Israeli mindset. It is likely that the U.S. must go into a deep financial depression and experience thousands more deaths and maimings in Iraq and Afghanistan before the man-in-the-street will force changes in the U. S. Congress and in the ignorant advisors surrounding the President. The recent House and Senate elections have placed the Democrats in a precarious leadership role, but one must doubt if any change in Middle East policy will take place under the Democrats. Nancy Pelosi, the new Speaker of the House, and Senator Harry Reid, the new Senate majority leader, two days after Israel invaded Lebanon, slavishly supported Israel's destruction of "Our Democratic Ally and Friend, Lebanon!"

Our enormous trade deficits with China and our tendency to go to war instead of studying and negotiating to solve the root causes of world problems may give the final blows to the U.S. economy.²⁶ The U.S. and Israeli Governments exhibit an incredible lack of sensitivity and a clear immaturity in believing that world problems will be solved by overwhelming military force rather than through negotiations.

Once again the strategic murder of a Lebanese Maronite, Pierre Gemayel, grandson of the founder of the **Kataeb (Phalangists)**, in early December, has energized the U.S., Israel and the Christian Lebanese to point another accusatory finger at Syria, but wiser heads, on the spot, see the hand of Israel and the U.S. encouraging mayhem in Lebanon, apparently to justify a military strike at Syria and possibly Iran.²⁷

As clear proof of U.S. intentions to forward its interests by gunboat diplomacy, rather than by the diplomacy advocated by former Secretary of State, James Baker and the Iraq Study Group, has been the movement of a second aircraft carrier battle group into an already crowded Perso/Arabian Gulf and the appointment of Admiral William Fallon to head the allied armed forces

²⁵ It is widely recognized that a large number of the Neocons are of the Jewish faith or Born-Again Christians wishing to establish Israeli dominance in the Middle East. Israel is about 1 % of the population of the Middle East!

²⁶ The professors Steven Walt of Harvard and John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago have made a study of the detrimental effect on U.S. foreign policy and the U.S. economy by A.I.P.A.C. (American Israeli Political Action Committee) that was published on the website of the Harvard John Kennedy Center and also in **The London Review of Books** (March, 2006).

²⁷ **See:** the deeply perceptive article of Jonathan Cook, "Syria is a Convenient Fallguy for Gemayel's death", under "Countercurrents. Org" and his book, **The Unmasking of the Jewish and Demographic State** (Pluto Press, 2006).

in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is clear that by doubling air and sea power in the Gulf the U.S. is trying to offset the power we Americans have given to Iran by turning Iraq over to the Shi'ites. The U.S. may wish to interdict Iran's march toward becoming a nuclear power in 10 years by bombing her nuclear facilities, but this move would surely bring forth a response from Iran, who merely needs to block the Straits of Hormuz to bottle up the aircraft carriers and to blockade the movement of thousands of oil tankers to markets around the world. In 2007 it may be wise to invest in a horse and buggy!²⁸

²⁸ Consult the Strategic Map and the Article by John Kifner in the **N.Y. Times** "Week in Review", (January 14, 2007), p. 14.