THE DYNAMICS OF SUNNI-SHIA RELATIONSHIPS

DOCTRINE, TRANSNATIONALISM, INTELLECTUALS AND THE MEDIA

BRIGITTE MARÉCHAL and SAMI ZEMNI
EDITORS

Before the immense changes of the 2011 'Arab Spring', it was Sunni-Shia sectarian rivalry that preoccupied most political analyses of the Middle East. This book presents wide-ranging and up-to-date research that sheds light on the political, sociological and ideological processes that are affecting the dynamics within, as well as the relationships between, the Shia and Sunni worlds.

The growing tensions and occasional clashes between believers in the two main strands of Islam have been major concerns. Upheavals within the Shia sphere of influence had altered the relationship: the Iranian revolution of 1979 changed the politics of Iranian Shiism and impacted on Shia communities regionally, while the 2003 Anglo-American invasion of Iraq initiated a new phase of tension in Sunni-Shia relations. The spectre of a sectarian war in Iraq, a diplomatic and military offensive against the Lebanese Hezbollah and a potentially nuclear-armed Iran (along with Tehran's support for Hamas) prompted King Abdallah II of Jordan to warn of an emerging 'Shia crescent'. However, away from such grand geopolitical gestures, Sunni-Shia relations are being rearticulated through an array of local, regional and global connections.

This book presents wide-ranging and up-to-date research that sheds light on the political, sociological and ideological processes that are affecting the dynamics within, as well as the relationships between, the Shia and Sunni worlds. Among the themes discussed are the ideological and doctrinal evolutions that are taking place, the contextualisation of the main protagonists' political practices, transnational networks, and the role of intellectuals, religious scholars and the media in shaping and informing this dynamic relationship.

MARÉCHAL
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With the contributions of M. ABOU ZAHAB, J. ALAGHA, B. BALCI, R. BRUNNER, B. DE SMET, S. A. DUDOIGNON, A. GOYUSHOV, J.-F. LEGRAIN, R. MEIJER, S. MERVIN, TH. PIERRET, P. SABAHI, R. VISSER, J. WAGEMAKERS.

'At a time when the conflict in Iraq, and the more recent uprisings in Syria, Bahrain and in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province, have prompted a resurgence of essentialist generalisations on the Sunni-Shia divide, this collection of brilliant contributions by leading scholars from various disciplines is a welcome reminder of the complexity of the sectarian question in Islam which does not simply derive from textual and interpretative divergences, but is also socially constructed and politically instrumentalised.' — Stéphane Lacroix, Assistant Professor of Political Science at Sciences Po, Paris, and author of *Awakening Islam: The Politics of Religious Dissent in Contemporary Saudi Arabia*

'Too often the Sunni-Shia "divide" in Islam is spoken of in deeply reductionist or ahistorical terms. Maréchal and Zemni's collection, however, sets a new standard by carefully situating contemporary sectarianism in relation to the simultaneous push and pull of local and transnational factors. A must-read for anyone seeking to understand Sunni-Shia dynamics in the wake of the Arab Uprisings.' — Peter Mandaville, George Mason University, author of *Global Political Islam*

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BRIGITTE MARÉCHAL and SAMI ZEMNI
(*Editors*)

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Doctrine, Transnationalism, Intellectuals and the Media

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Introduction

Evaluating Contemporary Sunnite-Shiite Relations: Changing Identities, Political Projects, Interactions and Theological Discussions

Brigitte Maréchal and Sami Zemni

Prior to the first months of 2011, it was not the optimism and enthusiasm of the Arab Spring, but sectarian rivalry between Sunnis and Shiites that informed most political science accounts on the Middle East. The growing tensions and sometimes violent clashes between believers of the two main trends of Islam were the major points of attention for political commentators as well as academics. A number of facts accounted for this heightened attention: a series of upheavals within the Shiite sphere of influence had altered the relationship between Shiism and Sunnism over the course of several decades, and Shiism was perceived as progressively showing its propensity towards a higher level of historicity (i.e. its capacity to re-appropriate its destiny and demonstrate change).[1] The Iranian Revolution of 1979 changed the politics of Iranian Shiism, and subsequently impacted on Shiite communities throughout the region; the 2003 Anglo-American invasion of Iraq initiated a new phase of tension in the relations between the two trends and Shiites were suddenly gaining political power that had traditionally been held by the Sunnis. It also became more and more obvious that it was a specific form of Sunnism, namely Salafism, which was primarily responsible for anti-Shiite ideas and actions. The spectre of a sectarian war in Iraq,

a diplomatic and military offensive against the Lebanese Hizbullah and a potentially nuclear Iran (as well as its support for the Palestinian Hamas) led the Jordanian King Abdallah II to warn the world of an emerging "Shiite Crescent".

In this disordered context, an allegation such as the one made by the sociologist Jean-Paul Charnay at the beginning of the 1970s that "an ecumenical re-centering of beliefs, a softening between old oppositions is emerging within Islam", seems to have been overtaken by events.[2] The same observation can be made regarding the assertion of the late Hamid Enayat, a historian and political scientist, about how progress had been made towards Sunnite-Shiite reconciliation during the twentieth century. Writing at the beginning of the 1980s, Enayat claimed that "each school has affected the political thinking of the other [...] and the differences between the two have been reduced in the process".[3] On the contrary, today the differences between the two schools increasingly seem to be emphasized. However, beneath the world of grand geopolitical gesture, and beyond the changes observed in the last twenty-five-to-thirty years, Sunnite-Shiite relations are being rearticulated through an array of local, regional and global connections. And this all the more so since the outbreak of the 2011 revolts, because these populations are also trying to re-appropriate their own historicity.

The events of the Arab Spring have shown that the Arab peoples, reconnecting with their historical agency and re-emerging as a potent political voice, have mobilized on a massive scale to demand their basic rights. From Tunis to Cairo, from Rabat to Baghdad, the people chanted "*al-sha'ab yurid isqat an-nidham*" ("the people wants the fall of the regime") when asking for rights and justice. In Lebanon, Iraq and Bahrain the people added one word, with an utterly important connotation to the slogan: "*al-sha'ab yurid isqat an-nidham al-taifi*" ("the people want the fall of the sectarian regime"),[4] which signals a willingness on the part of people across the region to transcend sectarian affiliations and ask for more inclusive forms of citizenship. While these forms of citizenship might be inspired by religious feelings and specific readings of them, it is equally true that their interpretation in the Arab world is growingly non-religious.

We will reflect on the landslide changes throughout the Arab and Muslim world since January 2011 in a concluding chapter, where we also further analyze the main findings of the conference that provide the basis for this publication.

A conference

The idea of organizing a conference on the relations between the two main branches of Islam first developed in 2006–2007 as a number of academic discussions had arose that were linked to the strong dynamism of a number of Shiite movements, and notably Hizbullah in Lebanon. Soon, Prof. Felice Dassetto at Université catholique de Louvain (UCL) transformed this interest in the internal diversity of Shiism into a question of inquiring into the (changing) nature of the relationships between Shiism[5] and Sunnism. Following an open call that was made by the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office in 2008 for research proposals dealing with the question of "Political-religious equilibrium in the Arab and Muslim world" (EPRAM), a joint proposal was presented by three academic institutions: the CISMOC (Centre Interdisciplinaire d'Etudes de l'Islam dans le Monde Contemporain at UCL), the MENARG (Middle East & North Africa Research Group, at Ghent University) and the Egmont Institute (Royal Institute for International Relations, Brussels). Our successful EPRAM project consisted in organizing both an international scientific conference, followed by a publication (this book), and the writing of a country-based database and a summary report based on state of the art knowledge, dealing with more diplomatic aspects of the question.[6]

The conference was organized in Brussels, in the Royal Belgium Academy of Sciences and University Foundation, from 30 September until 2 October 2009. Seventeen participants to the conference delivered presentations specifically covering the Middle East and Central Asia, and most of those who took part authored the chapters presented in this volume.

Nevertheless, we regret not including some of the written contributions of several prominent scholars and intellectuals who participated in this very inspiring meeting. We think in particular of Sayyid Yousif al-Khoei (al-Khoei Foundation—London), who presented a contribution entitled "Development of Shiite-Sunni relations in the UK with special reference to the Middle East". We also think of Mohammad Amer's (ISIM, International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World—Leyden) presentation on "The Shiite-Sunni harmony and sectarian politics: a case of the Minhajul Quran in Pakistan", and Prof. Stéphane Lacroix (Sciences-Po—Paris), who enlightened us with the question of Saudi Islamism and the Shiite issue. Finally, we also think of Dr Laurence Louër (CERI, Centre for International Studies and Research-Paris), with her contribution on "A

comparative perspective on Sunni-Shiite relations in Kuwait, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia", and of Dr Azzam Tamimi (IIPT, Institute of Islamic Political Thought—London), who spoke on "The political and the religious in Sunni-Shiite disputes". A reflection on their contributions is, however, integrated into the conclusion of this book. We would also like to thank Prof. Roel Meijer and Dr Joas Wagemakers, who did not participate in the conference, for their valuable and timely contribution on the Shiite question in Saudi Arabia.

Relations

Beyond repeated polemical sayings or slogans, it should be noted that the theme of relations between Sunnis and Shiites has traditionally been neglected, under-researched, and even avoided in mainstream scholarship. While some scholars have indeed focused their work on specific forms of interaction between Sunnis and Shiites (such as Brunner, Enayat, and Vali Nasr, among others), it is nevertheless clear that a book systematically dealing with the different types of relations between the two mains trends of Islam is still missing.

Focusing on relations does not necessarily mean that we want to validate the idea that sectarian interactions form the central dynamic or the most important aspect of Arab and Muslim political life. On the contrary, we think that a thorough analysis of the interactions between historically and geopolitically contextualized Sunnis and Shiites can broaden our understanding of the interaction between political, religious, cultural, economic and social factors. We consider reality from a social constructivist viewpoint, and thus look at social reality as a construct and not a given fact. In an increasingly globalized world,[7] we think that the question of interdependence has to be seriously taken into account because it is an active constitutive element of social realities. As the sociologist Roland Robertson has pointed out, because the global is always expressed in the local, and as the local has to be considered as a peculiarity from the global, globalization is indeed always "glocalization".[8]

New paradigms developed within the field of sociology[9] are helpful in thinking about contemporary Sunnite-Shiite relationships beyond the sterile, traditional, and paradigmatic opposition between the collective and individual dimensions of the two schools. Taking relations and interactions as the starting point of analyses helps us to go beyond the "polymorph and

bulimic"[10] concept of (collective) identities, which are always in a process of a "relative homogenization",[11] always changing, always moving, despite the conservative powers of social memory and institutions.

All of the contributions in this book present original research. They shed light on the historical, political, sociological and ideological processes that are affecting the dynamics within, as well as the relationships between, the Shiite and the Sunnite worlds. Remembering the questions already stipulated in the work of Hamid Enayat, we will try to tackle questions such as the reasoning of the disputant, the foci of emphasis and the degree of tension, on the one ahnd, without forgetting to consider practical cases where both participations are collaborative, such as the defence of Palestine, or the response to a perceived aggressive West, on the other hand.

While, of course, it was impossible to cover all countries,[12] places, interactions or conflicts in this book, its coverage includes the ideological and doctrinal evolutions that are taking place within the two main branches of Islam, the contextualization of the political practices of their main protagonists, their transnational networks and the role of intellectuals, religious scholars, the media and transnational actors that inform this dynamic relationship.

The first part of the book focuses on Sunnite-Shiite interactions between geopolitical tensions, doctrinal recognition and rejection. While Sabrina Mervin focuses on the doctrinal conflicts that inform current geopolitical tensions between Sunnis and Shiites, Rainer Brunner zooms in on the complicated relationship between one of the most important and influential institutes of Sunnite Islam (i.e. al-Azhar), and Shiite, mainly Iranian, clergy. He especially focuses on the attempts at ecumenical rapprochement since the end of the 1940s, which have always remained limited, fragile and so far short-lived experiences.

The second part of the book looks into the contemporary Sunnite-Shiite encounters in the Middle East and the Gulf. It includes a chapter by Jean-François Legrain on the manipulation of a Shiite threat in Palestine, as well as a chapter by Joseph Alagha on the tensions and conflicts, in the Lebanese context, between the Shiite Hizbullah and Salafist jihadi movements. Furthermore, there is a timely chapter by Reidar Visser, which debunks the myth of a sectarian Iraq and shows that, in a historical perspective, territory and sect were never closely linked in the country. Rather, the outstanding feature as far as the historical record goes is the remarkable contrast between a near-omnipresent assumption about ethno-territorial linkages in second-

ary-source Western literature about Iraq on the one hand, and the stubborn refusal of these linkages to materialize in the empirical world on the other. A chapter by Thomas Pierret highlights, from a well-informed historical perspective, the current Syrian narrative that the geopolitical and strategic alliance between the Iranian Islamic Republic and the secular Syrian Republic led by an Alawite minority has led to a relative process of the "Shiitization" of the country. Finally, Roel Meijer and Joas Wagemakers concentrate on how the problematic Sunnite-Shiite relationship has evolved in the context of Saudi Arabia. Through an analysis of first-hand material of the Shiite discourse on reform, the authors highlight the struggle for full citizenship rights since 9/11. This represents a clear change from earlier Shiite reform movements insofar as it marks a shift from a communitarian to a civil rights logic.

The third part of the book focuses on the contemporary Sunnite-Shiite encounters in Iran, Central Asia and the Indian Subcontinent. In his seminal contribution, Stéphane Dudoignon focuses on one of the least known research topics within Islamic studies—the Sunnite minority of Iran. The study of Sunnite Islam in Iran is still awaiting its rightful place as a research topic in modern and contemporary Iranian studies, to say nothing of Islamic studies at large, as the author rightfully points out. Supported by his thorough historical knowledge, Dudoignon focuses on the confrontations, exchanges and convergences between Sunnis and Shiites in Iran since 1979. Farian Sabahi adds to this understudied field of research by including an analysis of the Iranian media and its representation of Sunnite Islam. Further, Mariam Abou Zahab provides us with a first-hand account of the growing sectarian tensions in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan as a consequence of the increasing influence of the Taliban and their ideology in a post 9/11-environment. Finally, Bayram Balci and Altay Goyushov highlight the Islamic revival in post-Soviet Azerbaijan. While the Shiites constitute the majority of the Azeri population, it is both Sunnis and Shiites that have experienced this revival. The authors describe how foreign support groups and movements are behind the religious resurgence, and how this, in turn, has contributed to an increase in the mutual suspicion and competition between the adherents of the two schools, while the secular state has failed to reduce the cleavage between the two communities. As the French anthropologist Maurice Godelier reminds us, "any society is created and shaped by these relationships in-between the politics and the religious": both of these dimensions have historically played a vital role in

"establishing the sovereignty of any human group on a territory—whose borders are more or less recognized by its neighborhood—, on its resources and inhabitants". According to Godelier, despite the main Western considerations on this subject (referring, among others, to the theories of secularization that were once understood as paradigms), religion remains a necessary ingredient, an internal component of politics; "Religion is politics and works hand in hand with the politics".[13]

This global framework is nevertheless affected by major dynamics and processes of change, such as those associated with globalization, as well as the subjectivization of belief. Muslim societies, like other societies, are undergoing major processes of change, and Sunnite-Shiite relationships are inevitably affected by these contemporary religious (re-)compositions. According to Peter Beyer, religion can play two distinct roles in the political arena. On the one hand, the role of religion in politics can lead to an increase in its distinctive cultural character by reaffirming a specific tradition, as has been the case with the proliferation of religious radicalisms since the 1970s. On the other hand, religions can also promote ecumenism:[14] more openings are observed towards other religions as there are new adjustments in their relationship with the truth (which in the modern world is progressively understood as nonexclusive to a specific religious tradition). But as Jean-Paul Willaime reminds us, "Ecumenical lived religion, based on personal experiences, might (nevertheless) not impeach the strong contemporary reactivation of confessional identities".[15] The whole process involving the main Islamic religious scholars that led to the Declaration of Amman in July 2005[16] is just one side of this coin. The declaration, which sought to define and promote an "inclusive orthodoxy" that could form the basis for global Muslim unity and peaceful Muslim relations between the followers of the eight orthodox legal schools and beyond them,[17] is clearly connected to the various forms of Islamic sectarian religious violence that have been observed throughout the world. Without these forms of violence, the declaration would probably never have materialized.

Acknowledgements

First of all, we would like to warmly thank Prof. Emeritus Felice Dassetto, President of the CISMOC (UCL) for having initiated and creatively followed this very stimulating project. As members of the academic committee, we would also like to thank Amine Aït-Chaalal (UCL), Asef Bayat

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A great thanks also to all the participants to the conference, namely Mariam Abou Zahab, Joseph Alagha, Sayyid Yousif al-Khoei, Mohammad Amer, Bayram Balci, Rainer Brunner, Stéphane Dudoignon, Altay Goyushov, Stephane Lacroix, Jean-François Legrain, Laurence Louër, Roel Meijer, Sabrina Mervin, Thomas Pierret, Farian Sabahi, Azzam Tamimi, Reidar Visser, and Joas Wagemakers. Their scientific competences, together with their enthusiasm and good humour, were greatly appreciated, and they have left us with many positive memories of successful collaboration.

Also a very special thanks to Ikram Akodad and Eliane Lallemand (UCL), who helped us with the coordination of the conference. We are grateful to Sigrid Vertommen and Koen Vanrumste (UGent) for their help with the index.

As this conference and publication were part of a larger research project, monitored by a follow-up committee from the Belgian Science Policy, we would like to thank Raoul Delcorde, Françoise Gustin, Zakia Khattabi, Claude Misson, Renier Nijskens, Guy Trouveroy and Raf Van Hellemont, all working for the Foreign Affairs or the Egmont Institute (the Royal Institute for International Relations), for their interesting remarks and critical inputs during our meetings at the Egmont Institute before the organization of the conference. Sven Biscop and Jelle Puellings at the Egmont Institute were also directly involved in the other part of the project and they were always very dynamic and helpful.

Last but not least, the whole project would not have been possible without sponsors. We would like to thank again, especially, the Belgian Science Policy, but also the Fonds Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (FWO) and the Royal Belgium Academy of Sciences.

Part One

Sunnite-Shiite Interactions Between Geopolitical Tensions, Doctrinal Recognition and Rejection

1

On Sunnite-Shiite Doctrinal and Contemporary Geopolitical Tensions

Sabrina Mervin

"God is one"[1] is the doctrine of the *tawhîd*, the cardinal principle of Islam. Thus, according to the Qur'an, since there is only one God, only one way leads to him, and it is the right way, that of the truth and Islam, which is presented as unique. The Qur'an, moreover, exhorts believers not to divide themselves into sects.[2]

Divine unicity therefore has as its equivalent the unicity of doctrines and the unity (*wahda*) of the *umma*—the community of believers that gathers all Muslims together. But this has remained an ideal, for the history of doctrinal development, like the development of Muslim societies, clearly shows that Islam is not one, but plural, and that the believers have never united as one sole community around one and the same conception of their religion. A *hadîth* (an account attributed to the Prophet Muhammad) illustrates this frustrated ideal quite well, for it says in substance, in its variant readings, that the Muslim community will split into seventy-three sects, of which seventy-two will go to hell and only one will be saved: the latter is known as "the group" (*al-jamâ'a*) or sometimes *al-firqa al-nâjiyya*. Obviously, if each sect sees itself as the elected one, we still need to determine which "group" we are talking about (i.e. who to include and who to exclude). Islamic scholars interpret the term according to their respective approaches. Some simply consider the saved ones as the virtuous, those who

follow the precepts of Islam (Abu Hamid al-Ghazâlî, d. 1111), others have enumerated precise categories (ulama, exegetes, theologians, etc.), while others see the Sunnis (*ahl al-sunna wa al-jamâ'a)*, and hence the majority of Muslims, as the redeemed. It suffices to say that this *hadîth* has fuelled discussions and polemics between the various branches of Islam.

The slow construction of doctrines, which took place in various societies (those of Mecca, Medina, and then the conquered cities and regions), in the context of rivalries and political alliances, coupled with the influence of local religions and beliefs, does not allow us to date the "birth" of the branches of Islam precisely. It was more of a process that led to the emergence of groups that are distinguished by a core of common doctrines. However, it is possible to identify certain momentous dates and turning points in this process.

The death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632 is the first. Since he left no male child and no written will, the problem of his succession arose, with the crucial question being who would be the most legitimate to guide the community after him, and what methods should be used to select his successor. The second moment is that of the great discord (*al-fitna al-kubrâ*) which burst out after the murder of the Caliph 'Uthman and which culminated in the battle of Siffîn, in 657. The battle of Siffin opposed the army of Mu'âwiya, the governor of Damascus, with the army of 'Alî, cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet. Out of these events, which divided the ranks of Muslims, as well as from ongoing theological discussions, emerged the three large branches of Islam, which were subsequently to undergo further subdivisions: Sunnis, Shiites and Kharijites. The latter, the fewest in number, subdivided into different groups, with only the Ibadites remaining today.[3] Sunnis were to constitute the majority of Muslims. They divided into juridical schools, four of which took the lead and survived,[4] as well as into theological schools; Asharism, the middle road between the literalist and the rationalist approaches, carried the day. The Shiites, who were partisans of 'Alî (*shî'at* 'Alî) separated into three groups: the Zaydites, the Ismaelites, and Imamites, or "Twelvers". The latter are the most numerous, and it is to them that we refer in using the term Shiite without qualification. The Shiite theological school is mostly referred to as Ja'farism. In addition to the main Shiite groups there are also marginal and minority groups, which are called *ghulât* (exaggerators) because of the exalted status they grant 'Alî (i.e. in their devotion and worship they deify 'Alî)—the Alawites, for example, form part of this group.

How is Twelver Shiism to be defined?

Historians have developed various approaches to Twelver Shiism, depending on the angle of analysis that appeared most relevant to them. Some view Twelver Shiism as a movement of political opposition to Sunnism by focussing on the "revolutionary" prospects it opened up during the formative period of Islam. Others emphasize the esoteric aspects contained in the original doctrines that have not disappeared, and which bring Shiism closer to Sufism. Still others are interested in Shiite theosophy, following the example of Henry Corbin. Lastly, observers of contemporary Shiism have especially concentrated on recent juridical developments that have conferred a new role on its ulama. They describe the rise in power and subsequent victory of Usûlism, a rationalist current which defends recourse to methods of *usûl al-fiqh* in working out the standards of Islamic law over the Akhbârî current, which defends a literalistic approach to the account (*akhbâr*) of Imams.[5] Shiism is, in fact, a whole made up of these various aspects, as well as being a body of dynamic and pluralistic doctrines. It is also a world vision, an ethos based on practices with corresponding images, sounds and emotions.

It is essential to understand the particularities of Shiism, which distinguish it from Sunnism and constitute points of discord between the two schools of Islam. Without going into extensive detail, the following discussion provides a broad outline of these particularities.

The first specific feature of Shiism is the doctrine of the Imamate, which is part of the very foundations of Twelver Shiism. The Imam, who is infallible, is the legitimate successor of the Prophet, and the Imamate comes to fulfil prophecy (*nubuwwa*), just as the *way* or *path* is the equivalent of the law, and exoterism and esotericism are two sides of the same coin. In a similar manner, the Qur'an is mute (*sâmit*) without the Imam (*nâtiq*) to explain it. The first Imam was 'Alî, who was assassinated (by a Kharijite) in 661. He was succeeded by his eldest son, Hasan, and then by his younger brother, Husayn. The line of the Imams then continued via descendants of Husayn, until the twelfth Imam. According to sacred Shiite history, the Imams who did not perish by the sword were poisoned. This was the case with the death of the eleventh Imam, who left a son. The theory of the Imamate then continues with a Messianic and millenarianist doctrine which claims that the twelfth Imam disappeared after the death of his father, entering a first, minor phase of occultation, followed by a second, major phase, beginning

in 941 and continuing until today. The Imam, the Mahdî, is still alive, but he is hidden and the faithful await his appearance (*zuhûr*): after a hard battle against the forces of evil, he will make justice reign on earth, and then the end of time and judgement day will come.

The Imamate theory has implications that go beyond politico-religious constructions about guiding the community. Allegiance to the Imams is accompanied by love and devotion to them (the *wilâya*), as well as worship in the form of pious visits (*ziyâra)* to their tombs. These marks of attachment are extended to the whole family and all descendants of the Prophet, the *ahl al-bayt* (People of the House). In the "sacred thresholds" (*'atabât muqaddasa*) of Iraq, in Iran at Mashhad, Jamkaran, and Qom, in Syria at Sayyida Zaynab and elsewhere, richly decorated shrines are dedicated to Imams and other *ahl al-bayt* figures.[6]

Other shrines that were in the Baqî' cemetery, in Medina, were razed by the Wahhabites after they took over the city in 1925, and they are now simple tombs.[7]

The Imamate theory also involves a vision of history: that of the defeated, because the Imams who were ousted from power will become conquerors with the appearance of Mahdî. The founding moment in this vision of history was the battle of Karbala in 680, when the third Imam, Husayn, met martyrdom. This event functions as a myth: it is relived each year by means of a ritual unique to Shiism, and which has given rise to a religious culture that is both erudite and popular, as well as to contemporary interpretations of Shiism itself. Let us briefly recall the central event of what developed into a veritable epic of the *ahl al-bayt*. After Mu'âwiya's death, Husayn refused to pledge allegiance to his son and successor, Yazîd. At the head of his family and a small troop of companions, he faced the Umayyad army on the plains of Karbala, on the banks of the Euphrates. His men perished, one by one, and Husayn was the last to be killed. His family was taken to Kufa and then to Damascus, to the caliph's court, where his sister Zaynab defended the family honour. His son 'Alî, the survivor, was to ensure the continuity of the Imamate.

The Karbala paradigm provides Shiism with moral values and model figures. It defines good and evil, exalts self-sacrifice and the struggle against oppression. It nourishes a collective memory shared by the whole of the Shiite world, as well as collective memories formed as much at the local level as at the micro-level. The celebrations of the month of Muharram

commemorating the battle and, particularly those of the tenth day (Ashura) commemorating Husayn's martyrdom, involve several types of ritual.[8]

All of the rituals consist in recounting and reliving the drama, and lamenting the sacred family's misfortunes and sufferings. Everyone expresses their sorrow and weeps as, according to a *hadîth*, tears lead to paradise. During public processions, the "penitents" strike their chests in cadence, in stressing the names of Husayn or 'Alî/Haydar.[9] Some practise a rite of mortification in making their blood flow: the *tatbîr*, which involves incising the scalp and then striking the wound to make it bleed, and flagellation is carried out with chains. Debates regarding whether this practice is licit or not have divided ulama for nearly a hundred years. Some forbid it in the name of the Islamic principle that prohibits harming oneself, while others forbid it because of the negative image of Shiites it gives (Ali Khamenei, Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah); others allow it ('Ali al-Sistani), and some even encourage it (the Shiraziyya movement).[10] Since the 1960s, these commemorations have been used for the purpose of mobilization and they have become politicized. In an abolition of time and space, the heroes of yesteryear, in Karbala, are associated with those of today, in all the Shiite worlds: "Every day is Ashura and every [parcel of] land is Karbala".[11]

The other religious practices of Shiites differ little from those of Sunnis and, more generally, there are fewer divergences between the school of Shiite Islamic law (Ja'farite) and the Sunnite schools, than there are between the latter themselves. There exist, for example, differences in completing the prayer and in the contents of the call to prayer (*adhân*). Let us note, however, two points that have been put forth in the discussions and divergences between ulamas of the two branches of Islam. The first is temporary marriage or that of pleasure, which is authorized in the *fiqh* Ja'farite—and is practised, with a certain discretion, in Shiite societies. This makes it possible for a man to marry a woman, in addition to his four juridical wives, for a limited time; these marriages are not inscribed in the Ja'farite courts and are concluded between the two persons concerned.[12] The second point relates to women inheriting, which is supported in Shiite law (if there is no direct male descendant).

Finally, it is important to point out that, in terms of the Qur'an, the Shiites have accepted the same text as the Sunnis, although they have a different corpus of accounts for the Sunna, which is transmitted by the imams rather than the Prophet's companions. In the area of pure theology, one

might say, in résumé, that they are close to the Mu'tazilites;[13] they believe, for example, that God is just and that man is free in his actions.

*Between rapprochement (*taqrîb*) and ruptures*

The heresiography and classical polemics between Sunnite and Shiite scholars are rich in debates and controversies, and the history of Islam is punctuated with events that have been—and still are—used as markers of discord between the two groups. We shall not go back to the battle of al-Qâdisiyya or to the Shu'ûbiyya movement here.[14] Instead, it is simply important to recall that their history is criss-crossed with political conflicts, which are sometimes expressed in confessional and doctrinal terms, with a view to stigmatizing "the other". This was the case in the rivalry between the two blocs formed by the Ottoman and the Persian empires which, by the end of the sixteenth century, and after conversions in the territories they controlled, were, respectively, Sunnite in majority in the former, and Shiite in majority in the latter. Yet, globally, the Shiites were in the minority in the Muslim world, and hence suspected of deviance. They were referred to in pejorative terms such as *râfida* (those who refuse the authority of the first three caliphs), which is still used today, or *bâtiniyya* (in reference to the esoterism of their doctrine).[15] The latter term also refers to the *ghulât* (those who "exaggerate" the cult of 'Alî) who were excluded from Islam, whereas the Twelver Shiites generally came in for criticism, but not total exclusion from the community. The Ottoman administration, for its part, did not recognize the Shiites as different: they were treated as one with the Sunnis, were obliged to have recourse to the same courts and to abstain from practising certain of their particular rites, at least in public.[16]

A first attempt at rapprochement came from Nadir Shah, who, in 1743, had just laid siege to Basra. As he was in a strong position, he included demands for the recognition of the Ja'farite School in clauses of the peace treaty he was to sign with the Ottomans. The latter eventually refused, but the attempt led to the organization of a congress between the Shiite and Sunnite ulama in Najaf. Hence it was only a partial failure.[17] At the end of the nineteenth century, the Ottomans, in turn, envisaged a rapprochement with the Shiites. The initiative was dictated by two factors: outside threats which weakened the empire, and the propagation of Shiism in Iraq.[18] The Ottoman Sultan Abd al-Hamid II implemented a pan-Islamic policy that sought to consolidate his position as the leader of Islam, in reconciling

Shiites and Sunnis, in the role of caliph and in securing an alliance with the Persian Empire in the role of sultan. The Young Turks pursued this policy and were thus able to mobilize the Shiites, who fought alongside the Turkish army in the jihad against the British.[19]

Pan-Islamism also had its intellectual and religious leaders, such as Jamâl al-Dîn al-Afghânî-al-Asadabâdî, but also Kawâkibî, and then 'Abduh, Rashîd Ridâ, and others who accompanied and pursued that policy. Jamâl al-Dîn's basic idea was simple. The inability of Muslims to unite had precipitated the decline of the two great empires and facilitated European incursions into Islamic lands. The torn body of the *umma* had to be put back together to form a common front against the invasions, smoothing over doctrinal divergences and uniting in political action. A union was the remedy for all ills. Although these fine ideas were undermined in the process of forming the modern states of the Middle East, they did initially meet with some success.

In 1931 an Islamic Congress was held in Jerusalem assembling Sunnis and Shiites. The prayer at the al-Aqsâ mosque was directed by the Iraqi cleric Muhammad Husayn Âl Kâshif al-Ghitâ', who used his sermon to call for unity in facing the assaults of the West and for the defence of Palestine.[20] Such appeals were reiterated in the 1930s and 1940s, alongside a dialogue between Shiite ulama like al-Zanjânî and the rectors of al-Azhar, Marâghî and Shaltût. In 1948, an association for rapprochement between Islamic sects (*jamâ'at al-taqrîb*) was founded in Cairo by an Iranian cleric, Muhammad Taqi Qommi, with the support of the al-Azhar ulama and Egyptian politicians. It published a review, the *Message of Islam* (*Risâlat al-islâm*), where debates between Sunnis and Shiites managed to remain cordial; this rapprochement eventually reached its apogee in 1959 when Mahmûd Shaltût, the rector of al-Azhar, issued a fatwa recognizing Ja'farite law as the fifth school of Islamic law, on an equal footing with the four Sunnite schools. While the *jamâ'at al-taqrîb* suffered as a result of the break in the relationship between Egypt and Iran after Tehran's recognition of Israel in 1960, and finally ceased its activities in the late 1970s, it had nevertheless succeeded in taking a giant step in the history of *taqrîb*.[21]

Yet good intentions at meetings and principled declarations masked a certain malaise, due to the limits of this *taqrîb* movement, and even its very impossibility.[22] Veritable rapprochement would have led either school to the adoption of common doctrines (which was not really an option),[23] or to the absorption of one school by the other—meaning the minority by the

majority. In fact, the debates that have taken place between Sunnis and Shiites since the early twentieth century, after a perennial appeal to unity, are composed of a series of accusations against the Shiites coming from the Sunnis, and responses in the form of defences or justificatory remarks on the part of Shiites.[24] This can be explained in two ways: one is doctrinal, and the other is political.

The Sunnite protagonists in the debates were partisans of the Salafiyya current, or were even Wahhabite sympathizers. They called for reform and understanding between the sects in the context of a principle favouring a return to the *salaf* era, that of the pious ancestors, a sacralized, idealized period. But the Shiites had another conception of the history of that period, and a considerable number of their doctrines were unacceptable to the Salafiyya. Hence they were incapable of reaching an understanding and they continue to engage in polemics on the issue to this day. Elsewhere, thanks to Ottoman pan-Islamic policies and the subsequent fall of the empire and the formation of modern states, the Shiites were gradually able to obtain more and more visibility and liberty. They published their history, were able to observe their rituals, founded Ja'farite courts, and sought to establish a place for themselves in states (such as in Lebanon). They were thus in a process of affirming their identity, and so were not disposed to denying it, being more or less in competition with the Sunnis (in Iraq, for example). In Saudi Arabia, however, Shiites were subject to severe discrimination from the modern Saudi state that was based on Wahhabite doctrine: in 1927, the ulama even issued a fatwa demanding that Shiites convert to Islam.[25]

The Alûsî[26] in Baghdad, for example, were ardent anti-Shiite polemicists. Rashîd Ridâ (d. 1935), the director of *al-Manâr*, repeatedly published appeals for unity in his review, while continuing to engage in inflammatory controversies with Shiite scholars, notably Muhsin al-Amîn (d. 1952). This debate began in 1900 with an *al-Manâr* article that accused the *mujtahid* (Shiite clerics) of Najaf of converting Sunnis to Shiism. The article set off a series of controversies, which ceased in 1910, only to begin again in the early 1920s around questions dealing with the history of the formation of Islam. These controversies became more venomous after the destruction of the *ahl al-bayt* shrines in Medina, and were further amplified in the review *al-'Irfân*.[27] They were then pursued in *The Young Muslims' Review* (*Majallat al-shubbân al-muslimîn*), by the Salafist Muhibb al-Dîn al-Khatîb (d. 1969).[28]

The polemic fell into relative decline until the Iranian Revolution and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979. In fact, the initial reaction of Sunnite Islamist movements to the revolution was rather positive. Khomeini's appeal to embrace the Iranian Revolution was addressed to all of Islam, and his attempts to export the revolution were aimed at Shiites and Sunnis alike. His unitarist speech was, once again, founded on the need for an alliance of Muslims in facing the West and on a corpus of common doctrines, while, after his death, Khamenei was to create a new society for rapprochement in 1990, the *Majma' al-taqrîb*.[29] Yet writings against Shiism and Khomeini's ideas were still published in the early 1980s in Egypt, Jordan and elsewhere. A good number of these authors were Syrian Sunnite Islamists in exile who thus sought to attack the ally of a regime which oppressed them, a regime described as Shiite. Sa'îd Hawwâ notably published a work of bitter critiques of khomeinism; similarly, Ihsân Ilâhî Zâhir (d. 1987), the leader of a Wahhabite movement in Pakistan, denounced "the new (Shiite) assault" for expanding in Muslim countries.[30]

Points of discord

Conversion phenomena, higher visibility, a process of national integration, and a Shiite position of force were the recurrent causes of reactions on the part of Sunnis, and this continues today. Before examining the developments of the present crisis, which began after the fall of the Baathist regime in Iraq in 2003, let us look at the tenor of discussions between the two schools that reveal a remarkable continuity, regardless of the circumstances. If certain debates took place in the context of an attempt at rapprochement, allegations or fatwas were formulated to refuse the *taqrîb*, as with those issued by Ibn Baz, mufti of Saudi Arabia.[31]

The references advanced by the Sunnite authors are above all to Ibn Taymiyya's works (d. 1328), a neo-Hanbalite thinker. He wrote a treatise, *Minhaj al-sunna*, in response to a Shiite author, al-'Allâma al-Hillî, who had made an apologia for Shiism in his *Minhaj al-karâma fî ma'rifat al-imâma*. Ibn Taymiyya also issued fatwas, which contained points that were taken up after him, against those he called *bâtiniyya*; he accused them of infidelity (*kufr*) and polytheism (*shirk*).[32] Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhâb made the same accusations.[33]

These polemical writings are largely based on accusations formulated by Sunnis against Shiites and their doctrines; the main lines of these accusations are outlined below.

The first accusation touches on the cardinal principle of Islam. Shiites are reproached for not respecting the doctrine of *tawhîd*, in associating God with imams and the *ahl al-bayt* figures they worship. The particular place they accord 'Alî ends up ranking them among the *ghulât*.

According to their adversaries, yet contrary to what they themselves affirm, the Shiites have not accepted the Qur'an, which they suspect of falsification (*tahrîf*), for they have added two verses to it—they are thus falsifiers. They do not admit the same corpus of *hadîth* as the Sunnis, and have hence forged their own.

The doctrine of the Imamate (which is rejected by Sunnis) leads Shiites to refuse the legitimacy of the first three caliphs. They do not recognize the authority of the companions, whom they vilipend or insult (*sabb al-sahâba*) and have a negative image of Aïcha and other "mothers of believers". On a broader basis, they have a false conception of the *salaf* period and of the history of the beginning of Islam.[34] They await the Mahdî.

According to the Sunnite critique, Shiites have introduced blamable innovations (*bid'a*), like the doctrine of intercession (*shafâ'a*) and their devotional practices at the tombs of imams and saints, with some among them being more venerated than the Ka'ba at Mecca. Their Muharram celebrations involve many practices that are *bid'a*, and, moreover, they express their hatred of Sunnis.

The Shiite school of law diverges on various points concerning worship; it allows temporary marriage (or *mut'a*), which Shiites use as a means of attracting conversions—a great deal has been written on this question.[35]

Shiites practice dissimulation (*taqiyya*), and hence they constantly lie about their real beliefs. They sow *fitna* (discord, sedition) among Muslims.[36]

The latter accusation is reciprocal. To this should be added much hearsay, which is reciprocal too, as well as prejudices and stereotypes mixed with complot theories and other rantings. The controversies between Shiites and Wahhabites or Salafis are particularly violent.[37] In return for their intransigence, the latter are described by the Shiites as Kharijites or as *nawâsib* (singular *nasîbî*), meaning enemies of 'Alî and the Alids.

The Shiite Revival, the Crescent and Fitna

In the mid 1970s, people began talking about the Shiite revival in Lebanon under the influence of Musa al-Sadr. A politico-religious discourse made itself heard. The advent of the Islamic Republic of Iran sent a shockwave throughout the Arab Middle East. This discourse had wider echoes and a certain impact on Islamic movements. Yet it did not manage to gain the following sought by the Iranian policy of exporting the revolution: on the one hand, Sunnite movements rapidly distanced themselves from the revolution, while, on the other, Shiite movements themselves, many of which predated the Iranian Revolution, had their own agendas and their reservations regarding Iran's efforts to achieve hegemony over Shiism—to say nothing about clerical circles who stood solidly behind the apoliticism of *marja'* Kho'i.[38] Moreover, the Iranian revolutionary flame was extinguished somewhat with Khomeini's death in 1989.

The fall of the Baathist regime in Iraq in April 2003, and the arrival of the Shiites to power in that country following the American invasion, changed the regional balance of power. Iran grew in power in the region, particularly in the Persian Gulf, while the Lebanese Hizbullah experienced a straightforward political and military success against Israel in 2006, which increased its prestige in the Muslim world. The power of Shiites from the Mediterranean to Pakistan was reinforced. The leaders of political Shiism, Nasrallah and Ahmadinejad, gained popularity, imposing themselves as the heralds of the Muslim worlds facing Israel and the United States in a heady return to the revolutionary utopia so prized in the 1970s. In demonstrations, portraits of Nasrallah could be seen next to those of Che Guevara or Hugo Chavez.

Since 2004, King 'Abdallah of Jordan has been warning about what he calls "the Shiite crescent", an expression which has become popular in the media. Rather than being founded on a tangible reality, this expression reveals fears of seeing a form of "Shiistan" emerge, an entity ranging from the Mediterranean to the Ganges, traversing economically and politically strategic zones, and entirely devoted to Iran. While in power, the former Egyptian President Husni Mubarak came out against the growing influence of the Shiites, which he suspected of being a fifth column of Iran. And furthermore, in spring 2009, Hizbullah was accused of nurturing plots on Egyptian soil that were supported by Iran.[39] During this period, Morocco broke off its diplomatic relations with Iran and accused it of spreading

Shiism in Morocco via the activities of its cultural centre.[40] In Jordan, six Shiites have been put on trial before a military court for promoting Shiite ideology.[41] For a number of years, rumours of conversion have run rampant, from Damascus to the Maghreb (Algeria and Tunisia are affected too).[42] In Afghanistan, Shiite books have been thrown into the river.[43] Shiites are arrested in Saudi Arabia: Human Rights Watch speaks of "denied dignity" and of "discrimination and hostility towards Saudi Shiite citizens".[44] In Lebanon, encounters in combat opposed Shiites and Sunnis in May 2008, which had not been seen for a long time. Finally, and above all, violence between adherents of the two schools continues in Iraq and Pakistan.

It seems that we are in a situation where violence between Sunnis and Shiites is escalating. The press, which is fond of sensationalistic headlines, has undoubtedly contributed to this; inflammatory words and images unfurl on the Internet. A series of online video clips in French on Shiism (and thus intended for North Africans), for example, broadcast images that are both horrible and fantasized.

At the same time, initiatives seeking to calm things down and to gain control of the situation have multiplied. In 2004, the Amman Message represented a major step towards tolerance because it recognized the validity of eight juridical schools (Sunnite, Shiite and Ibadite) and forbade the *takfîr* (anathema).[45] Warnings against the "return of the *fitna*" (the discord, which would play into the hands of the enemies of Islam) and appeals for *taqrîb* and calm come in rapid succession. In the words of the late *marja'* Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah (d. 2010), who saw himself as a champion of *taqrîb* and who expended intense diplomatic efforts to achieve rapprochement: "we must avoid provocations casting confessional oil on the political fire".[46]

This colourful image reflects the situation quite well. Ultimately, the fundamental issue affecting rapprochement between the two schools is a political one, which, although complex, depends above all on the increasing power of Iran and its centrality in relation to the Shiite worlds—the religious aspect of Sunnite-Shiite relations is largely used as a political tool. We must deconstruct the discourse and study each situation by placing it in its historical and local social context. In taking as an example the idea of the Shiite axis, ranging from Teheran to Damascus and encompassing Hamas and the Hizbullah, it is clear that this axis is not Shiite, but a remake of the Refusal Front (i.e. the political alliance of parties and movements against the US and Israel). There is nothing Shiite about Hamas; as for the alliance between Syria and Iran, this is primarily based on political, strategic and

economic considerations, even if the connections between the two countries are facilitated by the fact that the Alawites, who hold power in Syria, are gradually moving closer to Twelver Shiism as part of a movement which began in the early twentieth century.[47] To take another example, the situation of the Shiites in Oman, who are in the vast minority, is a highly positive one: Omani Shiites are rich, doing well and are close to the sultan. Moreover, Sultan Qabus did not hesitate in visiting Ahmadinejad, in summer 2009, even before his re-election had officially been declared, so important to him is the role Iran can play in the stability and peace of the region. But the sultan is Ibadite, which is a branch of Islam that is heir (even if he denies it) to the Kharijites, the Shiites' worst enemies.[48]

While we need to dissociate the political and the religious or analyse how the two fit together, we cannot deny that Shiism has met with a certain success. And, in concluding, I shall try to offer some clarification of this point.

The Success of Shiism

There are ongoing studies on the phenomena of conversion, which is needed to defuse a debate that is partly founded on rumours, and partly based on facts assumed by the Shiite circles.[49] The motivations, explanations or justifications of those converted have to be analyzed: how should we judge, for example, what the Moroccan Shiite intellectual Driss Hani means in declaring that "Morocco is a Shiite country"?[50]

In the meantime, we can underline the efficiency of the Iranian religious teaching system. While the *hawza* in Najaf declined as a result of being subjected to the repression of the Baathist regime and the chaos that has reined in the country since 2003, Qom has flourished. The Islamic Republic provided the finances to support and promote religious schools, which did not prevent the system from maintaining a certain distance from the state. Qom ensured the continuity of a traditional teaching, which slowly but surely formed the *mujtahid*[51] (Shiite high ranking clerics), and welcomed reformed institutions offering modernized instruction, and an overture to the social sciences, such as the university Sheikh al-Mofid in Qom. Foreigners can take their place in the two systems: in fact, a school is reserved for foreigners, which introduces them to Persian over a six month period before training them in the religious sciences. Moreover, an institution is in charge of opening and managing religious schools outside of Iran. These schools provide teaching in a wide range of subjects, from the moder-

nity of a rational approach to a spiritual approach to Islam, which is true to the principles of Shiism. Such schools have, for example, been somewhat successful in countries such as Ghana and Nigeria.

Among the foreigners who are trained in Qom, it is possible to meet Sunnis, notably North Africans, as well as at Sayyida Zaynab, in Syria. This fact is not new;[52] it remains to be seen whether this becomes a more generalized trend. Elsewhere, by means of cultural centres and, more generally, publications, a "Shiite culture" is being spread, although its expansion has yet to be compared to that of a "Salafist culture".

This new Shiite culture, which first of all affects the Shiites themselves, has various facets, designed to affect different publics. It is popular and addressed to the youth by means of videos and CDs of stars of the *latmiyyât*, the ritual chants of Ashura,[53] the speeches of Hasan Nasrallah, mixed with pieces of music, not to mention video clips on the Imam 'Alî, for example. The culture is also scholarly in form and is addressed to intellectuals via the Shiite theosophical tradition (Mulla Sadra Shirazi) and the writings of Iranian reformist thinkers, like Soroush or Shabestari, who, each in his own way, open new paths to theological reflection.

All this time, while Islamist ideology—be it Sunnite or Shiite—is losing its momentum, the regime of Ahmadinejad has relit the flame of a revolutionary utopia and promoted an apocalyptical vision of Islam where the forces of good will finally win out over those of evil. Thus, he promises victory, and in that he bears a strange resemblance to other announcers and holders of the apocalypse, Christian and Muslim.[54]

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Sunnis and Shiites in Modern Islam

Politics, Rapprochement and the Role of al-Azhar

Rainer Brunner

The religion of Islam, both in terms of a religious system of doctrines and morals and as a normative political order, has been characterized from the very beginning by the deep split of the Islamic community (*umma*) into Sunnis and Shiites. While the former constitute the vast majority, the latter make up barely 10 to 15 per cent of today's Muslim population. Although there has been no shortage of attempts to describe the alleged nature of the schism between the Sunnis and Shiites, most of the approaches that have been used are unsatisfactory. Bernard Lewis has provided a short overview of the most prevalent of these definitions, which have tended to interpret the events of early Islamic history—as far as they can be reconstructed from the sources—along the lines of ethnicity (Sunnite Arabs vs. Shiite Persians), social conflict (Sunnite establishment vs. Shiite underdogs), analogy to European religious history (Catholics vs. Protestants), or simply by following the mainstream of classical Islamic heresiography, which by necessity is dominated by Sunnite authors. The latter liked to consider themselves as part of Islamic "orthodoxy", while they more or less excommunicated the Shiites as a—by implication "heterodox" or even "heretical"—sect.[1] More often than not, such explanations reveal more about the intellectual climate

in which they originated than about the conflict they claim to describe. Lewis rightly dismisses these crutches for understanding, offering instead the more pragmatic solution of viewing the conflict mainly as a political quarrel about the course of history: the Sunnis thereby appear, broadly speaking, as the obedient advocates of the status quo, whereas the Shiites represent those who contest(ed) this kind of conformism.[2]

Useful though such pragmatism may be in order to prevent short-sighted historical analogies, to a considerable degree it still expresses itself through a retrospective view of history because, at the time of the events in question, there was no such thing as a status quo—it was still in the making. Regarding the legitimacy of governmental issues, too, the Shiites' attitude proved to be flexible, as they did manage, over the centuries, to seize power and establish empires: the Fatimids ruled over North Africa, Egypt and Syria between the early tenth and late twelfth centuries, and the Safavids left a lasting mark by converting Iran to Shiism after 1501.[3] In particular, reducing the conflict to power politics falls short of explaining a feature of the two schools which goes far beyond such worldly considerations (although it is, admittedly, closely connected to them): their different—and ultimately incompatible—approach to salvation history and the question of the nature and continuity of prophetic charisma.[4] For the larger part of the community (i.e. those who would become Sunnis), political leadership was early on stripped of its divine inspiration, which had been the central source of legitimacy during Muhammad's lifetime. For the Sunnis, the Prophet's charisma in his capacity as the leader (*imam*) who paved the way to salvation was transferred to the community of the believers as a whole. There were, however, others who strongly contested the presumption that the world could even exist without a divinely inspired living *imam*. According to this group of believers, who later became known as Shiites (a term derived from *shi'at 'Ali*, "the Party of 'Ali"), Muhammad had designated his cousin and son-in-law, 'Ali b. Abi Talib, as his successor, thereby guaranteeing the continued effectiveness of his charisma which would be passed on to 'Ali and his male offspring from his marriage to Muhammad's daughter Fatima. It was only after nearly three centuries—and following several internal schisms—that this concept was finally abandoned, or rather modified: around the turn of the ninth and tenth centuries, the doctrine caught on that the twelfth *imam* had disappeared into an occultation (*ghayba*), from which he would return as "the rightly guided" (*al-mahdi*) messiah at the end of time.[5] While pro-

phetic charisma and divine inspiration thus came to a final halt with the demise of Muhammad in Sunnite Islam, the Shiites extended it (if only theoretically) until today. In practice, the religious scholars (*ulama*) assumed, as time went on, more and more prerogatives of the *imams*,[6] but this did not basically alter the thoroughly different Shiite outlook on salvation history, which centres on the figure of the *imam*.

These brief introductory remarks should already suffice to explain why relations between the two main branches of Islam have always remained complicated throughout history. The ecumenical movement that tried to bring about a mutual rapprochement from the mid-twentieth century onward did not ultimately prove to be successful.

A tense present

Nearly everywhere in the Muslim world, the political situation at the beginning of the twentieth century is characterized by open and discomforting sectarianism. Although it has to be pointed out that the tensions between Sunnis and Shiites are not the only reason for political conflict and civil war, it is indisputable that the religious identity of the respective actors plays an extremely important role. The range of crises stretch from Lebanon in the west via Iraq and the Gulf states, to Pakistan in the east; even in Egypt, where there is hardly any visible Shiite presence, public debates focus, to a remarkable degree, on the conflict between Sunnis and Shiites.[7] The present chapter is intended to provide an overview of the present political situation as well as the intellectual discussions and controversies of recent decades, many of which, in one way or another, are related to one of the most important religious institutions in Sunnite Islam, the Azhar University in Cairo. One has to bear in mind, however, that a strict separation between political actors on the one hand, and intellectual, theological or legal debates on the other, has always been rather problematic in the Muslim world during the twentieth century. After the Iranian Revolution in 1979, which marked a decisive turning point in modern Islam, such a distinction has become even more meaningless.

As far as the political situation is concerned, two major factors can be identified that have been propelling Shiite mass mobilization since the 1970s and 1980s. The first of these factors is an internal one, namely the revolutionary zeal brought about by the events in Iran. The successful 1979 uprising that ousted the Shah inspired many a Shiite group and fomented

the fear among numerous states in the region of alleged machinations on the part of the Iranian government to export the revolution.[8] The second factor proved to be no less important: the external pressure which was exerted by Sunnite governments and societies in countries with a mixed population,[9] either in the form of economically or politically disadvantaging Shiites (in Lebanon), or their religious discrimination (in Saudi Arabia and Bahrayn), their exclusion from power (in Pakistan), or their pure and general oppression by a dictatorship that pretended to be secular (in Iraq before 2003).[10]

The last-mentioned case (i.e. Iraq) is certainly the most evident and momentous example. There, the Shiite majority[11] was, over many decades, systematically oppressed by the regime of Saddam Hussein, and the bleak situation became considerably worse following the revolt of the Shiites after the second Gulf War in 1991, which was brutally quashed by the Baathist government.[12] What is more, two Shiite Grand Ayatollahs who acted as spiritual authorities for the believers were effectively stifled by the regime: Abu l-Qasim al-Khu'i—who was spared a more brutal treatment solely on account of his enormous reputation among Shiites beyond Iraq—died under house arrest in 1992; and Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr (the father of the popular preacher Muqtada al-Sadr), who was assassinated in broad daylight in 1999.[13] Yet it is a cruel irony that open sectarianism broke out only after the downfall of the old regime in 2003. The purge, not only of the security forces and the Baathist Party, but also of the regular army which had not been seen as a sectarian institution until then, affected the Sunnis more severely and was one of the causes of a civil war that continues to constitute a danger to the country's unity. Moreover, several Shiite groups, such as the *Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq* (ISCI; before 2007, it was called *The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq*, SCIRI) exploited their new power and took revenge on the Sunnis.[14] It was only after the provincial elections in January 2009 that political observers started sounding more optimistic with regard to the country's future and the possibility of sectarian coexistence.[15]

Another country where the conflict between Sunnis and Shiites has assumed dramatic forms over the past three decades is Lebanon. It is true that the Lebanese political system has been characterized by a strict sectarian proportionality since the country's independence in 1943, and that the so-called "National Pact" (*al-mithaq al-watani*) today acknowledges no less than eighteen different religious groups, four of which are Muslim (Sunnis,

Shiites, Alawites and Druzes).[16] Shiism became the most powerful political and military force only after the emergence of the militias of Amal and, above all, Hizbollah in the 1980s, during the civil war and the Israeli occupation of the southern parts of the country.[17] Two circumstances in particular made this evolution possible: one was the rise of the charismatic scholar Musa al-Sadr who had emigrated from Iran in 1959. During the 1960s and 1970s, he successfully lent a strong voice to the Shiite masses who hitherto had been downright neglected both economically and socially by the government. He established the "Supreme Islamic Shiite Council" in 1969, and, by launching the "Movement of the Oppressed" in 1974, laid the foundations for what was to become the Amal militia. This revival of Shiism outlasted his mysterious disappearance in 1978 on his way to a visit to Libya.[18]

The second decisive factor for the Shiites' upsurge in Lebanon was of a demographic nature: the distribution of power in the country is based on the 1932 census, according to which the office of the President of the State is reserved for the Maronite Christians who at the time constituted the majority of the Lebanese population. The second place was taken by the Sunnis, who have provided the country's prime ministers ever since; as for the Shiites, they were only the third largest group, and were thus accorded the modest office of President of the Parliament. Although a new census continues to be avoided (for fear of an upheaval of the entire political system), it goes without saying that, after nearly eighty years, these regulations no longer reflect the country's political and social reality, where the Shiites now constitute the majority of the population.[19] The rise of Hizbollah and its transformation into a major political power in the country has to be assessed in view of this development. After the end of the civil war in 1989, Hizbollah—which categorically refused to be disarmed—began participating in the elections and even agreed to join the government in 2005/06. The events in spring 2008 (when it led a successful military campaign against the government which had tried to switch off Hizbollah's uncontrollable communication network) showed that, in today's Lebanon, nothing can happen without Hizbollah's consent. While its reputation in the past was primarily based on its opposition against an external enemy (i.e. Israel), in its armed resistance against domestic political opponents it was widely perceived as turning its weapons against its Sunnite (and also Christian) compatriots for the first time.[20]

A third important Arab region in which sectarian conflicts play a critical role is the Arabian Peninsula (i.e. Bahrayn and Saudi Arabia). With regard

to Bahrayn, the Shiite majority of the population has been dominated for more than two centuries by the Sunnite rulers of the Al Khalifa dynasty. It is thus quite characteristic of the country that, in the course of the general unrest that began to hold sway over North Africa and large parts of the Middle East in early 2011, the confrontation in Bahrayn quickly assumed sectarian traits.[21] As far as Saudi Arabia is concerned, Shiites constitute only a small minority (mainly living in the oil-producing regions in the eastern parts of the country) and they do not have the capacity to pose a danger to the government.[22] In recent years, one can even perceive a tendency among the Shiites to adapt to the political system, as well as among the reformist forces within the government to grant Shiites more civil and political rights.[23] Nevertheless, the fact that the state is based on the puritan and rigid doctrine of the Wahhabiyya, which by its very nature is vehemently anti-Shiite, considerably enhances the fragile character of the mutual relations between Shiites and Sunnis.[24] This fragility is best illustrated by two observations. On the one hand, the cautious opening of the country that has been going on for several years is, to a large degree, dependent on the personality of King 'Abdallah and is exposed to numerous internal adversaries. On the other hand, there is an international political dimension, namely the continuous rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran, to which the Saudi anxiety over developments in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon may be added, as Iran wields considerable influence over these countries. These considerations are by no means purely theoretical: during the 1980s, several violent confrontations took place on the occasion of the annual Mecca pilgrimage. The conflict reached its peak in 1987 when more than 400 pilgrims were killed in clashes with Saudi security forces. Nowadays, the kingdom is primarily worried about Iran's nuclear ambitions. Furthermore, Saudi Arabia has historically acted as the driving force behind the revival of anti-Shiite polemical literature, and this remains the case today, with the most militant websites against Shiism usually being run by Wahhabite circles.[25]

When looking at the contemporary situation in the Middle East (including the ongoing crisis between Israel and Palestine and Iran's open support of Hamas and Hizbollah) one cannot help arriving at the impression of being thrown back to the 1980s, when the Sunnite regimes in the region were shaken by their anxiety of an Iranian attempt at exporting the revolution.[26] Today, some rulers express a similar fear, such as the Jordanian king 'Abdallah, who warned of a "Shiite crescent" in the region, or the former Egyptian President Mubarak, who suspected all Shiites, regardless of their

country of residence, of focussing their loyalty exclusively towards Iran.[27] It goes without saying that such a tense diplomatic atmosphere does not augur well for intellectual exchanges either, particularly when one thinks of the past debates aiming at an ecumenical rapprochement. In fact, the complete dependence of any activity in this field on the general political climate proved to be crucial during the entire twentieth century. And it is precisely because of this dependence that the efforts of the first ecumenical organization in modern Islam finally failed—in addition to the helplessness it revealed in its own mode of argumentation.

A fragile ecumenical past

The "Society for the Rapprochement among the Islamic Legal Schools" (*Jama'at al-taqrîb bayn al-madhahib al-islamiyya*), established in Cairo in early 1947 by a young and hitherto largely unknown Iranian scholar named Muhammad Taqi al-Qummi, was a unique and, in a way, somewhat strange organization.[28] For one thing, it was founded in a country with a population that is practically devoid of any domestic Shiites. It is of course true that al-Azhar University, the renown and role of which as an important intellectual centre shine brightly beyond the country's borders, had been founded in the tenth century by the Ismaili Fatimids, who ruled Egypt between 969 and 1171 when they were defeated by Saladin.[29] After that date, however, Shiism disappeared in the country, although a remarkable degree of emotional attachment for the family of the Prophet (the so-called *ahl al-bayt*) persisted. Traces of this affection remain perceptible today, and many an Egyptian makes a point of describing the country as "Sunni but Shia inclined".[30]

Yet for reasons other than such intentional anachronism, the ecumenical association deserves to be called singular because its protagonists, from the very beginning, carefully avoided any open debate about controversial issues. Instead, the firm intention to focus on common points of interest and opinion between Sunnis and Shiites, and to shun all issues that divided them, quickly became its mantra. Moreover, from the outset active participation in the Cairene association was strictly limited to three denominations within Islam: Sunnis, Twelver Shiites and Zaydites. All other Shiite currents, such as the Ismailis or the Alawites, were excluded and even defined as heretics.[31] All this led, however, to the more or less self-imposed vow to remain nothing else but a manifestation of goodwill, without touch-

ing upon the real problems between Sunnis and Shiites (i.e. their thoroughly different judgement of early Islamic history and its representatives, as well as the religious and political consequences resulting from this regarding sectarian identity today). Yet this restriction was symptomatic, in the sense that it was probably caused by the understanding that any deeper discussion of sensitive issues would, without doubt, have rapidly led to renewed disagreement. Apart from this, there was an important second stereotyped argument in favour of preventing or minimizing any external risk: the affirmation that the ecumenical debate had to keep its distance from politics, as the latter was identified as the principal reason for all sectarian strife (*fitna*).[32]

Neither of these arguments was able to stand up to reality. During its entire history, the activities of the *Jama'at al-taqrîb* were accompanied by the shrill sound of polemicists—above all from the Sunnite camp—who readily pounced upon precisely those points which the ecumenical actors refused to discuss.[33] Likewise, the call to avoid meddling in politics was hardly more than eyewash, given the importance of the revolutionary aspirations displayed by the Egyptian President Jamal Abdel Nasser for any kind of pan-Islamic efforts. It was only for a comparatively short period—between 1958 and 1960—that the Egyptian government discovered the usefulness of the idea of a rapprochement between Sunnis and Shiites for its own policy, after other forms of alliances, in particular with Saudi Arabia, had failed. The *taqrîb* association, in consequence, was allowed to flourish and to draw international attention to its cause. The most spectacular result of this brief golden age of Islamic ecumenism was the famous *fatwa* issued by Mahmûd Shaltût (d. 1963) who at the time was the rector of al-Azhar University. By this legal opinion (which was basically nothing else but a copy and paste summary of some passages of an interview with Shaltût in a Lebanese newspaper) Shiism was, for the first time in modern history, officially recognized as the fifth legal school (*madhhab*) within Islam, on a par with the four Sunnite schools. For a short while in the wake of the *fatwa*, there was even a discussion about the proposal to have a chair of Shiite law established at al-Azhar.

In the end, however, nothing came out of these initiatives, as the honeymoon of the ecumenical association lasted merely one year. In summer 1960, a short and intrinsically rather unimportant political crisis was triggered off by a casual remark in which the Iranian Shah Muhammad Reza Pahlevi acknowledged that his country had long since recognized the state

of Israel. Nasser immediately took this as a pretext to sever diplomatic relations with Iran, and this step also put a factual end to the activities of the *Jama'at al-taqrib* at the same time.[34] Although the association continued to exist until after the Iranian Revolution in 1979, it never again managed to recover from this blow and regain its former standing. Relations between Sunnis and Shiites were henceforth characterized by a mutual reserve that occasionally gave way to polemical exchanges.

Islamic ecumenism contested, revived, disturbed

Immediately after the revolution in Iran in 1979, a small number of Sunnis—even if only for a short period—displayed enthusiastic support for Khomeini and wrote apologias in his favour.[35] But to the extent that the marked Shiite character of the revolution became more and more obvious during the following years, in particular after the outbreak of the first Gulf War between Iraq and Iran (1980–88), the prospects for a renewed rapprochement between Sunnis and Shiites on an intellectual level deteriorated rapidly. One of the reasons for this was the course of international politics in the region and the widespread fear of an export of the revolution, as has already been mentioned earlier in this chapter.

The second reason for the deterioration in Sunnite-Shiite relations, which went hand in hand with political hostilities, was a veritable renaissance of anti-Shiite polemical literature. This upsurge took the form, on the one hand, of re-editions of older pamphlets, both by classical scholars such as Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) and by twentieth century writers such as Musa Jarallah (d. 1949) or Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib (d. 1969/70).[36] On the other hand, new authors also appeared. Following in the footsteps of predecessors and often using pen names, they saw it as their task to "prove" that contemporary Shiism, which they identified with the allegedly disastrous role of the Persians in "Arab" Islamic history, was an even more dangerous threat to Islam (as they saw it) than it had been in the past.[37] This battle of words—which would occasionally lead to assassination attempts[38]—took place against the background of the Gulf War. They were, however, not only directed against Khomeini's regime in Teheran, but against Shiism in its entirety, both classical and modern. Even Egypt, the former headquarters of the ecumenical association, unmistakably turned away from the spirit of rapprochement, and diplomatic relations were once

again severed (and they have not been restored since this point) after the Egyptian government allowed the dethroned Shah to come into the country from exile.

In line with these political developments, al-Azhar University apparently also found itself obliged to turn its back on Shiism and to close ranks with the Saudi Arabian religious institutions instead, and above all with the Mecca-based Muslim World League.[39] At the same time, it pretended to continue cultivating the ecumenical heritage by supporting the re-opening of the *Jama'at al-taqrîb* in 1992. This step, however, was made in such a discreet way that it turned out to be a complete failure, which did not cause even the slightest repercussions in the wider Islamic world.[40]

As for the Iranian regime, the state clerics and their supporters, they answered by a similar strategy that involved using sticks and carrots and combining polemical counter-attacks against the Sunnis with the claim to represent the true ecumenical spirit. As early as 1982, in the wake of some sectarian attacks by the Saudi mufti 'Abd al-'Aziz Ibn Baz, an "Islamic unity week" (*hafte-ye wahdat*) was ostentatiously inaugurated on the initiative of Ayatollah Montazeri (then successor designate to Khomeini) in Teheran; in the following years, a series of international conferences was hosted by Iran with the aim of promoting intra-Islamic dialogue under the leadership of the government.[41] After Khomeini's death in June 1989, these efforts were even reinforced, and in October 1990, on the occasion of such a conference, the foundation of a new ecumenical organization was announced, this time at the urging of Khomeini's successor, 'Ali Khamenei, and under the auspices of the Iranian government. By choosing the name *Majma'-e taqrîb bayn al-madhahib al-islamiyya*, and by constantly evoking the memory of Mahmûd Shaltût and other *taqrîb* heroes of the 1950s, its helmsmen gave the impression that they considered themselves to be the true advocates of a new spirit of rapprochement within Islam.[42] From its outset, the *Majma'-e taqrîb* deployed intense publication activities and edited a journal called *Risalat al-taqrîb* ("The Message of Raprochement"). It was presented as a relaunch of the journal *Risalat al-Islam*, which had been published by the former *taqrîb* organization between 1949 and 1972.[43] Today, two detailed websites[44] inform readers of the association's activities in more than a dozen languages, as well as of the Iranian perspective on the religious and political situation in the Muslim world in general, and of Islamic unity in particular. The current secretary general of the organization—which was renamed some years ago as "The World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of

Thought" (*al-Majma' al-'alami lil-taqrîb bayn al-madhahib al-islamiyya*)—is Ayatollah Muhammad 'Ali al-Taskhiri.

One of the means for promoting an exchange of ideas, which its Egyptian predecessor associations had carefully avoided in the 1950s, is the organization of regular international conferences, the twenty-fifth of which took place in Teheran in February 2012.[45] On the occasion of these meetings, representatives of the Iranian regime attend voluntarily, whereas other religious organizations of the Muslim world, which are either dependent on their respective governments or are even entirely run by them (such as the Azhar or the Muslim World League), appear only rarely, at least on the official level. Scholars, activists or intellectuals from various Muslim and Western countries participate as individuals and do not seem to act on any official assignment.[46] Moreover, it is remarkable that Iraqi scholars also keep their distance, even after the fall of the ancien régime. Apparently, the Grand Ayatollahs resident in the Shiite holy sites in southern Iraq, in particular 'Ali al-Sistani, as well as the other protagonists of Shiism in the country, do not have any intention of allowing themselves to be monopolized by the Iranian government.[47]

Although the *taqrîb* society promoted by Iran is by far the most visible body in the area of sectarian relations within Islam, it is by no means the only one at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Al-Azhar has also been trying, for several years, to make up for lost ground and to re-establish itself as an important centre for dialogue and Islamic unity, notwithstanding its close connections with Wahhabism, which earned the university the prestigious "King Faysal International Prize" for service to Islam in 2000.[48] It looks, however, as if the Azharis themselves are far from agreeing on the issue of how to act towards Shiism. On the one hand there are, from time to time, calls to confiscate Shiite publications or to have them banned, above all those of Iranian origin. The official reason offered in such cases is usually the allegation that the authors of these writings put forward a "wrong" interpretation of Muslim history, in particular with regard to the behaviour of the Prophet's companions (the *sahaba*). This accusation is all the more explosive, as practically the whole corpus of Prophetic traditions (*hadith*), and the entire historiography on early Islam, rests on the shoulders of these companions. As is well known, the points of view of Sunnis and Shiites are diametrically opposed to each other on this issue, more than on any other controversial subject.[49] It is rather characteristic in this context that the late rector of the Azhar, Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi (d. 2010),[50]

felt bound to issue a *fatwa*, in spring 2007, in order to specify that the veneration of all companions of the Prophet constituted the sixth pillar of Islamic piety—thereby nearly automatically running the risk of provoking a confrontation with Shiites who contest the authority of the majority of the *sahaba*.[51] Furthermore, Tantawi repeatedly spoke out against building Shiite mosques in Egypt, and the "Academy of Islamic Research" (*Majma' al-buhuth al-islamiyya*), which is attached to the Azhar, demanded that measures be taken against the alleged missionary activities of Shiite circles in the country.[52] Such charges are unlikely to have been made without ulterior motives, for there is in today's Egypt a very small Shiite minority—mostly former Islamist Sunnis who converted to Shiism during the 1980s under the influence of the Iranian Revolution—whose leaders know how to draw attention to themselves in the media.[53]

On the other hand, however, a spectacular event took place in spring 2007: the absolutely remarkable re-opening of the *Jama'at al-taqrîb*, in the midst of al-Azhar and in close cooperation with Iranian institutions.[54] A series of bilateral meetings since 2001 had not succeeded in notably advancing the project of rapprochement, revealing instead the obstacles and sceptical voices on both sides. It was only due to the impact of the sectarian crisis in Iraq, which deteriorated severely after 2003, and following the revival of polemics in the wake of the war between Israel and Hizbollah in the summer of 2006 that the idea of a resuscitation of the ecumenical forum in Cairo managed to gain ground. It was then also—more or less diplomatically—supported by the Azhar rector Tantawi. When the formal act was finally staged in March 2007, it attracted an enormous amount of attention from the Arab media. A particular eye-catcher was the fact that former Iranian President Muhammad Khatami was the guest of honour, which raised hopes for a revived spirit of rapprochement far beyond the assembly.[55] Nevertheless, before long one could not but get the impression that history had repeated itself, and that the relaunch of the ecumenical society had proved to be as ephemeral as the first one in 1992. Apparently no visible public activity followed the solemn ceremony, and the renewed *Jama'at al-taqrîb* disappeared from the limelight as quickly as it had emerged. As for al-Azhar, it seems to be continuing its zigzag path toward rapprochement, which has been its hallmark with regard to Shiism for the past six decades. While Tantawi, in February 2008, went so far as to bring into play the possibility of having Shiite students accepted at the university,[56] several Azhar-related institutions doubted whether Shiites were to be

regarded as Muslims at all.[57] In June 2009, Tantawi himself joined in and emphasized that there was no place for Shiism in Egypt in terms of a legal school.[58] Finally, his successor, Ahmad al-Tayyib, only a few weeks after assuming office, made it very clear that not only would al-Azhar resist any attempt at spreading Shiism in any Sunnite country, but also that rapprochement between Sunnis and Shiites would take place on the intellectual level (*al-mustawa al-fikri*) and within "scientific limits" only (*fi l-hudud al-'ilmiyya faqat*).[59]

Three main reasons, which are typical of the dialogue between Sunnis and Shiites in general, may be identified that explain this renewed paralysis: the insufficiency of the argumentation of its protagonists, the apparent dependence of the debate on the goodwill of international politics, and finally the distrust of Shiism, and even open anti-Shiite hostility, among influential Sunnite spokesmen. All this is anything but surprising because these were the very circumstances that had accompanied the discussion between the two schools throughout the twentieth century. As far as the role of politics is concerned, it is indisputable that the chances of success for a dialogue between al-Azhar and Iranian Shiites are fairly meagre as long as diplomatic relations between Egypt and Iran are not resumed.[60] With regard to the mode of argumentation, one keeps hearing (since the 1950s) the hackneyed phrases that, in principle, there is no real disagreement between Sunnis and Shiites on elementary points of law and dogma, and that the differences—which are extremely small in any case—are no bigger than those between the four Sunnite schools of law; that the aim of *taqrîb* is not the fusion of the sectarian groups, let alone their abolition; and finally that it is absolutely essential to close ranks against the enemies of Islam, that is to say against Western colonialism, to which Zionism and the Pope have been added, all of whom are held responsible for any discord and conflict within Islam.[61]

Finally, there are the attacks of those who view any form of rapprochement between Sunnis and Shiites with great scepticism or who even kindle marked polemics. The most outstanding contemporary representative of this current is probably Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the well-known Egyptian-born scholar who has been residing in Qatar since 1961.[62] He distinguished himself several times by acerbic remarks against what he considers to be an unremitting Shiite missionary zeal, which directly threatens Sunnite identity. In September 2006, after the war between Israel and Hizbollah and at the height of demonstrations of support among Sunnis in the entire Arab

world in favour of Hizbollah's Secretary General, Hasan Nasrallah, Qaradawi called him a "fanatic" and demanded that the Shiites finally stop slandering the Prophet's companions and pretending that the Qur'an was incomplete.[63] He reiterated his critique shortly afterwards on an international stage, on the occasion of a large ecumenical conference in Doha (Qatar) in January 2007. Once more, Qaradawi attacked the supposed missionary politics of Iran in the entire region and the negative Shiite attitude towards the *sahaba*. According to Qaradawi, what was needed in the ecumenical discussion was frankness instead of politeness, *musaraha* instead of *mujamala*. Although his main opponent, Muhammad al-Taskhiri, the head of the aforementioned Iranian ecumenical association, attempted to pacify the situation, the affair caused a considerable stir in the international press, and many an observer remarked that this was the first time that a conference of this sort was not restricted to a diplomatic exchange of opinions but led to determined declarations.[64] It seems as if the turmoil he caused further encouraged Qaradawi, as he repeated in several interviews he gave to Arab newspapers in September and October 2008 his accusation that the Shiites aimed to undermine Sunnite societies and that the Sunnis had to keep an eye on this danger.[65]

It remains to be seen whether these mutual charges and the incessant significance of how to judge the Prophet's companions and the traditions handed down by them are able to form a solid basis for a renewed ecumenical spirit in Islam. At any rate, they serve as a reminder of yet another sharp observation made by Bernard Lewis in the article cited at the beginning of this chapter: "The names of 'Ali, Mu'âwiya, and Yazid are as contemporary as this morning's newspaper, more so than yesterday's".[66] In fact, it might be necessary to correct this a little: their names are the objects of today's newspapers.

Part Two

Contemporary Sunnite-Shiite Encounters in the Middle East and the Gulf

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3

The Shiite Peril in Palestine

Between Phobias and Propaganda

Jean-François Legrain

Denunciations of a "Shiite threat" in Palestine have multiplied in the last three or four years, even if almost 99 per cent of the population in the Occupied Territories is Sunnite, and the remaining 1 per cent is Christian. These denunciations have been made by individuals, organizations and states empowered by various motivations but united in the same hostility towards Hamas and the Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine (IJMP), on the one hand, and the Lebanese Hizbullah, Syria and Iran, on the other.

In this chapter, I will first of all establish an inventory of the phobias and propaganda developed around the so-called "Shiitization" of Palestine as the cement of an "axis" of destabilization. Even if these phobias are usually religious and the propaganda political in nature, both tend to excel in mutual instrumentalization. I will then show that these types of discourse, beyond their superficial differences, centre on a common "conspiracy theory" (i.e. Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hizbullah, Syria and Iran are thought to form one ensemble, with every element being, *in fine*, enslaved to the interests of Iran alone, the "enemy" of peace and stability in the Greater Middle East). After exploring the relations maintained by these organizations and states between themselves from a diachronic and synchronic perspective, I shall then show

that the discourse about the Shiite threat in Palestine is a simplistic approach that is subservient to immediate political interests. I shall therefore question three main aspects of the "threat": the "spread" of the Shiite faith, the "fascination" with revolutionary Iran and the "uniqueness" of the Iranian, Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian projects. Given the scope of this chapter, I will take up this question from the standpoint of Palestine.

An inventory of phobias and propaganda

Hamas and Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, Syria and Iran, apart from their official professions of faith in mutual cooperation in defending Palestinian rights, observe a semi-silence as to concretely implementing this cooperation in their political, ideological, organizational and operational relations. Even academic studies only rarely dwell on the question. The field of investigation has thus become monopolized by an inflated discourse expounded by actors and observers that are fundamentally hostile to these policies, which are labelled "Shiite" and are denounced as threatening. For convenience but provisionally, I shall differentiate here discourses related to a phobia of Shiism cultivated in Sunnite environments, which we could qualify as religious and as classic, from speeches that are only the tool of a political mobilization. But we will quickly realize that religious phobias and political propaganda are mutually instrumentalized.

Religious phobias

The approach whereby Shiism is viewed in terms of a conspiracy to which the Jews are linked is not new in the Sunnite world. Ancient religious traditions had made Shiism the fruit of a Jewish conspiracy led by 'Abd Allâh Ibn Sabâ', a converted Yemeni native, when the Quran had developed the topic of the conspiracy led by the Jews against the Prophet and Islam itself. As a contemporary witness of this approach, a literary work called the "Protocols of the Ayatollahs of Qom", inspired by "The Protocols of the Elders of Sion", appeared during the 1990s.[1] Spread by Salafist circles, these pamphlets are used to disseminate the idea of the supposed conspiracy cooked up by the highest Iranian authorities to internationalize the Islamic revolution and reunify Islam by abolishing the Sunna.

As part of this approach, Salafists as well as Palestinian and international circles have made the question of the "Shiitization of Palestine" one of their

preferred themes in recent years. The terms most currently used are: *tashyî'* and *tashayyu'* (chiification in French, Shiitization or Shiafication in English), terms a priori lacking pejorative connotations, but which are employed in descriptions openly hostile to Shiism. Expressions like *al-taghalghul al-shî'î* (the Shiite penetration), *al-ghazû al-shî'î* (the Shiite razzia) or, further, *al-tabshîr al-shî'î* (the Shiite evangelization) are also used, as well as *al-mashrû' al-safavî* (the Safavid project), which refers to the dynasty that had forcibly imposed Twelver Shiism on Iran, which had previously been Sunnite, in the early sixteenth century. Palestinians' individual conversions, which are celebrated by Shiites as *mustabsirûn* (those who came to light), are viewed by Sunnis as being part of a worldwide Shiite policy of moral corruption.

Two internet sites are specifically designed to broadcast Salafist speeches on the ill-effects of Shiitization in Palestine. Created in 2006, "*al-Haqîqa*" ("the Truth-Reality")[2] emanates from an unknown "Committee for the defence of Sunnite beliefs—Palestine", the declared mission of which is to bring to light the reality of threats that Shiites and other members of mislaid sects (Baha'is, Druses, Ahbash, etc.) constitute for Palestine in particular and, beyond this, for Sunnite Islam in general. Less Palestinian-centred but as Salafist as the latter, the "*al-Râsid*" website ("the Observer")[3] was inaugurated in 2003. In both cases, no information is given about the real identity of those responsible for the site, or their national and geographical origins. The most prolific author on the Shiite question, who is abundantly cited and reproduced by these sites as well as others, is Usâma Chahâda, a Jordanian national. He presides over a "Committee of the good word" and his writings are available on his blog.[4]

Diatribes against the Shiite articles of faith are broadcast on these sites and Shiites are designated as *rawâfid* (Rafidites) (i.e. those who reject the legitimacy of the first three caliphs called "the well directed" in Sunnite milieus), and sometimes also as *kuffâr* (infidels). But most often, the arguments proposed by these sites are eminently political and are intended for the here and now. Likened to Jews and Christians, Shiites thus become allies of Zionism and the United States. Islamic Jihad and Hamas, as a result of their links with Hizbullah and Iran, are in turn reduced to mere vectors of Iranian strategy for the expansion of Shiism.

On the ground, the Army of Islam (*Jaysh al-Islâm*) is one of the jihadist groups of the Gaza Strip that periodically denounces the process of Shiitization, which has benefitted from the toleration of the Palestinian Authority

controlled by Hamas. On the basis that "the Shia are more dangerous than the Jews and Christians", its communiqué, published on 12 June 2008, for example, claims that: "Shia Islam has invaded the Gaza Strip through foundations, organizations, societies, and parties, whose members are estimated to number thousands and are assuming the highest levels of the decision-making process. Some people among us are working to establish the throne of Satan in Palestine".[5] This topic is developed in a directly political mode by one of its spokesman, Sheikh Ibn Hârith al-Ansarî: "The problem of the Shiite plot is that it follows a 'long breath' strategy and uses public sympathy and the heart of the nation, Palestine, as it is no secret to anyone. [...] We should not ignore the role of Syria and Hezbollah in supporting, hosting, and training the sons of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad movements in the training camps, let alone the financial support which stems from a Shiite plot to export the doctrine [...]".[6]

Abû Hamza al-Maqdisî, in the name of the Islamic Front for the Liberation of the Palestinian soil-Army of Muhammad (*al-Jabha al-Islâmiyya li-Tahrîr Ard Filastîn—Jaych Muhammad*), goes further and qualifies Hamas as "a Shia Iranian movement" in a declaration published on 31 May 2008.[7]

Political propaganda

The discourse on the Shiite peril has also been developed by state actors. In this case, the "pro-western" camp, under the terms of an alliance more or less openly declared as "Sunnite", is mobilized against the anti-American camp, denounced as "Shiite": the Palestinian Authority of Ramallah, Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, to cite only those on the Arab side of the Near East, without forgetting Israel, periodically promote this discourse.

King Abdallah II of Jordan's declaration in December 2004 is usually considered to be the first manifestation of this contemporary political version of anti-Shiite discourse.[8] In the context of the first post-Saddam Iraqi elections, the Hashemite sovereign warned his American allies of the risks linked to "the emergence of a new Shiite crescent". Ranging from Bahrain to Iran and Lebanon, this so-called crescent encompasses Alawite Syria, and Iraq, the latter of which faces a threat from the Shiite majority of its population, and from that of its millions of co-citizens who, fleeing violence, have found refuge in the region's—Sunnite—countries. The resurgence in popularity obtained by the Lebanese Hizbullah on the occasion of its semi-victory against Israel during the summer of 2006 has only increased the fears of the pro-occidental camp, without forgetting the defence accord signed in

June 2006 between Syria and Iran in the context of the Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinejad's declared nuclear ambitions.

For its part, Palestine has been included in this crescent since the Hamas victory in the legislative elections of January 2006. The Shiite "threat" supposedly posed by Hamas was confirmed and augmented during summer 2007 when security forces affiliated to the Ministry of the Interior and the Ezzedin al-Qassam Brigades of Hamas anticipated a putsch fomented by security forces linked to the presidency and to Fatah under American supervision, which Hamas used to gain exclusive control of the Gaza Strip.[9]

In all discourses, Iran is considered to be the power that gives the orders: the Syrian government and Hizbullah are pure proxies of Iran whereas Hamas, which is at a lower echelon on the hierarchical ladder, constitutes an instrument armed by the Islamic Republic on the south side of Israel. The threat is sometimes qualified as "Shiite", sometimes as "Iranian", and often as both. The proponents of this discourse quite frequently use the term "axis" to indicate that these different, threatening Shiite actors are linked together. Such usage, of course, is not innocent even if the clear reference to the axis powers of the Second World War remains largely unmentioned. The notion of the "axis of evil" used by President George W. Bush adds an additional connotation to the language used by those who are anti-Shiite.

Lacking the space to assess each of these discourses in detail, I will merely cite here Mark Langfan, a strategist based in the United States. His "Iran: the fourth Reichastan", a four page text, has the advantage of expressing in a few words, and without any linguistic precaution, the theses underlying most talk on the Iranian threat to the Near East: "The grim reality is that the Hamas/Hezbollah Israel War and the Iranian backed component of the Iraqi insurgency are two sides of the same coin that has its fount the growing Iranian Fourth Reichastan Axis against America and the World". "Iran is in fact using Syria, as Germany used Italy, to facilitate its early strategic moves in the 'Thirties' so that in the 'Forties' Iran will come to rule. In short, the seemingly disparate elements of the emerging Fourth Reichastan supply each other as an axis, defend each other as an axis, and fight for each other as an integrated axis".[10]

Religion and politics in mutual instrumentalizations

The distinction previously made in this chapter between phobias and propaganda would be nonsensical should we consider that the religious

person takes his discourse to heart, whereas the politician maintains a critical distance from it, the very condition of controlled manipulation. But the reality is more complex and recent examples, in dealing with the Palestinian case, show that politicians and people who are religious are capable of using one another, depending on the context.

In Palestine, the violent mobilizations that occurred in 2006–2007 between supporters of Fatah and those of Hamas made use of religion in its most dangerous aspects.[11] Therefore, they brought to light an erosion of the feeling of membership of the same community, and contempt for the requirements of citizenship, as proclamations of "*takfîr*" were declared. The implication of this is that one has to take his distance (to make "*hijra*") from the impious society by forming alternative pious societies. It could also imply, as is the case in Palestine, that impious persons should be physically eliminated. Such an instrumentalization of religion has not come from Hamas, a so-called "fundamentalist" organization, but from Fatah, the "secular" movement. In fact, the idea first emerged among those close to Muhammad Dahlân. The former chief of the preventive security forces in Gaza and former vice-minister of the interior, and a spearhead in refusing to let Hamas exercise the popular mandate it had won, General Dahlân was elected as a member of the Fatah Central Council in August 2009. Since 2005 he is also, and above all, the prime interlocutor of General Keith Dayton, US Security Coordinator for Israel and the Palestinian Authority and the real decision-maker for security policy in Ramallah. In January 2007, for example, Hamas was jeered with cries of "Shiites, Shiites" during a demonstration of mass support for Muhammad Dahlân held in Gaza. In May of the same year, an individual calling himself Sheikh Shakir al-Hayran published a fatwa[12] and a series of writings on an internet site linked to Muhammad Dahlân. These texts have been reproduced on various official Fatah sites and forums (which also distribute most of the Salafist material about the Shiitization of Palestine), as well as on the official site of the National Security Forces. Using the language of Islamic jurisprudence, the sheikh sought to deprive Hamas of its identity as a Sunnite Muslim movement, thus offering Fatah-linked security forces full religious latitude in physically eliminating their adversaries: "Hamas and the Jews are two sides of the same coin, collaborationist troops set on furthering Shiite regional interests, whose goal is the Authority's annihilation and destroying the [Palestinian] people in starving it and bringing it to its knees by force [...]". Most observers have identified the mysterious sheikh as being Mahmûd

al-Habbâsh, the minister of religious endowments of the Fayyad cabinet in 2009–2010, having deserted Hamas in the mid-1990s.

In 2009, information from Gaza indicated the possibility that certain Salafist-jihadist groups, with a message close to al-Qaida's and profoundly hostile to Hamas, have been manipulated by Fatah,[13] but clear evidence of this has yet to be provided. In any case, the movement's official forum[14] regularly posts communiqués of the World Islamic Media Front (the media front of al-Qaida) when attacking Hamas. In Ramallah, the minister of social affairs, and the presumed author of the 2007 fatwa, is entrusted by the presidency with a mission of good offices among the Salafists. As he was acting as a go-between, on 29 April 2009 President Mahmûd 'Abbâs received a delegation composed of the principal West Bank Salafist organizations. The Palestinian president did not fail to underline that during his long exile in Syria he had established close links with Imam Al-Albânî, the Salafist reference par excellence, even adding that he felt close to his ideas.

The Israeli government has also contributed to the denunciation of the "Shiite crescent" due to its central position in the pro-American apparatus in the region but also and more specifically due to its own narrow interests. In the 1990s it viewed Iraq as the most important threat to its existence, and Israel participated in building up the myth that Iraq was a worldwide threat. After the fall of the Baathist regime in Iraq, this role has been replaced by Iran. It is no coincidence that the reference literature on the "axis of destabilization" often originates directly or indirectly from the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) of Herzliya,[15] which "aims to train the future leaders of the State of Israel", and that the factual material for this discourse comes from the Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, which is linked to the Israeli army.[16]

Amazingly, during the 2009 edition of IDC's annual conference on security (which is becoming the international reference point in strategic discussions on the Middle East), the contribution of Shmuel Bar,[17] Rachel Machtiger and Shmulik Bachar, "When Green Meets Black: Relations Between A Shiite boss And Its Sunni Protégé Organizations" was nothing else than a patchwork of Salafist texts translated from *al-Haqîqa* and *al-Râsid* (cf. *supra*) that were reproduced without any critical distance. For his part, just after the war against Lebanon and Hizbullah in 2006, Yossi Alpher,[18] the former head of the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies in Tel-Aviv and a counsellor of Prime Minister Ehud Barak, asked: "Could Israel Make Common Cause With Sunni Arabs?" and underlined the idea that

"the threat posed to Israel by Iran, its proxy Hezbollah and its ally Syria was also recognized as a threat by the Sunni Arab heartland [...] Israel and the major Sunni Arab states—Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the Gulf emirates—now appeared to share an enemy".

Attempts to characterize both threat and political projects in the region in sectarian or confessional terms are not new in Israeli circles.[19] Today, such projects of redrawing the boundaries in the Middle East, which reflect ethnic affinities and religious communalism, have been espoused and updated by American neoconservative circles.[20] The feeling of "threat", therefore, might be nothing more than the negative print of these plans.

The "conspiracy" put to the test by history

A number of the elements that make up this "conspiracy theory" do not stand up to an examination of the facts. Actually, the relations Hamas and the Islamic Jihad maintain with Hizbullah, Syria and Iran are far from the simplistic essentialism that characterizes the discourse on the dangers posed by Shiism. Indeed, these relations appear eminently more complex to the historian, and are in constant realignment depending on the periods and cases involved.

Spreading the Shiite faith

As a historian, I shall limit myself to questioning representations of the so-called "threat" and shall not venture into the domain of theology. In the context of the competition between Sunnis and Shiites, conversions to Shiism are addressed in a twofold way: that of the Shiites who put forward their capacities to persuade people to join their creed, and that of the Sunnis who point the finger at the "danger" these conversions represent. From a Shiite point of view, this question is often approached by websites that are dedicated to preaching.

The Center of Belief Researches[21] based in Qom (Iran) and in Najaf (Iraq), for instance, dedicates an important part of its efforts to the expansion of the Shiite creed, but it is particularly interested in conversions. Claiming that the centre has identified 8,000 converts in eighty-four countries, the section of its website dedicated to the biographies of the converts has, however, only 222 entries among which only three are Palestinians. Based in the holy city of Karbala (Iraq) and linked to Imam al-Shirazi, the

"Fourteen Massoum Humanitarian Foundation" has similar interests[22] and its site lists 154 converts for the contemporary period and the nineteenth century, of which five are Palestinians. *Al-Haqîqa* and *al-Râsid* continue to be used as Sunnite references on the websites.

For the Shiites as for the Sunnis, individual cases of conversion are treated as though they represent a mass trend, but it is very difficult to disentangle realities from phantasms. Extensive use of the net by Islamist and Islamic circles has intensified the internationalization of discourses and practices, in many cases fed by sources entrenched behind the anonymity of the internet. Initiatives which, in other times, would remain individual or local, thus instantaneously become world events. In the Palestinian case, for example, conversions to Shiism are denounced by Salafists as a mass phenomenon. Yet consultation of Sunnite websites celebrating the conversions and Shiite websites worried about this question, reveal merely fifteen to twenty cases of conversion (a number of them being refugees in Syria and Lebanon). Moreover, if the alleged conversion is proven for some, it is much more dubious for others as, for instance, that of the founder of IJMP Fathî Shqâqî.[23]

Once again, political interference appears. The campaign led in August 2007 on "The Iranian trials of expansion of Shiite confession in Palestine" illustrated by the alleged conversion of Khâlid Mash'al, president of the political bureau of Hamas, was thus conducted from Jordan shortly after Hamas gained exclusive control of the Gaza Strip. The source for this "information", which was instantly spread by the Salafist websites as well as by the international press, was *al-Haqîqa al-Duwaliyya* (*Fact International*).[24] This weekly had been created in February 2006 specifically to promote a "moderate" Islam, three months after the suicide operations against hotels in Amman.

Elsewhere denounced by the Salafists as evidence for the existence of Shiite missions in Palestine, some Shiite websites have portrayed themselves as "Palestinian". Only one of these, the oldest (founded in September 2004), can be linked to an identifiable institution, the Jafariya Society—Palestine, founded by Ashraf Amûna and other young people, all natives of Dabbûriyya (near Nazareth in Israel) and converted abroad. The association runs a place of worship (*husayniyya*), a public library and publishes a magazine. Named "Dhû al-Fiqâr",[25] the name of Ali's sword, the site was reduced to a simple homepage in 2005 and disappeared at the end of 2009. With the exception of a page dedicated to the history of Palestine, it was exclu-

sively devoted to religious questions. Several websites active between 2005 and 2008 can be regrouped in one ensemble. The oldest is the "Palestine Shia Forum",[26] which was online between November 2005 and June 2007. "Shia of Holy Land"[27] is contemporary of the latter. "Palestine Shia Forum"[28] was active from April 2006 until December 2007 and gave its place to the forum "Light of the Prophecy in Palestine"[29] online until May 2008. While the first two sites were exclusively religious, the last two also offered a certain number of "secular" pages. It seems that all these sites emanated from Abû al-Batûl al-Maqdisî, a converted native from 'Awartâ, near Tulkarm north of the West Bank. A second group of sites emanated from a mysterious "Omat al-Zahraa Studies Center—Palestine" (one of the nicknames of Fatima, daughter of the Prophet and spouse of 'Ali). The oldest[30] was online between March 2007 and March 2008 and its pages were dedicated to the Twelve Imams. Some of these pages reappeared in February 2008 in a blog named "Umat al-Zahrâ' Umat al-Nûr".[31] At the end of December 2009, the centre re-emerged with a website reduced to a small number of postings.[32] Its founder is known to be Abû al-Turâb al-Filastînî, a convert to Shiism, who asserts that his centre is based in Gaza (without any proof). A "site of the Shiitization of Palestine",[33] registered in Najaf (Iraq), seems to have been active for one or two months at the beginning of 2009, before becoming a victim of a cyber-attack. Its creator was another convert, Ibrâhîm al-Husaynî, and his aim was specifically religious. The only website remaining online in 2010, "Forums of the Twelvers of Palestine",[34] was registered in March 2009 in Cairo by Abû Maythum Filastîn, a convert who presents himself as a webmaster. Although the forum is supposed to tackle questions concerning Palestine, its main political subject, beside religious ones, is Iraqi Hizbullah. These websites thus have a relatively ephemeral existence. Aside from the Jafariya Society's site, they are simply individual initiatives taken by converts, their presence in Palestine being unproved in a number of cases.

The announcement on 2 March 2006 of the foundation in Ramallah of a "Higher Islamic Shiite Council in Palestine" set off chain reactions in the Salafist press as well as the international media. The most hostile among them talked about the opening of an "ideological embassy of Iran". Yet none of these commentators, including an academic researcher who wrote about the project, mentioned the announcement of its withdrawal five days later. Indeed, it would appear that the originator of the project, Muhammad Ghawânima, a refugee of Jalazûn camp near Ramallah, is psychologically

unstable. A former member of IJMP, he left the organization after its conversion to Shiism at the end of 1970s, and he had simply sought, as he specified, to open new channels of support for the Palestinian people. Therefore, his objective was to break with the PLO policy that had cut itself off from the Iraqi Shiite population in supporting Iraq in its war with Iran. Disclaiming any prior understanding with Iran, he stressed that his contacts with Lebanese Shiites had solely taken place during his stay in Israeli prisons.

Fascination with Iran and distance-taking

IJMP was the first organization to be accused (at that time by the Palestinian Muslim Brothers) of being a vector of Shiitization in Palestine, its principal leaders being denounced as converts to Shiism. IJMP was founded in the late 1970s by Gazan students in Egypt. Disappointed with the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, which at the time was completely removed from any patriotic involvement, they considered Palestine to be the heart of Islam and made its liberation an immediate imperative. They were fascinated by the Iranian Revolution to which their Secretary General, Dr Fathî Shqâqî, dedicated an opuscule entitled "khomeini, the Islamic solution and the alternative". For a long time, IJMP remained the prisoner of its own understanding of itself as an "Islamic vanguard" (*talî'a islâmiyya*), which prevented it establishing any large popular base. The organization was decimated by targeted Israeli repression in 1986–87 and weakened afterwards by successive splits. IJMP has consequently been viewed for a long time as a small group that could be manipulated, and which was entirely dependent on its links with Teheran where an official representative has been mandated since 1991.

Such an interpretation, however, ignores the role played by Arab solidarity in the organization's activities, which, among other things, led IJMP to support Saddam Hussein in his war with Iran during the 1980s. It also neglects the fact that IJMP has more recently managed to build up a popular base of support (endowed with a charitable and social network, which although limited are certainly active), which assured the victory of some of its candidates in the municipal elections of 2005. It is highly unlikely that the organization's supporters would allow IJMP to be subject to any foreign manipulation. In short, such an approach forgets that the Iranian Revolution was lived first of all as Islamic and revolutionary, beyond any Sunnite-Shiite cleavages, when Arabs and Iranians in search of justice were reading

Sayyid Qutb. That an Islamic movement had proved successful in overthrowing one of the closest regional allies of the United States was viewed as being more important than the fact that the revolution was Shiite.

Today Hamas is designated as Iran's spearhead on Israel's southern flank, even if the movement still maintains close relations with Saudi Arabia and the other Arab states in the Gulf. Moreover, nothing in the movement would indicate a predisposition to becoming a puppet of a foreign regime, much less the puppet of a Shiite state. Hamas was created more or less a decade after the Iranian Islamic Revolution. Yet, as an "active member of the Muslim Brotherhood Association in the Intifada", according to the expression used in one of its first communiqués dated January 1988, Hamas claims a lineage going back to the late 1920s when Hassan al-Banna created the association in Egypt, and to the mid-1940s, when the association created a Palestinian branch. Moreover, endowed with a fundamentally Sunnite ideological corpus, Hamas maintains a vast associative network, which also suggests that it is an organization that will be hard to manipulate.

The founding of Hamas revealed a revolution within the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood, which led them to abandon their traditional quietist politics in favour of active participation in the national struggle. In this sense, Hamas doubtlessly owes a certain debt to the exemplarity of Hizbullah and Iran, to which its very name bears witness. Hamas, which signifies "zeal", is merely an acronym. Its full name is "the Islamic resistance movement" (*Harakat al-Muqâwama al-Islâmiyya*), a designation similar to the "Islamic resistance in Lebanon", the name of the structure that coordinated the anti-Israeli uprising of South Lebanon's population in 1982 and which was the prototype for what was to become Hizbullah. Moreover, if IJMP had never existed—which would have allowed reconciliation between religion and patriotism in the Palestinian field because some of its members took the Iranian Revolution as an example—and if IJMP had not constituted a threat from the inner ranks of the Muslim Brotherhood itself, perhaps the Muslim Brothers would have arrived at the conclusion that their entry into the field of the national struggle was unnecessary. That did not make Hamas either a Shiite movement or even a dominant element inside the jihad trend.

In the Marj al-Zuhûr camp, for example, when the Israeli government exiled towards South Lebanon about 400 Islamic leaders of the occupied territories in 1992, Hamas designated its "university" with the name of Ibn Taymiyya, the medieval hero of the Sunnite apologetics. By this denomination the movement showed its determination to protect itself from its

neighbours, Shiite populations and Hizbullah. Moreover, Hamas has never produced any institutional theological speech of its own; instead, all of its citations are those of international Sunnite Islam with its modern Egyptian (Hassan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb) and Pakistani (Abu Al-'Ala al-Mawdudi) references, and with one of its most common guides being Yusuf al-Qaradawi. In the domain of religious thought, Hamas is diversified and made up of currents sometimes in contradiction with each other, but which share a more general culture of consensus (*ijmâ'*) that unifies them into the movement. Sheikh Nizâr Rayyân, for instance, was a theological reference for the most rigorist Salafism that was fundamentally hostile to Shiism and to Iran. This aspect of his thought did not, however, bar him access to the highest levels of the decision-making process.[35]

If Hamas today is the target of outcries hostile to Iran and Hizbullah, as was IJMP for many years in the past, we should recall that Yasser Arafat himself was once the target of denunciations over Iranian and Hezbollahi engagement with the al-Aqsâ Martyrs' Brigades. Moreover, Fatah's flag adopted Hizbullah's yellow, but neither Yasser Arafat nor Fatah were ever suspected of Shiism.

Uniqueness of projects or channels in competition?

As I have tried to show, the "conspiracy theory" developed in terms of a Shiite threat and an axis of destabilization has popularized a schema of operational cooperation between Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hizbullah, Syria and Iran in the form of an integrated and descending hierarchical ensemble.[36] In contrast to this ideological approach, the history of this cooperation shows a phenomenon of complementarities and competitions between two channels, a "historical" Lebanese channel (to which was attached an Iranian channel that almost disappeared in 1981–1982) and another channel, more recent and Iranian, while Syria was driven to deal with the contradictions that have occasionally arisen between the two. History also recalls the role played by Fatah in this "axis", which, although eminent in the past, is marginal today despite the fact that it is still active, even if the movement has become the cornerstone of the new American order in Palestine.

The "historical" Lebanese and Iranian channel

The "historical" channel plunges its roots into the Lebanon of the 1970s when the PLO, particularly Fatah and the Popular Front for the Liberation

of Palestine (PFLP), assured military training for most of the armed opposition groups on the planet at that time. While the Marxist organizations tended to turn to the PFLP, other organizations chose Fatah for its absence of ideological marking other than nationalism, even if (or because) the movement had been viewed for a long time as being close to the Muslim Brotherhood. However, the training camps provided by the PLO were not religious: the motivations for the camps were first of all nationalist and/or social and revolutionary. For its part, the Jarmaq Brigade, the main Fatah contractor for military training to the foreigners, demonstrated a Maoist type of ideological commitment under the guidance of Mûnîr Shafîq, who had been profoundly engaged in the national liberation struggle since the beginning of his life. When he realized that Islam constituted the most powerful lever of revolutionary mobilization, he participated in the creation of various small Islamic jihad groups, in association with certain historical leaders of the religious trend internal to Fatah, before becoming one of the intellectuals of Hamas, despite being a Christian by birth.[37]

Throughout the 1970s, the armed forces of Fatah (*al-'Asifa*) in Lebanon were consequently in charge of the military training of the majority of the revolutionary Shiite activists. A feeling of "brotherhood in arms" consequently developed, which went beyond all political and/or ideological divergences that were originally present or which appeared later. Fatah, as a result, trained Shiite activists belonging to three different khomeinist tendencies in its camps: Iranians who prepared the future Islamic Revolution (at the same time as activists of the Marxist Feda'iyin-e Khalq were being trained by PFLP); Iraqis of the al-Da'wâ party; and the Lebanese with their Iranian allies who prepared the Shiite revival in Lebanon under the leadership of Imam Musa al-Sadr.

Contacts between Yasser Arafat and Imam Khomeini go back to 1969 when the latter was still a refugee in Najaf (Iraq), and they developed further during his exile in France. The military collaboration between Fatah and Khomeini's supporters in Lebanon began in 1975. Two of the Ayatollah's sons, Mustafâ and Ahmad, received their military training in the Fatah camps in Lebanon following the example of many of the highest leaders of the future Islamic Revolution. Some of them even pushed their commitment within Fatah to the point of participating in anti-Israeli military operations and becoming some of the movement's officers, such as Mostafa Shamran-Shavehi,[38] Mohamad Montazeri,[39] Ali Akbar Mohtashemi,[40] Mohsen Rafîq Dust,[41] and Jalal-e-Din Farsi.[42]

These historical Iranian networks, however, eventually lost their effectiveness for reasons pertaining specifically to Iran (some of the leaders of the Islamic Republic that had been trained by Fatah had been killed or marginalized at the end of the revolution's spasmodic first years) as well as for reasons that were specific to the Palestinian situation (the honeymoon between the PLO and the rising Islamic Republic broke down when Yasser Arafat demonstrated interest in the Arab nationalists of the Iranian Khuzestan).

On the Lebanese side, Imam Musa al-Sadr, the emblematic face of Shiism who was then undergoing a process of full political and social transformation, had made the liberation of Palestine an imperative for all believers. Unsurprisingly, he entrusted Fatah with the training of the armed personnel within his Movement of the Deprived (*Harakat al-Mahrûmîn*), the backbone of this resurgence. In July 1975 the Brigades of the Imam Ali for the liberation of Palestine (*Katâ'ib al-Imâm 'Alî li-Tahrîr Filastîn*)—the military wing of the Movement of the Deprived—that Musa al-Sadr had founded some years earlier was succeeded by Amal (Lebanese resistance detachments) (*Afwâj al-Muqâwâma al-Lubnâniyya*), which would owe its own name to Yasser Arafat himself, who was anxious to avoid locking up the liberation struggles in sectarian religious memberships. Part of the military personnel of Amal later migrated to Hizbullah and joined some of their old Iranian comrades-in-arms from the Fatah camps that were now invested with the task of coordinating between the new Lebanese movement and the Islamic Republic. These Lebanese Shiite networks, which were set up in the 1970s by Yasser Arafat and Fatah, continue operating to the advantage of the Palestinians up to the present-day, in spite of the torments that Shiite-Palestinian relations in Lebanon subsequently experienced.

For the Palestinians, the first beneficiaries of the operational aid given by this "historical" network, immediately after the evacuation of Lebanon in 1983, were members of Fatah's internal religious trends: the Hamdî Sultân al-Tamîmî's "Islamic Jihad Brigades" (*Sarâyâ al-Jihâd al-Islâmî*) (which led military operations in the occupied territories between 1985 and 1988, when their leaders were eliminated by Mossad in Cyprus); Munîr Shafîq's "Movement of Islamic fighting tendency" (*Harakat al-Ittijâh al-Islâmî al-Mujâhid*) (which took the political relay of the Islamic Jihad Brigades from 1989 until 1992); and Sheikh As'ad al-Tamîmî's "Movement of Islamic Jihad-Bayt al-Maqdis" (*Harakat al-Jihâd al-Islâmî—Bayt al-Maqdis*) (whose political activities stretch between the end of 1970s up to the death of the sheikh in 1998; his military commitment was nev-

ertheless limited to a short period around 1990). Fifteen years later, in the context of the second Intifada and at a time when the Israeli occupation of Lebanon had ceased, the same Lebanese Shiite leaders helped in the setting up and functioning of certain cells; the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades (*Katâ'ib Shuhadâ' al-Aqsâ*) (particularly from Nablus, Jenin and Tulkarm), and the Brigades of the Return (*Katâ'ib al-'Awda*) (which also operated in the northern West Bank). Both of these brigades, even if they pretended to be Fatah military wings, maintained more or less controversial relations with their alleged political command.[43]

Most of those in charge of that cooperation, organized in Lebanon itself (training in Hizbullah camps) or from Lebanon (financing, exporting arms), were killed in assassination attempts ordered by successive Israeli governments as has been documented by Lebanese courts. All of the individuals in question, before assuming responsibilities in Hizbullah's relations with the Palestinian organizations, were trained by Fatah in the 1970s.[44] Even in 2009, these "historical" Lebanese networks of Fatah persisted to provide help to the al-Aqsâ Martyrs Brigades—martyr 'Imâd Mughniyya's Groups (*Katâ'ib Shuhadâ' al-Aqsâ—Majmû'ât al-Shahîd 'Imâd Mughniyya*) headed by Salîm Thâbit. A native from Tulkarm but based in Gaza, Sâlim Thâbit managed to unite the various cells of the al-Aqsâ Martyrs Brigades which, after Hamas took exclusive control of the Gaza strip in June 2007, have decided to pursue the anti-Israeli struggle on good terms with the Palestinian Authority there, while breaking off relations with the Ramallah Authority. In Lebanon itself, the unavoidable Palestinian intermediary between Hizbullah and Fatah in the Palestinian territories was for a long time Brigadier General Munîr Maqdâh, the former Fatah military chief in Lebanon. Today, he runs Fatah's internal trend hostile to President Mahmûd 'Abbâs after he was military commandant-in-chief of Fatah forces in Lebanon.

This collaboration with the Palestinians, even if proved, does not imply that all groups of the West Bank and Gaza that have adopted Hizbullah as their name receive operational help from the Lebanese organization (and the question of their conversion to Shiism will not unsurprisingly be addressed). The most recent of these movements, for instance, the Brigades of Hizbullah in Palestine (*Katâ'ib Hizb Allâh fî Filastîn*), seem to maintain no direct link with Hizbullah in accordance with what they pretend.[45]

The new Iranian channel

Shortly after the deterioration in relations between Iran and the PLO, a new Iranian channel of cooperation with the Palestinians was set up from Teheran. This time, the cooperation existed outside of any relation with Yasser Arafat and Fatah, which were considered guilty of the charge of having betrayed Palestine by agreeing to negotiate its rights. It was then a question of bringing the support of the Iranian Revolution to an organization of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad trend (whose other groups were close to Fatah), IJMP. These groups were organized at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s when they took their distance at the same time from the Muslim Brothers, who refused to enter the national struggle against occupation, and with the official position of the PLO, which was increasingly committed to compromising with Israel.

This new channel of cooperation was as non-ideological, in a Shiite missionary sense, as the historical Iranian and Lebanese channels. It was, as in the past, a question of fighting the Israeli occupation regardless of the underlying ideological motivation (nationalist and/or religious). As a result, the Pasdarans (Revolutionary Guard) were invested with contacts in Lebanon and Palestine. Mohsen Rafiq Dust, who had been trained in the Fatah camps in Lebanon, was once their minister. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine—General Command (PFLP-GC) of Ahmad Jibrîl, for its part, linked the Lebanese and Iranian networks with a know-how that led him to become one of the main recipients of Iranian help in the nationalist sphere. In the Islamist orbit, IJMP, headed by Fathî Shqâqî, was the first of the Palestinian beneficiaries of this political, financial and operational collaboration. This relationship, however, generated jealousy on behalf of the beneficiaries of Lebanese support.

In the 1970s and until the second half of the 1980s, IJMP constituted only one of the elements of the Palestinian Jihad trend, next to groups that were close to Fatah, which, for this reason, benefited from the help of the Lebanese channel. The relations maintained by IJMP with these groups, which were at the same time friends and competitors, have thus often been stormy in spite of occasional collaborations, exacerbated by jealousies resulting from the passage of certain military and political personnel from one group to the other. But at the very beginning of the 1990s, the creation of Hizbullah-Palestine (*Hizb Allâh-Filastîn*) sowed the seeds for trouble. For the first time, the military cooperation provided by Iran and

Lebanese Hizbullah to the Palestinian mujahedeen appeared diversified, even contradictory.

The founder of Hizbullah-Palestine, Ahmad Muhannâ, was a former officer of the Popular Liberation Forces (*Quwwât al-Tahrîr al-Cha'biyya*), a unit of the Army for the Liberation of Palestine, which had been created after 1967 to resist the new occupant within the Occupied Territories. As a result of this partnership, Muhannâ was incarcerated by Israel until 1985. At first, he associated himself with Fathî Shqâqî, who had been banned from Palestine in 1988, as he had been three years earlier. Nevertheless, as a fervent supporter of the militarization of resistance, he took his distance from him after he failed to convince him of creating an armed wing. He then joined the "Movement of Islamic Jihad—Bayt al-Maqdis" headed by Sheikh As'ad al-Tamîmî and, under its signature, organized the February 1990 attack on an Israeli tourist bus near Ismailia (Egypt). But his attempts to infiltrate fighters into the West Bank from Jordan, and to import weapons through the Syrian-Jordanian border, damaged the position of Sheikh Tamîmî, established in Amman. He was therefore expelled from the ranks of Bayt al-Maqdis and decided to create his own armed organization, which he named Hizbullah-Palestine. Operating in symbiosis with elements of the Lebanese channel, the group maintained direct links with Iran and Syria, with its military camps being situated in the Syrian Hauran and the Lebanese Bekaa. Feeling deprived of its particular links with Iran, IJMP thence tried to sabotage the initiative in appealing directly to the Guide of the Revolution. As it failed to obtain the abandonment of Hizbullah-Palestine, IJMP finally decided to create its own military wing, the Islamic Fighting Forces "Qasam" (oath) (*al-Quwwât al-Islâmiyya al-Mujâhida-Qasam*), which later became the al-Quds [Jerusalem] Brigades (*Sarâyâ al-Quds*).

Starting from this Hizbullah-Palestine experience, the Lebanese and Iranian channels cooperated successfully and set up new alliances among Islamic Palestinian organizations outside the limits of the Islamic Jihad trend. Ahmad Muhannâ's deputy, Adnân al-Ghûl, a refugee from the Gaza Shâtî' camp, had first belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood. Advocating the armed struggle for the liberation of Palestine, he took his distance from the Brothers and frequented various jihadi groups before becoming a key military element of Hizbullah-Palestine. Yet, following the evolution of Hamas in the area of armed struggle, he rejoined his previous movement in 1992 and became deputy to Muhammad Dayf, chief of the Ezzedin al-Qassam Brigades (*Katâ'ib al-Shahîd 'Izz al-Dîn al-Qassâm*). Adnân al-Ghûl was

eliminated in October 2004, but, as a result of its relationship with al-Ghul, Hamas benefited from contacts with networks of the Lebanese branch at a moment when most of its higher leaders were exiled by Israel from Palestine to South Lebanon in 1992. At the beginning of the 1990s, links were established with this new Iranian channel. They became institutionalized after the first "Conference in Support of the Islamic Revolution in Palestine" was held in Teheran in October 1991 by opening an official Hamas office in Iran in 1993. In October 1992, military and financial agreements were signed on the occasion of a visit to Teheran of a delegation that was received officially by Imam Khomeini himself.

From this point onwards, cooperation has continued in the political, military and financial domains. This Iranian-Hamas relationship received a strong symbolic boost in March 1998 when the founder of Hamas, Shaykh Ahmad Yâsîn, was granted a reception in Teheran where he was treated like an acting head of state, during his vast diplomatic tour that took place just after his release from the Israeli prisons. For a long time, financial assistance from Iran remained comparatively limited. As long as Hamas merely had to compensate for AP's insufficiency in education and health matters, the need for assistance from outside remained comparatively low, due to the importance of the voluntary work of its actors but also to its self-financing capacity via the control of the committees of *zakât*. The nature of financial support changed, and its importance increased, when the international community decided to implement a complete blockade of Gaza after Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip. From this date onwards, Iran assumed the place of the international donors and it continues to assure the financing of the Gaza PA for the payment of its civil servants. In military affairs, Iran (and Hizbullah) favours imports of weapons into the Gaza Strip, even if these armaments are poorly-maintained. Iranian experts also play an advisory role. After the Israeli offensive of December 2008—January 2009, the evidence suggests that Iran sent a mission of evaluation of the military performance of the Ezzedin al-Qassam Brigades and security forces of the PA, which in turn led to changes in the latter organizations.

Conclusion

The analysis of the discourses on the "Shiitization" of Palestine as the cement of a "destabilization axis" and their confrontation with a number of historical realities has shown that their various usages are eminently ideological and built on particular religious and political interests.

Denunciations of mass conversions in Palestine from Sunnism to Shiism, which are supposed to prove the religious offensive of Iran and Hizbullah are not based on reality (no more than the victorious Shiite claims). Denunciations of a "Shiite crescent" as well as calls to the constitution of a "Sunnite ark" are themselves only a political construction elaborated by the pro-Western camp which, under traits of a more or less alleged "Sunnite" alliance, rallies against the anti-American camp denounced as "Shiite". Religious phobias and political propaganda, far from ignoring each other, thus draw from a common pot; truths and untruths immediately become rearranged as part of their own obsession with a "theory of conspiracy".

The operational collaboration between Iran, Syria, Hizbullah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad does exist, as the actors themselves have acknowledged this a number of times. Far from a schema of operational cooperation in the form of an integrated and descending hierarchical ensemble—as popularized by the discourse about the Shiite peril—the history of this collaboration reveals a great deal of complexity. Throughout the last thirty years, in fact, this collaboration proceeded from complementarities and competitions between a "historical" Lebanese channel (to which was attached an Iranian channel that almost disappeared in 1981–1982) and another channel, more recent and Iranian. Fatah held a central place in this game, which is deliberately forgotten by the supporters of the theory of the Shiite conspiracy in the present-day. Each of the actors has retained an indubitable autonomy within this collaboration which, away from the religious field, is based on circumstantial political interests: Iran, Hizbullah, Fatah, Jihad and Hamas, depending on epochs, recourse to each other for the building or the preservation of their military and political apparatus in a common search of "liberation" and/or "revolution".

In the religious domain, the mobilizing capacities of the discourse about the Shiite peril among Sunnite populations shows a rupture with the recent period of modernist Islam, during which the rapprochement between Sunnism and Shiism was a motto used by al-Azhar as well as the Muslim Brotherhood. This discourse illustrates the failure of this slogan. In the political domain, this same mobilizing capacity testifies to a newly opened page where the Salafists (even if they sometimes borrow some of their concepts from al-Qaida) constitute the new potential partners of the supposedly "secular" regimes, members of the Western sphere in their conflict with the Islamists (in the Muslim Brotherhood manner), who are their only true opponents endowed with popular support.

4

Ideological Tensions Between Hizbullah and *Jihadi* Salafism

Mutual Perceptions and Mutual Fears

Joseph Alagha[1]

Introduction

Fatah al-Islam (FaI), a *takfiri* jihadi Salafist movement inspired by al-Qaida, presented the first security threat both to the Lebanese state and to the Shiite resistance movement Hizbullah in the period following the evacuation of the PLO from Lebanon in 1982 and the collapse of its Sunnite allied militias, most notably the Nasserite *Murabitun*.[2] The sudden power vacuum this created left room for Hizbullah to gradually run the show, spearheading the resistance against the Israeli occupation until it succeeded in virtually driving the Israeli army out of Lebanon in May 2000. Until the appearance of FaI in 2006, Hizbullah had no local ideological competitor that posed a threat to its domination. FaI regards the Shiites as *rafida* (heterodox heretics) who should be fought against in the same manner as the "crusader and Jewish" occupying armies of Muslim lands. FaI has sought to use its transnational linkages to al-Qaida and global jihad to make Lebanon another Iraq where Sunnite-Shiite discord (*fitna*) might still explode into a full-scale civil war. FaI's innovative recruitment tactics have been more

effective than those of al-Qaida, and the organization has lured many Arabs, Muslims, and even hundreds of foreign European Muslim jihadists to join its ranks.[3]

FaI came to prominence in November 2006 in the Palestinian refugee camp of Nahr al-Barid in North Lebanon. In less than a year, domestic, regional, and international factors, along with strategic mistakes and miscalculations, led to its defeat by the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) on 2 September 2006.[4] FaI believed that the camp was a safe haven that was immune to any attack by the LAF on the basis that the Lebanese government would honour the defunct 1969 Cairo Agreement, which barred its military from entering the twelve Palestinian refugee camps. Indeed, storming a Palestinian camp and demolishing it in its entirety sets an important precedent, which enforces the Lebanese state as the sole owner of the monopoly of violence, even though the eleven remaining camps are still off-limits to the LAF. This precedent could also be interpreted as a step in the right direction to the implementation of UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1559 with regard to disarming the Palestinians, in compliance with the text of the resolution that called for disarming all non-Lebanese and Lebanese militias operating on Lebanese soil, the latter being an unequivocal reference to Hizbullah, which retained its arms after the end of the fifteen-year civil war in 1990. Some scholars, academics, policy-makers, political analysts, and journalists who subscribe to conspiracy theories argue that the Sunnite prime minister's Centralist Future Movement (*wasatiyya*), which wields enormous influence over the Salafi movement in Lebanon, intended to use FaI as a strong bulwark against Hizbullah in any flare up of Sunnite-Shiite *fitna*. However, the entire organization of FaI was annihilated before the break up of the major post-civil war Sunnite-Shiite *fitna* in May 2008. Hizbullah succeeded, within a few days, in gaining control over the predominantly Sunnite West Beirut, which houses the Lebanese government's most important ministries and institutions, after reigning in the Future Movement's security guards and successfully neutralizing the LAF. After a few months of Hizbullah's show of force, in an endeavour to defuse the crisis, the party reached out to its ideological enemies, the Salafis, by jointly signing an eight-point Understanding with the latter, the main aim of which was to avoid *fitna* in the future. However, the détente did not last long and in August 2010 turf battles erupted between Hizbullah and the Sunnite *al-Ahbash* in West Beirut.

Transnational ideology and relations

Wiktorowicz classifies Salafis into three distinct, but interrelated categories: purist Salafism (quietist, conservative Salafism or "apolitical" Salafism); politicos or political reformist; and jihadi Salafism:

(1) The purists emphasize a focus on nonviolent methods of propagation, purification, and education. They view politics as a diversion that encourages deviancy.[5]
(2) Politicos, in contrast, emphasize application of the Salafi creed to the political arena, which they view as particularly important because it dramatically impacts social justice and the right of God alone to legislate.
(3) Jihadis take a more militant position and argue that the current context calls for violence and revolution.[6]

Meijer adds that, "jihadi Salafism concentrates on the struggle (*jihad*) and activism as self-fulfilment (even if it means martyrdom)".[7]

Theoretical dimensions[8]

The concern of this chapter is with FaI as a jihadi Salafist movement. FaI's ideology looks very similar to that of bin Laden and al-Qaida.[9] It regards Jews and Christians, or "Crusaders", as well as all non-Sunnite Muslims, as infidels (*kuffar*).[10] Israeli Jews are considered "Zionists", Arab Christians are regarded as "agents of the neo crusaders", and the US government as "Satan".[11] Sunnite Muslims who do not adhere to their ideology are not treated any better. They and all Arab regimes are regarded as apostates (*murtaddun*) who should be killed if they do not revert back to "true, authentic Islam", as their leader Shakir al-'Absi stated: "revert to Islam you rulers of *ridda* [apostate] and followers of Satan [US]."[12]

Jihadi Salafis "believe that Israelis and westerners are fundamentally evil and part of a non-Muslim occupation army bent on exploiting Arab lands and resources. Throughout the early 1980s and most of the 1990s, their focus was on the violent overthrow of what they saw as corrupt, apostate nation-state autocracies across the Arab and Muslim world".[13] Jihadi Salafis convey a "supercilious respect for the sacred texts in their most literal form, but they combine it with an absolute commitment to jihad, whose number one target has to be America, perceived as the greatest enemy of faith".[14] They are not concerned about defining an Islamic state, but rather with the

implementation of Islamic Law (*shari'a*): "the more *Shari'a* the better". The shift is from state sponsored actions, which are directed against domestic targets, towards a deterritorialized supranational kind of activism aiming to perform jihad against "Crusaders and Jews" throughout the world.[15] Jihadi Salafis think of themselves as Muslims first and foremost, and not as citizens of a particular country. They do not care about borders and national interest; they do not even root themselves in any particular country. Instead, they follow the "jihad of the day" or global jihad, "geopolitics", or political neojihad for all.[16]

In spite of al-'Absi's denial that "we do not brand as infidels any one of the people of the *qibla* [Muslims] as long as they are committed to following the Qur'an and Sunna"[17]—which is vague and open to many interpretations as to whom these people are—both Shaykh Maher Hammud, the Imam of the Quds Mosque in Sidon, and Shaykh Dr 'Usama al-Rifa'i, the mufti of 'Akkar, acknowledge that FaI are not pure Salafists, but rather form a syncretic mix of takfiri Salafism.[18]

Although the majority of the LAF are Muslims, FaI has described it as "the crusader army" because its members are willing to serve under a Christian commander, General Michael Sulayman, the "crusader Christian".[19] FaI also shares the same love for "martyrdom" as al-Qaida. Thus, although the LAF had repeatedly offered FaI militants the opportunity to surrender, promising them a fair trial, they consistently refused to sign a truce, stressing the duty to fight to the death.[20]

In line with al-Qaida's ideology, al-'Absi divides the world into a metaphysical battle between

> "those who fight in the name of God and rise His banner and the infidels, the US, Israel, and the Lebanese security forces, who are despicable, mean and exercise hatred against Islam and the Muslims. These forces are aided by pro-American Middle Eastern states and the Palestinian Authority, which are executing the US-Israeli policy of naturalizing the Palestinian refugees and doing away with their right of return, in an attempt to reach a final settlement [peace agreement] with the enemy [Israel] [...] Also the *'ulama* who support these forces are condemned. God will place you in eternity with whom you love: Michael Sulayman and Fu'ad al-Sanyura (the Lebanese PM) [...] Nation of Islam, the war has started between belief (*iman*) and infidelity (*kufr*) in the land of Greater Syria, as Shaykh Usama bin Laden has said, may God protect him and grant him the power to continue his jihad against the tyrants and oppressors".[21]

Like al-Qaida, FaI considers it a religious duty to transform the Abode of War (*dar al-harb*) into the Abode of Islam (*dar al-Islam*) through jihad.

Peace will only be achieved when the entire world becomes Muslim. In line with al-Qaida, FaI regards Lebanon as the Land of Victory (*ard al-nusra*)[22] and the Land of Holy War (*ard al-jihad*).[23] However, in contrast to al-Qaida, it also regards it as the Land of Steadfastness (*ard al-ribat*),[24] especially after the adoption of UNSC Resolution 1701 and the deployment of a robust UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon), mainly composed of European soldiers, whom FaI regards as NATO forces.[25] Thus, irrespective of its context, FaI regards jihad as an obligatory religious duty (*fard 'ayn*)[26] incumbent upon every capable Muslim. FaI does not limit jihad to the defence of the land, the self, money, or possessions (*jihad al-daf'*).

Practical dimension, local specificity

FaI members are mobilized on religious and ideological grounds. The FaI curriculum is comprised of almost the same religious and intellectual foundations as al-Qaida's. Even FaI's logistical and mobilization capabilities are adopted from al-Qaida. However, there is an important difference: FaI tailors its official discourse to suit the local circumstances in Lebanon, and it also focuses on Palestine. This is especially true in the formulation of its local political aspirations, which al-Qaida does not condone.[27] Abu Salim Taha, FaI's spokesman, for instance, confirmed the organization's intellectual link with al-Qaida, but he also stressed the impossibility of FaI becoming part of al-Qaida due to their different views with regard to issues such as the target of jihad and the sources of funding for jihad.[28] Like al-Qaida, FaI's fighters are willing to lie and deny responsibility for bomb attacks, as was the case, for instance, with an attack on two commuter busses in *'Ayn 'Alaq*, near *Bikfayya*, in which three civilians were killed and twenty wounded.[29/30] More importantly, in a combination of Palestinian and larger Sunnite issues, Abu Salim Taha has stated that his organization is burning the candle at both ends: it is fighting the "Israeli enemy to regain Jerusalem as well as protecting the *ahl al-Sunna* (Sunnis of Lebanon) from the plans that have been contrived against them". It is an open organization in the sense that "anyone who believes in our ideology and doctrine can join us." Al-'Absi added that, "*ahl al-Sunna* will remain a spearhead in fighting the Jews and Americans".[31]

Typically for the syncretism of the movement, FaI issued religious edicts (*fatwas*) that allow cheating, deception, lying, and stealing in order to

finance its "*jihadi* activities against the infidels and deserters of Islamic teachings" or "to terrify [terrorize] thereby the enemy of God and your enemy" (8:60); the latter, which is ironically their most heavily invoked Qur'anic verse, is intended to grant religious legitimacy to their rogue acts. The movement states that "anything in the service of the cause is allowed", even if it appears contrary to established Islamic values and norms.[32] Their *fatwas* serve to sanction criminal activities such as bank robberies and the raiding of exchange centres.[33/34] Under the notion of *maslaha* (public interest) and the jurisprudential rule of "necessity permits what is prohibited" (*al-darurat tubihu al-mahzurat*),[35] FaI exploits Islamic norms to suit their purposes, including killing innocent civilians and booby trapping children, corpses, and animals.[36] The Lebanese intelligence service[37] has spread the rumour that FaI fighters consume large quantities of drugs, especially derivatives of opium stacked in dates, as well as hash, hallucinogenic pills, and sedatives so that they "can chop heads in cold blood" and feel no pain when they are wounded, thus becoming invincible fighters.[38] Following the strict Salafi dress code, they not only penalize women and men who do not abide by their dress code, but they also label any male who does not grow a beard an "infidel".[39] Likewise, FaI calls for a strict implementation of the *shari'a* in the Palestinian refugee camps.

FaI subscribes to the concept of the Emirate, a mini-Islamic state. At one point, emir Shakir al-'Absi aimed to form an Islamic Emirate in North Lebanon (Tripoli and vicinity) and to impose Islamic law there. He stressed that the ideological background of his organization is inspired by the Qur'an and the Sunna. Al-'Absi has claimed that FaI's mission is to establish the religious foundations of Islam in society and reform what has been corrupted in order to lift the banner of *La illaha illa Allah* (there is no god but Allah) over Palestine. He has emphasized that FaI is an independent organization that does not take orders from any state or from non-state actors. He has conveyed affinity with al-Qaida members, asserting that "all those who fight the US are our brothers", but it is clear that the organization is also linked to the Palestinian cause. Shakir al-'Absi stated that "there is no organizational or logistical link between FaI and al-Qaida, but we embrace its doctrine of fighting infidels [...] we support Bin Laden's ideas and we're not afraid to be labeled as terrorists."[40] He added that he is going to implant religion into the Palestinian struggle.[41] As to the sources of funding for FaI, al-'Absi states that his organization relies heavily on the giving of alms (*zakât*), voluntary religious donations from Muslims, and charity-related funds. But it seems that this flow of funds is not substantial. It is

more likely that FaI acquires its funds through criminal activities, such as "break and entry" and armed robbery, which it sanctions by *fatwas* if the funds are spent on "*jihadi* operations against the infidels and the heretics". These funds were used to entrench the organization in Tripoli, the capital of the North. In order to avoid surveillance, condos and offices were bought in the most expensive and prestigious neighbourhoods of the city.[42]

The extent to which it is difficult for an aspiring transnational organization with local ties such as FaI to become an affiliate of al-Qaida is apparent from the decision of al-Qaida to dispatch one of its experts in religious (*shar'i*) affairs, the Saudi Abdallah bin Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Bishi,[43] to assess FaI's credentials. Al-Bishi in fact turned the request down, after having been informed of FaI's un-Islamic practices[44] in Nahr al-Barid, and declared himself to be "shocked, abhorred, and appalled" by their un-Islamic conduct. For instance, al-Bishi was surprised to learn that al-'Absi and his family did not strictly observe all religious duties. He even issued *fatwas* against the "perverted" practices that some FaI militants used to acquire funds, such as the smuggling of guns, the illegal trafficking of goods, and the illegal taxing of prohibited practices. Al-Bishi's verdicts led to a strained relationship between al-Qaida and FaI's leading cadres, especially Abu Madyan, who confined al-Bishi to house arrest. Furthermore, al-Bishi told some of the recruits, especially the Saudis, that Lebanon is neither the Land of Jihad nor the Land of Steadfastness, but the Land of Victory, thereby admonishing those who seek jihad to head to other arenas of struggle, most notably Iraq.[45] Although al-Bishi's pronouncements might have been made with the aim of rapprochement with the Saudi regime, they reveal a great deal about the character of FaI.

Sunnite-Shiite conflict: Domestic, regional, and international dimensions

Conspiracy theory

The renowned US journalist Seymour Hersh accused the Lebanese government of complicity in the founding of FaI by supplying the organization with arms, money, and logistical help, and by turning a blind eye to its activities in order to exploit it as a strong ally in any possible breakout of violence among the Sunnis and Shiites in Lebanon, since it is the ideological enemy of Hizbullah.[46] Hizbullah's unofficial daily mouthpiece *al-Akhbar* of 24 May 2007 reiterated the same scenario, as did the ex-UNIFIL Major-General

Commander Alain Pellegrini, who accused the Lebanese government of involvement. "Those financing the [jihadi Salafi] *Jund al-Sham* in Sidon are also those behind FaI in Nahr al-Barid," Pellegrini told Hizbullah's official weekly mouthpiece *al-Intiqad*,[47] which is an indirect reference to MP Bahiyya al-Hariri, ex-PM Hariri's sister, who is accused of heavily financing the Palestinian jihadi Salafis to use them as a bulwark against Hizbullah in the event of a flare up of Sunnite-Shiite discord. This analysis is also borne out by many local and international observers, academics, and policy-makers.[48]

Itani even claims, based on evidence he collected, that the Lebanese government was not only an accomplice, but a main player in the founding of FaI, as he asserts that the Lebanese police (ISF) bussed FaI fighters from 'Ayn al-Hilwé to Nahr al-Barid. Moreover, Itani adds that, in November 2006, ex-Islamic Association (*Al-Jama'a Al-Islamiyya*) MP Khalid al-Daher[49] visited al-'Absi, who was wanted as a result of an arrest warrant issued against him by the Lebanese police. Al-Daher told al-'Absi that Hizbullah intended to attack the Sunnis of Lebanon and that FaI will get all the help it needs as long as it makes a solemn promise to stand by *ahl al-Sunna* and defend them from any ill that might befall them. Al-'Absi replied that: "We do not want to fight Hizbullah as long as it is fighting Israel; however, if Hizbullah attacks the Sunnis, then we will fight the *rafida* till death." Following the conversation, in-kind and material aid, as well as monthly pay cheques, were issued to FaI fighters and cadres.[50] Saab and Ranstorp corroborate Itani's story.

Hizbullah was not idle. On a parallel ground, it was coercing its Sunnite allies to found an alliance to stand in the face of the growing Salafi threat. There was no better man to do the job than the veteran Shaykh Fathi Yakan, the pioneer of Sunnite Islamism in Lebanon and a principal founder of the Islamic Association. "In August 2006, Yakan formed *Jabhat al-'Amal al-Islami*, an umbrella organization that brings together major Lebanese Sunnite groups and organizations from all parts of the country aiming to 'fill an existing gap' and 'create an authoritative body for the Sunnis in Lebanon' that will 'work in cooperation with the other authoritative bodies.' Of those groups are *Harakat al-Tawhid al-Islami*; [...] Islam Without Borders Organization [...]; in addition to several members of *al Jemaah Islamiyah* [Islamic Association], like Abdallah al-Tiryaki, who broke with the leadership and opted to join ranks with Yakan".[51] It is ironic to note that by these actions Hizbullah is unconsciously contributing to the rise of jihadi Salafism in Lebanon, a movement that endeavours to offset the growing power of Hiz-

bullah.[52] Gade adds that, "Growing hostility to Hezbollah and Shiite dominance in Lebanon has clearly been a factor in the rise of Sunni Extremism there, and it has contributed to raising the legacy of Sunni extremist militancy inside Lebanon. It could also have contributed to giving Sunni activists in Lebanon the idea of imitating Hizbullah in its exploitation of ideology to receive support".[53]

Foiling the terrorism plot

Basim Al-Sabi', the Lebanese minister of interior, believes that FaI consists of a local branch that deals with Lebanese issues under the tutelage of Syrian intelligence, in addition to a regional and international branch that deals with the recruitment of foreign nationals. He has stated that FaI members in custody have confessed to planning to attack UNIFIL forces[54] in South Lebanon and had planned the assassination of thirty-six leading Lebanese figures,[55] including the Maronite Patriarch. In addition to plotting to attack the Lebanese ministries, and especially the Ministry of Interior, FaI planned to target the General Directorate of the General Security, and LAF barracks, especially in the North where it intended to establish its Emirate. The plan was to detonate bombs in the old and new tunnels that link the North to the rest of Lebanon, after which FaI would declare the formation of an Islamic Emirate in Tripoli and the vicinity based on the *shari'a*, thus emulating the experience of the Islamic Unity Movement (*Harakat al-Tawhid al-Islami*) under the leadership of the late Shaykh Sa'id Sha'ban, who, in 1983, militarily controlled Tripoli and the surrounding Muslim areas.[56/57] The ISF supposedly thwarted these attempts.

From his side, Shakir al-'Absi claimed that a campaign has been arranged to discredit his organization, and countered the above accusation by arguing that even though he is ready for battle, Islam prohibits the killing of innocent civilians.[58] He warned against the "conspiracy" of accusing FaI of working for Hariri's Future Trend (majority leader of the ruling coalition), Hizbullah, the Syrian intelligence, and al-Qaida, arguing that this is a prelude to a hostile project against the camps and the Palestinian presence in Lebanon: "We did not come to destroy; rather we came to build and remove corruption from the country", by way of jihad. Al-'Absi said that his suicide bombers are ready to confront any aggression against the camps, contending that Israel is the primary target of these martyrs.[59]

Nonetheless, FaI ambitions exceeded the founding of an Emirate in the North, and extended to the establishment of a transnational Islamic Jihadi

Army, with various sections and units. It is not surprising that a few days before the confrontations started on 20 May 2007, al-'Absi held meetings with the twenty-nine year old Syrian, Muhammad Habbal, in order to form a Marine Unit, as well as units for external security headed by the leading cadre Saddam al-Hajj Dib.[60] Al-'Absi also founded a Personal Security Unit, a Secret Missions Unit, a Bombing Unit, led by Abu Yazan, and a Hospitality Unit to equip Arab and Asian fighters who consider Lebanon to be a Land of jihad and *ribat*.[61]

Condemnation and exoneration

On 9 August 2007, the US administration added FaI to its list of terrorist organizations, according to the previously amended 13224 decree, paragraph 1B, thus freezing its assets and banning any dealings with it. Washington considers FaI to be an offshoot of *Fatah al-Intifada*, which is supported by Syria. While the US still blames Syria for supporting FaI,[62] the LAF General Michael Sulayman exonerated both Syria and the Lebanese government of any blame for or complicity with FaI by arguing that FaI is an offshoot of al-Qaida and is heavily influenced by its ideology; thus, he concluded that the LAF are fighting a war against "international terrorism". This stance runs contrary to the earlier position of the Minister of Interior and Prime Minister Fu'ad al-Sanyura who contended that FaI is a policy tool in the hands of the Syrian intelligence and state apparatus, a charge vehemently denied by the Syrian regime.[63] The Lebanese military intelligence supported the Lebanese government's stance when it revealed that the interrogations with FaI suspects, as well as Shakir al-Absi's wife and daughter, substantiated the earlier evidence of an organizational link between the FaI's leader and the Syrian intelligence, before and during the *Nahr al-Barid* confrontations.[64] Whatever the case, these revelations suggest a regional and international hand in the formation, operation, and functioning of FaI. Although FaI hid itself under the banner and umbrella of the Israel-Palestinian conflict, it is most likely that its ambitions stretch beyond this to exercise global jihad, as its diversified multinational credentials and linkages to al-Qaida might suggest.[65/66]

Final Word

On 29 November 2008 FaI issued a statement entitled "The Truth on the Continuous Aggression Against FaI in the Levant", in which it contended

that the "Nusyri ('Alawi) Syria,[67] the crusader Maronite Lebanon, Hizb al-Shaytan *al-rafidi* [the 'rejectionist' Party of Satan i.e. Hizbullah], secularist Fatah, and the Muslim Brotherhood [the 'deceivers of the faithful' who rendered fake 'religious legitimacy to regimes that only deserve to be annihilated']"[68] have coalesced in order to fight the adherents of the Salafi Trend" who are always "just and righteous". In reference to the November arrest of six FaI militants who took part in bomb attacks in Lebanon and Syria, FaI accused the PLO of handing them to the "infidel Lebanese Army". FaI accused the "atheist infidels" (Syrian intelligence) of forging the confessions of alleged FaI members and abducting al-'Absi's daughter, Wafa, who was forced to confess under duress of crimes she did not commit. FaI blasted the Syrian-Iranian role in Lebanon, which made the Shiites control Lebanon through "Hizb al-Shaytan". The statement condemned the "sidelining of *ahl al-Sunna*" and the "indifference of the purist Salafis"[69]—the main Salafi trend in Tripoli led by Shaykh Da'i al-Islam al-Shahhal who refuses any association with FaI—moderate Islamists, and "leftist political parties" of marketing the war waged against FaI as a "war on terror".[70] As Moussalli rightly noted, "The biggest Sunni political power is [Sa'd] Hariri.[71] The biggest Sunni religious power are the Salafists".[72]

On 8 December 2008, an FaI affiliated website announced that al-'Absi[73] and his two companions, who had earlier escaped with him from Nahr al-Barid, had either been arrested or possibly "martyred" after a bloody confrontation with the Syrian security forces near Damascus. After waiting for three days, the group's religious body (*al-Hay'a al-Shar'iyya*), which has the incumbent duty of electing the Emir, chose the Palestinian Shaykh Abd al-Rahman 'Awad (alias Abu Muhammad)—the Emir of the group in the 'Ayn al-Hilwé[74] camp who is accused of orchestrating two bombing attacks against the Lebanese Army in Tripoli and the UNIFIL in the South—to succeed al-'Absi.[75] On 1 September 2009, the Kuwaiti daily "*Al-Ra'i*" reported that Daniel Bellemare, the chief judge appointed by the UN Tribunal to investigate the Lebanese PM Rafiq Hariri's murder,[76] interrogated al-'Absi in a Syrian prison.[77]

Latest Developments

On 14 August 2010, in Shtura, in the northeast of Lebanon, LAF ambushed and killed Abd al-Rahman 'Awad and his aide Abu Bakr Ghazi Mubarak while they were on their way to perform jihad with the al-Qaida

affiliated "Islamic State in Iraq". A third cadre managed to escape. On 19 August 2010, 'Awad and Mubarak were buried in 'Ayn al-Hilwé in the presence of Abu Sharif 'Aql, the military commander of *'Usbat al-Ansar*. After the assassination, FaI elected Usama al-Shahabi as its new Emir and Tawfiq Muhammad Taha as his aide.[78] This development coincided with the Lebanese parliament amending the 1946 labour law and ratifying a new law that allows the Palestinians to work in all fields except those pertaining to professional syndicates (such as medicine, law, engineering and the like) in an attempt to grant them part of the civil rights that they were denied as refugees for six decades.

Fadlallah's and Hizbullah's Stance on the Unity of Muslims

The late Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah (1935–2010), the highest-ranking Shiite religious authority in Lebanon, called for the unity of Muslims, stressing that the Qur'an cautions against *fitna*.[79] According to him the Quranic usage of *fitna* connotes a state of chaos among the believers or populace that leads to psychological and mental suffering, hardship, and chastisement.[80]

Ayatollah Fadlallah emphasized that any local collaboration with Israel and the US creates *fitna*, and he thus urged the Muslim populace to be responsible and to mobilize against the perpetrators of *fitna* in order to safeguard the existence and future of Muslims. He also stressed that *fitna* can result from partnership with the unjust ruling elite. Therefore, Fadlallah cautioned that the seeds of *fitna* should be uprooted so that the Muslims could forge their unity.[81]

Hizbullah is an ardent supporter and advocate of Muslim unity as well. In particular, both its 1985 founding document the "Open Letter" and its second 2009 manifesto called for the unity of Muslims by invoking Qur'anic verses and religious sensibilities.

Hizbullah's political ideology discussed the inner and outer causes of *fitna* among the Muslims. The party's 1985 Open Letter warned against the imperialist discord that is threatening to rapture the whole Muslim world. It blamed the "devilish conspiracy" of the imperialist-colonialist nations for killing and concealing righteous *'ulama* who opposed its "aggressive plans" and who were calling for Islamic unity in order to thwart Western conspiracy and ward off its venomous discord that is being disseminated among the Muslims. Hizbullah called on the Muslim *'ulama* to be united by stress-

ing the dangers of Sunnite-Shiite *fitna*, which the imperialists and oppressors are trying to fuel in order to divide and conquer the Muslim *umma*. Thus, Section 22 of the Open Letter, entitled "God is with the unity of the Muslims", stressed the need to:

> Be aware of the malignant colonial discord [*fitna*] that aims at rupturing your unity in order to spread sedition among you and enflame Sunni-Shiite sectarian feelings, inciting Sunnis against the Shiites and vice versa [...] God is with the unity of the Muslims [...] It is the rock that breaks all the conspiracies of the oppressors; it is the hammer that crushes the evil schemes of the oppressors [...] Do not allow the policy of "divide and rule" to be practiced among you; rather fight it by recourse to the Qur'an (3:103) and (6:159).[82]

Hizbullah's leading cadres, such as Hasan Nasrallah, Husayn al-Musawi, and Shaykh Subhi al-Tufayli,[83] Hizbullah's first secretary general, highlighted the importance of the unity of the Muslims on a global level through an all-encompassing Islamic state.[84] In addition, they stressed the Islamic doctrine of the consciousness of unification in the Muslim *umma*. Thus, for Hizbullah the unity of all Muslims is a legitimate duty incumbent upon them in order to ward off the discord of infidelity (*fitnat al-takfir*).[85]

Hizbullah's 2009 manifesto reiterated:

> We therefore remind of the importance of unity among Muslims. The Almighty has said: "And hold on fast, together, to the rope of God, and be not separated" (3:103). We take heed of those causes of division between the people, such as confessional provocations that are instigated especially between Sunnis and Shiites. We count on the awareness of all Muslims in addressing what is being contrived against them at this level.[86]

In brief, Hizbullah's political ideology heeded Imam Khumayni's call for pan-Islamism, especially in the wake of what he termed the worldwide conspiracy against the unity of the Muslims. Hizbullah's political ideology has always called for unity, both in the Islamic and domestic fronts, in order to avoid the dangers of discord. Hizbullah advocates pan-Islamism in order to render special attention to the dangers of discord, stressing a revolutionary distinction between upright Muslim religious scholars and the corrupt ones, or state jurists who follow the injunctions of the imperialist colonizers by applying the precept of divide and conquer. Hizbullah based its call for the unity of Muslims and warding off *fitna* on a host of Qur'anic verses: (3:103); (6:159); (2:191); (2:193); (8:28); (8:73).

It seems that the conspiracy theory has also governed some of Hizbullah's visions. This is why Hizbullah considers any political or military dispute

between Sunnis and Shiites as an oppressor/colonizer conspiracy aimed at spreading discord and dissention among the Muslims. Thus, Hizbullah blames internal discord on the West. Hizbullah has repeatedly warned against this and has called upon Muslims to uphold common grounds that will ultimately enforce their power in the face of the mounting challenges facing the *umma*.

Hizbullah's discourse is general in the sense that it does not give specific examples on Sunnite-Shiite disagreements, since this would lead to discord, when Hizbullah's aim is the unity of all Muslims. However, Hizbullah's efforts to unify Muslims remained on a theoretical level as a kind of persuasive smaller jihad by the tongue and heart, rather than real Sunnite-Shiite unity, mainly due to their mutually branding each other with infidelity (*khutab al-takfir*) and the disintegration that the Islamic community was passing through. Nevertheless, in the local Lebanese context "The Union of Muslim 'Ulama"[87] has covered some ground on the way to unifying Islamic work among the Sunnite and Shiite *'ulama* as well as their respective populations, at least through mutual dialogue and understanding. Hizbullah argued that respecting the jurisprudential differences among the Sunnis and Shiites does not preclude unity and cooperation among the Sunnite and Shiite Islamists on common political-ideological concepts such as anti-imperialism, anti-Zionism, "the liberation of Jerusalem", and so on. In fact, such political-ideological concepts have forged a unity of interests and common goals between Hizbullah and Sunnite Islamists such as the Lebanese *Harakat Al-Tawhid Al-Islami* and *Al-Jama'a Al-Islamiyya*, as well as Palestinian Sunnite Islamists, all of which received material support from Iran.

Hizbullah also founded a military alliance with the jihadi Salafi Ansar Allah. Ansar Allah number around two hundred fighters who are deployed in *Miyyé wa Miyyé* and *'Ayn al-Hilwa*, Palestinian refugee camps near Sidon. It was founded by Jamal Sulayman, an ex-Fatah commander, in 1989.[88] Sulayman subsequently developed a personal relationship with Sayyid Nasrallah, became heavily influenced by Hizbullah's ideology, and celebrates "Jerusalem Day", which Imam Khumayni declared during the last Friday of the month of Ramadan, raising Hizbullah's banners and flags as well as a miniature of the Dome of the Rock. Ansar Allah sent fighters to Iraq as well, and they also targeted ex-PM Hariri's Future TV in 2004.[89/90] Itani even claims that Ansar Allah fought the Israelis alongside Hizbullah during the July 2006 war.[91]

Hizbullah's Relations with the Salafis, in particular, and the Sunnis, in general

Nasrallah's appeasement speech

In May 2007, in the wake of the commencement of the hostilities in Nahr al-Barid between FaI and the LAF, FaI gained support from an unexpected quarter. Although the Lebanese Shiite resistance movement Hizbullah is considered to be the ideological enemy of FaI, Hizbullah's Secretary General, Sayyid Hasan Nasrallah, did not condemn FaI. Employing a policy of appeasement, rather than befriending or antagonizing FaI, Nasrallah even warned of breaching two red lines. In words reminiscent of the late Syrian president Hafiz Al-Asad, Nasrallah warned that, "entering the camp is a red line", while at the same time he stressed that "any attack against the LAF is also a red line, and is vehemently condemned whoever the perpetrators might be". He cautioned that any decision the Lebanese government takes to enter Nahr al-Barid is tantamount to sacrificing the Lebanese Army, the Palestinian people, and Lebanon: "We reject transforming Lebanon into a fighting ground between the US and al-Qa'ida—as has happened in Iraq [...]. We can never support a new War of the Camps."[92] Nasrallah's moderate discourse, at a time of severe discord between Sunnis and Shiites, was meant to ward off sectarian violence (*fitna*).[93]

This sharply contrasts with Nasrallah's earlier view in which he labelled the *takfiri* Salafis as: "a fanatic and extremist group that lives in the Middle Ages and has no brain, no heart, no religion, no morality, and yet claims to be Muslim [...] those fanatic murderers [...] have no religion other than killing and bloodletting, and are people that everyone, the Sunnis before the Shiites, rejects [...] these kind of people are unwanted by this nation" [*umma*].[94/95] Noe explains: "Nasrallah would repeatedly voice his rejection and condemnation of Sunni extremists, including but not limited to al-Qaeda, who embraced the principle of *takfir* in fighting Shiism—that is, declaring the Shiites were apostates, and therefore subject to punishment by death".[96] Gade adds, "Nasrallah has himself also pointed to the growing Sunni fear of Hezbollah [...] he criticized the anti-Shiite sentiments of 'some parties with Salafi inclinations' in Iraq, and especially al-Zarqawi's al-Qaida in the Land of the Two Rivers" (2007:49).

Hizbullah's views on fitna and Jihad

Unlike the Salafis who consider *taqiyya* (expedient dissimulation) as an innovation (*bid'a*), "which they condemned as mere human interpretation",[97] Nasrallah argued that Hizbullah follows *taqiyya* in order to avoid creating a schism among the ranks of Muslims. From this perspective, Nasrallah declared that *fitna* should be warded off at all costs since its consequences would be catastrophic for the *umma*. As a practice of political *taqiyya*, Hizbullah has always called for unity, both in the Islamic and domestic fronts, in order to avoid *fitna*.[98] Shaykh Subhi al-Tufayli has warned that the Shiites will be "slaughtered like sheep" in any global Sunnite-Shiite *fitna*, since they are a minority.[99]

Nasrallah qualifies the meaning and implications of jihad when he affirms, "Not all fighting is jihad". According to Nasrallah, the Islamic-Qur'anic terminology (*mustalah*) or definition of jihad, is that jihad is the specificity of fighting in the name of God: "Oh believers, if you journey [fight with the sword] in the way of Allah be discerning. [...] And he who kills a believer intentionally will, as punishment, be thrown into Hell, dwelling in it forever; and Allah will be angry with him, curse him and prepare for him a dreadful punishment" (4:94–93). Thus, for Nasrallah, this is the toughest punishment in the Qur'an that can be inflicted upon a person who intentionally kills a believer, for this a *kabira* (the worst sin). Nasrallah adds that jihad has its own religious injunctions and jurisprudence; there is *halal* (religiously sanctioned) and *haram* (religiously prohibited) in jihad. That is why he stressed the need to ask the jurisprudents about the jurisprudential details dealing with jihadi work, or else this work will not be done for God, but for some other end. Thus, jihad in the name of God should be governed by God's *shari'a*, God's legitimacy, and the total subjugation and obedience to God's volition in order to avoid *fitna*.[100] Unlike Hizbullah, jihadi Salafis "believe resistance and jihad should prevail over the conservatives' fear for *fitna*"[101] without specifying any limitations or boundaries for their jihad.

It is worth mentioning that the late Ayatollah Fadlallah had issued a fatwa banning the practice of insulting or cursing the first three rightly guided caliphs.[102] In his Tenth of Muharram 1431 AH/ 2009 AD speech commemorating the "martyrdom" of Imam Husayn in Karbala' in 61 AH/ 680 AD, Ayatollah Fadlallah called for Muslim empowerment through the unity of the Sunnis and Shiites, which is a precursor to the unity of the *umma* in all its constituencies.[103]

Bearing this in mind, are there areas of common ground between Hizbullah and the jihadi Salafis, or are they always at loggerheads? The answer to this is that there are, indeed, many areas of common ground between Hizbullah and the jihadi Salafis.[104] Like Hizbullah, the jihadi Salafis regard "the Jews [Israelis] as killers of the Prophets and enemies to the messengers". They both call for the unity of the Muslims in fighting the invading Jews (Israelis), for reconciliation and unity among Muslims, and for the need to defend Lebanon and liberate the al-Aqsa Mosque.[105] Like Hizbullah, the jihadi Salafis consider Israel to be a "Zionist entity" and a "cancerous gland" that is nibbling the body of the Muslim *umma*. As the jihadi Salafis state: "We are happy with every harm and defeat inflicted upon the Zionists even if it is at the hands of Hizbullah and the Shiites".[106]

Hizbullah's May 2008 military coup

That being said, the tug of war between the mainly Shiite Hizbullah-led March 8 Opposition Group, on the one hand, and the mainly Sunni-led March 14 Trend that supports the Lebanese cabinet, on the other, led to a bitter polarization, which plunged Lebanon into 537 days of stalemate and political deadlock, from 1 December 2006 to 21 May 2008.

This political confrontation escalated into mass demonstrations and military street fights between supporters of both sides of the political spectrum. On 7 May 2008 Hizbullah used a cost-of-living-strike as a springboard to protest against some provocative government decisions, and gunfights erupted in West Beirut between armed supporters of both factions. Although the government withdrew its decisions, on 9 May 2008 Hizbullah fighters took over the predominantly Sunnite West Beirut, which houses the Lebanese government's most important ministries and institutions, and placed the Sunnite PM and his cabinet under house arrest, after succeeding in neutralizing the LAF. However, in a few days Hizbullah handed over their positions and captives to the LAF.

As the violent Sunnite-Shiite confrontations threatened to spark a new civil war, on 14 May the Secretary General of the Arab League Amr Musa headed an Arab committee to Beirut, after turf battles had claimed the lives of around eighty people, the majority of whom were Sunnite. Under an Arab umbrella, both camps (March 8 and March 14) embarked on a "national dialogue" that resulted in the Doha Accord on 21 May, which barred the use of weapons in domestic feuds.

Hizbullah's Understanding with the Salafi Movement: 18 August 2008[107]

After less than three months, at a time when tensions were still running very high and people had not forgotten about their lost blood and destroyed possessions, Hizbullah's public relations campaign paid-off when an understanding was reached with the political Salafis (politicos). After intensive negotiations that lasted for months, on 18 August 2008, Sayyid Ibrahim Amin al-Sayyid, the current head of Hizbullah's Political Council (Politburo), representing Hizbullah, and Shaykh Hasan al-Shahhal representing the Salafi movement in Lebanon, signed an understanding aimed at organizing the relationship between the two parties, defusing the chronic tensions in the Islamic sphere, and warding off any prospect of *fitna*. In a well-attended press conference, the Salafi Shaykh 'Abd Al-Ghaffar Al-Zu'bi, the political aide of the Islamic Heritage Endowment, read the eight points of the Understanding below:

1) Starting from the prohibition of shedding the blood of a Muslim, we prohibit and condemn any aggression committed by any Muslim group on another Muslim group. In case of any aggression or onslaught, the aggrieved party has the right to recourse to any legitimate means to defend itself.
2) Avoiding sedition and provoking the public because this ultimately leads to discord, thus slipping the carpet from underneath the feet of the religious scholars (*'ulama*) and placing the decision in the hand of the rash, vile people or the foes of the Islamic umma.
3) Standing firm in the face of the Zionist-US project, which aims at disseminating discord through the dictum of "divide and conquer".
4) Doing our utmost best to uproot infidel (*takfiri*) thinking that is existent among both the Sunnis and the Shiites because branding all Shiites as infidels is rejected by Salafis and vice versa.
5) If Hizbullah or the Salafis are oppressed or attacked by any domestic or foreign actor, then the other party must stand firm with the aggressed party as much as its capabilities allow.
6) Forming a committee from Hizbullah's *'ulama* and those of the Salafist movement to discuss points of contention between the Sunnis and Shiites, which contributes to confining disagreement among the members of the committee, thus avoiding any spillover to the public, to the street.
7) Every party is free in what it believes in. No party has the right to impose its ideas and its jurisprudential concepts on the other.

8) Both parties (Hizbullah and the Salafis) regard the Understanding as a means to ward off discord among Muslims, and promote civil peace and co-existence among the Lebanese.

The Understanding did not survive long after Hasan al-Shahhal's cousin, Shaykh Da'i al-Islam al-Shahhal—the head of largest puritan Salafi movement in Lebanon—vehemently criticized Hizbullah's move as an attempt to place a wedge among the Salafis, in particular, and divide the Sunnis, in general. However, the eight points above are telling since they portray the possibility of finding a common ground between Sunnis and Shiites if jurisprudential differences are set aside, and common political and ideological points are addressed.

Confrontation between brothers

That being said, détente (*tahdi'a*) did not last. During the holy month of Ramadan, on 24 August 2010, Sunnite-Shiite armed conflict erupted in the streets of West Beirut between al-Ahbash (Association of Islamic Charitable Projects)[108] and Hizbullah, claiming three Hizbullah members, including the security officer of Beirut and his body guard, as well as one al-Ahbash member. Hizbullah burned al-Ahbash's mosques, religious, social, and community centres, and cooperatives.

Two meetings helped to defuse the crisis, although the situation remained fragile. Prime Minister Sa'd al-Hariri met with the Syrian President Bashar al-Asad. The next day Damascus summoned al-Ahbash's leadership and rebuked them for the "bloodily targeting of Hizbullah". On 30 August 2010, a reconciliatory meeting between Nasrallah and al-Ahbash's Shaykh Husam Qaraqira deplored what had happened between "brothers in arms".[109] Nasrallah promised to reimburse the damages, acknowledged that both parties had wronged each other, and that al-Ahbash had been oppressed for some time. He told Qaraqirat: "Beware from entering the dungeons of sectarian *fitna* and targeting the Resistance [Hizbullah] [...] This is something we will never be quiet about." Nasrallah reiterated Hizbullah's official position: "When the *umma* comes closer to obedience (*al-ta'a*) to God, it comes closer to victory."[110]

It is noteworthy that both al-Ahbash and Hizbullah are Syrian allies. Al-Ahbash has been active in destabilizing Dar al-Fatwa of the Lebanese Republic and contesting its religious authority by confiscating mosques and community centres. Also, two leading al-Ahbash cadres served around three

years in prison on suspicion of their role in the 2005 assassination of ex-Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri, but they were subsequently set free due their being insufficient evidence to convict them. It is also worth noting that, unlike the jihadi Salafi Ansar Allah, al-Ahbash refused to aid Hizbullah in the July 2006 war against the Israelis, as well as in the May 2008 confrontations against their fellow Sunnite Muslims, even though they are bound by a military alliance with Hizbullah.

These events led the ruling March 14 coalition to call for a Beirut without arms (i.e. to disarm Hizbullah in Beirut) as a prelude to disarming it altogether in Lebanon. This call remains hollow and futile since Hizbullah's leading cadres and institutions are based in south Beirut. Thus according to the Hizbullah scenario, if the IDF decides to attack them in Beirut, then they would be helpless. These potential events are not beyond the realm of possibility since there is an important link between the jihadi Salafis and al-Ahbash, who consider the other Salafis heretics. In fact, 'Usbat al-Ansar assassinated Shaykh Nizar al-Halabi of al-Ahbash on 31 August 1995 because it considers them *ahl al-Ridda*.[111/112]

Conclusion

FaI's ideology shares certain basic features with al-Qaida, but it has its own ideological characteristics that are specific to the local Lebanese and Palestinian context. Like al-Qaida's ideology, FaI considers it a religious duty to transform the Abode of War, through jihad, into the Abode of Islam, and to establish peace by making the entire world Muslim. However, in contrast to al-Qaida, FaI not only regards Lebanon as the Land of Victory, but also as the Land of Holy War and the Land of Steadfastness. FaI regards jihad as an obligatory religious duty (*fard 'Ayn*) incumbent upon every capable Muslim, without any regard to the context where jihad is carried out. Another major difference in the ideology of both parties is that al-Qaida objects to the unorthodox funding methods used by FaI, which resemble organized crime to a large extent.

Ironically, it seems that FaI relied on the stance of their ideological enemies, the predominantly Shiite Hizbullah that had called for honouring the 1969 Cairo Agreement—"the camp is a redline"—and Hizbullah's previous support of the Palestinians in the War of the Camps, in thinking that the ill-equipped LAF are incapable of launching a war of attrition against it. However, the reality was different. The results of the 106-day war included

the destruction of the Nahr al-Barid camp and the displacement of around 40,000 of its residents. Even after the apparent victory of the LAF, FaI as an organization is far from being completely wiped out because of the presence of dormant cells networked by leading cadres who are still at large.[113] Therefore, LAF's control of the Nahr al-Barid camp does not imply a total annihilation of the movement since FaI cells still have the ability to regroup and mobilize. After all, the success of any Islamic movement depends on its capability to mobilize efficiently.

On 10 September 2007, the Lebanese government, the PLO representative in Lebanon, and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) launched a campaign appealing to the international community to raise an estimated $382 million that was needed for rebuilding the camp and for catering to the needs of its displaced residents. Knowing that Lebanon is facing a chronic debt that reached a high of 180 per cent of its GDP, will the international community deliver? After almost three years, the camp is still virtually in ruins and the captured FaI members are still in detention in a high security Lebanese prison awaiting trial. If the camp is not rebuilt quickly, and if the plight of these detainees drags on without due process while awaiting the administration of justice, then Lebanon may face a growing Palestinian discontent that might spread to other camps, especially to 'Ain Al-Hilwé, and which might even translate itself into military confrontations with FaI's ideological allies in the most populous Palestinian camp in Lebanon, which houses an estimated 80,000 refugees. However, since this scenario is detrimental to everyone's interest, the jihadi Salafis, the Palestinian factions, the Lebanese authorities, and Hizbullah are doing their utmost to contain and control the situation.

Nevertheless, the situation is still fragile. In response to rumours that the Palestinian refugee camps have become a safe haven for al-Qaida, on 12 January 2010 Abu Muhjin—the Emir of the jihadi Salafi 'Usbat Al-Ansar in 'Ayn al-Hilwé—asserted on behalf of all the Palestinian factions in the camps: "We will not allow any person who does not have a Palestinian agenda to enter the camps". He cited close cooperation in this regard between his faction, the PLO, Hamas, the Islamists, LAF, and the UNIFIL.[114] These actions not only lead to positive dialogue between the Palestinians and the Lebanese state, but also between the Palestinians and the Lebanese Shiites, spearheaded by Hizbullah. Although Hizbullah's 2009 manifesto is vehemently against naturalizing the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, it urgently called on the Lebanese government to grant them their

civil rights so that they can lead a dignified life while awaiting the right of return,[115] a step that partially materialized in August 2010 with the ratification of the new labour law.

Will the fragmentation of political authority lead to a bloody Sunnite-Shiite confrontation, as a prelude to an overall Sunnite-Shiite *fitna*? Or will another scenario materialize? Given the holy matrimony and strategic alliance between Sunnite Islamists—such as the Islamic Association (*Al-Jama'a Al-Islamiyya*) of the late Shaykh Fathi Yakan; *Harakat al-Tawhid al-Islami*; the jihadi Salafi Ansar Allah, etc.—on the one hand, and Hizbullah and the Shiites, on the other, on the basis of jihad against Israel and abolishment of political sectarianism under the pretext of reform, would these Sunnite Islamists be willingly or unwillingly, consciously, or unconsciously, complicit in Hizbullah's political programme, policies, actions, and vision?

5

The Territorial Aspect of Sectarianism in Iraq

The Case of Anbar

Reidar Visser

Anbar, the Sunni-dominated, westernmost governorate of the northern part of Iraq, is sometimes cited as a candidate for becoming the second federal region in Iraq, alongside the Kurdistan region that was recognized when the Iraqi constitution was adopted in 2005. If such a development were ever to take place, would it indicate that sectarianism in Iraq has a strong territorial dimension?

This chapter looks at the realities behind the emerging discussion on "Anbar federalism". Its main argument is that, just like in the Shiite-majority areas south of Baghdad, on the whole, few pro-federal signs were discernable in Anbar prior to 2010, and even when such signs tentatively emerged during the course of 2010, they failed to attract widespread popular support locally. At the same time, however, the Sunni-majority population of Anbar continues to show that it is prepared to press hard for wide-ranging rights in the name of the existing governorate. In so doing, they are highlighting a considerable contradiction in the Iraqi political system whereby, under the constitution, existing governorates can theoretically claim most of the rights and privileges of a federal region on the Kurdistan pattern, whereas in practice—as seen in the provincial powers law of 2008,

the rulings of the federal supreme court and the structure of the annual federal budgets—they are relegated to a more subordinate position vis-à-vis Baghdad. Nonetheless, the reluctance of most political players in Anbar to go all the way in claiming a federal region serves as a reminder of the persistence of Iraqi nationalism as a cross-cutting ideal that remains relevant to Sunnis and Shiites alike.

Federalism and sectarian identity in Iraq: The historical record

In a historical perspective, territory and sect were never closely linked in Iraq. Instead, the outstanding feature as far as the historical record goes is the remarkable contrast between a near-omnipresent assumption about ethno-territorial linkages in secondary-source Western literature about Iraq on the one hand, and the stubborn refusal of these linkages to materialize in the empirical world on the other.

Many of the fallacious Western assumptions about territory and sect in Iraq are rooted in the equally fallacious and now widely-refuted "artificiality thesis" about Iraq's origins as a modern state. The merger of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul into a single kingdom in 1921 was supposedly a plot by industrious British imperialists. The most imaginative writers within the "artificiality thesis" tradition go on to attribute ethno-sectarian colours to each Ottoman vilayet, with Basra supposedly being the "most Shiite", Baghdad "more Sunnite", and Mosul somehow "Kurdish". In fact, studies of the late Ottoman era clearly show that the tripartite administrative arrangement of late Ottoman Iraq was in fact an exception that lasted from the 1880s to 1914, whereas previous centuries frequently saw Iraq ruled from Baghdad as a single country with the concept of "Iraq" being widely used as a corresponding category of identity. Moreover, as far as the idea of sectarian distinctiveness for each territorial entity is concerned, even a brief look at the administrative map of late Ottoman Iraq reveals that when the three subdivisions existed between 1884 and 1914, Baghdad stretched all the way southwards to today's Muthanna governorate—thereby making it easily the "most Shiite" governorate with both Najaf and Karbala and their holy sites within its borders—which makes the idea that Basra was a "more Shiite" vilayet than Baghdad utterly problematic.[1]

Perhaps the best window on the absence of strong links between sect and territory in Iraq is the historical record of what happened when, after five hundred years of Ottoman rule, a completely new political order was insti-

tuted in Iraq by the British in the 1920s. During this tumultuous period, numerous border changes in the region occurred, and any dreams of establishing sectarian homelands would have enjoyed excellent prospects at the time. In fact, no such ethno-sectarian separatism materialized in the 1920s. Only one enduring separatist enterprise materialized south of the Kurdish areas during the British mandate, with its base in Basra. However, this project had no connection with Shiism. Rather, it was a scheme fronted by mercantile entrepreneurs of mainly Sunnite, Jewish and Christian backgrounds, with some support from a minority of Persian merchants. The large majority of the population of Basra—both Sunnite and Shiite Arabs—rejected the scheme, and instead favoured close links with Baghdad. The few projects that can be described as truly sectarian during the British mandate were even more marginal: an attempt by some merchants and tribal leaders to obtain the support of the Shiite clergy for a separate Shiite state in 1927 (the support of the clergy failed to materialize and the scheme went nowhere); and a micro-separatist project in the name of Hanbali Islam headed by Shaykh Ibrahim of Zubayr, a Najdi enclave outside Basra, in 1921, which similarly proved abortive.[2] Later in the century, even the violent upheaval of 1958 failed to prompt any resurgence of separatism of a sectarian kind. Subsequently, during Baathist rule, evidence of Shiite separatism never moved beyond the level of poorly sourced and speculative reports in British intelligence sources.[3]

Against this historical backdrop, it is perhaps unsurprising that when federalism was introduced in Iraq after the American invasion in 2003, there was only limited enthusiasm for creating separate federal regions based on sectarian identities. In theory, the Transitional Administrative Law of 2004, the constitution adopted in 2005, and the specific legislation devoted to the creation of regions passed by the Iraqi parliament in October 2006 all enable the creation of new federal regions through the amalgamation of two or more governorates, or the conversion of a single governorate to a standalone federal entity. Such federal initiatives can be launched by gathering signatures locally (a tenth of the electorate or a third of the governorate council), which in turn will be followed by a referendum in the affected governorates. Yet in practice, no new federal regions have so far emerged alongside Kurdistan (which was recognized as a federal entity in the constitution, and the uniqueness of which is rooted in ethnic distinctiveness rather than a particular sectarian identity).

Most of the few, meagre attempts at creating new federal entities that do exist have taken place in Shiite-majority areas. Still, the most enduring of these—which encompasses Basra and the far south—is not really a Shiite entity, since its ideology has been mostly non-sectarian, and since its alternative territorial frameworks (focused on between one and three existing governorates) create intra-sectarian divisions among the Shiites instead of unifying the community in a single sectarian entity. Since late 2003, various politicians in Basra have promoted the idea of the oil-rich Basra governorate becoming a separate federal entity in its own right—the "Region of Basra"—separate from the rest of the Shiite territories to the north.[4] In 2004 this project was also supported by the local branch of the Supreme Islamic Council of Iraq (SCIRI). From 2005 onwards the main protagonist for this idea has been the Fadila Party, an offshoot of the Sadrist movement. The basic idea of the project has been to evoke Basra's status as Iraq's main oil-producing governorate and to contrast this with the extremely dilapidated conditions of its infrastructure, even by Iraqi standards. For a short while the project coexisted with a slightly more expansive scheme called the "Region of the South", which also included the neighbouring governorates of Dhi Qar and Maysan. This too was based on the oil/underdevelopment theme, since its borders would correspond neatly to the greatest oil reserves in the south, excepting them from the six, more oil-deficient Shiite-majority governorates to the north. In December 2008 and January 2009, voters in Basra had a chance to express their opinion on the "Region of Basra" scheme when its backers formally launched an initiative to create a federal region pursuant to the federalisation legislation passed by the Iraqi parliament in October 2006. However, the enterprise failed miserably. Less than 30,000 Basrawis signed the petition calling for a referendum, out of an electorate of more than a million (around 140,000 or a tenth of the electorate was the required threshold to call a referendum).

The second federal scheme to materialize in Shiite-majority areas was more explicitly sectarian. The scheme emerged in July 2005 and was formally launched by one of the Shiite parties, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), in August 2005, when Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim announced the "holy goal" of creating a single federal entity that would combine all the nine governorates south of Baghdad on the basis of the "commonalities of its inhabitants". Since the governorates south of Baghdad are Shiite-majority, it was fairly easy to understand to what those "commonalities" referred. The idea of a single Shiite entity was promoted

quite heavily by SCIRI in 2006 and the first part of 2007, but later that year the propaganda in its favour receded. Only scattered references to the single Shiite region could be found during 2008. By the time of the local elections in January 2009, its proponents (now renamed the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq or ISCI) had switched to advocating greater powers for the existing governorates throughout Iraq instead of any particular federal scheme. By September 2009, Ammar al-Hakim—ISCI's new leader and probably the single ISCI politician with the strongest association with the Shiite region scheme—said it was up to the Iraqi people to decide the size of any future federal region. Thus, in contrast to the Basra initiative, ISCI's project appears to have died out on its own, and it has yet to be tested in a petition movement. Nevertheless, several indicators point to its superficiality and lack of public support. In the first place, the supporters of the Shiite federal region had obvious problems in terms of basic nomenclature and finding a suitable name for their proposed new polity. In 2005 and 2006 they mostly referred to it as the "Region of the Centre and the South" or *iqlim al-wasat wa-al-janub* (partially reflecting the need to differentiate the projected region from the competing, Basra-based "Region of the South" project), but in 2007 Ammar al-Hakim abruptly changed the name of the projected region to the "South of Baghdad Region" or *iqlim janub baghdad*, which is perhaps an indication of the project's complete lack of historical precedents.[5] Also, ISCI's electoral fortunes are thought to have been negatively influenced by its attempt to sponsor the project. In the last local elections in January 2009, the party was reduced to an average of around 10 per cent of the vote throughout the Shiite-majority governorates, and in the March 2010 parliamentary elections it lost more than a third of its seats in the Iraqi national assembly. Today, the scheme is seen as largely irrelevant in Iraq, though its brief existence continues to nurture the imagination of journalists and conspiracy theorists.

Still, it is important to stress that the apparent reluctance among Iraqi Shiite politicians to tamper with the existing state structures and the fifteen non-federated governorates in particular should not be translated as an attitude of general timidity as far as relations with the centre are concerned. Quite the contrary, the experience of recent years clearly shows that Shiite politicians are prepared to press very hard for the rights of the existing governorates, as exemplified by the demands that came to the foreground during the debate on the budget in the Iraqi parliament in early 2010. After the idea about a per-barrel fee for oil-producing governorates had been

introduced mainly with reference to Basra, the mid-Euphrates governorates soon followed up with demands for remuneration for visits by foreign tourists to the holy Shiite sites in their own areas such as Najaf and Karbala—a demand that was eventually incorporated into the final budget. Another area of interesting experiments with quite radical forms of decentralization within the framework of the existing governorates concerns Islamic morals. Here, certain provinces have gone further than others in outlawing alcohol (Basra, Najaf and Wasit), and in Wasit the local authorities have even imposed full-time guards for the female members of the local assembly, ostensibly to "protect" them from un-Islamic situations when they go about their work as elected representatives.[6]

Challenges to the Unified State in Anbar in the post-2003 period

Turning now to the question of pro-federal currents and attempts to link sectarian and territorial identity in Iraq's Sunni-majority areas, it is clear that it is the north-western governorate of Anbar that stands out. But rather than indicating a coherent pro-federal movement, scattered reports about various calls for federalism or territorial autonomy for Anbar relate to four distinct, if sometimes interlinked currents, as outlined below.

Two of these currents were highly marginal to local politics in Anbar and largely reflected external attempts to manipulate the politics of the governorate in specific directions during the first years after the beginning of the Iraq War in 2003. Firstly, already in August 2005—possibly even prior to the formal launch of the Shiite region scheme by SCIRI—an "Islamic Emirate of al-Qa'im" came into existence in the upper Euphrates region within Anbar towards the Syrian border, supposedly under the leadership of al-Qaida sympathisers in the town of al-Qa'im.[7] While its degree of actual influence on the ground is disputed, it is significant that the idea of an emirate based in al-Qa'im and covering larger parts of western Iraq, also beyond Anbar and incorporating other Sunni-majority areas, made its way into al-Qaida propaganda during 2006. By June of that year, a map circulated in which the Qa'im emirate extended southwards to Karbala and eastwards to Mosul, leaving "Kurdistan" as well as "Dawlat Bani 'Alqim" in the Shiite areas, the latter being a reference to the supposed role of Ibn al-Alqimi in handing Baghdad to the Mongols in 1258 as well as his alleged Shiite loyalties.

This projection of Sunnite sectarian identity on a map of Iraq was unprecedented and might perhaps be brushed off as a cyberspace fantasy had it not re-emerged in a slightly different (and also slightly more material) variant in October 2006, when the foundation of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) was declared by supporters of the "Mesopotamian" branch of al-Qaida.[8] This creation, too, was limited mostly to Sunnite areas of Iraq, although the aim of forcing the rest of Iraq to submit was soon indicated on other propaganda maps, and a long-term goal of re-establishing the caliphate in Baghdad was declared. In the names of the ministers appointed to the somewhat imaginary government of this new polity in 2007, one might still find lip service being paid to the idea of a unified Iraq: several ministers had tribal names that were definitely associated with areas south of Baghdad (like Janabi), or they referred to tribes with well-known multi-sectarian composition (such as Aaraji, Jibburi, and Bani Tamim, which all include Sunnis and Shiites alike). However, in a video published for the second annual anniversary of ISI in 2008, another propaganda map strictly limited to the Sunnite areas and with references to the adjacent lands as the country of the "Persians" seemed to signify a complete rupture with the Iraq concept. The same tendency seemed to be confirmed in 2009 and 2010, when provincial governors (*walis*) were named by ISI for Sunnite-majority areas, but not for all of Iraq. It is interesting that, in so doing, ISI appeared to recognise the administrative nomenclature of modern monarchical/Baathist Iraq with separate governorates as the basic administrative unit.

Of course, the main point here is the overall marginality of ISI and its proponents, certainly in the aftermath of the Anbar awakenings of local Sunnite groups rising against al-Qaida in 2007. The second push for some kind of decentralised solution for Anbar and other Sunnite forces in this period came from radically different forces: the Americans and a minority of pro-federal Iraqi political parties, chiefly the two biggest Kurdish ones as well as SCIRI/ISCI, one of the Shiite parties. However, these efforts also appeared to fall largely on deaf ears in Anbar. With respect to the American initiatives, the Bush administration never wholeheartedly embraced the soft-partition formula for Iraq even in the dark days of 2006, although one key proponent of one or more federal regions in the Sunni-majority areas had a very central position: Ambassador Ryan Crocker. In a key hearing in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on 11 September 2007 he not only adopted the fallacious but at the time widespread reading in American think tank circles to the effect that the Kurds and Shiites ostensibly

demanded federalism in unison: "With provincial powers, Iraqis are grappling with very serious questions about the right balance between the centre and the periphery. Many, mainly Shiites and Kurds, see the devolution of power to the regions and provinces as being the best insurance against the rise of a future tyrannical figure in Baghdad. Others, mainly Sunnis, see Iraq, with its complex demographics, in need of a strong central authority". In fact, Crocker went further and seemed to indicate that Sunnis, too, could be converted to a pro-federal position: "The role and powers of governors and provincial councils, although not yet fully defined, is far in excess of what it ever has been. And I think that is a good thing [...] And that's what I was referring to in my statement when I noted that we are starting to see a more robust debate on what the nature of federalism is, and we're starting to see it among the Sunnis, which I think is a positive sign. So I think things can well move in that direction [i.e. of soft partition, responding to a question by Senator Richard Lugar]. And if and as they do, we need to be there to encourage a positive direction."[9]

Crocker was merely dancing to a tune that was orchestrated by his host in the Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Joe Biden. In his tireless efforts since 2006 to devise some kind of "alternative" Iraq policy, Biden early on fixed his eyes on the idea of a "soft partition" of Iraq based on three ethno-sectarian regions—Shiite, Sunnite and Kurdish (Biden subsequently modified his plan to the point where, for all practical purposes, it became illegible, but the conceptual framework of a tripartite Iraq certainly endured among his supporters). Biden's project also involved certain attempts at outreach to Sunni-dominated areas, including Anbar. In one of his several short stopovers in Iraq, in early September 2007 Biden addressed a "reconstruction forum" in Anbar where some key pro-federal leaders from other parts of Iraq were also present, including ISCI's Adil Abd al-Mahdi and the Kurdish Deputy Prime Minister, Barham Salih. It seemed clear that Biden's aim was to demonstrate some kind of "Sunnite interest" in federalism (which would complete his tripartite federalism fantasy); however, subsequent to the meeting all he was able to parade was an alleged statement by Tariq al-Hashemi, the Sunnite vice-president and a member of the Sunnite Islamist Tawafuq bloc, to the effect that "his [Hashemi's] heart tells him a central government; his head tells him a regional government".[10] Despite rather fervent overtures also from Ammar al-Hakim of SCIRI—the only pro-federal Shiite party—the tribal leaders of Anbar generally failed to produce any statement that could be construed as being even remotely sup-

portive of a tripartite soft partition scheme for Iraq. In fact, the only mainstream Sunnite party that had even engaged with the concept of federalism in the Iraqi political process at that point was Hashemi's own Islamist Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP), which tentatively offered ideas for certain limitations to the procedures for forming new federal regions during the constitutional review process in the first half of 2007, but was never even near to proposing a Sunnite equivalent to SCIRI's all-Shiite Region of the Centre and the South. At any rate, like ISCI, the IIP was also punished quite severely by voters in the January 2009 local elections, and again in the March 2010 parliamentary elections.

Instead, the factors that limited manifestations of "federalism schemes" in Anbar and other Sunni-majority areas in the period 2005–2009 seem to belong to the realm of conspiracy theories. By summer 2009, even the Buratha news agency, a media outlet considered to be close to the Shiite Islamist ISCI, which in theory is quite pro-federal, reproduced imaginative conspiracy theories to the effect that the Islamic Iraqi Party was in league with the Israelis and the ex-governor of Basra in seeking to create a federal region of Anbar.[11] Political leaders of Anbar, for their part, were at pains to repudiate any suggestion that they were linked to any scheme to create a federal region, as seen in comments by the prominent Sahwa leader Ahmad Abu Risha in early 2009.[12] All of this suggests that the "pro-federal" trend in Anbar starting around 2007 was in reality something of an exogenous phenomenon comparable in that respect to ISI's project from 2005 onwards; albeit one in which pro-federal parties elsewhere in Iraq, notably the Kurds and ISCI—plus to some extent the Bush administration—took a great deal of interest.

The "pro-federal" trend in Anbar in 2010 and its limits

It was not until 2010 that a sustained attempt by Anbaris themselves to engage with the concept of federalism took place. When this finally happened, it took two different forms.

Firstly, there were the scattered elements of a pro-federal movement proper. As in the case of the Shiites, despite all the talk of tripartite soft partition in the West and in the conspiracy theories of the pan-Arab media, it was non-sectarian variants of federalism (such as the scheme to make Basra a standalone federal entity within the Shiite context) that seemed to garner what limited interest there is within the Sunnite community. Prob-

ably the only recorded emphatic Sunnite call for a purely sectarian federal region as a parallel to the ISCI/SCIRI initiative among the Shiites is an article by one Adnan al-Jibburi, first published at the Kitabat website in March 2010 and since reproduced on many Iraqi websites.[13] But Jibburi's voice appeared to be a lonely one. Instead, certain Anbar leaders in 2010 for the first time expressed an interest in converting Anbar to a uni-governorate federal region, on the pattern of the failed attempt in Basra in December 2008–January 2009.

Such expressions of interest were particularly widely reported after various sources named Anbar businessmen that allegedly had taken part in a meeting in Amman in Jordan in July 2010 with the Kurdish president Masud Barzani to work for the establishment of Anbar as a federal region.[14] One report referred to Qasim al-Rawi, Tariq al-Halbusi and Abd al-Jabbar al-Kubaysi.[15] Halbusi's name was repeated in several reports, although some of them seemed primarily focused on criticizing tendencies of tentative dialogue between leaders of the secular Iraqiyya and Iran, seeing the federal scheme in Anbar as one manifestation of this rather unlikely conspiracy theory.[16] Other reports suggested that Muhammad al-Hayyis, the sole Sunnite politician of some weight in the north to be co-opted by the mainly Shiite, ISCI-led Iraqi National Alliance at the time of its launch in August 2009, had pioneered the movement, which would seem to confirm the image of some support for Anbar federalism by like-minded politicians among the Kurds and ISCI.[17] That allegations of such links were not entirely unfounded seemed confirmed by the holding of an investment conference for Anbar with Iraqi and international participation in Kurdistan in early 2011.[18]

Despite these unparalleled tendencies of public support by named Anbar figures for federalism, the overall trend seemed to remain hostile. In June 2010, as the stream of rumours about some kind of pro-federal trend in Anbar was getting bigger, Khalid al-Alwani of the Iraqi Islamic Party in Anbar said all the tribes of the governorate rejected the idea of creating a federal region "that would separate Anbar from the rest of the Iraqi governorates".[19] Hikmat Jasim Zaydan, vice-governor of Anbar, declared in December 2010 that the virtues of decentralization (as opposed to federalism) had been misunderstood and that it would not be natural for Iraq as a "single body" (*jasad wahid*) to sever any of its parts through the creation of federal regions. In his view, Kurdistan was an exceptional case that could not be replicated elsewhere in Iraq.[20] Ordinary citizens in Anbar reverted to

the "partition" theme and suggested that the creation of a federal region in Anbar could be the first step towards the dismemberment of Iraq and its partition into statelets.[21] Also, in early 2011 the national leadership of the Iraqi Islamic Party expressed "astonishment" that some had accused it of supporting the pro-federal trend.[22] The conspiracy theories refused to go away entirely, including a suggestion to the effect that Salih al-Mutlak of the nationalist Iraqiyya party—which is strong in Anbar—envisaged the creation of a separate statelet in Anbar in which Palestinians could be settled in the future.[23]

Secondly, another wave of pro-federal sentiment also materialized in Anbar in early autumn 2010, although it came in the guise of a movement that often refrained from speaking its real name. Anbar has a gas field that was discovered in the dying days of the Baathist regime. In the post-2003 period, interest in that field as a potential driver for a prosperous Anbar has been revived, although in the beginning this primarily seemed to be an American-driven project that tallied with the general desire in Washington for the Anbaris to turn to federalism in the first years after the passage of the constitution in 2005.[24] When it became clear in 2009 that the central government intended to include the gas field, named Akkaz, in one of its licensing rounds for foreign companies interested in the Iraqi energy sector, the governorate council in Anbar began taking a greater interest in the project too. However, the constitutionally mandated (but ambiguously worded) "cooperation" between the centre and the provincial authorities failed to materialize, and when the Maliki government in Baghdad in October 2010 proceeded to award the Akkaz field to a South Korean firm without seeking local approval, strong protests ensued.[25] There were reactions to the way in which the central government had pushed forward with the project, demands that the gas be kept in Iraq (instead of exported), and claims for guarantees for local jobs to be provided in conjunction with the Akkaz project.[26] Some of the protestors, such as Mizhar Hasan al-Mulla of the Anbar investment committee and a member of a small tribal party, went as far as explicitly threatening to create a federal region. But interestingly, many others did what they did in the name of the existing governorate rather than calling for a federal solution, thereby using article 115 of the ambiguous Iraqi constitution to press for exactly the same rights for federal regions and nominal governorates. Some members of the Anbar council apparently believed they had the right to decide on an export policy for their own governorate, which would seem to be in contradiction with

the role of the central government in devising a strategic energy policy stipulated in the second paragraph of article 112 of the constitution.[27] Importantly, this extreme interpretation of the rights of the governorates under the constitution was fronted by people who in theory were connected with nationalist movements such as the Hiwar faction of Salih al-Mutlak, including Jasim Muhammad al-Halbusi, the local council speaker, and it is somewhat ironic that the same people who had condemned "federalism" as "partition" were prepared to ask for exactly the same maximum rights demanded by the Kurds, as long as it was done in the name of the existing governorates.

Reasons for the marginal nature of the challenges to the Iraq concept

One can speculate as to the reasons for the remarkable persistence of Iraq as the predominant category of territorial identification in the general chaos of post-2003 Anbar, despite clear attempts by external forces to induce various forms of local autonomist movements. One striking difference between the alternative territorial frameworks that briefly emerged in Shiite and Sunnite circles in Iraq in the post-2003 period is that the Shiite proposals appeared to have an ad hoc character mostly without any attempt to seek legitimacy in Islamic political thought, whereas, on the Sunnite side, at least the ISI project for a Sunnite Islamic state was littered with references to supposed precedents that could serve as justifications. For example, among the Shiites, SCIRI/ISCI rarely developed their federalism agitation beyond the axiom of a federal region as a "holy goal". Those arguments that were employed to back up the demands were utterly pragmatic, calling for a "balance" in Iraq that could only be secured through the creation of a counterweight to the Kurdish region, as well as evoking the practical consideration that security forces recruited locally would be in a better position to defend the local population. No senior *mujtahid* cleric ever espoused the specific idea of a Shiite region. A few attempts to draw parallels to the classical Islamic period ("when also the caliphs had sub-governors") were soon abandoned and would have been difficult to maintain given the absence of sectarian parallels in the administrative maps of the caliphates. Probably the only real support base for the scheme came from disgruntled exiles based in Europe and North America, although some of these people—like Basim al-Awwadi—continued to serve as key advisors to ISCI leader Ammar al-Hakim in 2010.[28]

Conversely, Sunnite arguments in favour of the Islamic State of Iraq explicitly refer to Islamic ideals. The clergy is less stratified in Sunnism than in Shiism, and little is known about the author of one of the more elaborate works defending the ISI that was offered in early 2007, one Uthman al-Tamimi.[29] At any rate, the point here is the systematic attempt to find Islamic precedents for the ISI. The author argues that in its size and nature, ISI corresponds to the Islamic state established in Medina in the early seventh century AD. He later adds ideas about the prospect for pan-Islamic expansion, but the parallel to Hijaz in the first Islamic century seems to be the cornerstone of his argument.

It is tempting to ascribe this striking difference between Sunnite and Shiite methods for justifying territorial alternatives to Iraq to certain doctrinal differences between the two branches of Islam when it comes to state formation. In Sunnism, ever since the distinction between sultanate and caliphate was firmly entrenched in the eleventh century, new state formation has been unproblematic and the role of the sometimes-extant caliphate by and large theatrical—as seen for example in the "shadow caliphate" of Mamluk Egypt after 1258 or in late Ottoman times. With the caliphate weak or non-existent, the creation of new sultanates or emirates has been a continuous process unencumbered by restrictions originating from Sunnite political thought. Sometimes lip service was paid to the idea of a universal Islamic order, but in many cases this was readily dispensed with by emirs who experienced no doctrinal barriers to Islamic state formation when developing their emirates as independent polities. By way of contrast, processes of state formation in the Shiite world have been characterized by a greater degree of ambiguity or even inhibition. To at least some extent, this seems attributable to the doctrine of the Imamate (i.e. the designation of ultimate authority as belonging to the Hidden Imam), in line with which at least parts of the Shiite clergy have always been reluctant to sponsor the creation of new state structures and to develop ideological superstructures to accompany them. Accordingly, many of the early examples of state creation in Shiism are really examples of Mahdism. It could be argued that even the creation of the Safavid Empire and the way it legitimized itself featured such elements. It has been suggested that not until Jaafar Kashfi in the early nineteenth century did a straightforward theory of power-sharing between rulers and the clergy emerge in Shiism, and even this did not set off any surge in Shiite state-building outside Qajar Iran.[30] Then in the twentieth century came the return of a pan-Islamic imperative in the shape of

Wilayat-i faqih, which apparently has had a greater inhibiting effect than the dream of a single caliphate in the Sunnite world. One needs only compare the reluctant character of the few examples of Shiite separatism that are on record (Iraq in 1927, Lebanon in the early 1930s, Saudi Arabia in the late 1940s) with the mushrooming since the late twentieth century of Islamic emirates and other quasi-states in the Sunnite world from the Caucasus to Afghanistan. Symptomatically, when it comes to Shiite separatism, there has been an almost universal absence of support from the leading orthodox clergy.

However, despite the presence of certain ideological differences when it comes to theories of state formation, the marginality of the challenges to the territorial framework of Iraq is after all common to both the Sunnis of Anbar and Shiites living south of Baghdad. This suggests the presence of other underlying variables that may account for the endurance of the Iraq concept. The most obvious explanation seems to be simply that Iraqi nationalism became established in the Iraqi intellectual elite of all sectarian backgrounds at such an early point that developments in twentieth-century Islamic political thought may in themselves not be sufficient to reverse the Iraqi nationalist trend. Examples of this are legion once the unempirical idea of Iraq as an "artificial" state "cobbled together" from "disparate" Ottoman provinces is abandoned. In fact, Iraqi literature from the nineteenth century and the Young Turk period are ripe with references to Iraq as a territorial frame of identity, as seen for example in the writings of authors like Abd al-Jalil al-Tabataba'i, Kazim al-Dujayli, Abdallah Bashayan and Anastas al-Karmali. It is a wonderful irony that even Muhammad Baqir al-Hakim—perhaps the Shiite writer that has made the most systematic attempt at articulating a theory of federalism within the *Wilayat-i faqih* framework—should refer to Iraq as a potential subunit in that kind of system in his pamphlet *'Aqidatuna*, whilst never even mentioning the nine-governorate Shiite region preferred by later SCIRI leaders. What we are seeing today is probably better described as politicians of different sectarian orientations striving to achieve hegemony within a shared nationalist and territorial framework.[31]

In sum, there is certainly a sectarian dimension to Iraqi politics, but sectarian identities among Sunnis and Shiites do not correspond to any deeply rooted sense of territorial homeland that is different from the concept of the modern state of Iraq. The absence of a territorial component in Sunnite sub-identities in north-western Iraq and in Shiite ones south of

Baghdad means that the dynamics of sectarian problems in Iraq—and the most promising mechanisms for solving them—are likely to differ from those of countries where sectarian and territorial sub-identities go more easily hand in hand, as seen above all in the Balkans in the 1990s. The Western policy-making debate on Iraq in the post-2003 period has been overwhelmingly dominated by concepts like federalism, power-sharing, and consociational forms of democracy more broadly as recipes for achieving national reconciliation in the country. For a long time, it was thought that if only the Sunnis could be converted to a pro-federal position, the Kurds and the Shiites would readily agree to three-way devolution. However, given the sacrosanct character of the territorial unity of Iraq in both Sunnite and Shiite discourse, there is much to suggest that policy prescriptions for the country need to be adjusted to better fit the local realities. If fewer resources are devoted to solving imagined and often non-existing territorial issues between the sects, it will be possible to give more attention to those real and pressing questions that still remain. One key issue concerns relations between the existing governorates and the centre, since developments in the period 2003–2010 indicate that as long as the federalism nomenclature is left aside, local politicians are prepared to push very hard for privileges for the fifteen current, non-federated governorates of Iraq.

6

Karbala in the Umayyad Mosque

Sunnite Panic at the "Shiitization" of Syria in the 2000s

Thomas Pierret

On an afternoon of April 2008, about a hundred people were attending a lesson in Sunnite theology at the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus. Suddenly, lamentations were heard that almost drowned out the voice of the teacher. The lamentations were emanating from a group of Iranian pilgrims gathered around a man singing the martyrdom of Imam Hussein at the battle of Karbala. Visibly upset by this vocal interference, the Sunnite scholar asked his audience to repeat after him a sentence from the book he was explaining. He reiterated his request several times and invited the students to raise their voices. The audience progressively went along with the game, so that the "chorus" eventually resonated throughout the immense prayer hall.[1]

This struggle for the soundscape of Damascus' most sacred mosque illustrates the tensions that have arisen as a result of increasingly visible Shiite religious activities in Syria during the last three decades, and more particularly during the past five years.[2] In the midst of the 2000s, indeed, the former homeland of the Umayyads—the most glorious dynasty of Sunnite history, but a faction of usurpers in the eyes of the Shiites—has been seen by many as the target of a wide-scale plan of "Shiitization" (*tashayyu'*) mas-

terminded by Iran. According to this narrative, the Islamic Republic has taken advantage of its strategic alliance with the Alawite-dominated regime of Damascus to spread the Imami creed in Syria. The same narrative asserts that although such activities started under Hafiz al-Asad, their growth was facilitated after 2000 by the even more pronounced pro-Shiite bias of his son Bashar.[3]

These claims must be handled with the greatest caution, since the theory of a "Shiite Crescent" has been chiefly promoted by sides like pro-Western Arab regimes, the Syrian opposition, and anti-Syrian Lebanese parties, which have aimed to neutralize the popular appeal of the anti-Israeli/anti-US stance of the Syrian-Iranian axis. Yet, one cannot rebuff the aforementioned narrative without further ado: whereas in Palestine, for instance, similar rumours are obviously groundless,[4] in Syria, there are Twelver religious institutions that enjoy substantial financial means and a growing margin of action. The Shiitization narrative thus relies on a complex intertwining of facts and propaganda that this chapter aims to unravel.

The first part of this chapter is devoted to the growing visibility of the Shiite presence in Syria during the twentieth century. The second part deals with the evolution of Sunnite-Shiite relations in the country from the end of the Ottoman Empire to the 1990s. Finally, in the third part of the chapter, an analysis is provided of the panic surrounding Shiitization that took hold of Syrian Sunnis during the 2000s.

Background: the growing visibility of Twelver Shiites in twentieth century Syria

During the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and particularly since the 1980s, Syria has witnessed a marked development of Shiite presence and activities on its soil. This situation is the result of four main processes: the revival of the small local Imami community, rapprochement between the Alawite sect and Ja'fari doctrines, the settlement of Iraqi refugees, and the establishment of a strategic alliance between Damascus and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Shiite communities have lived in various parts of Syria for centuries. According to the last census that included figures on the country's sectarian composition, which dates back to 1953, Shiites represented only 0.4 per cent of the total population at that time.[5] Until the early twentieth century, moreover, they had no scholarly tradition, and hence a very limited visibil-

ity in the local religious landscape. The awakening of the Damascene community was initiated by Ayatollah Muhsin al-Amin, a reformist cleric from Jabal 'Amil (now South Lebanon) who settled in the city in 1901.[6] On his arrival, al-Amin sought financial support from local Twelver merchant families in order to set up a school and the very first private Islamic charity in Syria. These institutions, which were later named after their founder (al-Muhsiniyya), still exist today and remain under the control of Shiite notable families. The Ayatollah's role in the modern history of the Damascene Imami community was so significant that the latter's stronghold in the Old City is now known as "the quarter of al-Amin". The sheikh's fame far exceeded the limits of the Levant, not only because he was a *marja'*, that is, one of the most respected Shiite scholars of his time, but also because he took part in journal-mediated controversies with such prominent figures as the Egyptian Sunnite reformist Rashîd Ridâ. Since al-Amin's death in 1952, no religious leader of such a calibre has emerged among his Syrian coreligionists. However, the institutions set up by the Ayatollah have continued to thrive during the following decades thanks to the rapprochement between Twelver Islam and the Alawite minority, which has dominated the state apparatus for more than four decades now.

Although the Alawite creed has its roots in the Shiite tradition, as shown by its veneration of Imam Ali, it has long been considered heretical by both Sunnite and Imami scholars. Rapprochement (*taqrīb*) with Shiite clerics from Lebanon and Iraq only developed from the early 1910s onwards due to three factors.[7] First, a reformist trend emerged within the community that aimed to rationalize the Alawite faith by drawing from the—incomparably more elaborated—Twelver scholarly tradition. Second, separate religious courts for the Alawis were established in 1922 by the French authorities, and the reformists pushed for the adoption of Ja'afari law in place of customary rules. Third, the leaders of the community who advocated the creation of an independent Alawite state within the coastal region were marginalized in the late 1930s at the hand of their pro-Syrian unity nationalist rivals, who sought to get closer to the Islamic mainstream by stressing their Shiite identity.

Rapprochement deepened from the late 1940s onwards due to the fact that Iraqi and Lebanese religious networks identified the Alawite mountains as a "mission field". In 1951, these networks helped Alawite scholars to set up the Ja'fari Society, whose name eloquently illustrated the agenda of the community's reformist trend. One of the first initiatives of the society was

to lobby for the official recognition of Ja'fari law by the Syrian state, which it obtained in 1952.

Following Hafiz al-Asad's coup in 1970, the process of rapprochement took a more distinctly political turn. As the first non-Sunnite head of state since independence, the Alawite General encouraged rapprochement with the Shiites as a way to stress his community's belonging to Islam. He therefore lent full support to those reformist Alawite men of religion who had promoted both "Ja'farization" and national unity since the 1930s. He also sought the support of prominent Shiite clerics. The first to provide such support was the Iraqi Hasan al-Shirazi, the brother of Ayatollah Muhammad al-Shirazi and main ideologue of the "Shiraziyya", a presently transnational movement that originated in Karbala.[8] Between his expulsion from Iraq in 1970 and his assassination in Beirut ten years later, Hasan al-Shirazi lived in Lebanon and Syria. In the latter country, the authorities enthusiastically welcomed him as an opponent to the rival Iraqi regime. Al-Shirazi reciprocated by stressing the Alawites' belonging to Shiite Islam in the foreword of a booklet published in 1972 by Alawite reformists. In the following years, the Iraqi cleric built on his ties with the latter to expend missionary efforts among their coreligionists. He reportedly encountered limited success because the level of religious observance among Alawites was—and is still—relatively low.[9]

The second answer to al-Asad's request came in 1973, when the religious and political leader of the Lebanese Twelver community Musa al-Sadr officially recognized the Alawites as Shiites. Through this move, al-Sadr won a powerful patron for his community: in the following decades, the latter's alliance with Syria—through al-Sadr's Amal movement and later Hizbullah—would constitute a permanent feature of regional politics.

After 1979, al-Asad's strategic partnership with revolutionary Iran earned him the support of what had now replaced Najaf as the centre of gravity of Shiite Islam. Of course, this would not make the Alawites more credible "Muslims" in the eyes of many Syrian Sunnis, who were facing harsh repression as a result of the 1979–82 Islamic uprising. Nevertheless, the Syrian-Iranian alliance had a major consequence, that is, the unprecedented development of Shiite institutions within Syria.

Syria is home to several shrines that occupy a prominent position in the symbolic geography of Imami Islam. The most important of them are located in Damascus (tombs of Sayyida Zaynab, the daughter of Imam Ali, and of Sayyida Ruqqaya, the daughter of Imam Hussein, "Head of Hussein"

in the Umayyad Mosque) as well as in Aleppo ("Mashhad al-Hussein", a place where a drop of blood fell from the head of Imam Hussein). Since the 1950s, these shrines have been restored thanks to donations originating from foreign Shiite merchants, as well as beginning under the Shah, from the Iranian state.[10] Syria's alliance with Teheran following the Islamic Revolution entailed substantial Iranian investments in the rebuilding of some of these shrines in accordance with the canons of Persian architecture. The same occurred in places that were not traditional loci of Shiite worshipping. Starting from 1988, the Islamic Republic erected two massive mausoleums in the city of Raqqa, the site of the battle of Siffin, on the Euphrates.[11] In the vicinity of Damascus, a shrine was constructed in Dariya, starting from 1999, on the tomb of Sukayna, a daughter of Imam Ali, and Shiite clerics have taken control of the tomb of the Companion Hajar bin 'Uday al-Kindi in 'Adra. In Aleppo, Shiite institutions have displayed a growing interest in the purported tomb of Muhsin, the son of Imam Hussein, despite the fact that local Sunnis consider this burial place as that of a mere saint known as "Sheikh Muhsin".[12] These holy places have become the main stops of the tourist route that now attracts thousands of Shiite pilgrims, most of them Iranians, every year.[13]

The other main aspect of foreign Shiite presence in Syria is the development of a city of about 200,000 inhabitants around the mausoleum of Sayyida Zaynab, in the southern periphery of Damascus. This phenomenon results from the transformation of the site into a major Twelver learning centre, as well as from the settlement of Iraqi refugees fleeing persecution by Saddam Hussein's regime from the early 1980s onwards and the severe hardship imposed by the Western embargo in Iraq in the 1990s; since 2003, Shiite presence in the city has further increased as Iraqi refugees have sought to escape from sectarian violence in the country.

In the mid-1970s, Hasan al-Shirazi took advantage of his good relations with the Syrian authorities to open the first *hawza* (religious institute) in Sayyida Zaynab. In 1982, Ayatollah Khomeini imitated him, a move that was later followed by more than a dozen scholars from Iraq, Iran, and Lebanon.[14] The location proved highly successful as a teaching centre because of the weakening of Najaf as a result of Ba'thi repression, and, as far as Arabs were concerned, cultural proximity. Some scholars were also willing to escape Iranian tutelage, following the example of many Shirazis who left Qom in the late 1980s because of the deterioration of their previously excellent relations with the Islamic Republic.[15]

Whereas the *hawzāt* are mostly designed for foreign Shiite students (Iraqis, Lebanese, Gulfians, South Asians, Afghans),[16] other institutions also address a trans-sectarian Syrian audience, which has fed Sunnite anxiety about possible missionary projects. Since the 1990s, the Iranian cultural centre has convened regular conferences all over the country, distributed religious literature, and offered scholarships to the limited number of Sunnis who expressed the desire to study in Qom.[17] Al-Najma al-Muhammadiyya ("The Muhammadian Star"), an Iraqi Shiite association, has organized yearly inter-religious meetings since its creation in 1992.[18] However, the main source of Sunnite anxiety has been the activities of Iraqi clerics belonging to the Shiraziyya: not only because they enjoy a wide margin of manoeuvre as a result of the close ties they wove with the regime since the early 1970s, but also because their group, which has been focusing exclusively on religious revivalism since it relinquished its political ambitions in the late 1980s, is well-known for its aggressive missionary zeal. Shirazi mullahs took control of "Shiite" shrines in the country—and provided most of their staff—even before the Iranian state started to fund their development.[19] One of these mullahs, 'Abd al-Hamid al-Muhajir, was allowed to present a programme on Syrian national television in the early 1990s.[20] In 2001, he opened the Syrian branch of the Committee for Service to the People of the House of the Prophet (*Hay'a khidma ahl al-bayt*), an organization whose self-avowed goal is to "spread the thought and culture of the People of the House all around the world".[21]

Although Syrian Sunnis have always felt uncomfortable with the growth of Shiite institutions in their country, the latter process is not in itself a sufficient explanation for the level of sectarian distrust that was reached in the 2000s. For one century, indeed, the fluctuations of Sunnite-Shiite relations in Syria have always been tightly related to the broader political context.

Sunnite-Shiite relations before the 2000s: the indelible traces of the Iranian "treason"

During the first half of the twentieth century, Muslim reformism and Arab nationalism stressed the need for unity against Western colonialism, thus creating a favourable context for Sunnite-Shiite rapprochement.[22] Such was the background of Muhsin al-Amin's effort to improve inter-communal relations in Damascus: he maintained good relations with reformist Sunnite scholars, hired a Sunnite muezzin for his school, and opposed the creation

of separate religious courts for Shiites.[23] Although tensions arose following the Saudi-Wahhabi conquest of the Hijaz in the mid-1920s,[24] Western imperialism was still fostering inter-sectarian synergies. In 1938, when the Salafi Sheikh Kamil al-Qassab convened the anti-colonial Congress of the Ulema in Damascus, he invited 'Abd al-Karim al-Zanjani, a Najafi scholar and champion of Islamic unity.[25] In its communiqué, the congress called to "unite the voice of the different Islamic schools of thought, which come together on the dogma of God's oneness, the ultimate goals of Islam, and the struggle against atheism."[26]

Despite the fact that their leader Mustafa al-Siba'i had been a disciple of Muhibb al-Din al-Khatib, a Cairo-based Syrian Salafi and one of the most influent anti-Shiite polemicists of the twentieth century,[27] the Syrian Muslim Brothers continued to show signs of opening towards Shiites after independence. Beside the new impetus given to Islamic ecumenism by the foundation in 1948 of the Azhar-sponsored Association for Rapprochement in Cairo,[28] the reason for this was a sense of solidarity with fellow Islamists sharing anti-imperialist and anti-secularist views. In 1955, the Syrian Brothers wholeheartedly welcomed Navvab-e Safavi, the leader of the Iranian movement Fada'iyan-e Islam, when he visited Damascus on his way back from the Islamic Congress of Jerusalem.[29] Al-Siba'i also introduced the study of Ja'fari law into the curriculum of the Faculty of shari'a he founded at the University of Damascus in 1954.[30] It is true that the Brothers' leader ended up deploring the lack of reciprocal efforts among his Twelver counterparts,[31] but it was politics, not doctrinal divergences, that eventually spoiled Sunnite-Shiite relations in Syria.

In the mid-1970s, the discontent provoked among Sunnite inhabitants of Sayyida Zaynab by the presence of Shirazi clerics forced the authorities to rein in the latter's activities for a while.[32] However, widespread anti-Shiite resentment had not taken root in the country yet. In the 1970s, Syrian Islamists were still reading books of the Iranian thinker Ali Shariati, and they enthusiastically welcomed the overthrow of the Shah as an "Islamic" rather than a "Shiite" revolution.[33] It is probably no accident that the wave of assassinations that had struck Syria since 1976 turned into a full-fledged insurgency in late 1979, that is, a few months after the birth of the Islamic Republic in Teheran. However, despite the fact that the Syrian Muslim Brothers had vowed support for his cause, Ayatollah Khomeini chose to side with the secular al-Asad, thus paving the way for a long-term strategic partnership.[34] As a result, the Islamic opposition had no choice but to seek

support from the Iraqi regime, which was itself at war with Iran. Teheran's "treason" also prompted several exiled Syrian Islamists to publish pamphlets denouncing both Shiite doctrines and Iranian expansionist ambitions.[35]

Inside Syria, the outcomes of the alliance with the Islamic Republic further strengthened Sunnite distrust. Indeed, the takeover and rebuilding of the shrines by Shiite actors generally occurred at the expense of local Sunnite inhabitants. In the late 1980s, for instance, the Iranian-funded rebuilding of the tomb of Sayyida Ruqqaya entailed the destruction of a block in the old Sunnite quarter of al-'Amara as well as the replacement of the local imam with a Shiite staff. Moreover, the mushrooming of Shiite *hawzāt* in Sayyida Zaynab has been seen by Sunnite clerics as a proof of the double standards applied by the regime, which has only allowed for the opening of a couple of Sunnite religious institutes since the 1970s. Finally, and as already mentioned, many Sunnite believe that Shiite institutions based in Syria actually serve missionary projects.

Such a tense context explains both the regime's encouragement for intersectarian dialogue and the reluctance of many Sunnite scholars to answer positively to this invitation. Indeed, the most frequent participants to Sunnite-Shiite public meetings are notoriously compliant religious leaders such as the late Grand Mufti Ahmad Kaftaru and his successor Ahmad Hassun. The unpopularity of such a stance is well illustrated by the case of Aleppo's Second Mufti Mahmud 'Akkam. A very popular preacher during the 1980s, he was later rejected by many of his admirers because of his avowed sympathy for Shiite Islam. In 1989, for instance, he led the "prayer of the absent" in memory of Ayatollah Khomeini, a gesture that was badly perceived in a city that has close cultural and economic ties with Iraq's Sunnite provinces.[36]

Anti-Shiism is thus no new phenomenon among Syrian Sūnnis. However, it reached unprecedented levels in the 2000s as a result of the combination of increasingly visible Twelver activities in the country, on the one hand, and of the rise of sectarian tensions in the Middle East on the other.

The 2000s: Sunnite panic at the "Shiitization" of Syria

In 2001, for the first time in modern Syrian history, a procession of chest-beating young men organized by the Shirazi Committee for Service to the People of the House went through the Old City of Damascus while singing hymns vowing to take revenge for the martyrdom of Imam Hussein.[37] This

martyrdom, as is well known, occurred at the hand of the Umayyad dynasty, whose mosque was located just next to the route of the procession. The repetition of similar events in the following years infuriated many Sunnis, not only because they perceived them as provocative, but also, once again, because of their feeling of discrimination, the authorities having banned most outdoor Sunnite religious celebrations for four decades. In 2005, Sunnite clerics and notables denounced the processions in a petition sent to President Bashar al-Asad, in vain.[38]

During the same period, there was a feeling in Syria that the expansion of Shiite infrastructures was getting a new impetus. The construction of the twin mausoleums of Raqqa had started in 1988, but it was only completed in 2004 due to several years of interruption. In Darya, the shrine of Sukayna bint Ali had been under construction since 1999. As will be shown below, the latter initiative aroused strong suspicions among Sunnite religious leaders, who dismissed the very historical existence of Sukayna bint Ali as a Shiite invention and consequently interpreted the building of her mausoleum in a Sunnite area as part of a strategy of progressive encroachment: a shrine attracts pilgrims, the presence of pilgrims entails the creation of shops selling religious literature and souvenirs, and Shiite influence inevitably spreads among the local population.

Of course, the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi refugees after the 2003 war played a major role in reinforcing the feeling of "invasion" by making Shiite religiosity more visible. This new potential audience also led to a surge of activity among Twelver institutions in Sayyida Zaynab. Indeed, the first half of the decade saw the multiplication of new *hawzāt* and revivalist committees founded by scholars wishing to emulate the Shirazis.[39] Here also, the contrast between the regime's toleration of such organizations and the growing repression exerted against the non-violent Salafis—among other Sunnite trends—was too obvious not to stir up Sunnite anger. Nevertheless, the wave of anti-Shiism that struck Syria in the mid-2000s cannot be understood without taking into account the regional context.

After 2003, Syrian Sunnis witnessed the rise of Shiite and Iranian influence in Iraq with much anxiety, a sentiment that translated into genuine panic during the full-scale civil war that was ignited by the bombing of the mausoleum of Samarra in February 2006. Rumours referred to the foundation of "dozens of *husayniyyāt*" in Syria,[40] and to wide campaigns of proselytizing (*tabshīr*) targeting in particular the Sunnite population of the Jezireh (East of the Euphrates), a predominantly rural area characterized by

widespread poverty and illiteracy.[41] The region is home to the village of Hatla, near Deir ez-Zor, where a community of a few thousand Shiites constitutes the only proven and significant case of collective conversion of Syrian Sunnis to Shiite Islam since the 1990s.[42] The same region is said to have been a primary target for the Ali Murtada Association of Jamil al-Asad, Hafiz's brother. This "political grouping behind a religious facade"[43] had been founded in 1981 in order to mobilize the Alawi community against the Islamic opposition. Thanks to its considerable financial and military means, it also reportedly managed to recruit a large number of Sunnite Arabs and Kurds from the Jezireh until it was banned in 1983.[44] Eastern Syria has also been a major exporter of labour to Lebanon, which resulted in several cases of conversion to Shiism.[45]

In the weeks that followed the Samarra bombing, prominent Sunnite Muslim scholars started to publicly denounce Shiite "intrigues" in their Friday sermons. In Aleppo, Sheikh Mahmud al-Husseini flayed the Imami institutions of Raqqa.[46] According to him, the latter's provocations were fuelling sectarian discord, thus opening the door to the bad winds coming from Iraq:

> In two days, around two hundred mosques have been burnt in Iraq [...] the same phenomenon penetrates in our country, and I condemn it. [He raises his voice] I have received an invitation to attend the celebration of the battle of Siffin in Raqqa! [He yells] Siffin!! A symbol of war, of factionalism, of divergence!!! Sectarianism infiltrates from the East, but it seems that the security services—which pretend they are concerned about the unity of the country—do nothing to stop it!!![47]

The next month, Sa'id Ramadan al-Buti, Syria's most renowned cleric and the main pillar of the regime's religious legitimization, alluded to the construction of the tomb of Sukayna bint Ali in Dariya and denounced it as a Trojan Horse:

> They invent names of imaginary members of the Prophet's family, they build imaginary tombs thanks to the darkness of the night, and then they build them green cupolas. The goal of all this is to take over the surrounding areas. They turn these places into springboards for setting one sect against another, into springboards for conspiracy and discord.[48]

Al-Buti believed that the situation was sufficiently worrying to depart from his usual political cautiousness and openly expressed his discontent at the authorities' passivity: "maybe they are too busy with difficult circumstances that have plunged them into confusion". He also implicitly targeted

the policy of the Iranian state in Syria: "May God fight politics when it disregards principles; May God fight politics when it exploits religion to promote its interests."[49]

In the following weeks, the issue of Iranian-backed proselytism in Syria emerged in the mainstream Arab media when, in an interview with a Kuwaiti newspaper, leading Syrian human rights activist and former member of the Muslim Brothers Haytham al-Malih referred to a "secret agreement" between the governments of Damascus and Teheran to "turn Syria from a Sunni to a Shiite society".[50] Likewise, the anti-Syrian Lebanese magazine *al-Watan al-'Arabi* talked of a "strategy of Shiitization" that had already resulted in thousands of conversions.[51]

At the same time, the promulgation of a decree imposing the closing down of Sunnite religious junior high schools reinforced the local 'ulama's sentiment of discrimination. In a petition against the decree that they sent to the president in June 2006, clergymen insisted on the fact that "the Shiite *hawzāt* deliberately disregard the circulars of the Ministry of Education".[52] A few weeks earlier, indeed, the directors of the religious institutes of Sayyida Zaynab had refused with impunity to attend a meeting organized by state officials in order to discuss the legal and administrative situation of their schools, which in the absence of any legal recognition, were still operating on the basis of permits issued by the security apparatus.[53]

Even though it initially led to a rapprochement between the Sunnite clergy and the state, the war that broke out in July 2006 between Israel and the Syrian-backed Hizbullah eventually resulted in more tension. During the conflict, the distrust generated among the Sunnite 'ulama by the pro-Iranian orientation of the Lebanese militia was counterbalanced by a genuine sense of the need for Muslim unity against Israel, by the threat of state repression, as well as by a will to stay in tune with a public opinion that immediately enthused at the military prowess of Hizbullah: in a largely spontaneous move, thousands of yellow Hizbullah flags and portraits of Hasan Nasrallah popped up in the country. Certain Friday preachers remained ambiguous—they denounced "Zionist barbarity" while not even mentioning Hizbullah in their sermons—[54] but leading clerics such as al-Buti and the elite of Aleppo's 'ulama openly condemned the "defeatist" fatwas issued by Saudi scholars who had forbidden any support to the Lebanese party considering the latter's Imami creed. Al-Buti even claimed that these fatwas had been "fabricated" in the United States.[55] Sunnite Islamic charities also played a leading role in helping the thousands of Lebanese

refugees—many of them Shiites—who flooded Damascus during the summer. The regime was thus indebted to the religious elite, which possibly explains the decision not to implement the projected closure of the religious junior high schools at the start of the new school year.

Although Hizbullah's "Divine Victory" was widely acclaimed by the Syrian population, the prestige won by the Lebanese militia quickly waned as a result of renewed rumours of Iranian-backed proselytism, which peaked during the autumn of 2006. Once again, Sunnite fears were fuelled by a combination of facts and propaganda. As far as facts are concerned, admiration for Hizbullah's military performances sometimes translated into a more strictly religious interest in Shiism. In October 2006, while visiting a young committed Sunni of Aleppo, I found a video CD containing a hymn in honour of Imam Ali sung by Iraqi Shiite artist Basim al-Karbala'i, with the mausoleum of Najaf as visual background. When asked about the place where he had bought this CD, my informant told me to go to Bab al-Faraj, a quarter of downtown Aleppo where all kinds of videos are sold, from Friday sermons to erotic movies. By way of advertisement, shopkeepers usually display the novelties on a TV overlooking the pavement. One of them was showing al-Karbala'i's videos, which were proving highly successful since I saw several of them being sold in about fifteen minutes—all of this in a city that is not home to any sizeable Twelver or Alawite community. Of course, such a popular interest in Shiite Islam did not amount to conversion—my informant, at least, never renounced his Sunnite faith—but it was sufficient to spread panic among circles that were already afraid of Shiite "invasion". It was also, above all, a piece of good fortune for those who had political interests in feeding the phobia.

The July war, indeed, was immediately followed by an unprecedented propaganda campaign denouncing Shiite missionary efforts in Syria and the Arab world at large. This campaign was launched by the rivals of the Syrian-Iranian-Hizbullah axis—i.e. the Syrian exiled opposition, the anti-Syrian Lebanese parties, and the main allies of the US in the Arab East (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan)—which were strongly dissatisfied with the outcome of the war. Its heroic resistance to the Israeli offensive had considerably strengthened Hizbullah—which now felt confident enough to push for the fall of Fu'ad Siniora's anti-Syrian government—and its sponsoring states, whereas it dealt a symbolic blow to "moderate" Arab regimes. Syria's benefits were also obvious in the realm of diplomacy: Western consensus about the necessity to isolate the country started to crack during the war, Spanish

Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos being the first member of a European government to visit Syria since the assassination of Rafiq al-Hariri in February 2005.[56]

For those who were afraid of a reinvigorated al-Asad, a rhetoric counter-offensive focusing on Iranian proselytism was not only a way to convince the targeted audience that the Alawite ruling elite was detrimental to the predominantly Sunnite identity of Syria: it was also aimed at depriving the Ba'thist regime from its claimed Arab nationalist legitimacy, since Shiitization, anti-Syrian polemicists claimed, was tantamount to the "Iranization" or "Persanization" of Syria.[57]

In previous years, the Muslim Brothers had avoided engaging in sectarian controversies, probably in order not to antagonize potential partners among the secular opposition. Starting from early September 2006, however, they released scores of alarmist articles that sometimes drew upon the crudest versions of conspiracy theory.[58] The Iranians, who were occasionally called "Safavids",[59] were not only accused of spreading the Twelver creed in the Syrian steppe by giving USD 10,000 to each recent convert, but also of trying to "modify the country's demography" through the naturalization of thousands of their nationals.[60]

This time, rumours of Shiitization were not only echoed by the local clergy (Wahba al-Zuhayli, Syria's most famous specialist of Islamic law, denounced a "movement led by the Iranian embassy")[61] but also by Western newspapers,[62] by the king of Saudi Arabia,[63] as well as by two of the world's most influential Sunnite clerics, namely, the head of the World Union of Muslim Scholars Yusuf al-Qaradawi,[64] and former Saudi opponent Salman al-'Awda.[65] A Syrian MP and the Minister of Culture even had to publicly deny rumours that the Grand Mufti Hassun had embraced Shiite Islam.[66] In the first weeks of 2007, the situation further deteriorated following the execution of Saddam Hussein at the hand of Shiite militiamen, on the one hand, and deadly sectarian skirmishes in Beirut, on the other. Discourses radicalized throughout 2007: Mufti of Mount Lebanon Ali Juzu, an ardent supporter of the Siniora government, spoke of Damascus as "the gateway of Persian colonialism",[67] while the Syrian Muslim Brothers described the military agreement signed by Damascus and Teheran in June 2006 as tantamount to "the occupation of Syria by Iran".[68] Like all Arab viewers of satellite TV channels, Syrians were also exposed to increasingly heated debates between representatives of the two sects, as well as openly anti-

Shiite programmes such as that presented on al-Safa TV by 'Adnan al-'Ar'ur, a Syrian Salafi polemicist based in Ryad.

In order to contain the flames, liegemen of the regime among Sunnite and Shiite clerics denied the "false rumours" of Shiitization on pan-Arab televisions.[69] In November 2006, the Association for Fraternity between the Islamic Schools of Law was jointly founded by Salah al-Din Kaftaru, the son of the late Grand Mufti Ahmad Kaftaru and the director of the academy that was named after him,[70] and Abdallah Nidham, the head of the Twelver association al-Muhsiniyya.[71] Since 2004, that is, since the invasion of Iraq, the Kaftaru Academy has organized a yearly Sunnite-Shiite congress. In 2007, it welcomed no less than three of such meetings, which were held in the presence of Syria's chief allies among Lebanese Sunnite Islamists, namely, prominent thinker Fathi Yakan and representatives of the al-Tawhid movement.[72] That year, the academy was also the venue for the founding congress of the Society of the Ulema of Iraq, a bi-sectarian organization aimed at fighting the foreign occupation of the country.[73]

The goodwill displayed by the representatives of official Islam towards the regime's promotion of "Islamic unity" should not hide the fact that all Syrian Sunnite clerics were worried about Shiite proselytizing, which they perceived as an existential threat to their communal identity. For instance, even though Salah al-Din Kaftaru was actively involved in Sunnite-Shiite dialogue, his "private" criticisms of Iranian missionary activities were an open secret. He was eventually arrested in July 2009, a decision the security services justified by, among other things, Kaftaru's verbal "attacks against other religious communities".[74] Even Islamist MP Muhammad Habash, who is well known for his very open approach to inter-faith relations, asked the Iranian vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Manushehr Muhammadi for official clarifications on that issue during a public meeting held in Damascus.[75] As for Sa'id Ramadan al-Buti, whose open denunciation of Shiite "scheming" has already been mentioned, he seemingly exploited the regime's need for his moral authority in this difficult period in order to extract some concessions. In January 2007, in his weekly programme on national television, the scholar described the circumstances of Saddam Hussein's execution as being the result of an American-Zionist conspiracy aimed at dividing the Muslims. In order to thwart this plan, he concluded, Sunnis and Shiites should form "not merely a tactical, but a strategic" alliance against Israel.[76] It is probably not a coincidence that, on the very same day, the government withdrew the permit of the Association for Social Initiative,

a feminist organization which al-Buti had violently criticized for its lobbying in favour of a secular reform of the law on personal status.[77]

Being perceived as a threat to the very existence of the Sunnire community, Shiite proselytizing has also been the only issue that evenly worried all categories of Syrian Islamic actors during the past decade. Indeed, whereas clerics generally concentrated on sectoral objectives such as the struggle against feminism and the defence of religious schools, lay activists and reformist intellectuals embraced a democratic agenda. All of them agreed, however, on castigating the Shiite "invasion". As we have already seen, the first Syrian personality to talk about Shiitization in foreign media was the human rights activist Haytham al-Malih. Likewise, the reformist intellectual 'Imad al-Din al-Rachid denounced the founding of "dozens of *husayniyyât*" in the country on al-Jazeera TV.[78] Moreover, the Movement for Justice and Development, an AKP-inspired party created in London in 2006, sponsored the authors of *The Shiite Renaissance in Syria*, which remains the most detailed report on Imami missionary activities in the country.[79] This report aimed at invalidating what it presented as the emollient results of another study released in 2006 by secular intellectuals.[80] Whereas, according to the latter, Shiitization only concerned a handful of families and was not promoted by any actual missionary efforts, the authors of *The Shiite Renaissance* asserted that 8,000 Syrian Sunnis (three-quarters of them from the Jezireh) had converted to Twelver Islam between 1999 and 2007.[81]

Rumours of Shiitization decreased somewhat since 2008, partly as a result of the regime's compliance with the Sunnite 'ulama's demand to obtain the replacement of Iranian ambassador Hassan Ikhtari, a cleric who was widely considered to be the mastermind of Shiite missionary activities in Syria.[82] The main factor that calmed the situation, however, was the diminution of sectarian tensions in the Middle East due to the relative improvement of the situation in Iraq and Lebanon.

Conclusion

Shiite Islam has become increasingly visible in Syria during the twentieth century due to the revival of the local Imami community, the rapprochement between the Alawite sect and Twelver Islam, the influx of Iraqi refugees, and the alliance between the Ba'thist regime and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The multiplication of Shiite shrines and religious schools that has

been witnessed since the 1970s has provoked widespread discontent among the local Sunnis. Indeed, the latter have resented the takeover (or, in some cases, perceived blatant invention) of holy sites by Twelver clerics, have jealously watched the regime grant foreign Shiites a freedom of action it denies to Syrian Sunnis, and have become increasingly convinced that they are the target of Iranian-backed missionary projects.

Although such sentiments were already well entrenched in the late twentieth century, Syrian opponents explain the unprecedented panic at Shiitization witnessed in the mid-2000s by pointing to a significant increase in Twelver activities that resulted in a growing number of conversions. This shift, they claim, resulted from both the deepening of the Syrian-Iranian partnership and from Bashar al-Asad's pronounced goodwill towards Shiite missionaries. Such a narrative is questionable in several respects. Of course, there is little doubt that many of the Imami clerics who officiate in the country wish to win Sunnis over and, in the case of the Shirazis in particular, hardly conceal their intention to do so. However, to date, there is no indisputable proof of a large-scale phenomenon of conversion among Syrian Sunnis. As for the idea that a policy shift on the part of the regime occurred during the past decade, it must be seriously qualified. It is true that Shiite *hawzāt* and committees multiplied at that time—probably as a result of massive Iraqi immigration—and it is also true that Twelver "provocations" reached a new level with the processions that were organized in Damascus from 2001 onwards. At the same time, the circumstances of the construction of the mausoleum of Sayyida Ruqqaya, in the late 1980s, or the "invention" of the tomb of Sukayna bint Ali, in 1999, show that Hafiz al-Asad was not really more worried about the sensitivity of his Sunnite subjects than his son Bashar. Finally, seeing Shiite activities in Syria as tantamount to Iranian influence is not entirely accurate either. Indeed, the most active Twelver trend in Syria is the Iraqi Shiraziyya, whose ties to the Syrian regime preceded the latter's alliance with Teheran. Although they probably coordinate their action in Syria with Iranian institutions, the Shirazis also rely on their long-standing and intimate relationship with the Alawite community, and, consequently, with the security apparatus, in order to fulfil their own missionary agenda.

In any case, explaining the intensity of anti-Shiite sentiments among Syrian Sunnis in the mid-2000s requires taking regional developments into account. Since the 1980s, Shiite presence in the country was all the more badly perceived because it was associated with Iran, one of the very few

states that had chosen to support al-Asad in his war against the Islamic opposition. After 2003, the same state was seen as encouraging its Iraqi clients to cooperate with the Western invaders. From then on, the curve of anti-Shiism in Syria has closely followed regional developments, rather than any purported intensification of missionary efforts in the country: a first peak was observed in the spring of 2006, that is, right after the start of the full-scale civil war in Iraq; in the following summer, tension decreased because of widespread admiration for Hezbollah's facing up to Israel; for this very reason, however, rivals of the Syrian-Iranian axis launched an unprecedented campaign of propaganda, which provoked hysteria among Sunnis all over the Middle East during the autumn of 2006; this trend reached its apex after the execution of Saddam Hussein in January 2007; and logically, tensions started to decrease in 2008 with the end of the most severe phases of the Iraqi and Lebanese crises.

The Shiite presence in Syria will probably remain a factor of tensions, all the more so given that the government does not seem willing or able to curb Twelver initiatives in the country: in July 2009, an official permit was granted for the building of a new mausoleum near the city of Raqqa.[83] Warnings formulated by prominent religious figures did not stop either: in March 2010, 'A'id al-Qarni, a former Saudi opponent and one of the most popular Islamic writers of the last decade, spoke of Iran's "gigantic efforts" to Shiitize Syria.[84] At the same time, the Syrian mobile phone operator MTN deactivated the service allowing its clients to send SMS to the Salafi satellite channel al-Wisal because of the latter's anti-Shiite stance.[85] These developments, however, were not enough to reawaken the panic that took hold of Syrian Sunnis four years ago. In order to reappear, such a panic will probably have to wait for another major episode of sectarian strife in the Middle East.

7

The Struggle for Citizenship of the Shiites of Saudi Arabia

Roel Meijer and Joas Wagemakers

If any state in the Sunnite Muslim world today seems the very antithesis of what Shiite Islam stands for, it must be Saudi Arabia. Not only have the revival of Shiite politics in Iraq after 2003, the assertiveness of the Lebanese Hizbullah and the nuclear ambitions of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad created fears of a "Shiite crescent" in Saudi Arabia,[1] but the latter is also home to Wahhabism, a reformist and strict form of Sunnite Islam that often has anti-Shiite tendencies. The rhetoric coming from Wahhabi scholars in Saudi Arabia, which is sometimes dubbed the "*dawlat al-tawhid*" (the state of the unity of God), is frequently critical of Shiites' religious beliefs, even going so far as to label them "*mushrikun*" (polytheists). There is nevertheless a substantial Shiite minority in Saudi Arabia, which is often treated as inferior to the nation's Sunnite majority. Although the vast majority of Saudi Shiites probably favour good relations with their Sunnite brethren, they also seem increasingly unwilling to endure the discrimination and incitement against them that they have suffered for so long.

This chapter concentrates on how these problematic Sunnite-Shiite relations have evolved in the Saudi context. It starts by giving a historical overview of the Shiites in Saudi Arabia, followed by an analysis of Shiite

discourse on reform. We have especially concentrated on the most recent struggle for obtaining full citizenship rights since 9/11. In contrast to earlier analyses of the reform movement in Saudi Arabia, which either regard it as part an Islamo-liberal[2] or a communitarian movement,[3] we regard it as a civil rights movement. Finally, we focus on the current position of Shiites and some recent debates about their rights and citizenship within the Saudi state.

Shiites in Arabia: A historical overview

The number of Shiites in Saudi Arabia today is not entirely clear and analysts' estimates range from five to fifteen per cent of the population, which amounts to about one to three million people of a total population of some twenty-five million.[4] They are concentrated mainly in three parts of the country: Najran (in the south, near the Yemeni border), where Zaydi and Isma'ili Shiites live; Medina, the home of a Twelver-Shiite community known as the Nakhawila;[5] and the Eastern Province, where the overwhelming number of Saudi (Twelver) Shiites live. This chapter focuses on the latter group.

Arabia before the Saudis

Although Shiite Muslims seem exceptional in a thoroughly Sunnite country such as Saudi Arabia, they actually have a long history in the region. The Saudi Eastern Province is part of a number of areas surrounding the Persian Gulf that have substantial minorities or even majorities of Shiites, such as Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq and, of course, Iran. The Shiites of the Eastern Provinces used to be part of a territory referred to as "Ancient Bahrain", an area encompassing large parts of the Gulf Coast, including the oases of Qatif and al-Hasa (also known as al-Ahsa) in the Eastern Province itself. Although Ancient Bahrain was predominantly Isma'ili from the eighth to at least the eleventh century, Twelver Shiites gradually increased their presence there. In the fifteenth century, however, its fortunes declined when it was overrun by Sunnite tribes and, in the sixteenth century, when the Portuguese divided the territory that had constituted Ancient Bahrain, and the region that would become the Eastern Province came under Ottoman rule.[6]

Unlike present-day Bahrain, which fell under Shiite Iranian rule in the early seventeenth century, and as such became an important centre of Shiite

learning, the oases of al-Qatif and al-Hasa were in a difficult situation under Ottoman rule. As a result of their religious beliefs, the Shiites were not only seen as heretics by the Sunnite Ottomans but also as natural allies of the rival Iranian Empire and thus as a potentially dangerous fifth column. It was also in this period, under the influence of Iran, that Ismailism gradually gave way to Twelver Shiism in both present-day Bahrain and in what is now the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. As such, the Shiites in al-Qatif and al-Hasa faced periodic harassment and discrimination from the Ottoman rulers, which changed for the better when the latter lost control over these oases to the apparently more tolerant Banu Khalid, one of the tribes engaged in revolts against the Ottoman Empire in the region, in the second half of the seventeenth century. The Shiites' fortunes were once again reversed, however, with the arrival of the Saudi-Wahhabi alliance in the eighteenth century.[7]

The impact of the Saudi-Wahhabi state

The alliance between the Saud family (the Al Saud) and their Wahhabi scholarly partners began in 1744, when Muhammad b. Saud (d. 1765), a tribal leader from Dir'iyya in the central-Arabian region called Najd, and Muhammad b. Abd al-Wahhab (1703–92), a strict religious reformer from the same region, started cooperating to conquer the Arabian Peninsula. The Al Saud formed the political and military leadership in this alliance while the Wahhabi scholars, including the descendants of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab (the Shaykh), provided it with a pan-tribal, unifying religious legitimacy.[8]

Central to Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's ideology was his emphasis on the unity of God (*tawhid*). Apart from the belief in one god, *tawhid* in Ibn Abd al-Wahhab's writings also entails that God must be absolutely sovereign in every sphere of life, including that of worship (*ibada*). As such, he condemned practices such as the veneration of saints and visiting tombs of shaykhs for religious intercession. These were dismissed as *bida'* (religious innovations) at best and were often equated with polytheism (*shirk*).[9] Since such rituals and customs were regularly practised among Shiites, for example in the veneration of their imams, Wahhabi scholars have often viewed them as polytheists (*mushrikun*)[10] and as a constant irritant and challenge to their own, supposedly pure, beliefs.[11] Moreover, the fact that Shiites reject the authority of the first three so-called rightly guided caliphs, who

are held in such high esteem by Sunnis, and focus solely on Ali and the Prophet Muhammad's family (the Ahl al-Bayt) has earned them the derogatory name *rafida* or *rawâfid* (rejectors), a term often used by Wahhabis.[12]

The anti-Shiite views of Wahhabi scholars were translated into policy by the various Saudi rulers. During the reign of the first Saudi state (1744–1818), the oasis of al-Hasa was conquered and Wahhabi rule extended over this area in the late eighteenth century,[13] and forces led by the Al Saud also massacred thousands of Shiites in the holy city of Karbala (Iraq) in 1801/1802.[14] While the rulers of the second Saudi state (1824–91) are said to have been more tolerant towards Shiites,[15] the latter remained a vulnerable group that have been discriminated against throughout the existence of the current Saudi state (1932–). Policies toward the Shiites under the first king of present-day Saudi Arabia, Abd al-Aziz b. Abd al-Rahman Al Saud (1880–1953), were based more on pragmatic considerations and a delicate balancing between political interests and Wahhabi ideas than they had been during the first Saudi state, however.

The Eastern Province and the Hijaz, the western region that included the Shiite community of Medina, were re-conquered by King Abd al-Aziz in the 1910s and 1920s, but they were not subjected to Wahhabi teachings in the way that they had been in the late eighteenth century. Control over these areas brought under his rule a large number of people who were unwilling to have Wahhabi teachings imposed upon them and who represented financial and business interests that the king did not want to jeopardize. More generally, an ideologically-driven policy would have clashed with British interests, which the king had to take into account. Despite his own anti-Shiite views, King Abd al-Aziz was therefore more forthcoming in his treatment of Shiites than the Wahhabi scholars were.[16]

Obviously, the king's relatively tolerant attitude was not easily accepted by Wahhabi scholars, nor by the more zealous Wahhabi Ikhwan (brothers), the band of fighters that King Abd al-Aziz had used to conquer parts of the Arabian Peninsula. The Ikhwan in particular resented the pragmatism of the king, whose treatment of the Shiites was just one example, and they demanded changes. Interestingly, King Abd al-Aziz, while unwilling to compromise in his relations with the British or neighbouring countries, relented and gave in to both the Ikhwan's and the scholars' demands with regard to Shiites: they had to be subjected to Wahhabism and undergo forced "conversion" to Islam. Although this policy was partly implemented, the military defeat of the Ikhwan by the king after they kept challenging his

policies in 1929/1930 meant the loss of a powerful ally to the Wahhabi scholars, who from that moment on were less able to pressure the king.[17] This led to a period of greater independence and ability to control policy for the kings of Saudi Arabia. The fate of the Shiites therefore became the prerogative of the rulers; the scholars, on the other hand, could only speak out on this issue in so far as the king allowed them to. This renewed balance of power, in which the position of the scholars was often one of legitimizing existing policies rather than being able to shape new ones in any meaningful way, has continued to this day.

Oil, discrimination and protest

From the 1930s onwards, the position of Shiites in Saudi Arabia improved somewhat, partly because of the discovery of oil in 1938 and its exploitation quickly after the Second World War. The company set up for this task, the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO), started employing Saudi nationals from the 1950s onwards and, since the oil fields could be found in the Eastern Province, many of these workers were Shiites. Through the ranks of ARAMCO, many of them attained a higher and more prestigious position in society, particularly within the Eastern Province.[18]

The improved economic status of Shiite ARAMCO workers did not translate into a more equal status in religious terms, however, and nor did it increase their representation in the military and their political power in Saudi Arabia as a whole. This was particularly painful when taking into consideration that the oil wealth of the Eastern Province, apart from providing jobs, did not generate financial benefits for the region's Shiites, but was mostly used to invest in other parts of the country. Even in the 1970s, when oil prices skyrocketed and huge amounts of money were poured into the development of the country, the Shiites hardly benefited at all.[19] In the meantime, their political awareness and self-consciousness increased. A younger generation of religious scholars and intellectuals, such as Hasan al-Saffar and Tawfiq al-Sayf, joined the Movements of the Vanguards' Missionaries (Harakat al-Risaliyyin al-Tala'i'), established in Karbala in 1968 and active in Iraq and the Gulf region. They later joined the affiliated group Islamic Revolution Organization (IRO), founded in 1975, which after 1979 became the dominant group among Saudi Shiites.[20] Influenced by a host of modern thinkers, they embraced the doctrine of the rule of the jurisprudent (*Wilayat-i faqih*), promoted by Khomeini in the 1970s, rein-

forced by Qutb's concepts of the pre-Islamic state of ignorance (*jahiliyya*) and sovereignty of God (*hakimiyya*) and the activism of Ali Shariati.[21]

By the time of the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 the Shiites in Saudi Arabia were organized and they had a revolutionary ideology to stage a revolt.[22] However, even during the Shiite uprising (*intifada*) that took place in the Saudi Eastern Province in 1979, while calling for an Islamic republic, democratic slogans were voiced: "No Sunna no Shi'is [*sic*] [...] just Islamic Unity".[23] After the crackdown by security forces, its leaders Hasan al-Saffar and Tawfiq al-Sayf fled to Iran, and later Syria. The monarchy adopted a dualistic policy in the following period. On the one hand, the Islamic Revolution shocked the Saudi regime and caused it to increase its efforts to promote its own Wahhabi version of Islam, including its anti-Shiite ideas;[24] on the other, it made an effort to address the Shiites' grievances by developing their region and investing more money in it. The underlying causes of the uprising—religious discrimination and the Shiites' political and social inequality—were not addressed and even the economic measures that had been taken had petered out by the late 1980s.[25]

The Shiite reform project of common Saudi citizenship

The Gulf War and the occupation of Kuwait in August 1990 constituted a watershed for the Saudi-Shiite relationship. Several developments came together in this period. Among IRO-allied students in the United States, a reformist trend emerged which no longer upheld the principle of *Wilayat-i faqih*. The fall of communism in Europe, the failure of the previous revolutionary approach,[26] in addition to the emerging pragmatic trend in Iran, which no longer promoted the expansion of the Iranian Revolution, enhanced a democratic strain in the reformist movement.[27] From its side, the regime sought new allies in the struggle against its internal critics who condemned the stationing of American troops on "holy soil" to invade Kuwait. In 1991 the IRO changed its name to the Reform Movement (al-Haraka al-Islahiyya). Two years later the leaders of the Shiite movement were given amnesty and returned to Saudi Arabia, where they further developed their reformist programme over the next two decades.

The new orientation meant a break with the previous absolutist concepts based on the works of Qutb, Shariati and Khomeini. Instead of praise for the revolution and martyrdom, it supported reform and gradualness; instead of separate laws and enhancing the communal position of Shiites in

Saudi Arabia it called for equal rights for all citizens.[28] Its leaders believed that the solution to the problem of discrimination was not just a Shiite problem but a "national" problem that touched upon the core of the state and the rights of the whole Saudi population. As these concepts evolved over the next two decades, they became more secularized, eventually centering on the concept of citizenship (*muwatana*) and the demand for equal rights and duties of all citizens in the country, regardless of their cultural and religious background.[29] The Shiite intellectuals promoted their "project" by means of interviews or writing their own articles in the Saudi press. However, not all Saudi Shiites adopted this line, and even within the movement much criticism has been directed at this approach.

We will now discuss the writings of some of the most prominent Shiite political thinkers of this trend, in particular Hasan al-Saffar, and Muhammad Mahfuz, and to a lesser extent Tawfiq al-Sayf. Hasan al-Saffar (born in 1958) is regarded as the leader of the more radical branch and of the uprising in al-Qatif in 1979. Remarkably, he was also the first to change his ideas. Already in 1989 he wrote an important book that proclaimed the virtues of pluralism (*ta'addudiyya*).[30] However, it seems possible that his ideas went back much further. In a series of lengthy interviews on his life held with the liberal thinker Abd al-Aziz Qasim in 2004, Hasan al-Saffar describes a diversity of influences on his life.[31] Although he carefully avoids mentioning his revolutionary background, he highlights the rational and tolerant currents in Shiism that had a huge impact on his thinking. After travelling as a teenager to Najaf to study in the Hawza and later going to Qom, he finally wound up in Kuwait, where he was influenced by Muhammad al-Shirazi. He also met Muhammad Taqi al-Mudarrisi.[32] Both are regarded as supporters of Khomeini's *Wilayat-i faqih*.[33] As important, in Kuwait, al-Saffar also came into contact with Sunnite thinkers and he read Hassan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb, Abu Al-'Ala al-Mawdudi, as well as Shiite thinkers, such as Musa al-Sadr, Mehdi Bazargan, Ali Shari'ati and Ruhollah Khomeini. The easy intermingling of Sunnis and Shiites in Kuwait constituted a tremendous contrast with Qatif and Saudi Arabia. It is, however, the Lebanese Shiite thinker Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-Din who has exerted the most important influence on al-Saffar's moderation and acceptance of pluralism. According to Saffar, his more tolerant turn derives from his realization that the religious minority sects (*tawa'if*) must live together and respect each other.[34] In this phase, al-Saffar still shows himself to be a traditional thinker groping around for Middle Eastern models that might bring

a solution to the deplorable situation of the Shiites in Saudi Arabia. He also retained, at this stage, much of the radical thought of the earlier period, as, for instance, is evident in his condemnation of the West as the source of imperialism, and Christianity as the source of intolerance. While condemning Salman Rushdie as apostate (*murtaziq*),[35] he also regards Islam as a complete system (*shumuliyya*).[36] It was only gradually that al-Saffar adopted a more balanced view, allowing himself to praise the West for the equality of its citizens and acceptance of pluralism and freedom. He began to promote concepts like mental inclusion and openness (*infitah*), democracy and institutionalizing of exerting critique,[37] while remaining critical of Western imperialist tendencies. In the later period he also became more critical of the idea of sectarianism (*ta'ifiyya*) and the mental isolation and national divisions it entails.

Despite these first steps, the situation of the reformers only changed after 9/11 and especially after the attacks by al-Qaida on the Arabian Peninsula in 2003, when Crown Prince Abdullah initiated the National Dialogue in which Hasan al-Saffar participated twice. One of the first organized dialogues was on interfaith relations, which was applauded by Shiite leaders.[38] The concept of dialogue (*hiwar*), tolerance (*tasamuh*), condemnation of fanaticism (*ta'assub*) and religious extremism (*ghuluw*), promoted by Crown Prince Abdullah, dovetailed nicely with the ideas that al-Saffar and other reformist Shiites had been discussing.[39] In 2003, 450 Shiite clerics, intellectuals and activists offered a petition to Crown Prince Abdullah entitled "Partners in the Homeland" (*shuraka' fi l-watan*). In this document, the signatories stated their loyalty (*wala'*) to Saudi Arabia and to national unity (*al-wahda al-wataniyya*) but they also demanded an end to sectarian discrimination (*al-tamyiz al-ta'ifi*) and incitement (*tahrid*), instead claiming equal rights as citizens (*muwatinun*).[40]

Their optimism was enhanced when Abdullah became king in 2005 and announced his support of reform. For instance, Shiites voted in large numbers for the elections of Majlis al-Shura (consultative council) that were held in 2005.[41] In this period, Shiite books and booklets promoting dialogue and tolerance flooded the Arabic market.[42] Lectures of Hassan al-Saffar on tolerance and co-existence were collected. At the same time, Shiites participated to a modest degree in the constitutional movement for reform represented by the Saudi Spring, which besides demanding political rights also had a strong anti-Wahhabi clerical slant to it.[43] Al-Saffar and others such as Ja'far al-Shayib signed many of the petitions that were circu-

lating in 2003 and 2004. Although in hindsight the years 2003–2006 were the heyday of reform momentum,[44] the fact that the liberal current was able to reconstitute itself after the clampdown in 2005 and continue its much subdued and mostly cultural character in the (Sunnite) Saudi liberal newspapers, and a neutral liberal website, ELAPH, also allowed Shiite thinkers such as Hasan al-Saffar to continue their writings and evolve their thought in a more outspoken and less sectarian direction. In the second half of the 2000s al-Saffar adopted the dichotomous discourse of the Saudi Sunnite liberals, associating liberalism with human rights, freedom and progress, as opposed to backwardness, despotism and the ideological dictatorship of mono-opinion (*al-ahadiyya*).[45] His intellectual output is amazing, reaching eighty-three books and 4000 cassettes in 2009.[46] On his website it is clear he is a national public speaker who is sought after for his opinions in national debates.

Muhammad Mahfuz is a much younger man than Hasan al-Saffar and his ideas in many ways are a continuation of his leader's thinking, taking it in a less religious form, cutting it off from its sectarian roots, and hardly ever mentioning Shiism as such. He seems also to be better informed about the West, providing examples from American and European history and even having the courage to praise Israeli democracy where Jews can support Palestinians. Nevertheless, his work shows a marked development. While he does not mention democracy in his early works, he later concentrates on this issue and he began to demand a constitution after 2005. In this latter period he began writing for *al-Riyad* newspaper and his work clearly falls within the frame of the liberal reform movement in Saudi Arabia. He adopts modern Western anthropological and philosophical concepts such as the "Other", identity (*hawiya*) and specificity (*khususiyya*). In philosophical terms he moved away from the communitarian approach to finding common ground with other currents, akin to a Rawlsian "overlapping terms of consensus".[47] He also refers more clearly to contemporary developments, although the writings of Mahfuz and al-Saffar remain largely abstract, seldom mentioning Saudi Arabia itself but mostly referring to general trends in the whole of the Arabic world such as "despotism", sectarian strife, fanaticism and the reasons for weakness of the Arabic nation.

Political and religious reform

The main reformist critique in the second half of the 2000s is directed towards the concept and practice of sectarianism (*tawa'if*), defined by

reformists as "an exaggerated adherence to their sect and fear of the rights of other sects".[48] Sectarianism is based, according to them, on a whole range of negative practices, such as domination, discrimination, marginalization, and repression of minorities as the Other (*al-akhar*). This leads to disunity, confusion (*tawattur*) divisions, weakness, decline (*inhidar*) and defeat.[49]

Although they ultimately hold political power responsible for the hegemony of Sunnite religious doctrine and practice, their main critique is aimed at Salafism and especially Wahhabism. For example, al-Saffar complains that a member of the Council of Senior Scholars wrote a booklet (100 *su'al wa jawab fi al-'amal al-khayri*—A hundred questions and answers on charity work) in 1423HJ/2002–3 in which he states that "it is the duty of the *ahl al-sunna* to hate (*bughd*) the people of innovation (*ahl al-bida'*) and abhor them and despise then as 'rejectors' (*rafida*) and worshippers of the graves" (*quburiyyun*).[50] He was also upset when another *'alim*, shaykh al-Tuwayjiri, was willing to accept Shiites as brothers of the nation but not as brothers in belief.[51] On a more fundamental level, he believes that Salafism is misguided by being completely focused on details of rituals while forgetting the larger societal and political picture.[52] Finally, Salafism, he argues, is focused on *tawhid*, which is not just regarded as the Oneness of God, but as the unity of opinion and the denial of pluralism and diversity. *Tawhid*, in al-Saffar's eyes, epitomizes the Salafi fear of rationality, interpretation, diversity, dissension (*fitna*) and open debate (*infitah*). In contrast to what it endeavours, it represents a politics that leads to domination, discrimination, repression and eventually to dissension and strife (*fitna*).[53]

The source of this Wahhabi misguidance is epistemological and is based on the idea that one single current or school (*madhhab*) has a monopoly over the absolute truth (*al-haqiqa al-mutlaqa*).[54] In line with his support of pluralism, al-Saffar quotes such critics of Salafism as Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Muhammad Sa'id Ramadan al-Buti who inveigh against the literalness of Salafism.[55] Al-Saffar finds the practice of condemning all those who differ from their Truth as followers of illegitimate innovation (*bid'a*), and deviation (*inhiraf*) especially offensive.[56] This dictatorship of a single opinion (*al-ahadiyya*) leads to intolerance, hatred (*hiqd*) religious extremism (*ghuluw fi-l-din*) and excommunication (*takfir*), accusing the Other of innovation (*tabdi'*), or what the liberals have called "intellectual terrorism" (*irhab al-fikri*) (i.e. everything that promotes oppression (*karaha*) of Muslims).[57]

But the Shiite reformers do not only accuse Wahhabism of enhancing sectarianism: they partly blame themselves for accepting it. In order to

emancipate themselves, Shiites must break through their self-imposed silence. Al-Saffar therefore calls upon his followers to stop accepting the position of the oppressed (*mustadi'fun*), to refuse the suffering of the sectarian identity and to open up (*infitah*) to the rest of society.[58]

Pluralism

The fundamental religious principle underlying this reform is the idea that God has created man differently (even as unbelievers).[59] This ingrained difference (*ikhtilaf*) is apparent in the diversity of languages, customs, races, and religions that exist on earth.[60] It is related to the idea of individual freedom—"freedom is the human condition"—[61] ability, and necessity of personal choice. As a result, every person bases his/her own choices on their own specificity (*khususiyya*)[62] and identity (*hawiya*). In fact, freedom and rationality (*'aqlaniyya*) is what constitutes humanity (*insaniyya*) and human dignity (*karama*).[63]

On a religious level, different levels of knowledge among the fuqaha', or different personal or material interests,[64] lead to different interpretations of the text and different currents, all of which have equal legitimacy, for there is not one truth but only multiple interpretations of one text, none of which can claim absolute truth (*al-haqiqa al-mutlaqa*). Or, as al-Saffar states: "these people (Salafiyya) forget that their understanding of the holy texts (*nusus*) is just an opinion (*ray'*) that contains mistakes as much as it can contain correct [interpretations]."[65] All understanding of the text is "human knowledge (*al-ma'rifa al-bishriyya*) that is subject to debate".[66] Individual reasoning (*ijtihad*) is therefore necessary and no one can accuse the other of innovation (*tabdi'*) and deviation (*dalal*).[67] Islam's promotion of freedom is laid down in the *aya*; "there is no compulsion in Islam (*la ikraha fi-l-din*)".[68] Mahfuz puts the relationship with Wahhabism succinctly: "It is not possible to have a debate between two people who differ if the one is the holder of the truth (*sahib al-haqq*) and the other lives in deviation (*dalal*)".[69] The Zaydi writer Zayd bin 'Ali al-Fadil, stated this even more pointedly by asking, how can one discuss anything with Salafis who argue only in two categories, right and wrong?[70]

As pluralism is a natural, God-created condition, life should be based on the recognition of these differences and the principle of tolerance (*tasamuh*), respect (*ihtiram*) and acceptance of the Other (*qubul al-akhar*). Once this diversity is accepted and humans are regarded as equal, the realization

comes that groups should accept each other and co-exist (*ta'ayush*), work together (*ta'amul*), and cooperate (*ta'awun*).[71] But in order for this to come about, ignorance (*jahl*) must be combated and the knowledge of the Other promoted in order to achieve mutual understanding (*tafahum*).[72]

Pluralism is, however, not just the basis of justice (*'adala*) and reason (*'aql*) but it also has a utilitarian dimension: in liberal tradition it is regarded as the most beneficial principle for the development of the individual, the community and the country as a whole. In contrast to what the Salafiyya holds, it releases individual capacity, avoids dissension and internal strife, leads to stability (*itiqrar*), and allows the nation to meet modern challenges. Instead of man being the slave of religion, "monotheistic religions serve humanity" and the "liberation of mankind".[73]

A new culture

The utilitarian dimension of the Shiite reformist project can be described as diversity in unity. Or, as Muhammad Mahfuz argues, to accept the diversity of others is to recognize a common humanity (*al-insaniyya al-mushtarika*).[74]

This project of reform and renewal (*tajdid*) is no small matter. The basis of Saudi society should be completely transformed (*asas jadida*), a whole new culture should be built on pluralism and tolerance; a new consciousness and a "new social will" constituted.[75] This new culture should not be based, as Salafism is, on a common claim to truth. Nor can it only be based on the shared values of tolerance, cooperation and co-existence. If it is to succeed, it should critically review its own past, religious principles and claims to truth. It is remarkable that the Shiite project, in contrast to much revivalist Islamic literature of the past two decades, has little respect for cultural heritage (*turath*).[76] Respect for the *turath* must not lead to stagnation (*jumud*); it is only appropriate in so far as it is beneficial. Why should we, al-Saffar asks himself, accept Ibn Taymiyya's or Ibn Hanbal's negative opinions of the Shi'a if they lead to strife?[77] In line with the liberal idea of progress and the constantly changing nature of society, the reformists believe that the *turath* must be reinterpreted in accordance with the exigencies of the times.[78] As with everything else, the *turath* must be rationally analysed and adapted to new circumstances. There is no need to "declare holy the mistakes of the *aslaf*" (forefathers) because despotism is also part of the *turath*.[79] Only an "objective, scientific reading of history" can lead to progress.[80]

A critical review of the *turath* together with the notion of pluralism will lead to a new culture which is based on a whole new set of moral values (*akhlaq*). Not surprisingly, many of these terms are inversions of the Salafiyya terminology. For instance, dissension (*fitna*) is not regarded as the result of rejecting *tawhid*, but of imposing one's will on the other;[81] deviation (*inhiraf*) is not deviation from the right doctrine but from the ethics of tolerance;[82] sincerity (*ikhlas*) is not related to piety but to objectivity and non-partisanship.[83] The result is a transformation of morals. Good conduct (*hasan al-khulq*) is based on *hasan al-zann* (healthy opinion). These are based on friendship (*rifq*), altruism (*ithar*), the good (*khayr*), respect (*rahma*), forgiveness (*'afw*), charity/good deeds (*ihsan*), sociability (*mudarah*), trust (*thiqa'*), equity/justice (*qist*), peaceful means (*tariq salim*), and brotherhood. These are opposed to those morals falling under bad conduct (*su' al-khulq*), such as hatred (*karaha*), the bad (*sharr*) passions and irrationality (*ahwa'*), strife (*niza'*) and fighting (*sira'*), all of which stem from the claim to absolute truth.[84] Instead of force, the new culture must be based on dialogue (*hiwar*), debate (*jadl*) and rationality, and "critique and self-critique".[85] Only in this manner can the struggle against fanaticism and terrorism be waged.[86] The common good prevails over personal good.

Citizenship

The ultimate goal of this new culture is equal rights for all citizens of Saudi Arabia regardless of their religious background. The modern concept of citizenship (*muwatana*), however, is a new phenomenon in the writings of the reformists. In the early writings of al-Saffar, citizenship is not equated with equal rights, for Christians must pay the *jizya* tax as they are seen to be protected and respected, which means they are regarded as subjects.[87] Mahfuz only mentions the concept of citizenship on page sixty-six of his famous book *Dialogue and the Unity of the Nation* (2004) as deriving from a shared interest in the welfare of the nation.[88] He mentions it again later in the book when he speaks of the common responsibility of the citizens to fight terrorism.[89] But only at the end does he adopt the modern concept of citizenship. His next book, which was published one year later,[90] deals extensively with the concept. Not surprisingly, he states that all citizens must share the same rights (*huquq al-muwatana*) even if they belong to different schools of jurisprudence (*al-ikhtilaf al-madhhabi*). It is only in that and in subsequent works that he accepts citizenship as a universal

concept. His definition is still defensive in the sense of guaranteeing communal religious rights (*khususiyya*) in the form of a liberated "space", although he does mention a constitution: "This space of the citizen is guaranteed by the constitution, and a system of laws and political laws that will allow everyone to exercise the freedom of belief and thought without hampering the other in participating in the nation and its course."[91] The rule of law, as opposed to the "rule of the sultan", is meant to guarantee minority rights.[92] In his later works (2009) he elaborates further, claiming the active rights of individual citizens. Here he states that citizenship is the opposite of sectarianism (*ta'ifiyya*), claiming that while the first "flowers" in a democracy and "developed societies", the latter exists in "backward societies" dominated by despotism and narrow-minded nationalism. In these societies, power is based on status, which he terms "titles" (*'anawan*) and "nameplates" (*yafitat*). Here, leaders of clans, tribes and religious groups intermediate between the ruler and the subject, while in democracies the relationship between the citizen and the state is a direct one ruled by law[93] and a contract (*'aqd*) that lays down the duties and rights of both the citizen as well as the ruler. In these later works, civil society and human rights are promoted for the first time.

If the reformist Shiite political discourse is to a large extent liberalized, so is their concept of the advocates of this programme. Even if the reformist programme is focused on the modern intellectuals (*muthaqqafun*), who should have complete self-confidence, be completely "independent from political and financial pressures" and be "courageous", in order to "transcend stagnation" (*rukud*) and "inherited opinion", and to think independently, innovatively and to present their case in "clear language", this does not mean that clerics are excluded in its execution. In fact, for al-Saffar the Lebanese cleric Muhammad Jawad al-Mughniyya (d. 1979) epitomizes the perfect role model. Mahfuz includes the ulama in the project on condition that they incorporate modern concepts such as citizenship in the *shari'a*.[94] Modernized, the backbone of Shiite civil society could be the establishment of a progressive and completely independent *hawza* in al-Qatif.[95]

Their other hope for reform is pinned on promoting the concept of civil society. Lay thinkers such as Ja'far al-Shayib make a distinction between traditional civil society (*al-mujtama' al-ahli*), in which membership is based on birth, and modern civil society (*al-mujtama' al-madani*). The latter is capable of meeting the demands of a quickly changing, modern society and bringing about a balanced relationship between state and society. He explic-

itly includes trade unions, professional organizations, and cultural clubs as part of his definition of modern civil society, the determining characteristic of which is their independence.[96] However, in the end, all reformers are aware that the state is still overwhelmingly powerful and only through its support can many of the discriminatory measures and practices be removed.

The nation: diversity in unity

If the citizen (*muwatin*) and recognition of diversity (*ikhtilaf*) and pluralism (*ta'addudiyya*) are the basis of this reform project, its focus is the nation (*watan*) as the place where diversity in unity is realized. Interestingly, nationalism as an ideology (*wataniyya*) is condemned and never mentioned except as an adjective, such as "national unity" (*al-wahda al-wataniyya*). Nationalism as an ideology of unification under the aegis of the House of Saud, a new trend in Saudi Arabia, is never mentioned. Instead, the concept of national unity has the dual function of underlining Shiite loyalty to the Saudi state as well as their independence from foreign tutelage, indicating that the reformists are committed to peaceful change.

More concretely, the reforms entail the following demands: (1) Stop the tutelage of thought (*al-wisaya al-fikriyya*) and the claim to truth by one religious school of jurisprudence (*madhhab*) which is imposed on others and deprives them of their rights and income if they do not comply.[97] This means that all forms of supervision (*raqaba*), moral surveillance (*muhtasiba*)[98] and regulation (*taftish*) of beliefs and thought of the Other should stop.[99] (2) All forms of condemnation and slandering of the Other by means of excommunication (*takfir*), accusations of unlawful innovation (*tabdi'*), or apostasy (*shirk*), or general incitement to hatred (*al-tahrid 'ala al-karaha*) must be forbidden by law.[100] (3) A new society should be created on the basis of the "recognition of the right to disagree" (*al-i'tiraf bi-haqq al-ikhtilaf*),[101] mutual respect (*al-ihtiram al-mubadila*), protection of the civil rights of all citizens (*huquq al-muwatana*), and co-existence on the basis of justice and equality (*musawa*).[102] (4) The state has an important part to play in this process: it must implement laws that end discrimination (*tamyiz*) in education and all sectors of society, and punish those who are guilty of discrimination.[103] It must furthermore cleanse the educational system and curricula and the media of all denigrating remarks against minorities.[104] (5) The state must create equal opportunities for all schools of jurisprudence to enter "decision making institutions of the state", such as

diplomacy, the Majlis al-Shura, ministries, human rights organizations and the military.[105] (6) The state must stimulate dialogue (*hiwar*), spread the "culture of tolerance" (*thaqafa al-tasamuh*), "acceptance of pluralism" (*qubul al-ta'addudiyya*) and mutual respect (*ihtiram al-mutabadal*).[106] (7) Al-Saffar calls for a Manifesto for Islamic Respect (*mithaq sharaf islami*), which would lay the basis for national unity (*wahda al-umma*).[107] Mahfuz believes that the national debate and institutionalization of mutual respect amounts to a national reconciliation programme.[108] (8) The manifesto should be based on a "new national culture" in which critique and self-critique is promoted and where a "culture of asking the right questions" is allowed as a means to combat the dictatorship of one opinion (*ra'y al-ahadiyya*).[109] (9) But the reform also promotes cooperation between Shiites and Sunnis outside the state. Al-Saffar argues for concrete cooperation between religious leaders of different currents to found a specific common institute or university department where scholars can study the points on which the different schools differ, critically evaluate their own past (*turath*) and that of the other, look into the others *'aqida*, cooperate in creating a common jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and solve new problems jointly by organizing conferences where representatives of the different schools meet to discuss common problems.[110]

"Partners in the Homeland"? Saudi Shiites since King Abdullah

The inclusive debates mentioned above notwithstanding, Shiites remained a discriminated minority in Saudi Arabia throughout the 1990s and the 2000s. In the years prior to Abdullah's ascent to the Saudi throne in 2005, Shiites remained virtually entirely excluded from important political positions. They have also largely been unable to attain higher-ranking posts in the police force or the military.[111] Education was another area where discrimination and incitement remained, despite the protests of Shiites. Although references to Shiites as *rafida* or to their religious practices as *shirk* are said to have been removed from textbooks in 1993, their rituals are still condemned in more general terms.[112]

The derogatory discourse on Shiites was not only kept alive by anti-Shiite books and certain Wahhabi scholars, but also by conflicts involving Shiites elsewhere in the region. The first of these was the war in Iraq that started in 2003. After the downfall of the Iraqi regime led by Saddam Hussein, elections brought a new Shiite political class to the fore that had never enjoyed any political power. This also increased the relative influence of (Shiite)

Iran, which had strong ties with some Iraqi politicians, was said to be pursuing the development of nuclear weapons, and had a president who often expressed himself in rather bellicose terms. Developments like these once again strengthened the idea that Shiites may not be entirely loyal to the Saudi state and could be a potential fifth column in a possible future confrontation with Iran. As such, these external developments have increased tensions between Sunnis and Shiites inside the kingdom.[113] That anti-Shiite feelings could reach extraordinary heights became clear when a conflict between Israel and the Shiite Lebanese militia Hizbullah erupted in 2006. While most Arabs supported the latter, some Saudis recycled older anti-Shiite fatwas to suggest that Muslims should support Israel—or at least not Hizbullah—in this conflict.[114]

King Abdullah's reign

It was in this regional and national climate—when many Shiite activists sought the inclusive and more moderate solutions to their problems as mentioned above, and a small group of Saudi Shiites continued to favour a more violent approach—[115] that Abdullah became king in 2005. His ascent to the throne was met with widespread approval among Saudi Shiites, who saw in him an advocate of pluralism and tolerance and an ally against anti-Shiite elements in the regime. There was good reason for them to do so. As Crown Prince, Abdullah had gained a reputation for being tolerant and reform-minded and it was therefore no surprise that many Shiite leaders viewed him as their best chance of achieving equal rights and citizenship.[116]

By 2010 critics believe he has had little actual impact. It is by no means certain that religious tolerance goes much deeper than King Abdullah's own preferences and therefore does not seem to constitute a long-term policy change, particularly when the king's age—he is in his mid-eighties—is taken into account.[117] Discrimination of Shiites has continued with regard to practising their own religious rituals.[118] Human Rights Watch has welcomed the more tolerant atmosphere, but it states that it has not led to significant institutional reform or tangible political results.[119] The main question here, however, is to what extent a common Sunnite-Shiite liberal discourse has sprung up based on citizenship. Two case studies of recent debates in the Saudi media dealt with below will try to measure the success of a common reform programme.

Shaykh Muhammad al-Urayfi

One recent Saudi discussion in the media involving Shiites concerned the Saudi Wahhabi Shaykh Muhammad al-Urayfi, who had given a sermon in which he attacked Shiites in general and the Iraqi Grand Ayatollah 'Ali al-Sistani in particular,[120] calling him a Magian (*zindiq*) and a sorcerer (*fajir*).[121] This sermon, given in late 2009 or early 2010, sparked a debate in the more liberally inclined Saudi press about extremism, religious equality and tolerance towards Shiites, with both Shiite and Sunnite writers criticizing al-Urayfi for his rhetoric.

Several authors pointed out that al-Sistani is a respected and moderate scholar and that insulting him was not only wrong but also hurtful to Shiites in general.[122] One author seized this opportunity to express the common liberal critique of scholars like al-Urayfi in general: "Why do they not excommunicate terrorism and its shaykhs and what they are doing [or why do they not criticize] corruption, bribery and drugs and such?"[123] Another stated that "I am 100% a Sunni woman and I disagree with al-Sistani on matters of creed and politics but what al-Urayfi has done does not honour me (*la yusharrifuni*) nor does it make me happy (*la yasurruni*)".[124]

Many authors took up the other liberal theme that sermons such as al-Urayfi's are dangerous because they may sow the seeds for the use of sectarian violence. "The temptation (*fitna*) of confessional slander (*al-qadh al-madhhabi*) is playing with fire (*la'b bi-l-nar*), which you cannot easily extinguish", one author stated.[125] Another had a more pragmatic view, finding it irresponsible to express such views considering the fact that elections in Iraq were being held. He believed Sunnite extremists there as well as Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad would use these words to further their own interests.[126] In line with the Shiite concept of the "courageous" intellectual, several writers called upon Arab intellectuals to show more responsibility (*mas'uliyya*) and speak out against such sectarian views,[127] praising scholars such as Hasan al-Saffar for taking a strong stand against these ideas.[128]

Although several authors indicated that al-Urayfi was not speaking on behalf of the Saudi government,[129] they did acknowledge that the sermon in question was far from unique in Saudi Arabia and that the country was in need of a law against such sectarian speech. The reasons given for this were mostly framed in terms of equal rights and citizenship, with Saudi Shiite intellectual Tawfiq al-Sayf stressing the earlier mentioned concepts of

the priority of national unity and respect for the citizen, whether he or she agrees with you or not. "That is the truth of the new Saudi society (*al-mujtama' al-Sa'udi al-jadid*): a society that respects itself and values the social and cultural diversity and pluralism (*al-tanawwu' wa-l-ta'addud al-thaqafi wa-l-ijtima'i*) that it encompasses and sees in it an opportunity (*fursa*)—not a burden (*ib'an*) or a problem (*mushkila*) [...]".[130]

Another author stated that, "our Shiite citizens (*muwatinuna min al-shi'a*) [...] are just like the rest of our Sunni citizens. They work with seriousness and dedication (*bi-jidd wa-ikhlas*) for the progress of the kingdom of everyone and its defence".[131] According to still another writer, Shiites are indeed "partners in the homeland" and the Saudi government is trying to "strengthen the citizenship among citizens regardless of their differences".[132]

These responses demonstrate that many Saudi intellectuals accept Shiites as equal citizens and share the reformist programme. Still, the discussion about al-Urayfi's sermon was not always as tolerant as the above suggests.[133] Saudi author Samar al-Muqrin had even received death threats for criticizing al-Urayfi's anti-Shiite sermon and exclaimed: "Do I have to agree with al-Urayfi to be a Muslim?"[134] Apart from criticism of more tolerant Saudi Sunnite writers, however, there was also a lack of concrete government measures in favour of Shiites' rights, as we saw above and as the second case study illustrates.

Fawzi Al Shanar

In late December 2010, the Saudi newspaper *al-Madina* reported that a teacher from Qatif with seventeen years of experience had been fired by the Ministry of Education for "teaching a different religious method (*manhaj dini mukhtalif*)" to his primary school pupils. The teacher had apparently taught the children "prayer in a different and contrasting way (*bi-tariq mukhtalif wa-mukhalif*)" and presented them with a book "containing [different] confessional ideas (*afkar madhhabiyya*)".[135] Considering that the teacher was from Qatif and had a "different" religious background, it was clear to all that this man was in fact a Shiite. His name was Fawzi Al Shanar and he was a teacher at a Shiite primary school. His dismissal led to a storm of protest in Shiite media such as *Rasid*, whose writers contrasted the ideas promoted in Saudi Arabia in recent years about dialogue and "confessional and religious co-habitation (*al-ta'ayush al-dini al-madhhabi*)" with the abrupt firing of this Shiite teacher.[136]

Some authors protested the dismissal of the teacher by pointing out that this is a case of blatant discrimination. Shiites' rights, they argue, are violated if they are not given the right to teach their own religious rituals and customs to their own pupils. They should at least be allowed to do so in schools where the majority of pupils are Shiites themselves and these authors therefore call on the Ministry of Education to reappoint Fawzi Al Shanar.[137] Others pointed out that this would never happen to a Sunnite teacher and came up with numerous examples of discrimination of Shiites in Saudi education from their own experiences.[138] One writer mentions several instances from the past two years of Sunnite teachers verbally (and sometimes physically) abusing their Shiite pupils, only to be punished by being sent to a different school. "The citizen Fawzi Al Shanar", however, was not involved in Shiite outreach: he did not use any offensive language and did not hurt anybody, the writer points out, but is nevertheless given a more severe punishment by being sacked.[139]

The case of Fawzi Al Shanar once again led to calls for equal rights and full citizenship for Shiites in Saudi Arabia. "I must repeat what I have said before", one author states, namely that "the Saudi Shiites are the sons of this land and belong to it with their bodies and their spirits (*bi-ajsadihim wa-arwahihim*) and they are planted in its soil (*mazru'in fi turabihi*). They are entitled to what is in it just like other sons of this homeland are. [...] It is not in [our] interest to apply a discriminatory policy (*siyasa tamyiziyya*) towards this group of citizens (*hadhihi l-fi'a min al-muwatinin*) with any justification (*bi-ayy tabrir aw musawwigh*)."[140]

Another author claims that this whole issue "is nothing but an effect of the sectarian mentality (*al-aqliyya al-ta'ifiyya*) and the dismissive and hostile sick culture (*al-thaqafa al-marida al-mu'adiya wa-l-rafida*)" prevalent among some sections of Saudi society. This, he claims, needs to be confronted as the root of the problem. In the meantime, the author continues, all peaceful means available should be used to reverse the decision to fire Fawzi Al Shanar.[141] This is partly echoed by others who point to Fawzi's rights as a Saudi citizen and his rights according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,[142] or by those who despair that "our living together (*al-ta'ayush indana*) has become an issue that needs [religious] evidence (*adilla wa-barahin*)".[143]

Although signs of further religious rapprochement between Sunnis and Shiites have been discerned since the sermon by al-Urayfi and the dismissal of Fawzi Al Shanar, such as the efforts by Isa al-Ghayth, a Sunnite judge

from Qatif, to establish a coalition of moderate Shiites and Sunnis that also has involved Hasan al-Saffar,[144] little concrete action has been taken. This further underlines the conclusions drawn by critics such as Human Rights Watch that several interesting and encouraging intellectual debates are indeed taking place, but that they have not (yet) been translated into significantly better political and societal positions for Saudi Shiites. It therefore appears that, King Abdullah's more tolerant attitude notwithstanding, the Shiites' vision of being true "partners in the homeland" has not yet been fulfilled.

Conclusion

Saudi Arabia, with its globally-known emphasis on Sunnite piety according to its own Wahhabi interpretation of Islam, remains an unlikely country to host a large Shiite community. The latter nevertheless has a long history in the state's Eastern Province, as well as other areas such as Medina in the west and Najran in the south. Their position under Saudi rule since the eighteenth century has generally wavered between weary acceptance by the Sunnite majority and its rulers and active discrimination by the latter. This was partly due to religious reasons: Wahhabis place great emphasis on the unity of God (*tawhid*) in all its forms and sometimes even refer to the country as the *dawlat al-tawhid* (the state of the unity of God); Shiites' rituals, on the other hand, supposedly challenge this through their veneration of the imams and visits to their graves, leading Wahhabis to sometimes label Shiites as polytheists (*mushrikun*). Part of the tension between Saudi Sunnis and Shiites is, however, also due to political reasons, including in recent years. A newly assertive Iran with regional leadership ambitions, the rise of Shiite politics in Iraq and the continued activities of Hizbullah in Lebanon kept alive the idea that a "Shiite crescent" was in the making and that its members were more loyal to their co-religionists than to their homelands.

Shiites have responded to this in highly diverse ways, ranging from radical and sometimes even violent approaches to moderate efforts to work within the Saudi system. The latter trend became the dominant one among Shiite activists, including those that were once part of the radicals, such as the prominent cleric Hasan al-Saffar. Men such as him have developed a new and inclusive discourse about their own role in Saudi Arabia, stressing not the country's Wahhabi or even Islamic heritage, as many Sunnite Saudis have done, but terms such as pluralism, citizenship and the nation. Through

the prism of these concepts, Shiite activists and intellectuals have found a new basis for their own position in Saudi society and to claim equal rights, an end to discrimination and more freedom.

Recent developments in Saudi Arabia show that concepts such as citizenship have been picked up by larger numbers of Shiite activists and continue to be used, particularly after the ascent to the throne of King Abdullah in 2005, who is known as a more tolerant ruler that looks favourably towards inter-religious dialogue. From the above two case studies it is also obvious that a new commonly shared discourse between liberal Sunnite and Shiite reformists on citizenship is emerging. Concrete measures in the form of increased political representation for Shiites or substantially more freedom to practise their rituals have largely been absent, however. It therefore seems that, despite the increased acceptance of Shiites by Saudi intellectuals, the "*mushrikun*" still have a long way to go in the "*dawlat al-tawhid*" before they will become full citizens.

Part Three

Contemporary Sunnite-Shiite Encounters in Iran, Central Asia and the Indian Subcontinent

کتابخانه تخصصی دانشگاه زبان و مذاهب

8

Sunnis and Shiites in Iran Since 1979

Confrontations, Exchanges, Convergences

Stéphane A. Dudoignon

Les autres querelles se pacifient aisément, mais celle de la religion a longue suite; et encore que les gens de guerre ne soient pas fort religieux, ils prennent parti, et étant engagés, ils suivent puis après.

Blaise de Monluc, Commentaires (1521–1576),
ed. Paul Courtault, Paris: Gallimard (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), 1964: 629

After a recent public presentation on Sunnite Islam in modern-day Iran, the present author was complimented by several members of the floor, all distinguished specialists of the recent political history of the country, for being—and for being destined to remain—the unique specialist of such a peripheral subject. Besides being inexact, this assertion can also be seen as a telling example of the durable lack of interest within the field of Iranian studies for Iran's quite substantial Sunnite minority.[1]

As a matter of fact, in spite of its numerous political issues and dimensions, the history of Sunnite Islam in Iran is still awaiting its rightful place as a research topic in modern and contemporary Iranian studies, to say nothing of Islamic studies at large. In defence of scholarship, it must be said that Iranian Sunnis have almost completely vanished from primary sources

in the wake of the establishment of Twelver Shiite Islam as the state religion of the Safavid Empire, from the early sixteenth century onwards.[2] As to the short Sunnite episode of Nadir Shah's reign (1736–47), it does not seem to have brought about deep change in the overall perception that Iran is a Shiite country. In fact, in spite of Nadir Shah's proscription of Shiite practices and despite his promotion of a Sunnite identity for his dynasty,[3] the ephemeral conqueror of India and Central Asia has remained credited almost exclusively with plundering and destruction. Nowadays, in the Sunni-majority cities of Iranian Khurasan, Nadir Shah is remembered, strangely enough, as the one who brought to its achievement the repression of the Safavid period[4]—an expression of the conviction that for Sunnis in Iran safety cannot come from within.

Two peripheral forefronts: Kurdistan & Baluchistan

Two highly significant changes took place in Iranian Sunnite-Shiite relations during the twentieth century, but they have only now begun to attract attention from domestic and international observers and researchers. The first is the decline of tribal authorities in the western and eastern-most Sunni-populated peripheries of Iran, and their gradual replacement by centrally appointed civil administrators deprived of the moral prestige of former emirs and khans. This situation has gradually thrust a class of religious leaders with modernized profiles into the role of intermediaries for the resolution of conflicts (in Persian: *raf'-i ikhtilafat*, a key issue in the daily life of tribal societies). Two regions of Iran have been especially exposed to this evolution: Kurdistan in the west and Baluchistan in the east. Both were historically used as buffer zones between the central Iranian plateau and neighbouring empires. Both are also zones of transition with regions where major languages of modern Islam are spoken, from Arabic and Turkish in the west, to Hindustani in the east. This combination of characteristics makes Kurdistan and Baluchistan regions of primary significance in the modern and current geopolitical contexts of Iran.

In both regions, Sunnite Islam has been viewed with suspicion by the modern central Iranian states because of its connections with rival superpowers: the Ottoman Empire in the West,[5] and the Mughal Empire followed by British India in the East. The Sunnite *'ulama* in both of these regions continue to orient themselves towards major centres of learned culture like Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo, Istanbul, west of the Zagros Moun-

tains, and Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, or Delhi east of the Great Kavir Desert. The multilingualism of Kurdish mullahs (or *melas*) and of Baluchi *mawlawis* (Sunnite religious personnel with an Indian or Pakistani background) makes them key intermediaries between the cultural regions respectively defined by Arabic and Turkish, on the one hand, and those regions defined by Urdu language, on the other. Kurdistan and more recently Baluchistan have been reputed as centres for strict Sunnite learning—Shafi'i for the former, Hanafi for the latter—whence they remain largely considered hospitable abodes for every kind of 'heterodox' religious community.

The two regions are in fact variegated ethnic and confessional mosaics, where Sunnite majorities find themselves surrounded by neighbours of other creeds, often also of other tongues. In Kurdistan as well as in Baluchistan, the arrival of European, and then North American missionaries—Protestants of various denominations that began to arrive in the nineteenth century—made the mosaic even more complex, while increasing the suspicion of urban Muslims and of the governments in Teheran that these Christian newcomers may act as agents of hostile powers (of Great Britain in particular).[6] Partly as a reaction against these foreign encroachments, in the twentieth century Kurdistan and Baluchistan have been exposed, separately but simultaneously, to the expansion of a vernacular religious personnel with new profiles. Endowed with strong Sufi backgrounds, they have at the same time been submitting the teaching and practices of historical Sufi paths to sharp criticisms—opposing the notion of *ihsan* (laudable action) to that of *tasawwuf* (historical Sufism, associated with pietism). These new-brand *'ulama*, either of Arabic and Turkish backgrounds in Greater Kurdistan, and of Indian or Pakistani education in Greater Baluchistan, have been promoting a combination of gnosticism with rejection of historical Sufi paths like the old and powerful Qadiriyya and Naqshbandiyya in Kurdistan, or the Indian rooted Chishtiyya as far as Baluchistan is concerned.[7] Rejection has included the cult of the saints and magical practice—at least that magical practice non-sanctioned by the Islamic tradition set up by al-Ghazali in the early twelfth century CE.

The second major change has been the Iranian Revolution of 1979. The spring 1979 campaigns led by prominent Shiite and Sunnite clerics against the threat of Khomeini's dictatorship and against the very principle of the *wilayat-i faqih* (Jurisconsult's Government) notably brought about the first divorce between the country's Sunnite minority, conducted by its religious leaders, and the new political institutions identified with the Shiite major-

ity. These campaigns also permitted the emergence of a nascent sense of solidarity within a henceforth self-conscious Sunnite community of Iran. As soon as the constitution was elaborated in the fall of 1979, violence arose between local populations and Pasdaran in the streets of big cities, in regions as varied as Kurdistan in the west, Khuzistan in the south-west, Sistan and Baluchistan in the south-east, and the Turkmen-peopled districts of the south-eastern shore of the Caspian Sea.[8] The existence of Sunnite guerrillas in Iranian Kurdistan in the early 1980s, in Iranian Baluchistan in the 2000s, followed since 2001 and 2003 by the durable military presence of US-led coalitions in both Iraq and Afghanistan, have not contributed towards modifying Teheran's derogatory perception of Sunnite Islam as an alien and hostile force.

At the same time, the establishment of a limited and selective democracy in the 1980s has transformed the religious notability of the *mela*s and *mawlawi*s into a major force of vote-getters, especially in local and regional elections. In parallel, since the end of the war with Iraq and Khomeini's death in 1989, every presidential election in Iran has been characterized by the growing implication of the Sunnite *minbar*s in favour of candidates perceived as the most inclined toward reform or secularism, every time with marked impacts on the results of the ballots.[9] In the international context of the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, the growing pressure of political terror and the contested election of June 2009 have brought an ever-latent crisis to the verge of eruption. However, the fatal combination of these developments, in the medium and the short term, have created a contrasted situation in which cleavages and confrontations between the Shiite majority and the Sunnite minority of Iran are sometimes counterbalanced, in several important fields of public life, by exchanges and convergences—with or without the direct participation of the state. Interestingly, Iranian Kurdistan and Baluchistan are more than ever at the forefront of this combination of developments, loudly providing forces and arguments for the defence and illustration of the Sunnite minority at national level, and paying a heavy price in terms of repressive policies, while testing out—with the aid of figureheads from the Shiite majority—various kinds of formulas for their better integration into the Islamic Republic.

Twentieth-century Sunnite revivals: A reversal of poles?

In the central and northern Kurdish-peopled regions of Iran (the region [*ustan*] of Kurdistan itself, with its centre in Sanandaj, but also with the

districts of western Azerbaijan bordering upon Turkey),[10] the actions of the Pahlavi monarchy (1925–79) led to the rapid decline of the power of traditional tribal chiefs, combined with the cooptation of a limited number of them into the local and central governments, with financial and political rewards, and with the preservation of their large landholdings.[11] Notwithstanding the fidelity to the monarchy of this specific part of Kurdish society, the revolution of 1979 was initially welcomed in Kurdistan, a region where expectations of autonomy and cultural rights had been ignored by the *ancien régime*. However, global disillusionment with the new power quickly became visible. Interestingly, with the demise of Marxism as a political force and the return of Islam as a significant factor in politics, from the late 1970s onwards political action was led by charismatic figures from the religious personnel of Sunnite Islam. It was they who led the struggle for regional self-government and for full equality of rights with Shiites through the recognition of a separate Sunnite minority, although this was ultimately ignored in the constitution of December 1979.[12]

Amongst them, Shaykh 'Izz al-Din Husayni, the influential religious leader of the Mahabad Kurds, allied himself with a regionally powerful radical left. He adopted a socialist discourse couched in religious terms, with an emphasis on self-determination for Iran's various ethno-linguistic groups.[13] In 1980, in order to induce Sunnite minorities to participate in the presidential election, Ayatollah Khomeini announced that he was prepared to guarantee Sunnite minority rights and to allow the Sunnis to have their own religious courts in areas where they constituted the majority of the population. However, Shaykh 'Izz al-Din and other Kurdish leaders rejected this proposal. The failure of successive talks on the autonomy of Kurdistan led to the Kurdish boycott of the elections of March and December 1979 on Iran's new political institutions. Shaykh 'Izz al-Din subsequently continued to oppose Khomeini's theory of government, arguing that "in Sunni Islam there is no Imam as political leader", and denying the Islamic Republic an Islamic character. With time, however, leadership would pass from these religious figures to secular Kurdish politicians and secular, left-leaning political parties. When the new central government sent its army and Shiite irregulars to take control of Kurdistan, there were short-lived Sunnite Kurdish resistance movements, but soon only secular forces remained in place.[14]

A number of significant differences can be highlighted here between the north-western regions of Iran and their south-easternmost counterpart in terms of historical destiny. The region of Sistan and Baluchistan was created

by Riza Shah (1925–41) along the boundary of British India to make it easier to permanently control the previously unstable tribal territory of the Baluch, having it administered by Shiite Sistanis. In this region, the Sunnite religious personnel have been able to acquire and to preserve an unbalanced social control and political authority. As in Kurdistan, this position is due in part to the rapid marginalisation of Baluch tribal leaders from the 1920s onwards, with elimination of those keenest to realize regional unity and autonomy, and with the cooptation of those loyal to the Pahlavi Crown—in sharp contrast to the sociological continuity of traditional tribal leaders' dominance in Pakistani Baluchistan.[15]

The enviable status of Sunnite clerics in Iranian Baluchistan can also be explained by the demographic weakness and permanent repression of the vernacular secular intelligentsia, and to the absence of a large popular basis for foreign-based autonomist political parties. Moreover, the lasting regional confrontation between, on the one hand, Persian-speaking Shiite-background administrators and merchants originating from the Sistan province, or from Birjand, Kerman and Yazd,[16] and, on the other hand, a vernacular notability of Baluchi-speaking *mawlawis* linked with the main lineages of tribal leaders has produced a growing identification of Sunnite Islam with Baluchi national identity at the local level.[17] This phenomenon has increased as a result of the parallel intensification of Persian settlement and Baluch rural exodus towards sprawling new towns in the years immediately following the revolution of 1979.

The *mawlawis* have come to play the role of tribunes for the Sunnite cause at the regional level, and, since the last decade of the Pahlavi period, for the whole country. Indeed, in terms of demographic significance, 1.7 million Baluchi citizens of Iran can hardly pretend to compete with their six million Kurdish counterparts. The same can be said from the viewpoint of the respective ages of religious teaching institutions in Iranian Baluchistan and Kurdistan. Contrasting with the almost continuous history of Islamic learning in Kurdistan, or with émigré Kurdish *'ulama*, the westernmost Iranian part of Greater Baluchistan was generally thought of as a periphery of the Islamic world par excellence until the late twentieth century. However, Kurdistan and Baluchistan's respective roles as cultural givers and takers have been partly reversed during the short twentieth century. Considered for centuries to be the cradle of Sunni Islam in what we nowadays call the Middle East, Iranian Kurdistan had to give up its religious primate in the late 1970s in favour of the Sistan and Baluchistan region,

now a central driving force behind the revival and politicisation of Sunnite Islam throughout the whole country.[18] If beforehand Sunnite teachers of Islamic religion and law had to request confirmation of their *ijazat* ("permissions" to teach delivered by the masters in classical *madrasas*) from the *shaykh al-Islam* of Sanandaj, since the very last years of the Pahlavi period they have had to receive it from the *Shaykh al-Islam* of Zahedan. As we shall see, the Islamic Republic has only reinforced this new distribution of roles.

What has happened that might explain or justify this west-east reversal of poles within the Sunnite community of Iran? During a short but decisive period of time, from the eve of the First World War to the aftermath of the Second World War, Iranian Baluchistan found itself at a forefront of world history. British troops were then occupying, in periods of conflict, the south-eastern corner of Iran. Their presence facilitated the circulation of migrant workers between southeastern-most Iran and the delta of the Indus River. In the 1920s–1930s, in a context of struggle against the alleged expansion of Bolshevik influence in the region, the British presence helped a new generation of Islamic clerics to find their way to the major Sunnite teaching institutions of the north of British India. This was a period of quick expansion of the School of Deoband, a wide network of *madrasas*, the first of which had come to light in 1867 in the form of the "House of Learning" (Dar al-'Ulum) of Deoband itself, a city in the north of the Delhi region. Interestingly enough, one observes that Western (in the present case, British) support for the expansion of the School of Deoband towards the Middle East began some sixty years before the emergence of the present-day Deobandi-background Taliban movement, and the logic of containment of the Russian superpower was already, and fatally, placing Baluchistan at a forefront of this political tectonic plate.

Looking eastwards? Iran and the School of Deoband

A traditionalist movement postulating the primacy of the imitation (*taqlid*) of pre-modern Sunnite Hanafi jurisprudence (the Islamic law school that prevails notably in India, Afghanistan and Central Asia), the School of Deoband first appeared as a Sunnite Islamic reaction against the British schooling system and the latter's first Indian adaptations. Its central endeavour was the transformation of classical *madrasas*, which were organized on the principle of individual teaching of individual books, into a modernized formal institution. Built upon the model of European secondary schools,

the Deobandi *madrasa*s used to possess a curriculum divided into levels, taught by a permanent staff remunerated by stable resources organized through wide campaigns of fundraising. This replaced the capricious princely patronage of the previous period, which had meanwhile fallen into escheat. Its strict Islamic teaching, though giving room to personal gnostic practice under the leadership of a master, showed open hostility to the historical Sufi paths and to the cult of holy graves. Making use of modern technologies of mass communication from printing to the post and railway—with preference for Arabic-script Hindustani language over Persian, in order to reach an ever-wider, not necessarily well-read audience—the School of Deoband also extended its influence through the rapid multiplication of its teaching centres, especially along the Ganges River and Indus River valleys.[19]

As has frequently been the case in the subcontinent, since the 1910s, in the wake of the growing politicisation of religion and antagonism between Muslims and Hindus, the action of Deobandi *madrasa*s was then coupled with that of two major organizations. The first, a political party created in 1919, the Jam'iyyat al-'Ulama'-i Hind ["Society of the Islamic Scholars of India"], was opposed to the principle of a partition of India since it was attached to the idea of the autonomy of the religious field. One of its Pakistani offspring, the Jam'iyyat al-'Ulama'-i Islam (infra: JUI), although fragmented into multiple fractions, has been a major protagonist of the Islamicisation of politics in Pakistan since 1947.[20] The second of these organizations, the Tablighi Jama'at ["Missionary Society", infra: TJ] was created in 1926 in order to counterbalance Protestant and Hindu missionary activity among tribal populations of northern India. Aiming initially at a reinforcement of the Islamic faith of ordinary, mostly illiterate Muslims in a context of proselyte competition, Tablighi missionaries have contributed towards the diffusion of a particularly conservative version of the School of Deoband.[21]

Relevant for our purpose is that both the JUI and the TJ have become major players in the Sunnite Islamic revival in eastern Iran, with a particular vitality during the first thirty years of the Islamic Republic. In a regime banning political parties, the JUI has paradoxically become the most influential political organization in south-eastern Iran, especially after its victories in the 2002 Pakistani regional elections whereupon it joined coalitions of Islamist parties in Baluchistan and in the Northwest Frontier Province. As to the TJ, with its centre for Iran in the almost exclusively Sunnite Bal-

uch-peopled city of Sarawan near the Pakistani boundary, it has been prominently active in the most remote areas of the Sarhadd (lit. "frontier": the northern, barren half of Iranian Baluchistan) since at least the 1970s—a period when the action of its missionaries was beginning to discredit every religious or magical practice linked with the traditions of the tribes.[22] In Iran, the coordinated diffusion westwards of the influence of the School of Deoband, of the JUI and of the TJ has been taken on by an ever-growing network of modern *madrasa*s gradually organized into a hierarchy that came to encompass, since the early 2000s, the whole Sunnite periphery of Iran.

The expansion of the School of Deoband outside of India was, until then, hampered by its choice of Urdu language instead of classical Persian as the idiom of teaching and mass communication. From the 1910s onwards, and especially since 1970, the Deobandi movement has found strategic partners in new generations of *mawlawi*s from Iranian Baluchistan. The *mawlawi*s' exclusive use of Persian language for teaching and publications—as opposed to the *madrasa*s of eastern, Pakistani Baluchistan where Urdu has been adopted as the principal medium of education from the late nineteenth century[23]—has allowed them to play the role of necessary intermediaries between the Indian cradle of the School of Deoband and its new horizons in the Middle East and ex-Soviet Central Asia. It is one of the numerous apparent paradoxes of the area that the most peripheral region of Iran, where Persian language often remains absent from private use in favour of Baluchi, has come to play the role of a continental crossroads and a centre for diffusion of the Deobandi movement westwards and northwards through a new usage of Persian as a major *lingua franca*.

According to the written primary sources at our disposal, the first Deobandi institution opened in Iranian territory was the Dar al-'Ulum "Zangiyan" created in Sarawan around 1915, which is currently one of the most important *madrasa*s of the region.[24] The opening of the Zangiyan Madrasa has been followed by several waves of creating Deobandi institutions throughout Iranian Baluchistan, from Gusht in 1939 to Sarbaz in 1952, Zahedan in 1971, Chabahar in 1972, and so on—all with permission, and sometimes even the support of the Pahlavi monarchy, which apparently was interested in the possibility of keeping its Sunnite students in religion within the national territory, instead of them coming back to Iran having graduated from India/Pakistan or Saudi Arabia. In the Baluch-peopled peripheral quarters of the main new towns of Iranian Baluchistan, beginning with the regional capital Zahedan itself, Mughal-style Sunnite

mosques and *madrasas* have come to rival in size and ornament the haughty Safavid-style *husayniyyas* built up in more central quarters by the Shiite migrant merchants and white collars from Sistan, Birjand, Kerman and Yazd. A modest but successful jihad set up in spring 1936 by a certain Mulla 'Abd-Allah of Sarbaz, a religious leader of the Shahbakhsh (or Isma'ilzayi) Baluch tribe, against the old but numerically small Dhikri confessional minority—an Indian-born movement deeply influenced by Sufism[25]—was to become the founding drama of the whole Deobandi movement in Iran. The mobilization and negotiations entailed by the jihad seem to have played a central role in the promotion of Mulla 'Abd-Allah's lineage which, since the early 1970s, has been in command of the Dar al-'Ulum of Zahedan, managing to make of the latter the main Sunnite religious teaching institution of Iran as a whole—now the host of almost 1,700 students, thirty per cent female, from Iran itself, the Middle East and Central Asia.

The son of Mulla 'Abd-Allah, Mawlana 'Abd al-'Aziz Mullazada ["The Mullah's Son"] "Makki"[26] (1916–87) emerged soon after the revolution of 1979 as a prominent spokesman for the Sunnis of the region of Sistan and Baluchistan, being the Rector of the Dar al-'Ulum that came to bear his name, and as the *Shaykh al-Islam* of Zahedan. A deputy of Sistan and Baluchistan to the Islamic Constituent Assembly of 1979, Mawlana 'Abd al-'Aziz embraced the cause of clerical opposition to Khomeini. He is still remembered among his partisans for having left the assembly in high dudgeon in protest against the anti-democratic character of Iran's new political institutions, and for having afterwards kept a highly critical attitude to the institutions of the Islamic Republic.[27] Criticizing the principle of the *wilayat-i faqih* in terms analogous to those employed at the same time by Shaykh 'Izz al-Din Husayni in Mahabad, Mawlana 'Abd al-'Aziz went so far as to promote the iconoclastic notion of a "*marja'-i sunni* [Sunnite guide]"—a manner, characteristic of the Zahedan School, to adapt and to divert a specifically Shiite concept in order to question the strictly confessional character of the new political institutions of Iran, and to promote Sunnite Islam as the best possible substratum for a possible rapprochement between the two mainstream branches of Islam.

A Sunnite opposition to a Shiite republic?

In the 1980s, Mawlana 'Abd al-'Aziz became one of the main advocates for the equality of religious and political rights for all of the "ethnic and confes-

sional minorities [*aqalliyatha-yi qawmi wa madhhabi*]" of Iran. His recurring discourse on the necessary unity between Sunnis and Shiites in general—in a period of national unity against Iraq—and his insistence on the responsibility of the religious personnel of Islam in the preservation of this unity[28] have remained central in the publications of the Dar al-'Ulum "Makki". In the 1990s and 2000s, the cultivation of this inspiration and of a common opposition to the West, particularly on the question of Palestine,[29] in a mood that is more often nationalist than pan-Islamist, has provided the Deobandi movement of Iran with a rare subject of consensus with the diverse authorities and trends within the Islamic Republic. It is to be noticed that this moderate position and pursuit of a minimal consensus on the unity of the *umma* contrasts with the radical and violent anti-Shiite stance of some Deobandi *'ulama* of the same Mullazada lineage now in exile outside of Iran, notably in Western Europe.[30]

If Mawlana 'Abd al-'Aziz was unquestionably a key regional partner for the setting up of the TJ on Iranian territory,[31] the history of this organization within Iran remains poorly studied. However, at least one specific feature of the TJ in the Islamic Republic deserves to be unveiled, since it casts a revealing light on the mutual relationship between the Shiite majority and the Sunnite minority, and on the attempts by the central Iranian state to organize and to regulate it. It is a fact that the regional offices of the TJ in Iran, especially the office of the TJ in Zahedan for the region of Sistan and Baluchistan, are led by Shiite functionaries who often cumulate the most varied professional affiliations (this is because a functionary's salary is often not enough, in Iran, to keep the pot boiling). It is these Shiite officials who are in charge of the distribution of subsidies from the TJ to the registered local Sunnite missionaries of the organization, and of maintaining contact with them on a regular basis. Until the recent past in Zahedan, this charge was incumbent upon Sistan-born Shiite academic Ghulam-Husayn Jahantigh (b. 1962), a veteran of the war with Iraq, then a professor of political science at the city's "Free" University and, at the same time, characteristically, the Director of the Guide 'Ali Khamenei's Office in Sistan and Baluchistan until his replacement in 2007 by Ayatollah 'Abbas-'Ali Sulaymani.

Far from limiting his role to a passive and mechanic distribution of the resources of the TJ, Ghulam-Husayn Jahantigh, during his frequent car rounds through Baluchistan, used his position to be called as a witness of the misfortunes of the local population and, more generally, of the Sunnite

minority of Iran. Highly conscious of his responsibilities, in the course of the 2000s he has become a spokesperson for the Baluch and the Sunnis of eastern Iran (a situation that illustrates the poor access of the latter to the media). The high-quality Persian-language illustrated journal *Haft Iqlim-i Sharq* ["The Seven Climates of the Orient"], published by Jahantigh in Zahedan since 2002 (with a long interruption due to censorship in 2007–09), has been militating in favour of the valuation of Baluch culture for the Persian readership of the region. In parallel, Jahantigh has regularly advocated a rapprochement between the Shiite and Sunnite *madhhab*s in the regional press. In so doing, the Shiite publicist has been trying to distinguish himself from his patron Khamenei, whose "Centre for the Rapprochement of Confessions [*Markaz-i Taqrib-i Madhahib*]" has remained largely perceived, in the periphery of Iran, as a key instrument for the aggressive conversion of Sunnis to Shiism.

The successor of Mawlana 'Abd al-'Aziz as the Rector of the Dar al-'Ulum and as the *Shaykh al-Islam* of Zahedan, his son-in-law Mawlana 'Abd al-Hamid b. Mulla Faqir (b. 1947),[32] has successfully endeavoured, like his predecessor, to detach himself from his former Shahbakhsh tribal affiliation, making the Dar al-'Ulum "Makki" the main Sunnite religious teaching institution of the country, and the position of the *Shaykh al-Islam* of Zahedan the most prominent Sunnite religious charge in Iran. At the turn of the twenty-first century under the Khatami presidency, the creation of a "Council for the Harmonisation of Teachings [*Shura-yi hamahangi-yi ta'lim*]" and its location at the Dar al-'Ulum "Makki"[33] have transformed this institution into the beacon of Sunnite religious teaching throughout Iran as a whole, emulating the city of Qom and its biggest *hawza*s. The Council for Harmonisation can be seen as an institutional equivalent to the idea of a "Sunnite Guide", and an instrument favouring Zahedan's pretentions to primacy among Iran's Sunnite religious teaching institutions. Such an event is even more significant since Zahedan had to struggle for decades in order to assert itself as the major religious centre within Iranian Baluchistan itself—in particular in relation to the oasis of Gusht, which is equipped with a *madrasa* that has been operating since 1939, and which remains, together with the "Makki", the only institution in the region that has the authority to educate graduated muftis. In parallel, the Dar al-Ifta' (House of Fatwas), created at the Dar al-'Ulum "Makki" in 1984, has been promoting Sunnite jurisprudences within the overall legal system of the

Islamic Republic—a key, though understudied aspect of the permanent negotiations and mutual adjustments of the last three decades between the religious leaders of the Sunnite minority and the Shiite majority of Iran.

The conquest of this central religious institution was even more important as it has permitted Deobandi influence to reach new Sunnite *madrasa*s created in different regions of Iran, most particularly in Khurasan and in the Gulf—two regions that now send contingents of advanced Arab and Persian students to Gusht and to Zahedan. Since the late 1990s, this influence has also been extended to former Soviet Central Asia, where Tajikistan now performs the role of relay for Iranian Baluchistan that had previously been performed by Iranian Baluchistan for the subcontinent. In so doing, two peripheral, and until recently essentially rural regions of the world of Islam, have come to act as major pivots for the diffusion of a neo-traditionalist current of learned Islam. In parallel, Mawlana 'Abd al-Hamid b. Mulla Faqir has been constantly developing ties with the JUI, whose deputies and senators are invited every year from Karachi to attend the graduation ceremonies of the "Makki".[34] The latter's international relations have also been developed with the TJ, whose smiling English-speaking missionaries, out for a good time, can now easily be bumped into in the courtyards of Zahedan's gigantic *madrasa*. In the years following 9/11 and the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan, relations have constantly been reinforced between the increasingly coordinated network of the Deobandi *madrasa*s of Iran and their mother houses of Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar.

The emergence and structuring of a Sunnite vote

Since the beginning of the conservative reaction in Teheran in 2002, and in the framework of the monopoly that has been established by the corps of the Pasdaran on political and administrative power, to say nothing of the extremely lucrative economic sectors of hydrocarbons and public equipment, relations between the Sunnite minority and the Shiite majority in the 2000s have been marked by the multiplication of open conflict situations. The Sunnite community itself, under growing pressure since 2002, has been gradually endowed with political contents and dimensions, so much so that they favour the appearance of an Islamic resistance movement within an Islamic Republic: the Jund-Allah ["Legion of God"] created in 2002 in Iranian Baluchistan, as an offspring of previously existing Sunnite Baluchi armed movement Sipah-i Rasul-Allah ("Army of the

Prophet of God"). After renaming itself in 2006 as the "Movement of National Resistance of Iran", the Jund-Allah's pretention became the defence of the interests of all the Sunnis of Iran, its claims echoing those formulated in scarcely more mellifluous terms by the Dar al-'Ulum and by the *Shaykh al-Islam* of Zahedan.[35] For years, Iranian Sunnite confessional media have regularly focussed on collective executions by hanging of Baluch smugglers and political militants, and on assassinations of local Sunnite clerics, in Kurdistan as well as in Baluchistan. On pathetic photo-montages instantaneously published on the dynamic though heavily censored Sunnite confessional internet of Iran, one can often "admire" young men in Baluchi clothing hanging on coloured backgrounds made by facades or minarets of Shiite mosques.[36]

These disappointments are permanently fuelled by reaction against a convergence of durable demographic, economic and social phenomena that have remained very poorly studied, by specialists inside and outside of Iran. The first is the constant intensification of a massive Persian (or Azerbaijani) Shiite colonisation of the country's peripheries since the beginning of the Pahlavi period. Though this movement was initiated in the 1930s by Riza Shah to gain better control over the empire's marshes, it has also been considerably encouraged and emphasized by the Islamic Republic since the years immediately following the revolution. When Western and Iranian geographers insist, for example, on the unprecedented development of housing stock during this period of time in the peripheral regions of Iran, they usually forget to specify that these constructions have mainly benefitted Shiite settlers, Persian civil servants and petty traders, while Sunni-background migrants from the country or the desert were crammed into slum areas and shanty towns. The second of these demographic and economic phenomena is the ethnically differentiated economic development that has increased the anti-tribal segregation of the Pahlavi-era. This has been taking place alongside the labour discrimination against non-Persian-speaking populations in regions like Kurdistan in the country's far-west, and Sistan and Baluchistan in the Iranian far-east.

In these regions, discontent has been regularly and publicly expressed, especially in the period after the end of the war with Iraq in 1988 and Khomeini's death in the following year, with particular vehemence during periods of presidential elections. In the 1993 ballot, for instance, the alternative candidate Ahmad Tawakkuli, a man unknown to the general public, was to do the best in the peripheral, Sunni-peopled regions of the country.

Tawakkuli even managed to beat then President Rafsanjani in the region of Kurdistan.[37] In the 2001 presidential election, Muhammad Khatami received up to 83.5 per cent of votes in the Sunni-majority underdeveloped departments of the south-east, of the south and of the north-west of the country. At the same time, he received between 73 and 83 per cent of the votes in demographically and economically more developed regions of the centre—which provides us with a clear indication of the decisive role played by extra-economic criteria in Iranian general elections.

Four years later, in 2005, the "reformist" candidate Mustafa Mu'in, introduced as Khatami's successor, obtained his best personal score in Sistan and Baluchistan, the only region of Iran where he took the first place on the first round of that year's presidential election. Conversely, Mahmud Ahmadinejad obtained his poorest results in the same region, which still escapes the control of the huge clientele networks set up by the Pasdaran and their allies. This regional result of the first round of the 2005 presidential election clearly revealed that a secular, non-religious candidate, perceived as a potential arbiter between the Shiite majority and the Sunnite minority of Iran, could do well in a region where the result of the vote is to a large extent decided by the Sunnite *minbar*s. The mobilization of Sunnite voters by Sunnite mosques, *madrasa*s and Sunnite websites and blogs that had recently appeared throughout the country,[38] a phenomenon richly documented by the Iranian media, has allowed us to identify the existence of a Sunnite vote at the national scale—a highly significant phenomenon that most observers of Iran have to date been reluctant to recognize.[39]

Opponents to this argument will suggest that the score of the Iranian opposition in legislative elections is generally lower in peripheral regions. Such was the case even in the January 2000 general election, when reformers led by then President Khatami received mediocre scores in regions like Kurdistan and Sistan and Baluchistan, which had massively voted for the same Khatami three years earlier. One of the reasons for such a phenomenon is indeed the primacy of loyalty to local candidates regardless of their respective political persuasion. Another cause has been the resistance of "reformist" notables of peripheral regions to the "dropping" of candidates coming from outside, and their common hostility to the hegemony of the political fractions of the capital Teheran. A third, simpler explanation for this phenomenon is the over-sensitivity of notables and opinion leaders of the Sunnite periphery of Iran to the theme of the defence of the interests of their confessional community.

It should be noted that such expectations were perfectly understood by a politician like Mustafa Mu'in in the 2005 presidential election, and were perceived again in the 2009 presidential campaign by alternative candidates like Mir-Husayn Musawi and Mahdi Karrubi—a clear demonstration, if needed, of the possibility or existence of convergences between segments of Iranian officialdom, either secular or religious, and the opinion formers of the country's Sunnite populations. One must notice, on the issue of legislative elections, that for those of March-April 2008 the Ahmadinejad administration and the conservative parliament had adopted supplementary arrangements for restricting participation in the polling in the peripheral regions of the country, and so to lesser representation of the native populations of these territories in the parliament (through raising the level of higher education for candidates, in regions where this level is notoriously lower than in the more central regions of the country).

In the Parliament of the Islamic Republic of Iran, five seats are reserved by the constitution for confessional minorities: two for Armenians and one for Jews, Zoroastrians and Assyro-Chaldeans respectively (the Bahais not being recognized even the right to existence). The Sunnite Muslims of Iran are also not recognized as a specific confession, although, contrary to the Bahais, their faith has not been submitted *per se* to repression by the regime. This restriction notwithstanding and despite the absence of Sunnis in their official capacity in the power structures of the Islamic Republic—either central, regional or local—one could observe during the last decade the appearance and structuring within the Iranian Parliament of a "Sunnite fraction (*firqa-yi sunni*)" which, in spite of its very active role and ability for mobilization, has until now completely escaped the attention of statisticians and political commentators. This lack of visibility is partly due to this fraction's extreme fluidity, a common feature of political coalitions and lobbies in the Islamic Republic, and because of the fact that this fraction includes Shiite deputies from peripheral regions, whose vote is occasionally guided by considerations of regional interest. Yet the very existence of such a fraction also constitutes a highly significant innovation in the political history of modern and contemporary Iran, and should perhaps merit more interest.

However, besides the role played by this institutional framework in conveying the ever growing Sunnite disillusionment with the Islamic Republic, since the turn of the twenty-first century expressions of dissent have also taken the form of guerrilla movements. The most active of these, the Jund-Allah, had been led by the charismatic warrior 'Abd al-Malik, a member of

the Rigi tribe—which is one of the tribes in Iranian Baluchistan to have endured the biggest loss after the revolution of 1979—until his arrest in February 2010. Even more than the starchy world of Sunnite *madrasas*, the Jund-Allah is surrounded by secrecy and little in the way of valuable written literature has come to light about this movement. Moreover, since the mid-2000s the region of Sistan and Baluchistan has become virtually closed to foreigners, which definitely makes difficult an inquiry of any kind on the movement's roots and development, and even more on its possible connections with Sunnite mosques and *madrasas* on Iranian territory. However, the group's mere existence highlights the current rise of confessional tensions within the Muslim population of Iran, where the Islamic Republic has to face a jihad on its own territory, which has been led since 2006 in the name of the whole Sunnite population of the country. For the last eight years, the Jund-Allah has been challenging the Iranian government on two levels. First, as a movement inspired by the School of Deoband, it has questioned the very pillar of the Iranian government and has thereby given a blow to the principle of Islamic "unity and concord". Of central importance since the beginning of the war with Iraq in 1980, these notions have been permanently reassessed during recent years in front of the opinion of Guide Ali Khamenei.[40]

Secondly, the Jund-Allah is led by a representative of the tribal world, even if 'Abd al-Malik Rigi's short stay as a student in the Binnuri Madrasa of Karachi—a historical cradle of the Taliban movement—constitutes the most substantial part of his legitimacy. As such, the Jund-Allah also appears to the eyes of many as an expression of Baluch nationalism, questioning the territorial integrity of Iran. Since February 2007, the movement has been multiplying spectacular and bloody attacks against Pasdaran and police headquarters, most recently in 2009 against Shiite places of worship—always in connection with the presence of Pasdaran—throughout the Sistan and Baluchistan region. After the destruction in 2007 by the Iranian authorities of the Abu-Hanifa Sunnite Mosque and *Madrasa* in Zabul, the main city of the Sistan sub-region, the Jund-Allah launched the first suicide attacks in the history of the Islamic Republic of Iran. One of these occurred on 28 May 2009—two weeks ahead of the first (and last) round of that year's presidential election—with the exceptionally bloody bombing of the 'Ali b. Abi Talib Mosque in Zahedan, the second main Shiite place of worship in this city. To date, the apex of this series of events has been the bomb attack at a gathering of field officers of the Pasdaran and Baluch tribal lead-

ers in Pishin, in the south-east of Iranian Baluchistan, on 18 October 2009, which claimed forty-two casualties.

Perceived regionally as a champion of both the Baluch and of the Sunnis of Iran as a whole, 'Abd al-Malik Rigi did not promote any kind of separatism, which constitutes a substantial difference from the Iranian guerrilla movements of the late Pahlavi period. For the authorities of Teheran, the problem was and remains the opposite of what they had to face regionally until the 1970s. What makes a problem of the Jund-Allah is its genealogical links with the Taliban, amidst whom 'Abd al-Malik had launched his personal career as a warlord. These links have been aggravated in Teheran's eyes by the rapprochement of the movement's strategy and practice, since 2007, with those of Pakistani anti-Shiite terrorist organizations like the Lashkar-i Jhangi and the Sipah-e Sahaba. Under a new leader, 'Abd al-Malik's elder brother 'Abd al-Ra'uf (arrested in Pakistan in December 2010), the Jund-Allah still enjoyed numerous relays in the Persian-writing Sunnite confessional internet of Iran, notably on the Ahl-i Sunna web pages and in numerous other, mutually overlapping, Sunnite blogs. However, even before the fall of the Rigi brothers, which was most probably obtained through negotiation between the authorities of Teheran and their Pakistani counterpart, the extremist anti-Shiite rhetoric of the Jund-Allah and its practice of violence against Shiite places of worship had caused the large network of the Deobandi institutions in Iran to take distance from them, and to explicitly condemn the most recent waves of attacks. Until 'Abd al-Malik Rigi's arrest, the Jund-Allah had managed to constitute the main security challenge to Iranian authorities on their eastern borderland—a region where instability creates difficulties for future Iranian gas deliveries to the subcontinent, and for the long awaited opening up of the Baluch shore of Iran to Central Asian trade. From this viewpoint, the blows inflicted to the movement in 2010 constitute indisputable victories for Teheran.

Elements of conclusion

With their common assault on secular alternative political forces, the Pahlavi monarchy in the 1970s and the Islamic Republic in the first years of its existence contributed to the promotion of Kurdish *mela*s and Baluchi *mawlawi*s as key interlocutors of central power in the two most peripheral regions of Iran. The Dar al-'Ulum *Madrasa* created in Zahedan by Mawlana 'Abd al-'Aziz Mullazada "Makki" in 1971 is nowadays situated at the core

of a vast network of religious institutions that tends to encompass the whole Sunni-peopled periphery of the country. This geographical polarization and emergence of one centre with one leading teaching and legal consulting institution remains a feature of Twelver Shiite Islam as it has been flourishing in Iran since the Safavid period, and, in this sense, the model of Qom seems to have an appeal in Iran beyond the limits of the Shiite world. In parallel, the Dar al-Ifta' of Zahedan was promoting adjustments between the Ja'fari Shiite judicial practice and several Sunnite legal traditions (the Kurdish Shafi'iyya and the Baluchi Hanafiyya in particular). In recent years, the rapid development and professionalization of electronic media has paradoxically reinforced the role of *madrasas*—at least of those sufficiently well endowed for developing teams of webmasters and for federating each other in wide continental networks (the famous *linkistans* that organize concurrence between groups of competing religious teaching institutions).

As a general though very provisional conclusion, I would like to suggest that, despite the sporadic escalation of violence in the peripheral regions of Iran, especially between 2007 and 2009 in Sistan and Baluchistan, the typology of Sunnite-Shiite relations in Iran cannot be stuck to a simple, unequivocal and permanent antagonism. Even the strictly political dimensions of these relations have revealed the substantial role played by elusive public spaces like, for instance, the Iranian instances of the Indian and Pakistani-based Tablighi Jama'at, or the bi-confessional "Sunnite Fraction" in the Iranian Parliament. Other aspects of these exchanges, institutional and theological in particular, reveal the significance of Sunnite borrowings from institutions (let us remember the *marja'-i taqlid*, the Council for the Harmonisation of Teaching, etc.) and cultural features (beginning with the Persian dimension of modern Sunnite revivals in Iran) of Shiite Islam as it has been prospering in Iran since the early sixteenth century. Even the chronology pleads that we avoid an oversimplification of this issue: we have seen that the year 2002 was that of the launching of the "conservative" reaction in Teheran—the major event usually remembered in chancelleries as far as this year is concerned. But 2002 was also the year of the coming-out of the Jund-Allah, a year of exceptional expansion of the internet (notably of the Sunnite confessional internet) in Iran, and the year of the creation of Ghulam-Husayn Jahantigh's generous journal *Haft Iqlim-i Sharq* in Zahedan, among many other things.

I wish to warn the reader against the danger of interpreting the current history and political science of Iran as we used to do, some thirty years ago,

in the same way as the history of the USSR: from afar, watching out for any signal from official tribunes, scrutinizing every public speech by Ahmadinejad, tracing the least expression of public violence or counter-violence. As far as Iran occupies the place of a villain in collective imagery, a role that not long ago belonged to the Soviet Union, the Sunnis of Iran and their active religious personnel have come to be perceived, especially in NATO staff-headquarters and their dependencies, like the Muslims of the USSR long used to be—i.e. as a possible Achilles' heel of Iran. Everybody has observed the poor reliability of Soviet Islam in terms of the strategic struggle against the Soviet regime, which should be sufficient to question this kind of paradigm. Indeed, in modern-day Iran, confessional conflicts and violence appear with more sharpness than the kinds of exchanges or convergences on which we have also endeavoured to shed some light, still very pale, in the present study. A lot of work remains to be done in terms of the exploration of a still unknown continent, notwithstanding the paucity of accessible public archive materials and the obligation for researchers to rely either on statistics or on testimonies.

At the same time, the complexity and topicality of relations between Sunnis and Shiites in the Islamic Republic of Iran oblige historians and social scientists to try to shed some light on their very diverse and complex (much more than at first glance) aspects and issues—in a period of history when the issue seems to be less and less in the hands of clerics, and more and more in those of militaries. Besides, at this stage of our knowledge, a number of new avenues for research may be proposed. This could begin with the suggestion of the necessity of new efforts for the reconstruction of the history of Sunnite intellectual revivals of the twentieth century around Iran, especially in Iranian Kurdistan where the history of religious ideas does not seem to have aroused the enthusiasm of the specialists of Islam, or of Kurdish studies (which, paradoxically, is no more the case for Baluchistan). As far as Kurdistan is concerned, it is also curious that central questions like the intellectual and institutional change during the Pahlavi period, or the evolution of mutual relationships between Sunnite and Shiite *'ulama* during the past thirty years, has not provoked more research initiatives. The same could be said of a region like the poorly accessible Shiite-majority Sistan, the scene of a spectacular escalation of tensions between the two communities since 2007. As far as exchanges and convergences are concerned, one domain of Iranian public life at least should benefit from more academic solicitude: the judiciary, with its intense literary production

by Sunnite fatwa offices combining, as in the Dar al-Ifta' of Zahedan, the respective traditions of varied *madhhab*s. It seems that a lot could be learnt, in Kurdistan and Baluchistan—but also among neglected Arabs and Turkmens—through a more thorough examination of the constant evolution of the mutual links between *madrasa*s and tribes. The modern history of the Shahbakhsh and the Rigi suggests to which extent the expansion of a supranational neo-traditionalist current like the School of Deoband towards the tribal world remains a tributary of logics that are not only those of clerical societies. It sometimes leads us to wonder whether in Iran, through the confessional issue, the tribal world is not taking a kind of revenge on the vicissitudes of the twentieth century.

9

Iran, Iranian Media and Sunnite Islam

Farian Sabahi

Iran is a predominantly Shiite Muslim country with a number of ethnic and religious minorities, including Kurds and Sunnite Muslims. On the whole, the Iranian media is official, state-controlled and Shiite. As shown in this chapter, the Sunnite minorities are to some extent discriminated against, especially in the south-eastern province of Sistan and Baluchistan. This province is one of Iran's most deprived, and its location, near Afghanistan and Pakistan, also makes it a key route in the international drugs trade.

Due to these reasons, in recent years Sunnite groups have been prone to unrest, with a number of armed groups claiming to represent them. Amongst these groups is Jundullah (Soldiers of God), which operates along Iran's border with Pakistan, and which states that it is fighting for the culture and faith of the ethnic Baluch people.[1] In recent years Jundullah has carried out a number of suicide bombings, which will be mentioned shortly. Its leader 'Abd al-Malik Rigi was arrested in February 2010 and hanged four months later.[2]

Due to their opposition to the Islamic Republic, this Sunnite Muslim group has often been in the news. Proceeding in chronological order and starting from the most recent event, on 15 December 2010 a bomb explosion outside the Imam Hussein Mosque in the south-eastern city of Chabahar killed at least thirty-nine people. Jundullah claimed responsibility for

the bombing. This attack targeted pilgrims marking Ashura, one of the Shiite mourning days commemorating the death of Hussein, the Prophet Muhammad's grandson, in 680 A.D.[3]

The Iranian authorities believe that Jundullah is supported by the United States. However, Washington rejects the charge that it has anything to do with the group. Indeed, in November 2010 the US State Department designated Jundullah a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO), saying: "Jundullah uses a variety of terrorist tactics, including suicide bombings, ambushes, kidnappings and targeted assassinations". This designation means that there is a ban on anyone "knowingly providing material support or resources to Jundullah".[4]

On 15 July 2010, twin bombers from Jundullah struck outside a mosque in Zahedan (a city in south-eastern Iran and the capital of the province of Sistan and Baluchistan), killing twenty-seven people, including members of the powerful Revolutionary Guards.[5] Moreover, in October 2009 Jundullah said it was behind a suicide bombing that killed thirty-one people, including several top commanders of the elite Revolutionary Guards, in the Pishin area of Sistan and Baluchistan.[6]

On 22 September 2010 a bomb exploded in the town of Mahabad (a city in north-western Iran, in the province of Western Azerbaijan, and thus far away from Sistan and Baluchistan where Jundullah operates) near the site of a military parade marking the anniversary of Iraq's 1980 invasion of Iran and honouring the country's eight year war, also called 'Sacred Defence'. Twelve were killed and eighty-two injured, mostly women and children. Talking to reporters, the Iranian Intelligence Minister Heydar Moslehi declared that, "such moves masterminded by the global arrogance are aimed at sowing discord between Shiites and Sunnis".[7]

Religious and ethnic minorities: the Iranian mosaic

In this context, the issue of religious and ethnic minorities in the Islamic Republic of Iran is controversial for several reasons. First, ethnic minorities formally enjoy more rights when compared to the time of the Pahlavi dynasty, when regional languages were not officially allowed. During the era of Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (1941–79), tribes (also those in Sunni-populated regions) were perceived as a threat to homogeneity and nationalism. Between 1953 and 1979, the Pahlavi state brought education to tribes and nomads with the so-called "White Tent programme" that aimed to

transform "a threat to the national integration of a state and a cultural anachronism into loyal citizens, moving their devotion to their chiefs to the sovereign and the central government".[8]

Today, the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran formally protects the rights of religious and ethnic minorities. However, the Iranian state is in its outermost sense Shiite: the constitution states that only an Iranian who is a follower of the Shiite Ja'fari school of jurisprudence and Khomeini's *velayat-e faqih* doctrine (which states that, in the absence of the twelfth Shiite Imam, a cleric with perfect insight into the Shiite Ja 'fari School of law shall be the highest political authority in the country) may take up high office, something that effectively excludes the Sunnite population from any high-level political participation.[9] Thus, the rights given by the constitution are not fully respected and the authorities are often accused of "Persian chauvinism"[10]

Secondly, as mentioned earlier, the Iranian authorities believe that the United States, as well as neighbouring Arab countries, have attempted to play with religious and ethnic grievances in an effort to undermine the territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic.[11] From a historical point of view this is not new: in the nineteenth century, for instance, the resistance of the city of Herat to Iranian rule "resulted not only from British encouragement but also from the desire of the majority Sunnite element in the city to be rid of Shiite dominance. As a consequence the wars over Herat were a Sunni-Shiite confrontation".[12]

However, the relationship between nationalism and religious sectarianism should not be overstated because pan-Islam has a special place in Iranian national thought: al-Afghani promoted it and Iranian intellectuals of that era tended towards pan-Islam. After the June 1908 coup which overthrew the first Majles, the *mujtahids* of the Atabat (Shiite holy places in Iraq, at Karbala, Kazimayn, Najaf, and Samarra, containing the tombs of six imams revered in Twelver Shiite Islam, additionally serving as holy sites for pilgrimage) also turned heavily towards pan-Islam, recognizing the Ottoman Sultan as the leader of all Muslims, which was seen as a slap in the face for Muhammad-Ali Shah.

It is estimated that today some 98 per cent of Iranians are Muslims. Of these, according to official sources 90 per cent are Shiite (mainly, but not only, Twelvers) and 8–9 per cent Sunnite. However, according to diverse institutions of the Sunnite population, the percentage goes up to 20 per cent.[13] At any rate, the Sunnis constitute the largest confessional minority

in the Islamic Republic and the Sunnite identity often overlaps local ethnic identities, a fact that complicates the situation. Today in Iran, Sunnite Islam is found chiefly (but not only) among tribes and ethnic minorities outside the Iranian plateau and bordering territories inhabited by co-nationals abroad, such as Turkmens in the north, Baluch in the southeast, and most Kurds in the northwest. In Iran there is also a minority of Arabs in the south-western region of Khuzestan (oil-rich and as yet little developed) though they are overwhelmingly Shiite. Moreover, out of an overall population of seventy-one million, there is also a minority of Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians who have been granted rights and have held seats in the parliament since the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, while Baha'is have been discriminated against since the revolution of 1979.

However, the population of Iran has not always been Shiite. At the time of the Arab conquest the population of Iran was mainly Zoroastrian. In order to understand the negative feelings of the Iranians towards ethnic Arabs (who are mostly Sunnite Muslims) it is worth quoting the account of the Arab conquest written by the tenth-century poet Firdawsi, in which we find a general's lamentation: "*Curse this world, curse this time, curse this fate/ That uncivilized Arabs have come to force me to be Muslim...*"[14]

Only at the beginning of the sixteenth century, with the advent of the Safavids and Shah Ismail, was Shiite Islam established as the state religion. Nonetheless, the nineteenth-century Persian nationalist Mirza Aga Khan Kirmani lamented:

> *Oh Iran! Where are all those kings, who adorned you*
> *With justice, equity and munificence, who decorated*
> *You with pomp and splendour, gone?*
> *From that date when the barbarian, savage, coarse*
> *Bedouin Arabs sold your king's daughter in the street*
> *And cattle market, you have not seen a bright day, and*
> *Have lain hid in darkness.*[15]

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran

The Constitution of the Islamic Republic states that regional and ethnic languages can be used in the press and media. According to article 15, "the use of regional and tribal languages in the press and mass media, as well as for teaching of their literature in schools, is allowed in addition to Persian".[16] However, radicals within the central government continue to fear that greater freedom for Sunnite worship and for uncontrolled local languages

might strengthen the ties of these groups with their cross-border co-ethnics and possibly encourage separatism. Perceived also as a security threat, Sunnis have often been discriminated against and their symbols attacked.[17] According to one source, public Shiite prayers may include curses against Sunnis, and the Sunnite *azan* (call for prayer) may not be allowed.[18] If so, such a discrimination takes place despite the fact that Ayatollah Khomeini was rather in favour of Sunnite-Shiite unity and his agenda was conveyed towards "subtly steering Shiism closer to Sunnism".[19]

Nowadays articles in the press and on websites often question what the constitution says. Indeed, the constitution speaks of equal rights for all ethnic groups, but it also states that the president of the Islamic Republic must be a Shiite Iranian who believes in the *velayat-e faqih*, a concept used as the title of a published series of lectures given by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1969 which later became the form of Islamic government in Iran when Khomeini came to power in 1979.

According to article 115 of the constitution: "The President must be elected from among religious and political personalities possessing the following qualifications: Iranian origin; Iranian nationality; administrative capacity and resourcefulness; a good [personal] past-record; trustworthiness and piety; convinced belief in the fundamental principles of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the official *madhhab* [juridical school] of the country".[20] Indeed, the *velayat-e faqih* is a product of Shiite thought and it is unlikely that a Sunni could embrace it. As a consequence, even if this is not explicitly forbidden by law and by the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, so far no Sunnite candidates have ever run for the post of president, nor has Iran had a Sunnite minister or governor even in predominantly Sunnite towns and regions.

The media and the struggle for power

This chapter now proceeds with a focus on the representation of Sunnite Islam in the media of the Islamic Republic, which has changed over the years. This issue is perceived by the Iranian authorities as relevant, and the debate is now open in the political arena and, since 1992, also in the local media. In the latter year there were reports of violent demonstrations in several Kurdish towns in north-western Iran (where part of the population is Sunnite) and of Iranian Kurds attacking Iran from across the Iraqi border.[21]

In the Islamic Republic of Iran the struggle for power is played out in the media. After the election of President Mahmud Ahmadinejad in 2005,

many reformist publications have been closed and their journalists and editors jailed. There are some twenty major newspapers. The state-run IRIB (Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting) has local, national and international networks with a parliamentary network, a Radio Koran, a third channel for the youth, and an English-language satellite station called Press TV. Censorship limits freedom of expression and the authorities regularly implement controls and curbs on publications and broadcasts. All media are subject to severe limitations, satellite dishes are forbidden but, nonetheless, the authorities tolerate to some extent foreign satellite television channels. The Internet and its 32.2 million users are subject to lesser controls.[22]

As Sunnite Muslims are discriminated against in Iran, the Sunnite communities use the web as a means of discussion. For example, the site www.sunnionline.net, provides information both in Persian and English. The use of the Internet by Sunnite communities has increased even more in the period since the controversial presidential elections of June 2009.

Due to these obstacles to freedom of expression, besides academic sources and interviews, the following passages of the chapter will not only quote local newspapers and television broadcasts, but also articles appearing on websites, which are freer than the official media within Iran. The debate within the media will be traced up to the origination of the Green Movement, from within the reformist movement, after the 2009 elections.

This analysis does not pretend to be exhaustive. For instance, it will not cover the issue of Sunnite Internet forums in Iran, a topic widely explored by French scholar Stéphane Dudoignon, who has shown "the strong confessional segregation of Sunni and Shiite audiences; as well as worship places themselves, confessional websites are intended for and, apparently, attended by members of each professional group to the exclusion of the other, a strong spatial segregation being naturally translated into the religious Internet".[23]

From Khomeini to the 1980s, the revolution and the Sunnis

The memory of Ayatollah Khomeini is still fresh in the mind of Iranians and his position on certain topics is often recalled in order to legitimize to some of the decisions that are made by the authorities. While in exile Ayatollah Khomeini insisted on Iranian nationalism and seemed to disregard the religious and ethnic differences within the country. It was only later that he emphasized Shiite ideology, thus alienating the Sunnite world. However, it should be said that for many centuries Shiism was part of the Iranian iden-

tity and somehow contributed to diffuse a sense of identity and, at the same time, of diversity from the "other" (Sunnite and Ottoman/Uzbek).

At the time of the revolution of 1979 Khomeini "faced major difficulties mostly in the backward Turkmen, Baluch, and Kurdish areas where local khans, as well as Sunni mullahs and radical intellectuals, were able to establish their own ethnic organizations".[24] According to Nikki Keddie and Yann Richard, after the revolution some of these groups participated in uprisings "based as much on ethnic and economic demands as on religious differences".[25] Moreover, in some cases this was a revolt against the *velayat-e faqih*.

As a consequence of their uprisings, the authorities of the Islamic Republic have always regarded these minorities with caution, even if they did not demand secession from Iran but rather economic improvements and cultural autonomy. In the case of the Congress of Nationalities for a Federal Iran representing the Azeri Turks, Arabs, Kurds and Baluchis, the organization aimed at creating "a federal system where the various national communities can achieve self-rule in a free, united and democratic Iran".[26] However, since some of the minorities have links across the Iranian borders, the central authorities fear them. Thus, the Sunnite religious (and ethnic) minorities are perceived as a challenge, more violent on the occasion of the revolution and less afterwards, though the Zahedan area was characterized by serious unrest in 1994.[27]

Although Ayatollah Khomeini supported good Sunnite-Shiite relations, after 1979 Sunnis continued to be discriminated against and disfavoured in mosque building, political representation, and in other ways. Besides their cross-border ties, the main reasons for such discrimination are threefold: the economic underdevelopment of the areas where Sunnis live, the fact that they are not recognized as a minority due to the official pretence that Islam is one, and the fact that traditionally the Arabs (who are not only Sunnis) have looked upon London as their protector against the central government; this was the case, for instance, with Sheykh Khazal (who was a Shiite)[28] in Khuzestan, which was once called "Arabestan".[29]

However, it is interesting to note how in neighbouring Afghanistan Ayatollah Khomeini supported Sunnite groups (against Shiite groups), mainly because the Sunnite fundamentalist party Hizb-i Islami of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar had more in common with Iran's ideology "even if he did not adhere to Shiite Islam".[30] Needless to say, in doing this, Khomeini was moved by national interest rather than religion: "At the time, the Iranians

were preoccupied with their own affairs, and there was no organized group among the Shiites that could adequately serve as an appropriate representative of their position".[31]

An even more striking example is Iran's commercial support for Christian Armenia against the blockade, imposed in the 1990s by Turkey and by the Republic of Azerbaijan (where the majority of the population is Shiite) as a show of Ankara's support for Azerbaijan's efforts to retain possession of the separatist enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh. This support can be explained in terms of pragmatism: the Iranian "foreign policy establishment saw the weakening of the republic of Azerbaijan as concomitant to the national interest of the Islamic Republic, and therefore pursued a policy of tacit support for Armenia in the conflict".[32]

The theological reason behind this pragmatism is that, toward the end of his life, Khomeini moved into a direction considered unthinkable and heretical by major Shiite thinkers of the time. Indeed, as stated by Juan Cole, Khomeini extended the powers of the Islamic state

> "by appealing to the Sunni jurisprudential principle of *maslaha* or state action on behalf of the public good, a principle not recognized by medieval Shiite jurisprudents but which was taken up from Hanafi thought and foregrounded by Sunni modernists like Muhammad 'Abduh. In essence, the *public good* principle allowed the new state to do virtually anything and declare it in accordance with Islamic law, assuming it could be argued it benefited Muslims".[33]

Soon after the Iranian Revolution of 1979, Sunnite leaders from Kurdistan, Baluchistan, and Khorasan set up a new party known as *Shams*, which is short for *Shura-ye Markaz-e Ahl-e Sunnat*, to unite Sunnis and to lobby for their rights. However, six months later the party was closed down, its bank accounts were suspended, and its leaders were arrested by the government on charges that they were backed by Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.[34]

In the 1980s, at the time of Mir-Hossein Mousavi's premiership, the policy of the government was opposed to the provision of better representation for the minorities on the basis that their demands could split national unity. As we shall see later in this chapter, as a candidate in the tenth parliamentary elections, Mousavi behaved differently and preferred to try to win the votes of the minorities.

From Khatami to Ahmadinejad

According to the daily *Hamshahri*, founded by the reformist Gholamhossein Karbaschi and published by the Municipality of Teheran, a few months

before Muhammad Khatami became president in May 1997 the members of the anti-Sunni movement Hujjatiya, a religious organization dedicated to the Twelfth Imam, were "fanning the flames of discord between Shiites and Sunnis".[35] The Hujjatiya flourished in 1979 but was banned by Khomeini in 1983 because of its rejection of the doctrine of the *velayat-e faqih* and its conviction that a genuine Islamic Republic can be established only with the return of the last Imam, the Mahdi, which will be hastened by chaos. When banned, the Hujjatiya merged into the ranks of the Islamic Coalition Society or *Mu'talifa* (*Hay'atha-yi Mu'talifa-yi Islami*), which started as a result of cooperation between different trade associations and a group of clergymen, and which goes back to the period of the "White revolution" and the political opposition that was formed after the expulsion of Khomeini in 1964.[36]

With the election of Khatami, the expectations of ethnic minorities rose and many voted for him and for his programme, which recalled the promises of change inspired by Khomeini in 1979. In his speeches Khatami bowed to "the religious, ethnic and linguistic variations" of Iran and the need to recognize them in order to reach "social solidarity and consensus".[37] During his presidency (1997–2005) Iran's Sunnis benefitted from the relatively liberal political environment. Khatami worked for decentralization via local councils and for more independent publishing in local languages, and he spoke and acted against discrimination. As a result, he received especially high percentages of the vote in Sunnite areas.[38]

However, no real change came with Khatami and the minorities felt somehow betrayed by his government. With the election of Mahmud Ahmadinejad in 2005, the ideas of the Hujjatiya increased in power again for at least two reasons. First, the new president belonged to the Islamic society of the 'Ilm u San'at University, many members of which had links with this semi-clandestine society. Secondly, at least three of his ministers had a Hujjatiya background: "Intelligence chief Hujjat al-Islam Ghulam-Husayn Mohseni-Ejehi, a graduate of the Hujjatiya-founded Haqqani theological school with a long history in the intelligence services. Ayatollah Muhammad-Taqi Mesbah-Yazdi, a hardliner Shiite cleric who is said to have issued a fatwa urging all two million members of the *basij* Islamic militia to vote for Ahmadinejad in the recent presidential elections, is also associated with that university. The hardliner Minister of the Interior, Mustafa Purmuhammadi, is another Haqqani alumnus with suspected Hujjatiya sympathies".[39]

Sunnite leaders outside Iran are aware of the condition of the Sunnite minority within the Islamic Republic. Sheykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, for instance, complained about the situation in 2007 in a joint appearance on the Arab television network al-Jazeera with former Iranian President Ali-Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. Calling for Sunnite-Shiite unity, al-Qaradawi complained that in Iran there were no ministers of Sunnite faith, and that Sunnis were rarely in charge of official positions even in the regions where the majority of population was Sunnite, such as in Kurdistan and Baluchistan.[40]

Regarding Ahmadinejad's presidency, the current author interviewed Shirin Ebadi, the Iranian lawyer who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003, as well as two intellectuals. On the occasion of a public conference in Piacenza, Shirin Ebadi confirmed that discrimination against Sunnite Muslims takes place in the Islamic Republic of Iran and reminded the author of the paradoxes of the Islamic Republic where Christians and Jews can have their places of worship, while Sunnite Muslims cannot have a mosque in the capital Teheran.[41]

The first intellectual interviewed by the author was Hojatoleslam Mohsen Kadivar, who studied with Grand Ayatollah Montazeri. Montazeri supported the minorities, declared his disappointment with Ahmadinejad's behaviour towards them and said that their rights have to be protected because Imam Ali treated Sunnis as all other Muslims. Indeed, when Montazeri died "hundreds of Sunni students from Sistan and Baluchistan University in the provincial capital of Zahedan held a peaceful vigil in his honour amid tight security measures and despite the threats made by university officials to dissuade students from publicly expressing their respects for the cleric".[42]

Kadivar said:

"The status of the Sunnis is inferior to that of Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians, who are less than 1% of the population. The Sunnis do not have mosques in Tehran and Mashhad. The government—especially under president Ahmadinejad—is using force against the Sunnis and the leaders of the Sunni community have written letters of complaints. They are not the only group experiencing troubles. The Sufis can be both Sunni and Shiite [the Ni'matullahiyya is the largest Shiite Sufi order active throughout Iran, while the Naqshbandiyya is a Sunni order active, in Iran, mostly in the Kurdish and Baluch areas] and they are in the same situation, since their religiosity differs from the mainstream: the Iranian authorities have destroyed their religious sites, even though these acts are against the Constitution. Nonetheless, many reformists believe that Sunnis are like Shiites. In the *Mosharekat* [Islamic Iran Participation Front] and in the Mujahedin Parties there are Sunni leaders who make their contribution to politics without problems and differences".[43]

The second interviewee answered somewhat differently to the same questions. Jamileh Kadivar is a journalist for the newspapers *Ettelaat* and *Etemad-e Melli*, and also an ex-MP politically engaged with the moderate candidate Mahdi Karrubi during the electoral campaign of June 2009. Married to Ataollah Mohajerani, who was minister of culture during the Khatami-era, she had a chance to meet Sunnite activists in many parts of Iran.

Jamileh Kadivar said:

"Sunnis being jailed or hanged is not related to Ahmadinejad's presidency. It is rather the responsibility of the judiciary, not of the government. I accept that after Ahmadinejad's election the rights of speech, association, parties, gatherings and press have been greatly limited. However, this is true not only for Sunnis but also for Shiite Muslims. After the controversial presidential elections of 12 June 2009 nearly all politicians, journalists and activists arrested and tortured in Tehran and in the other big cities were Shiite. The youngsters killed in Kahrizak and those shot in the streets were Shiite. I doubt some people have been arrested or killed only because they were Sunnis".[44]

Sunnis and the controversial elections of 2009

Coming to the last controversial elections mentioned by Jamileh Kadivar, all four presidential candidates competed for the Sunnite vote, meaning that their share was probably higher than the official 8–9 per cent. As analyzed by Fathi al-Maraghi: "Each candidate has made a great number of promises to Iran's Sunni minority; however, the candidate who has been most active in this regard is Mahdi Karrubi. Karrubi has come to be known as the protector of Sunnis after the large number of visits he made to governorates that have a majority of Sunni residents, such as Sistan, Kurdistan, and Kermanshah. Also, he has made a special statement about the rights of ethnic and religious minorities".[45]

The state-controlled newspaper *Aftab News* reported that, during a trip to Kermanshah, Mousavi, a devout Shiite, not only prayed in a Sunnite mosque but also followed a Sunnite Imam to demonstrate his respect for Sunnis. In a conversation with Molavi Abdol Hamid—one of the spiritual leaders of the Sunnite community in Iran—Mousavi also promised to prepare a national plan to address and resolve the Sunnite community's numerous grievances, including the construction of the first Sunnite mosque in Teheran.[46]

As a consequence, Mousavi "won the majority of votes in Sunni-populated electoral districts, such as Baluchi inhabited-districts of Sistan-o-Baluchistan province, Sunnite Kurdish-inhabited districts of Kurdistan and

West Azerbaijan provinces and Turkmen-inhabited districts of Golestan province. This is consistent with the pattern of voting in these areas in the previous presidential elections. Sunnite ethnic groups predominantly vote for the opposition political parties in presidential elections."[47]

After the controversial elections of 12 June 2009 the so-called Green Movement appeared as an offspring of the reformist movement, mainly in the capital Teheran and in the central region of Fars. However, although both Mousavi and Karrubi tried to court the Sunnite minorities in their election campaigns, the Green Movement lacked support amongst them. After having experienced the revolution of 1979, the minorities would hardly lend their support unless the movement showed a more coherent policy towards the respect of minority rights.

On the occasion of the presidential elections of 2009 an article on the website *Madreseye feminism* ("Feminist school"—the website does not normally deal with issues concerning ethnic minorities but rather with women's rights; in 2006 it launched a campaign that gained one million signatures demanding changes to the discriminatory laws against Iranian women) outlines the seven requests made by the Sunnite community to the presidential candidates. These read as follows: "The respect of the Constitution (art. 12–13–15–19); equal rights, also for Sunnis, and the creation of centres financed by public money; no interference in others' religious affairs; no censorship in the production of books and in the press; some hours on Sunni Islam in national television and radios, and no insults towards the Sunnis; creation of religious places for Sunnis; employment of Sunni intellectuals and *ulema* in the propaganda and cultural centres".[48]

During the summer of 2009 a Sunnite site (www.ahlesonnat.net, one of the top websites of the so-called "Sons of Sunnah Iran" but which is actually based in Pakistan) had an article that stated:

> "as soon as they have the chance, the Shiites hit. All they say is aimed at creating discord. They don't accept to be a bit less Shiite. To discuss about Sunni and Shiite we need *masnavi haftad man* (210 kilos of books). In Iran the Sunni population is poor, they are not equal to the Shiites, their villages are in bad conditions but in Khorasan and Kurdestan people can survive. Entering the university and graduating is so difficult that many already give up at the very beginning of their studies. They don't have newspapers, radio, cinema, they do not have access to public space and cannot defend themselves".[49]

Furthermore, the Sunnite minority is often perceived as a threat, and part of the media coverage in Iran represents Sunnite groups as terrorists. For instance, in mid-July 2009 some of the fourteen convicted members of a

Sunnite rebel group were executed.[50] According to the semi-official *Fars News Agency*, the convicts were hanged in prison. To the central authorities, the men were members of the already mentioned Sunnite group called Jundullah, which was blamed for several attacks across Iran, including a bombing in May 2009 in a Shiite mosque in Zahedan that killed twenty-five people.[51]

In fact, this group had carried out some really grisly executions of Revolutionary Guards and, as research by the journalist Seymour Hersh suggests, it received substantial support from the US.[52] On this topic the expert of Sunnite Islamic jurisprudence Molavi Abdol Hamid, who is based in Zahedan where he is the highest authority in the city's main seminary, was quoted by Karrubi's newspaper *Etemad-e Melli*: "When people heard about the attack on me they gathered at the mosque for protest".[53] Ali Larijani, the speaker of parliament, also expressed his opinion and told the news agency *ISNA* (*Iranian Students News Agency*, established in 1999: *ISNA* is partly financially supported by the Iranian government and thus is not independent): "The reason for bombing a Shiite mosque is to infuriate the public against the Sunni community. It is clear to us that this incident was not carried out by Zahedan's Sunni community".[54]

Meanwhile, in February 2010, 'Abd al-Malik Rigi, the leader of the Jundullah, was arrested in an intelligence operation. In April 2010 the Islamic Republic of Iran granted an amnesty to 110 members of this terrorist group. The governor of Sistan and Baluchistan, Ali Mohammad Azad, told *IRNA* that 300 members of the terrorist band had expressed regret for their actions since Abdolmalek Rigi's arrest.[55]

The regional nexus

Finally, the relationship between Shiite and Sunnite Islam within Iran cannot be conceived without a political understanding of the current, difficult relations between Teheran and its Sunnite neighbours. A good example of this is the crisis triggered in 2009 by the conservative politician Nateq Nouri who mentioned Bahrain as an ancient Iranian province, as well as the Arab fears of Iran's nuclear programme.[56]

The Iranian presidential elections of 12 June 2009 and the protests which followed have given the Arab press further occasions to criticize Iran, mainly with satirical comments on the manipulation of the vote, on the harsh repression against the population and on the attitude of relevant

religious and political personalities such as Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.[57] However, the abundance of satire in the Arab press contrasts with a serious lack of editorials on the elections, on the protests and on the subsequent repression by the authorities. It seems, in fact, that the Arab leaders fear the Iranian Green Movement and the people's desire and will for democracy, as much as the reaction of the Iranian authorities.

Though not relevant to the present discussion on religious sectarianism, these notes are pertinent inasmuch as a third party might benefit from the Sunnite-Shiite conflict. This fact has been well understood by the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei who expressed his view on unity between the Shiites and the Sunnis thus:

"Today, one of the main goals of the arrogant powers and the US is to foment discord [...] The conflict between the Shiites and the Sunnis is what the US truly desires [...] I deem it necessary to warn our own nation, the Iraqi and the Pakistani nations, and other Muslim nations that they need to act against religious conflicts and the conflict between the Shiites and the Sunnis. Today, I notice some groups who are—through an organised plot—trying to cause splits among Muslims in the name of Shiites and Sunnis. The massacres that take place [...] are undoubtedly organised by the evil Zionists and arrogant powers. Such incidents are not organised by Muslims [...] Of course I do not mean to say that Shiites should convert to Sunni Islam or Sunnis should convert to Shiite Islam [...] Those who try to foment schism through their words, actions and plots serve the enemies' interests [...] The matters over which we disagree are much less than those we agree upon [...] Muslim nations should not use their resources against one another".[58]

The latest development concerns the decision of the Iranian government to ban Sunnite Muslims from praying at state universities and military camps. Confirmed by Sunnite sources in Teheran, this decision came "after Sunni Muslims were banned from holding communal Friday prayers services in their homes in cities like Isfahan, Shiraz, Kerman, and Yazd".[59] Sheykh Molavi Abdul Hamid, the highest authority for Sunnite Muslims in Iran and the Imam and preacher of the Makki Mosque, the largest Sunnite mosque in Iran located in the city of Zahedan, expressed his disappointment at the ban, saying "We are very sorry that some elements have come forward to ban Friday prayers from being held in the home and placed restrictions on this practice. This [messianic] group [of the Islamic Republic] is ideologically deviant and truly has a narrow outlook and is overly sensitive with regards to [Sunnite] mosques and schools and advocacy." Stating that the Iranian Constitution does not prevent religious

groups and sects from practising their faith, Sheykh Molavi Abdul Hamid added: "There should not be a ban on performing prayers, rather everybody should be invited to perform prayers, and we hope that all Sunnis and Shiites take the initiative to perform this obligation that is the most important pillar of Islam after belief in the oneness of God". Sheykh Molavi Abdul Hamid considered the objection of officials to the construction of mosques, schools, and religious centres for Iran's Sunnite community to be completely contrary to the principles of Iran's Islamic government. He said, "There are some [Sunni majority] villages where only one Shiite family lives, and the government builds a [Shiite] mosque. However the problem is that they do not allow us to build mosques or religious schools in large cities that are home to large Sunni communities."[60]

Conclusions

In conclusion, one cannot be too optimistic about the relationship between Shiites and Sunnis in Iran and in the Middle East in general. A typical joke has been doing the rounds for as long as the conflict has lasted and its irony seems an appropriate conclusion to this short overview. This is how it goes: A Sunni, a Shiite and a Christian meet in paradise. God asks them if they have a last desire before entering. The Sunni asks God to destroy the Shiite community and, similarly, the Shiite asks God to destroy the Sunni community. When asked about his wish, the Christian replies that, if God can satisfy the desires already expressed by the two others, then he has nothing more to ask.[61] However, in the case of Iran, the authorities will, sooner or later, feel the need to overcome religious differences in order to strengthen national unity.

10

"It's Just a Sunni-Shiite Thing"

Sectarianism and Talibanism in the FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas) of Pakistan[1]

Mariam Abou Zahab

Shiite Muslims make up 15 to 20 per cent of the population of Pakistan or a total of at least 25 million, making Pakistan's Shiite community the second largest in the world after that of Iran. Sectarianism which is, in Pakistan, more a Deobandi[2]-Shiite rather than a Sunnite-Shiite conflict,[3] comes from the belief that the sect which one professes is the only true one and that the followers of other sects should be converted to one's own sect or exterminated. Sectarianism is often seen as the consequence of Zia ul Haq's Islamization policy in the 1980s, which involved a state monopoly on religion and the dominance of a particular sect (i.e. Sunnite Islam). Sectarian consciousness had always existed but it was mostly confined to theological debates and clashes during the month of Muharram, the month during which the Shiites mourn the martyrdom of Hussain, the Prophet's grandson, at Karbala, but it never prevented co-existence. From the mid-1980s onwards, sectarianism has degenerated into violence and over 4 000 persons have been killed.[4] Before 2001, sectarian violence mostly affected the Punjab and Karachi, although violent incidents also erupted in Kurram Agency in the mid-1980s. The federal government tolerated some degree of sectar-

ian violence in the FATA because the area was seen as peripheral and it did not affect Sunnite-Shiite relations in the rest of Pakistan.

A US drone missile attack on a Taliban training camp in February 2009[5] highlighted the growing importance of Pakistan's Kurram Tribal Agency in the war along the frontier with Afghanistan. Unlike Pakistan's other six tribal agencies, the conflict in Kurram is complicated because of its sectarian divisions, which have flared into violent encounters between the region's Sunnite and Shiite Muslim communities. Sectarian violence has added a new dimension to the conflict between the Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP, the Pakistani Taliban)[6] and the state in the FATA. Although sectarian violence has only a loose association with the Taliban, the attacks are designed to create chaos in the region. Rising sectarianism in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (ex-NWFP)[7] and in the FATA is a direct offshoot of growing Talibanization and of the arrival of Punjabi Sunnite militants in the area in the recent years. Different strains of militancy have overlapped to the point where it is no longer relevant to treat sectarian violence as separate from al-Qaida attacks and religious militancy in Punjab as different from FATA.

Communities in conflict

Sectarian violence is not a new phenomenon in Kurram, which is the only tribal agency with a significant Shiite population. Around 40 per cent of the region's 500,000 inhabitants are Shiite. Upper Kurram is inhabited largely by the Turi (the only Pashtun tribe which is wholly Shiite) while Central and Lower Kurram are inhabited by Sunnis, mostly Bangash.[8] The Bangash are Ghurgusht Pathans, descendants of Ghurgusht, son of Qais Abdul Rashid, the legendary ancestor of the Pashtuns. Driven out from Gardez (Paktia) by the Ghilzai tribes, they moved to the Kurram Valley in the latter part of the fourteenth century. They claim to be of Arab origin.[9] All the Bangash of Upper Kurram are Shiite. The Bangash clans living in Lower Kurram and Kohat are all Sunnis, while other Bangash clans are Shiite, Sunnite, or a mix of both. Historically the Turi were under Bangash domination until the eighteenth century when they attacked the Bangash—apparently in retaliation for an insult made to a Turi woman—which turned them into hamsaya (dependants) and pushed them into Lower Kurram.

The Turi are the largest tribe occupying the most fertile area of the Agency. They were considered by the British as "alag", or different, from their neighbours because of their origin (Turks or Mongols who migrated

from Persia) and their Shiite faith. They are now considered to be Ghurgusht Pathans.

The Turi allowed General Roberts passage to Afghanistan during the Second Afghan War in 1877. The Afghans who had tried unsuccessfully to extend their influence in the area[10] renounced their claim over Kurram as a result of the Treaty of Gandamak in 1879.[11] The Turi requested the British takeover the administration of the area because they feared aggression by the neighbouring Sunni tribes, and particularly the Mangal. This occurred with the establishment of the Kurram Agency in 1892, when the Turi found themselves on the British side of the Durand Line established in 1893. The agency headquarters at Parachinar (about 70,000 inhabitants) is less than 100 km from Kabul (the so-called parrot's beak of Parachinar going deep into Afghan territory). Contrary to other parts of the FATA, Parachinar has had a very good education system since the colonial era. The next important town is Sadda, which is situated in Lower Kurram on the left bank of the River Kurram.

There are longstanding disputes over ownership of forests, hills, land and water resources between Sunnite and Shiite tribes and sporadic incidents of communal violence have taken place since the 1930s, particularly during Muharram or Nowruz (the Iranian new year as celebrated by the Shiites). Sunnis have consistently demanded that Nowruz celebrations should be banned on the basis that they are un-Islamic. Many argue that historically there was no Sunnite-Shiite problem, and that tribal rivalries have only assumed a sectarian colouration at specific moments. Clashes were often the result of petty disputes: for instance, the riots that erupted in 1973 in Parachinar were sparked by a row over the height of the minarets at the main Sunnite mosque and the Shiite imambargah.[12]

The massive influx of Afghan refugees in the 1980s caused a distortion in the demographic and sectarian balance of the area. Before the arrival of the refugees, Pashtuns took religion for granted. Religion was not a cause of conflict and it did not need to be emphasized and used for political aims. The strong Pashtun identity obviated the need for an alternative or sectarian identity. The Afghan jihad disturbed this balance and concentrated religious and temporal affairs in the hands of the mullahs. Religion became a cover for geopolitics, and sectarianism was fostered with the not so clandestine support of various states and of the Pakistani military establishment. One of the impacts of the Afghan crisis on the Tribal Areas was the increase in

religious institutions that translated inflammatory literature into Pashto, which reinforced sectarianism in the area.

Sectarian violence erupted in 1982 with massacres of Shiites in Sadda's bazaar.[13] Sixty-eight Shiite families took refuge in Parachinar. A jirga[14] resolved the matter in 1990 and paved the way for the Shiites to return to their homes, but its decision was never implemented. The Shiites argued, not without reason, that Afghan refugees had helped local tribes against their Shiite rivals. Indeed, the Turi were labelled as an impediment in the jihad, as pro-Iran or as pro-communist because they refused to allow Sunni Afghan refugees into their areas and often opposed the use of the Parachinar area as a launching pad for Afghan mujahidin.

Afghan refugees introduced a militant brand of Sunnite ideology at a time when the Shiites of Parachinar under the leadership of cleric Allama Arif Hussain al-Hussaini (trained in the Shiite theological centres of Najaf and Qom) were being radicalized by the Iranian Revolution. As modern weapons became available, clashes grew in frequency and intensity, while the local administration was viewed as indifferent or seen as taking sides.[15] The first large-scale attack took place in 1986 when the Turi prevented Sunnite mujahidin from passing through their territory to Afghanistan. General Zia ul-Haq allowed a massacre of the Turi Shiites at the hands of the Afghan mujahidin in conjunction with the local Sunnite population.[16] Hundreds of Sunnis and Shiites were killed, and Shiites who were still in a majority in Sadda (Lower Kurram) before the riots were pushed into Upper Kurram.[17] Allama Hussaini was assassinated in 1988 and the Turi held General Zia responsible. There were major clashes again in 1996, in which over 200 Sunnis and Shiites were killed after Shi'a activists murdered a college principal in Parachinar.[18] After 1996, a "Parachinar paradigm" came into existence, characterized by the use of heavy weapons by both sides, support of the Afghan refugees and the Taliban for the Sunnis, and the deployment of the army to restore law and order.

Impact of the collapse of the Taliban State

The Shiites, staunchly opposed to the Sunnite Taliban and Arabs, did not offer shelter to al-Qaida and the Afghan Taliban fleeing Tora Bora in December 2001. One tribe agreed to shelter the Arabs but another turned 200 of them over to the authorities, which took them to jail in the NWFP city of Kohat. A gunfight on the way to Kohat left ten Arabs dead on 19

December 2001. The graves of the Arabs in Kurram (Arhawalai) have become a place of pilgrimage for locals.

The nature and the dimension of the sectarian conflict have changed since 2001. Kurram has once again become strategically important as it shares a border with the Afghan provinces of Khost, Paktia and Nangarhar, and has a relatively large Afghan refugee population. The conflict is not tribal or sectarian per se, but is instigated by the Taliban who want access to Afghanistan and are supported by local criminal elements. They use tribal and sectarian differences to fuel the conflict and keep the government out. Moreover, the FATA and the Kohat area have become a sanctuary for Punjabi members of Sunnite extremist groups that were banned in 2002 and took shelter in the tribal areas, particularly in Lower Kurram and Orakzai Agency. These groups include the Sipah-e Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), the Lashkar-e Jhangvi (LJ) and the Jaish-e Mohammad (JeM), three branches of the same Punjabi Deobandi sectarian network.

In September 2005, the federal government ordered the expulsion of more than 100,000 Afghan refugees from Kurram. It is not clear whether the measure was successful or implemented, but it was seen by the Shiites of the region as a return to the previous demographic balance of power which had been tilted in favour of Sunnis. Sunnis feared that the departure of the Afghans might prompt Shiites to demand the repatriation of Shiites displaced from Sadda after the 1982 clashes, which had been decided by the 1990 jirga. After the earthquake of October 2005, militants belonging to Lashkar-e Taiba (LeT), an Ahl-e Hadith group, and other Deobandi groups active in Kashmir relocated to FATA and the Kohat area, a Sunnite stronghold.

Kurram has been in the grip sectarian of violence since April 2007—in the last four years, more than 1,500 persons have been killed and 5,000 others have been injured.[19] The violence started in April 2007 after Sunnis chanted anti-Shiite slogans during a procession in Parachinar. Shiite leaders complained to local political authorities, and on the following day a Shiite religious procession was fired upon.[20] In the clashes that ensued, mortars and rocket-propelled grenades were used, resulting in heavy casualties that left 215 people dead and over 600 injured.[21] When soldiers attempted to intervene, they were attacked by both sides.[22] The Sunnis accused Iran of providing weapons to Shiite fighters. Mast Gul of the Harakat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM), a jihadi group active in Kashmir, alleged in a 9 April press conference in Peshawar that Iran was providing money

and weapons to the Shiites, and that Sunnis would come from other parts of the country to help their local brethren if the Pakistani army did not take action. This did not take long to happen: after a period of closure, madrasas in South Punjab[23] openly linked to outlawed jihadi-sectarian groups—or giving them support covertly—resurfaced under new names and started sending militants to the FATA. After 9/11, these madrasas started receiving foreign students from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan, and they continue to receive considerable foreign funding, particularly from Pakistani expatriates. In addition, the militants are increasingly dependent on criminal activities for the financing of their operations: kidnappings for ransom and bank robberies are commonplace.[24] These movements recruit their men from private security firms, notably in Karachi, and when they are assigned to guard banks, they rob them, and the money is brought to the FATA. People kidnapped for ransom, notably in Karachi, are also brought to the FATA.

The storming of Islamabad's Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) in July 2007 was a turning point for sectarian feelings in the country. The militants entrenched in the mosque were made to believe that the soldiers who led the assault were all Shiites. A pamphlet circulating at the time in Islamabad announced the arrival of LJ militants to attack government forces whom they claimed consisted largely of Shiites.[25] The army as an institution has become a direct target, and particularly the Shiites in the army. Moreover, the present government is perceived as being pro-Shiite. From the summer of 2007, sectarian killings in the FATA and the beheading of captured Shiite members of the army and the frontier corps took place in revenge for the assault on Lal Masjid.

After the Red Mosque assault, JeM reorganized under Mufti Abdul Rauf, Masood Azhar's brother, who established a training camp in Kohat, long a hotbed of sectarian violence and a stronghold of the SSP. Javed Ibrahim Paracha, a former member of the national assembly for Kohat, has openly declared that he is at war with the Shiites and most of the sectarian violence in Kohat and Hangu has been blamed on him. After JeM and SSP militants regrouped in Kohat and in Lower Kurram (traditionally an SSP stronghold), there was an upsurge in sectarian attacks both in FATA and in the settled areas, notably Dera Ismaïl Khan and Hangu.

A new round of sectarian violence began in November 2007. Sunnis accused the Shiites of hurling a hand grenade at the central mosque in Parachinar during Friday prayers, while the Shiites accused Sunnis of firing

rockets at homes and mosques. The army used helicopter gunships to control Parachinar and Sadda, but the fighting continued in the rural areas. Local Sunnis were joined by al-Qaida fighters and Taliban from Waziristan who targeted the paramilitary forces.[26] Displaced Taliban from South Waziristan[27] bolstered the Taliban activities in Kurram. The first Waziristan laskhar (tribal army) was sent to Kurram in October 2007 under Qari Hussain who had strong links with the SSP.[28] They fought Shiites for two months. Forty villages were destroyed and ninety-five places of worship attacked in 2007; 2,300 families were also displaced after their houses had been set ablaze.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 6,000 Sunnis, mostly women and children, fled to Afghanistan in January 2008.[29] In the following month a suicide attack in front of the election office of the Pakistan Peoples Party candidate (a Shiite) killed forty-seven people and wounded around one hundred.[30] The clashes intensified during the summer and the government was blamed for doing nothing to stop the influx of militant outsiders from Waziristan. Hakeemullah Mehsud sent more Sunnis from Waziristan into Kurram and Faqir Alam Mehsud, who had been appointed as the local commander in April 2008, boasted of having personally beheaded at least seventy Shiites and "Sunnite collaborators".[31]

In June 2008, people from Kurram staged a demonstration in front of the Parliament House in Islamabad seeking the intervention of the federal government, but to no avail. Instead of intervening to stop the violence, the government kept claiming that there was no sectarian problem in Kurram, blaming a foreign hand for pitting the tribes against each other.[32] Many Bangash decided to move into Afghanistan. In July 2008, thirty Sunnite militants escaped from Sadda jail and attacked a convoy of relief goods sent to Parachinar, beheading fourteen Shiite truckers.

As the violence continued, the road from Parachinar to Peshawar was blocked, resulting in a shortage of food and medicines. Shiite truck drivers were abducted and beheaded while passing through Dara Adam Khel on their way to Kurram. Shiite communities were besieged as Sunnis controlled the road from Parachinar to Thall. People going to Peshawar were forced to travel via Paktia and Kabul. Those who took the risk of travelling through Kohat and Dara Adam Khel—where the Taliban and members of SSP and LJ have been active since early 2007[33]—were often abducted: "They stop every vehicle, ask the passengers to remove their shirts [to iden-

tify Shiites by the marks left on their back by Muharram flagellations] and also check their ID cards".[34] Paramilitary troops were frequently abducted—while Sunnis were generally released, Shiite soldiers were often beheaded. In all around 400 people were killed during this round of violence.

In August 2008, Wali ur Rehman, a TTP leader, made an offer to the Turi: if they stopped blocking the TTP's access to Kurram into Afghanistan, the TTP would allow them to travel unimpeded and provide protection to Shiite travellers. Turi elders refused as they suspected the TTP of wanting to take over the area.[35]

A unilateral ceasefire was declared by the Turi ahead of Ramadan (September 2008), but the bloodshed continued.[36] A peace jirga was later convened in Islamabad under the supervision of the Political Agent of Kurram; fifty members sent by each of the twelve tribes were joined by parliamentarians from both groups. An agreement was reached; the tribes were to vacate each other's territory, the road reopened (it had remained closed for two years), electricity restored (it had been cut for 118 days) and dozens of people who had been abducted by rival clans were to be released.[37] But the ceasefire was very fragile and the peace agreement was not implemented. The road was blocked again after twenty days owing to firing at travellers. There was a shortage of life saving drugs due to the road closure, patients had to be transported to Peshawar through Afghanistan and several, including children, died before reaching the hospital.[38] By blocking the road, the Taliban are effectively putting the Kurram Shiites under siege, and at the same time they have expanded their control in Lower Kurram by backing sectarian fighting.[39]

A 5 December 2008 bomb blast targeting the Saray-e Alamdar-e Karbala (known as the Parachinar imambargah) in the Kucha Risaldar district of Peshawar killed as many as thirty-four people and wounded over 120 others who mostly hailed from Parachinar. This crushed all hopes that the peace agreement would be implemented. In early 2009, a jirga spent two months in Kurram without finding a solution to the conflict. The government-sponsored jirga gave up its efforts. In May 2009, NATO forces and the Afghan government invited elders of rival factions to a military base in Paktia after Sunnite elders had complained to Afghan and NATO forces that the Turi had blocked movement and transportation of food. The Turi denied these accusations and demanded safety and the reopening of the Thall-Parachinar road.[40] The talks concluded without any agreement.[41] Both communities accuse each other of drawing support from the outside—the

Sunnis are alleged to be backed by the Taliban and the Shiites by Iran, and the Afghan Hazaras as foreigners are blamed (the hidden external hand). A Bangash malik saw "no Sunnite-Shiite tension rather a third hand involved in pitting the two tribes against each other".[42]

New clashes erupted in June 2009 when militants opened fire on officials and jirga members in Lower Kurram: nearly 150 people were killed in two weeks.[43] The blockade of Upper Kurram was reinforced from August 2009 when Taliban militants were brought from Orakzai, Khyber and Dara Adam Khel under the leadership of Hakeemullah Mehsud who took over as TTP leader after Baitullah's death in a drone attack. The Thall-Parachinar road was briefly reopened in November 2009 and a relief convoy of twenty-five trucks reached Parachinar. But this was only a brief lull in the conflict. In March 2010, six truck drivers who had been kidnapped were found dead near Thall. A letter found in the pocket of one of the victims said that anyone supplying goods to the Parachinar Shiite community would meet the same fate.[44] A few days earlier, a convoy of Shiites travelling from Peshawar to Parachinar was attacked by a suicide-bomber near Thall, killing at least fourteen people, including women and children. Turi and Bangash elders sent an open letter to the government asking it to come to their rescue and claiming that the "siege and economic blockade since April 2007 had converted the paradise-like valley into a Gaza strip".[45]

A general perception that the Shiites had emerged as the winners in the struggle led to retaliatory violence in other parts of the province. Due to the attacks many Shiites have migrated to Upper Kurram or to the cities (Thall, Hangu, Kohat). They have been forced into enclaves, which makes them easy targets (for instance 'Shi'agarh' 10 miles from Kohat on the road to Hangu). Much of the Sunnite population in Parachinar has migrated to Lower Kurram while Sunnite Mangal tribesmen are trapped in Upper Kurram and can only reach Peshawar through Afghanistan.

The Pakistani military establishment, under pressure from the United States to launch an operation against the Haqqani network in North Waziristan, is attempting to relocate the militants in Upper Kurram and to use the Kurram Agency to provide transit or sanctuary to its Afghan Taliban allies.[46] The strategy has been to impose the Haqqani network as "mediators" to help resolve the sectarian conflict.[47] Three Shiite leaders and Sajid Turi, a member of the National Assembly (MNA), had been co-opted to meet two sons of Jalaluddin Haqqani, but they did not have the *wak* (customary designation) to conduct a jirga on behalf of Kurram people who

have been resisting efforts to cede their territory to the Taliban.[48] At the end of October 2010, the government announced that it was closing the Parachinar-Gardez-Kabul route in order to clamp down on sectarian violence. The people of Kurram are again trapped and cut off from the rest of Pakistan. Meetings were held in Islamabad at the end of November 2010 between commanders of the Haqqani group and TTP with elders of Kurram Agency, but they failed to reach an agreement as the militants said that the Thalll-Parachinar road would be reopened only if it would be used by the Taliban, and if Turi tribesmen made assurances that they would not hinder militants' movements to and from Afghanistan via Kurram Agency.[49] In the meantime, the media reported that Sirajuddin Haqqani and his fighters had relocated to Kurram Agency with the knowledge of the Pakistani military to escape the drone attacks in North Waziristan.[50]

Sectarianism spreads to the Orakzai Agency

The sectarian clashes spilled over to the Orakzai Agency (450,000 inhabitants)[51] where 10 per cent of the Orakzai tribe are Shiite (Isakhel, Akhel, Turikhel, Muhammadkhel, a portion of Alikhel). The Shiites live south of the Mastura River. The Orakzai are believed to be the descendants of Karlanr, a son of Gurgusht. When the Bangash were ousted by the Turi from Kurram, they ousted the Orakzai from the country around Kohat.[52] The agency does not share a border with Afghanistan, and was at relative peace until October 2008.[53] Historically, the conflict in Orakzai was mainly over the ownership of Syed Mir Anwar Shah Shrine at Kalaya. This shrine, which originally belonged to the Shiites, was given to the Sunnis during British rule. The Shiites were later allowed to visit and ensure its maintenance.

The Kalaya Syed, who were established pirs of the Orakzai Shiite clans, were settled on land extending from the border of Kohat to Kurram. In 1923 Mulla Mahmud Akhunzada led a lashkar of Sunnite Orakzai and Shiite Manikhel Orakzai to evict the Kalaya Syed who moved to Kohat.[54] In 1927 the Shiite Bar Muhammadkhel brought the Syed back to the Tribal Areas. Mulla Mahmud mobilized a lashkar with Afridis and Sunnite Orakzai who were promised shares of the lands of the Shiites. Hundreds were killed on both sides and all Shiites were evicted from Orakzai. The Sunnis submitted a petition to the chief commissioner in Peshawar claiming that Shiites were committing crimes such as kidnapping Sunnite women. The British supplied weapons to the Shiites and Mulla Mahmud sought

help from Afghanistan. The Afghan king refused to interfere because of the risk of a British intervention. In 1930 the Shiites took back some land. A jirga decided that lands held before 1927 should be returned to Shiites.[55] In 1936, the British colonial administration demarcated Sunnite and Shiite areas to minimize the chances of conflict. Orakzai was made into the separate tribal agency of Tirah, confirming the territorial holdings and regional presence of the Shiite tribes.

In 1998, after clashes over flag raising on Nawruz, Taliban from Orakzai attacked the Shiite village of Shahukhel and razed it to ground, killing scores of Shiites, while numerous families were displaced and took refuge in Shiite villages; the army intervened.

The shrine was renovated in 1999 (the opening ceremony was held on 20 June 1999). Shiite residents wanted to organize processions and use musical instruments inside the shrine. A Taliban force was raised in the area in 1999 by Aslam Farooqi, a tribal chief affiliated with the SSP. In 2000 the Taliban declared that the agreement—which allowed Shiites access to the shrine—was un-Islamic and they warned the Shiites not to return. The militants occupied a hilltop and fired RPGs and mortars on neighbouring Shiite villages.[56] The Taliban demolished the half-built Shiite mosque and converted it to a Sunnite *Eidgah* (prayer ground for Eid festival). The Shiites offered the Taliban a plot of land, but they insisted on occupying the land on which the Shiite shrine was built. Shiites were chased away because they were considered to be unbelievers (*kafirs*). The Taliban remained active in the area until the end of 2001.

In October 2006, the shrine was reduced to rubble after a seven-day battle over its ownership that killed at least eighteen people. People from both communities were banned from entering the disputed area,[57] which is in the custody of the frontier corps. After a ceasefire was accepted, the Shiites moved back to their area across the Toi River (Sunnis occupy the north and Shiites the south). Sunnis who were not ready to negotiate agreed because they had regained control of the whole Layra (Kalaya) area. Since the assault on the Red Mosque in 2007, attacks on shrines have become a regular occurrence in Orakzai.[58] They are aimed at parting ways with established norms and values and at establishing a new identity. These attacks are inscribed in the targeting of shrines and mosques all over Pakistan: between December 2007 and December 2010, thirty major attacks against shrines, mosques and other religious targets have killed 800 people. The aim is to create chaos and also to force the armed forces to divert their attention away from the war on terror.

In 2004, foreign militants displaced by military operations in Waziristan began moving into Upper Orakzai, where they found a safe haven.[59] They were joined from 2006 by members of the SSP and LJ from Dara Adam Khel and by militants from Khyber Agency. After the creation of the TTP in December 2007, Hakeemullah Mehsud was appointed as its commander in Orakzai, while Tariq Afridi, the commander of the TTP in Dara Adam Khel, found shelter in Orakzai.

Orakzai has become a new centre of gravity for the TTP's leadership, a safe haven for Punjabi militants and a launching pad for attacks targeting NATO logistics into Afghanistan and for suicide attacks in Peshawar and other cities of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

There is an economic dimension to the conflict in Orakzai. Shiites are relatively affluent compared to Sunnis in the Tribal Areas. They own property and control resources such as forests, mountains, and fertile agricultural land. Sunnis prevent them from cutting their trees and selling them. The Taliban also expelled the Shiites from fertile land and forced them to pay jizya (poll tax on non-Muslims).[60] Shiites who had acquired contracts for developing coalmines were expelled from the area by the Taliban, who stated that infidels had no right to extract coal.

In one instance, Sunnite Ali Khel tribesmen rejected the Taliban's banishment of Shiites from some areas and raised a lashkar to fight the Taliban.[61] The grand jirga that took place in October 2008 was attacked by a suicide bomber, killing over one hundred Sunnis and Shiites. Despite this, the Taliban did not succeed in dividing the Ali Khel along Sunnite-Shiite lines because Ali Khel Sunnis and Shiites resist the Taliban. The Storikhel, also a mixed Sunnite-Shiite tribe, similarly stand united against the Taliban.

The trouble in Kalaya continued with a suicide car-bomb killing six people at a jirga called by the Shiites to settle a dispute with the Sunnis in December 2008. Clashes erupted again in April 2009 when a Sunnite girl eloped with a Shiite boy and the couple took shelter in Kalaya.[62] The Sunnite tribesmen refused to hand over the couple to the Taliban, who wanted to execute them. This ended with a clash between Baitullah's and Tariq Afridi's men. In October 2009, a bomb attack on a village near Kohat left thirty-five Shiites dead and in April 2010 a double suicide-attack at a refugee camp in Kacha Pakha, a Shiite area of Kohat, killed forty-one displaced Shiites from Orakzai.[63] This was probably in retaliation for the uprising of the Storikhel Shiites against the TTP at the end of 2009. In December 2010, a suicide-attack left eleven dead in a Shiite-run hospital in Hangu

district and another fifteen Shiites—including women and children—were killed in Kohat when a suicide bomber blew himself up close to a minivan that was about to depart for Kalaya. A spokesman for the Taliban of Dara Adam Khel claimed responsibility and said that Shiites were targeted.[64]

The Taliban based in Lower Orakzai have also been stirring sectarian violence in Kohat and Hangu (Shiites are in a majority east of Hangu; there are Shiite villages between Kohat and Hangu).[65] There were clashes in Hangu (NWFP) during Muharram in 2009, which left seventeen dead and thirty injured. Clashes erupted when people from Kohat who were protesting against the curfew imposed in Hangu on the eve of Ashura were attacked by Sunnis supported by the Taliban. It took three days to restore calm to the city.[66]

Sectarianism spreads to Dera Ismaïl Khan, Dera Ghazi Khan and Bhakkar

Besides Hangu, Dera Ismaïl Khan has emerged as another major sectarian flashpoint. The city situated 250 km south of Peshawar, which had always been tense during Muharram, is now among the most sensitive districts where sectarian clashes claim scores of lives. A large population from Waziristan migrated to the city after the start of the military operations, which exacerbated the ethnic and sectarian tensions. Over 800 people have died in targeted killings and suicide bombings directed at funeral processions[67] or the bazaar. Many families have left the city where sectarian violence continues in spite of a peace deal signed in early July 2009. Sectarian violence has spread to Bhakkar and Dera Ghazi Khan, cities of the Punjab with a history of sectarian tensions. Shiite families fleeing sectarian violence in Dera Ismaïl Khan have begun to settle in Bhakkar, a district with a large Shiite population. A suicide bombing in October 2008 targeting Rashid Akbar Niwani, a member of parliament belonging to a very influential Shiite family, left twenty-two dead and over sixty injured.[68] Dera Ghazi Khan has also become a target. An attack on a Shiite procession in February 2009 led to riots that lasted for several days.

Conclusion

There was an upsurge in sectarian violence throughout 2009 due to the increase of operational spaces for jihadi-sectarian groups as the consequence

of the weakening of the state's presence in the region. The operation Rah-e Najat, launched at the end of 2009 in Waziristan, was described as a success by the Pakistani military, but as usual, the militants were only dispersed and many of them moved to Kurram and Orakzai. The army organized a media trip to Kurram in early July 2010 and presented the area as pacified,[69] claiming that ninety-six militants had been killed and 3,000 to 4,000 militants driven out, but, according to locals, the Taliban still control a good part of Central Kurram. A few days later, eleven Shiites travelling from Kurram to Peshawar via Afghanistan were ambushed and killed in Chamkani (Paktia).

The population wants peace and security, but traditional leaders from both communities have lost control over the situation as very young fighters fill the ranks on both sides of the conflict.[70] Jirgas are no longer effective in resolving issues, particularly in the rural areas of Kurram. Even as American drones target sites within the Kurram tribal agency, the continuing struggle between Sunnis and Shiites shows few signs of abating. Sectarian violence is likely to become endemic as the Taliban have, to some extent, succeeded in exploiting sectarian strife to expand their space, while the state remains in denial about the sectarian conflict in the FATA.

11

Changing Islam in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan and its Weighting on the Sunnite-Shiite Cleavage

Bayram Balci and Altay Goyushov

In many regards, Azerbaijan stands as an original case study for an in-depth investigation on interactions between Sunnis and Shiites within a more or less homogeneous national society. First, in terms of demographic weight, Sunnite and Shiite communities are quite balanced: the Shiite majority comprises approximately 60 to 65 per cent of the population of Azerbaijan. Second, throughout history, the country has long been a battlefield and terrain of competition between Sunnite Ottomans and Shiite Safavids, while the heirs of yesterday's regional empires—contemporary Turkey and Iran—continue to appeal to Sunnite and Shiite followers all around the Middle East. Third, traditionally Muslim Azerbaijan has only recently recovered from forced Soviet secularism and is only now emerging as a newly independent state with an extraordinary potential for reinventing a national identity. Since the early 1990s and the country's independence, the three-layered framework of Azerbaijani identity—Sunnite, Shiite and secular—means that it is a unique research laboratory to explore the various dynamics of Islamic revivals, in which several national, international, religious and philosophical schools and influential movements are involved.

By narrowing down the more extended phenomenon of religious revival that has affected all of the former Soviet republics and societies to the case

of Azerbaijan, the purpose of this contribution is to elaborate on the inherent elements and features of this revival process and to investigate how they interact with Sunnite and Shiite relations and affect the newly auto-proclaimed secular state. Our hypothesis is that both Sunnite and Shiite revivals benefit from foreign influential support groups and movements, which contribute to the inflammation of mutual suspicion and competition between the two main trends of Islam, while the secular state fails to reduce the cleavage. First, we will show how Sunnite and Shiite communities developed and progressed at the same pace from the Safavid period through to the Soviet era. Secondly, we will analyse the Islamic revival process and identify its components and influences from Iran and Turkey, as well as from some Arab states of the Middle East.

Adaptation of Islam, the Turkic Conquest and dissemination of Shiite belief

Since the mid-seventh century C.E. the territory of the modern Azerbaijani Republic has fallen within the boundaries of the Islamic Caliphate. It took almost two hundred years for Islam to finally become the undisputed dominant religion, adopted by the vast majority of the local population along with the ruling elites. Later in the eleventh century C.E., the fall of Azerbaijan under Turkic-Seljuk rule and subsequent migration from Central Asia triggered a major shift in the ethnic composition of the region by making Turkic-Oghuz tribes its prevailing constituent. Although various Shiite beliefs had already been disseminated in Azerbaijan before massive Turkization began, it was only under the rule of Turkic Qara Qoyunlu (1380–1468) and the Safavid (1501–1732) dynasties that Twelver Shi'ism gradually became the leading religious branch of Islam in Azerbaijan. During the reforms of Nadir Shah Afshar (1736–1747) the term Ja'fari was adopted to identify local mainstream Shiism.

The longstanding rivalry between Sunnite and Shiite ruling dynasties from the late fourteenth century onwards left a strong imprint on the history of this region. Azerbaijan became one of the major scenes for a series of wars, which dragged the region into ideological confrontation based on religious differences. The hostilities between Shiites and Sunnis became part of the political and social reality and the everyday life of Azerbaijani Muslims. Partly as a legacy of these wars, Shiites have since predominated in the regions of Nakhichevan, Qarabakh, Apsheron, Ganja, Mil', Mugan and

Lenkoran, while Sunnism remained the prevailing current in the regions of Sheki-Zaqatala, Quba-Qusar and Shamakhi-Qabala.

Nonetheless, the relationship between Sunnis and Shiites in Azerbaijan has never been as one-dimensional as the aforementioned rivalry might indicate. The centuries-old relationship has also produced a special phenomenon of co-existence among followers of both branches of Islam in Azerbaijan. Many Sunnis shared Shiite traditions, and made pilgrimages to the holy places of the Shiites. Some of the Azerbaijani Sunnis bore Shiite titles as *mashhadi* and *karbala'i*.

Under Russian Rule

After Nadir Shah's assassination in 1747 and the decline of central power in Iran, constituencies called *Khanates* to the north of the Araxes River and ruled by local Turkic tribes enjoyed relative independence for half a century. By the end of the eighteenth century, the territorial expansion of Russia reached Transcaucasia, and the Orthodox Christian Russian Empire began to intervene in the centuries-old dispute between Sunnite Ottomans and Shiite Iran on these territories. Eventually, after decades of warfare, the Russian conquest of the Khanates was officially concluded with the signing of the treaties of Gulistan (1813) and Turkmenchay (1828) between the Russian Empire and Iran, which settled the Araxes River as a natural boundary between the two states.

Despite having a long history of dealing with conquered Muslim communities, firstly in the Caucasus, Russia's colonial policy was challenged by the substantial presence of Shiites, as the southern Caucasus had a large Shiite population. Since the early 1820s, the imperial administration drafted and implemented various plans in order to earn the loyalty of local Muslims. Reducing the religious ties of Shiites to neighbouring Iran and of the Sunnis to the Ottoman Empire was regarded as a primary goal to gain control of the religious life of local Muslims. In 1823 Russia's imperial administration established the position of a *Sheykhulislam* to lead the religious life of local Shiites and, nine years later, in 1832, a new mufti was appointed to head Transcaucasian Sunnis separately. Both of these religious leaders had to reside in Tiflis (the current capital of the Republic of Georgia—Tbilisi), which was the main city of Russia's colonial administration in the Caucasus. Forty years later, in April 1872, the czar's decree established two separate Shiite and Sunnite Transcaucasian Muslim Boards

which were supposed to provide an administrative apparatus under the *Sheykhulislam* and the mufti in order to regulate the religious life of local Muslims belonging to the two different branches of Islam.

Although Shiism, due to its slight majority both among the Transcaucasian Muslims as well as among the local ruling elites—and because of its influential *marja'iyya* institution which maintained strong religious ties with Iran—was the primary concern of the Russian colonial administration, it was the Sunnis who caused major troubles for the empire. In the early nineteenth century the *khalidiyya* branch of the *naqshbandiyya* Sufi order was popularized among the Sunnis of the Caucasus, and it became the leading ideology for armed resistance against the Russian Empire soon afterwards. Although the Azerbaijani Sunnis' participation in this armed struggle was not substantial, it was here in Azerbaijan where the local spiritual leader of *khalidiyya-naqshbandiyya*, Sheykh Ismail Shirvani-Kurdamiri, began his teachings and made this "new" belief very popular.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, Shiites continued to maintain a narrow majority over Sunnis in the Azerbaijani territories north of the Araxes River. The Shiites' prevalence began to increase substantially from the 1860s onwards when, after the defeat of armed resistance in the Caucasus War, thousands of Sunnis, including those from Azerbaijan, migrated to the Ottoman Empire. Throughout the 1860s, Shiites made up more than 60 per cent of the population of Azerbaijan. Another important change in the religious life of Azerbaijani Shiites under Russian rule was that local Shiites abandoned the traditional regular Friday ceremonial prayers—*'Jum'a namaz'*—due to the impossibility of freely discussing sensitive political issues during the obligatory *khutbat al-jum'a*.

Meanwhile, in the second part of the nineteenth century, while local Russian authorities continued to view Islam as the main challenge to their "civilizing mission" in the Caucasus and were introducing a variety of measures to assure the loyalty of Muslims, imperial efforts received a boost from an unexpected source which later produced even more worrisome dilemmas for the interests of the empire. Under Russian rule, a young generation of secularly educated individuals appeared on the political stage and formed a powerful new stratum of local Muslim society. By launching an attack on Muslim clergy, the newly formed intelligentsia portrayed *mullahs* and *sheikhs* as the source of the local community's ignorance and backwardness, and they ultimately defeated them in the fight for moral authority. Intellectuals like Axundzadeh, Zardabi, Sabir or Mammedguluzadeh compro-

mised the Muslim clergy by targeting local "spiritual leadership" in the popular mass media, plays and poetry, and by naming the clergy as an impassable hindrance to the course of education and development. At the same time, the burgeoning intelligentsia fashioned a fresh "cult of secularly educated man" and they eventually managed to evolve "into the conscience of the nation".[1]

Getting rid of the Sunnite-Shiite division and rivalry along with some other priorities were naively included in the shortlist of the intelligentsia's primary goals. At the turn of the twentieth century, the Azerbaijani press reflected the fact that this intellectual struggle against religious division had become one of the most urgent problems of the time.

This trend played a crucial part in the identity-building process launched by the intelligentsia, which resulted in the transformation of former "Shiite Iranians" and local Sunnis into newly shaped Azerbaijanis. During this period of cultural and political awakening, identity issues were at the forefront of the intelligentsia's ideological battles. Although the first generation of the Azeri intelligentsia was very critical of Islam and set out to convince the Azeri public of the advantages inherent in Western civilization over the traditional Muslim way of life, they still saw Islam as the main component of local identity. Their works were addressed equally to Caucasian Muslims, Iranians, and Ottoman Turks, who were all connected by a complex web of religious, cultural and linguistic ties. A majority of Azeris were Shiite, like the Iranians, and educated Azeris knew Persian. On the other hand, their native language was very closely related to Turkish, although Ottoman Turks were Sunnite. Influenced by European nationalist movements and racial theories, and particularly pan-Slavism, subsequent generations of leading Azeri intellectuals began to see themselves as part of the wider Turkic-speaking world. Many factors spoke in favour of promoting an ethnic, Turkic element as the main constituent of national identity.

Consequently, by the beginning of the twentieth century, Islam lost out as the primary source of revivalist ideology to the secularizing ideology of Turkic nationalism. Intellectuals like Ali bey Huseynzadeh made it their mission to awaken the Turkic-speaking peoples of the Russian and Ottoman empires to their common identity.[2]

All of these factors became more visible after the tsarist monarchy's collapse, when a short-lived parliamentary democracy was established in Azerbaijan (1918–1920). Throughout this period, Islamic political ideologies had some influence, but they never became powerful enough to become a

dominant political force. As such, during the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic of 1918–1920, the modernist Islamist Ittikhad (Unity) party, which brought together both Sunnite and Shiite intellectuals loyal to a pro-Islamist agenda, conceded parliamentary leadership to a coalition of nationalists and liberals, which were united in their support for the adoption of secular courts and in their rejection of forming a government on the basis of *shari'a*. Furthermore, the leaders of the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic introduced a series of bold religious reforms, including the unification of the abovementioned Muslim Spiritual Boards that had been established in the 1870s by the Russian Empire separately for Shiites and Sunnis. This helped to subordinate the shaping of religious doctrine to national political authorities. Unsurprisingly, the leadership of the newly established post-unification board—called "Məşihət İdarəsi" in the local language—frequently protested their underprivileged treatment by the nationalist government, but with little effect.[3]

The communist era

All of these pre-communist era secularization efforts of the Azeri intelligentsia encouraged the Bolshevik Party, after Sovietization occurred in the 1920s, to design a special policy toward Islam in Azerbaijan. Differing from their policy in other Muslim regions of the Soviet state, the Bolsheviks aggressively imposed some restrictive measures on Islam in Azerbaijan almost immediately after seizing power. In the Bolshevik view, the preexistence of a secular Azeri state, combined with the Azeri intelligentsia's anticlerical proclivities, produced an environment that seemed exceptionally conducive for promoting the anti-Islamic communist agenda.

As early as 1920, the Soviets launched cautious antireligious campaigns in Azerbaijan, particularly against the Shiite Muharram commemorations. These campaigns were directed especially against the mourning procession and other ceremonies conducted on "Ashura", the tenth day of Muharram.

Some authors also claim that during the establishment of Soviet power the Bolsheviks tried to use the Sunnite-Shiite differences among Azerbaijanis in their antireligious policy. According to these claims, in July 1923, the Azerbaijan Cheka prepared the *Plan of fragmenting Muslim religion in the Azerbaijan SSR* (based on GPU secret police order No. 6).[4]

Meanwhile, growing pressure from the Soviet authorities even forced Shiite and Sunnite Muslim religious elites to cooperate. Across the whole of

Azerbaijan, Sunnite preachers appealed to their followers to actively support Shiites during yearly Muharram commemorations, and Shiite mosques banned anti-Sunni sermons offending the first three caliphs, which had previously been common in local Shiite practice.

By the end of the 1920s, careful antireligious propaganda turned into an aggressive campaign with the government's introduction of wide-ranging restrictions imposed on almost all aspects of religious life, and the persecution of clergy and ordinary believers. In 1939 the last mosque in the capital Baku was closed. These developments in no way indicated the demise of Islam in Soviet Azerbaijan. However, there is no doubt that the general awareness of Islam's basic and essential teachings suffered great losses as the religion was practised less and less (in the late 1980s and early 1990s the vast majority of Azeris lacked even the most elementary understanding of Islamic practice, including such basics as the Ramadan fast or daily prayers), yet, surprisingly, Islam as an identity factor remained almost unharmed. Soviet atheistic education, which had almost completely eliminated religious knowledge, was not able to destroy the country's deeply-embedded Muslim identity.

From time to time, this Islamic identity would give rise to so called "mysterious appearances", or outbursts of Shiite religiosity amongst the larger population. The first wave of these incidents shook Azerbaijan in the beginning of the 1930s, when dozens of religious uprisings took place as news of the appearance of Shiite imams—believed to have been in hiding—spread throughout the country. More recently, in 1983—only a few years after the Iranian Revolution—reports spread that the shadows of all twelve Shiite imams had been sighted in Baku. For several days, thousands of people thronged Sovetski Street hoping to observe this miracle. But perhaps the most popular "mysterious happening" during Soviet rule was the appearance of Mir Mövsum Aga during the Second World War. Azeri society was electrified by rumours about this man with physical disabilities; he was allegedly the descendant of the Prophet Mohammad (called "*Seyyid*" in local tradition), and was able to cure incurable diseases. To this very day, Mir Mövsüm Aga's grave on the outskirts of Baku attracts tens of thousands pilgrims every year.

In general, Shiite *Seyyids* formed a separate caste and exerted great influence in Azerbaijan before the Russian Revolution. A significant number of *Seyyids* were killed during the Stalinist repression of the 1930s. Most family groups (*ojaqs*), however, managed to survive. This was due to the fact that

the title *Seyyid* is passed on to the next generation regardless of whether or not the next bearer has received any high-level religious education.

The tombs of the Shiite *Seyyids* (a few of them allegedly belonged to the direct descendants of Shiite Imams) and Sunnite *nakshbandi Sheykhs*—the so-called *pirs*—which attracted huge numbers of pilgrims from all over Azerbaijan throughout the Soviet period, were the most visible sign of local religiosity during communist rule. There were some 300 *pirs* in Azerbaijan. After practically all mosques had been shut down, these graves and tombs were the only places left to worship and to satisfy religious demands. The traditional life of the Azerbaijanis still appreciates the customs of *nazr*, *sadaqa* and other types of donations to these local shrines.[5]

Also, despite the anti-religious campaigns undertaken by the Soviet leadership, circumcisions and Shiite funeral ceremonies (*ihsan*) continued to have a substantial presence nationwide and they even increased as Soviet influence began to fade. Mosque attendance, especially during Ashura, had been increasing considerably since the late 1970s. Meanwhile, alcohol consumption and celebrations during the Muharram month of the Muslim calendar have continued to decrease significantly, even in modernized urban areas such as Baku. Interestingly, during the Muharram commemorations not only the Shiites, but also the Sunnis of the capital Baku refrained from weddings and other celebrations. In general, mainstream Azeris had little connection to the age-old Sunnite-Shiite rivalry until recently, and viewed the simple public pronunciation of the words "Shiite" and "Sunni" as impolite, which was partly a consequence of the pre-Bolshevik intelligentsia's successful efforts to neutralize religious propaganda, and partly because of the almost complete loss of the basics of religious knowledge during Soviet rule.

Post-Soviet revival of Islam

In the early 1990s, when newly independent states emerged from the ashes of the defunct USSR, the ideological and supranational vacuum provoked a deep and real upheaval in the redefining of the national, cultural and religious identity of the state, as well as individuals, and in redefining the relations of the former with the latter. As for Islam, the revival can be observed throughout all of the former Soviet republics: seized mosques are being reopened, new mosques are being built to welcome more and more followers, a prolific literary output is being translated into vernacular languages

and widely disseminated, and the main dailies and other media outlets with a general audience increasingly provide full coverage of religious matters and contribute to the higher visibility of Islam as an essential component of society. Nevertheless, as mentioned above, the Islamic revival is not restricted exclusively to local resources, though they play a major role in it.

The local resources of Islamic revival

As most Western analysts found out about the local resources of Islamic revival only after the collapse of the Soviet Union, we are inclined to forget that the local dynamics at work in the revival of Islam had started long before 1991.[6] Most of the research on religious phenomena in the Balkans and in post-Soviet Central Asia has proved that the collapse of the Soviet Union was not a turning point in the Islamic revival at all, as the process was already under way, although it certainly gained momentum after the dissolution of the USSR. With Soviet borders opened at last, long isolated Soviet Muslims, and pilgrims to Mecca and other holy places in particular, joined the *umma*, the world Muslim community. In the Azerbaijani example, three dynamics combine in the Islamic revival process and operate together in a synergetic way.[7]

The first dynamic is deeply rooted in the desperate identity search and frantic spiritual quest of the population in claiming back all of the moral and religious values that had been repressed in the Soviet-era. Their reaffirmation in the public arena has renewed the link with the past. Under social pressure, even though the need had not been expressed, mosques were built in every single village to match the new official image of a traditionally Islamic urban society. In many of these villages, the mosques remain empty, with the possible exception, for a small number of people, of the Friday prayer. Thus, the new Azeri identity, as promoted by the state as well as by the people themselves, makes use of religion as an essential element, although it is lived and perceived more as a superficial complexion than as a true revival of faith.

The second domestic dynamic was initiated by local political elites themselves who, after decades of loyal service to the Communist Party, rapidly converted to nationalism. Their use of religion for identity and nationalistic purposes reinforced their legitimacy as the holders of power. The legacy of the Soviet regime, which stood accused of all of society's failures, meant that the converted elites had to abandon communist rhetoric in favour of a radi-

cally renewed discourse based on traditional Islamic values and references. In Azerbaijan, symbolic nationalist moves were made, such as those by former President Heydar Aliyev with his son and heir Ilham, by undertaking a pilgrimage to Mecca in July 1994, attending important religious events and by regularly visiting major local places of worship and rehabilitated mausoleums. The mausoleum of Mir Mövsum Agha, in the suburbs of capital city Baku, whose rehabilitation was partly funded by the new regime, was visited by the president in 1993.

The use of Islamic values for nationalistic purposes was also evident in international politics, where Azerbaijan has established close links with the Arab League and international Islamic organizations, such as the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

The third, but definitely the most important dynamic at work, is foreign to Azerbaijani tradition and is imported from neighbouring Iran and Turkey, and to a lesser extent from the Arab countries. In a context of religious globalization, foreign religious influence, originating from these various geographical and cultural backgrounds, is multifarious and has affected the Islamic revival in Azerbaijan to a greater or lesser extent. We now turn now to these foreign influences in depth.

The Iranian influence

Due to the historical and cultural ties that were formed over the course of many centuries, Iran stands out as the most influential religious source of inspiration for Azerbaijani Shiites. The Shiite branch of Islam, second after Sunnite Islam, is itself split into numerous trends and sub-groups, and their spreading to the Azerbaijani bank of the Araxes River is also very heterogeneous and they interact at many different levels. Some stem from the state organs of the Islamic Republic while others come from semi-private foundations. Thus, the diplomatic department of the Islamic Republic, the Iranian Embassy and state-sponsored cultural centres promote the values and ideology of Ali Khamenei's regime. At the individual level, the cultural centres and the affiliated local worship cells called "*huseyniyye*" are led by none other than Ahmed Ojak Nejad, the son in law of the late Grand Ayatollah Meshkini[8] and Grand Ayatollah Khamenei's special envoy or *vekil* to Azerbaijan to promote the regime's official Islam.

However, private initiatives have been far more efficient in their missionary activities because they have been better organized and more active. The

theological notions of *marja'iyya*, *mujtahid* and *khoms*, as indicated in the introduction of this volume, are essential in gaining a full understanding of these movements' original and complex features.

For several reasons, the institution of the *marja'iyya* has hardly ever existed in the history of Azerbaijan. First, the Russian colonization of the region from 1828 onwards through to the Soviet experience until the early 1990s, had led to the severance of all ties with Iran, which made it impossible to establish new ideas from the Iranian Shiite centres. Second, the *marja'iyya* mostly thrived in Iraq and Iran from the 1940s, when Soviet borders were officially hermetically closed. When interviewed on the development of the *marja'iyya* in the country under the Soviet rule, the Azerbaijani Shiite clerics all claim awareness of the institution and accessed, albeit illegally, the theological works of Imam Khomeini as early as the late 1970s and 1980s and radio programmes from Tabriz since 1980. When crossed with other data sources, it transpires that very few believers indeed knew exactly what the *marja'iyya* was really about in the Soviet-era, and it appears that they were reluctant to accept their backwardness and lack of knowledge in some religious matters. On the contrary, the *marja'iyya* only developed in Azerbaijan among the Shiite community after the country became independent in 1991, and it is closely linked to the first development of Iranian Shiite missionary actions.[9]

And yet, many private foundations, sponsored by eminent religious figures or *mujtahid*, supported the Islamic revival in Azerbaijan. Fazil Lenkerani, Jevad Tabrizi and 'Ali Hussain al-Sistani are the most popular. The first two—who died recently—belonged to the Azeri ethnic group, which naturally favoured their popularity in free Azerbaijan, while al-Sistani became popular because of his moderate line and his extensive wealth. Some Azerbaijani students were granted the opportunity to go and study in Iraq and they brought back to Azerbaijan Sistani's literature, and especially his *Risale*, which they subsequently spread throughout the country.

The Iranian input in the Azerbaijani Islamic revival was particularly active between 1990 and 1995 among the Shiites, in the southern part of the country and in the landlocked autonomous province of Nakhichevan. This input met with undeniable success during the war against Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh between 1991 and 1994, but it later failed to turn out as well as the protagonists had expected: the reasons for this are political in nature and are connected to the regime's policy of control over religion, as is discussed later in the chapter.

The Arab influence

As half of the Azerbaijani Muslims are Sunnis, the religious revival also attracted missionary Sunnite movements originating from the Gulf countries and Saudi Arabia. Known as Wahhabism by its opponents (after the name of its founder, the Saudi rigorist theologian, Abdul Wahhab, 1703–1792) and Salafism or *wahidun* by its advocates, this apparently homogeneous religious trend comprises multiple sub-groups, which took a more or less puritan, fundamentalist or violently radical line. Based on the reintroduction of the Prophet's tradition, they recommend the practice of "pure" Islam, understood as the primordial Islam practised by Muhammad and his companions.[10] In Azerbaijan, the movement gained popularity among the north Caucasian minorities—Lezgi, Chechens, Avars, and Daghestanis. And yet, apart from the multiethnic capital city of Baku, they are well established in the northern and traditionally Sunni provinces of the country, opposite Dagestan.[11]

In Baku, the Sunnite movements established their headquarters in the Abu Bakir mosque, whose leader is the young and charismatic Gamet Suleymanov. Immediately after independence, the young Imam had left for Saudi Arabia and Sudan where he received an education in Islamic studies. The relative success of the Salafi interpretation of Islam in the north Caucasus requires a specific explanation. In this region, a sort of "semi-colonialism" still exists in that the population is not ethnically Russian, but is mainly Caucasian and Muslim, and has remained under the Russian yoke since the nineteenth century. Moreover, the economic transition from the Soviet system to a more liberal system has provoked a real pauperization among the population. Aware of this specific situation, the Salafi discourse is not only religious, in terms of promoting the application of the Prophet's way of life, but is also a denunciation of economic injustice and of Russian colonialism in this region. This means the success of the Salafi discourse is not necessarily linked to its religious elements but also to economic and political motivations.

The Turkish influences

Turkish influences are, at the same time, the most varied and the most influential in the Azerbaijani Sunnite revival. First, they benefited from the economic upswing in Turkey after 1980, and when Turgut Özal's liberal

policy coincided with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the opening of new markets in culturally close, independent countries in the 1990s, the dynamic Turkish private sector thrived abroad. Anatolian businesses gained strength and developed on an international scale. Most of these businesses are run and managed by conservative and traditionalist businessmen, encouraged by their own economic success to demonstrate their religious beliefs and support missionary actions to answer the needs of the *umma*. In the context of the euphoria that followed independence for all former Soviet republics, many states and private actors were motivated by the so-called "renewal of ties between all Turkish brothers" to redefine the "Turkish world, free at last from the communist yoke". And in terms of geography, history, language and cultural closeness, the first country to experience this renewal was Azerbaijan.

The first to show interest in Azerbaijan as a missionary field were the disciples of Said Nursi (1876–1960).[12] They belong to different groups that have split up but are still known under the generic name of *nurcu* and operate in various sectors including trade, construction, logistics, education, and religion. They unquestionably influenced Azeri Islam at several levels. Among them, one can identify the "classicists", who put into practice the strict precepts of Said Nursi and limit their mission abroad to the widest possible dissemination of Nursi's literature, the *Risale-i Nur* (The Epistle of Light), an exegesis of the Qur'an that was translated into several vernacular Turkic languages and into Russian. Businessmen and students carry this literature with them and organize seminars and informal meetings to spread the word. Nursi's interpretation of Islam is known as moderate, in the sense that it does not make any appeal for political protests against non-religious regimes and refuses resorting to violence, although it does not refrain from expressing potentially harsh criticisms. *Nurcu* Islam also advocates a moderate Turkish nationalism, conveyed by young and proud Turkish entrepreneurs. Besides, this more mystical than politicized form of Sunnite Islam increasingly tends to be organized as a brotherhood. Just after the death of Said Nursi, his movement split up into different small communities, each of them dominated by one of his followers.

One small group that originated from the *nurcu* movement, the *fethullahci* community—named after the movement's leader and disciple of Said Nursi, Fethullah Gülen—merits special attention because of its huge contribution to the Islamic revival in all of the former Soviet Union, and not only in Azerbaijan.[13] In Azerbaijan, as in other places, the movement

focuses on education. In the early 1990s, sympathetic businessmen set up a strong network of private educational institutions, under the supervision of the state educative organs to ensure compliance with official programmes. A *fethullahci* university was also created in Baku in 1995 and is today regarded as one of the most prestigious in the country.

It is erroneous to believe that the *fethullahci* schools and supporting businesses conceal clandestine and strict religious *madrasas*. Their approach is far more complex and their religious message is conveyed in a much subtler way, so that they have succeeded in deluding some of the most suspicious of all post-Soviet regimes concerning religion for a whole decade. According to Azeri law, the *fethullahci* schools, working almost exclusively in English, guarantee a secular education, prioritizing sciences (biology, chemistry and physics), mathematics and computer science, which ensures their tremendous success and prestige.

However, they do pass on their religious philosophy in their schools, but this takes different forms according to a more or less favourable context. In the first years after independence, basic education in religion was officially introduced in the school programmes. Yet the regime soon grew suspicious of all forms of proselytizing and, in order to avoid banishment, the *fethullahci* dropped the open *tabligh* (spreading) and *da'wa* (preaching) methods and stopped programmed lessons, and developed the far more discreet tactics of *temsil* (exemplification, showing a good example). In Turkish this word means "representation", or "model" and implies that missionaries must preach by exemplification, by presenting themselves as an example worthy of imitation. Without even mentioning the Qur'an, the *fethullahci* movement's ideas or achievements, all teachers must behave so as to set a perfect example of uprightness and success. Thus, hygiene, politeness, courteousness, sobriety, respect of elders, and patriotism in their day-to-day behaviour are the governing values of good morals.[14]

Emulating the *fethullahci*, the students in the Turkish high schools in Azerbaijan later showed interest in their philosophy and ideas and proved ready for proselytizing activities. Combined with their high level of education, the *fethullahci* movement can pride itself on having formed the new political, economic and religious elites of the countries that they operate in.

To a lesser extent, the disciples of two other Turkish movements have gained relative popularity among the Azerbaijani Sunnite Muslims. The Mahmut Ziya Hudayi foundation occurs to be one of the most important Turkish *nakshibandi* branches active in Azerbaijan. The foundation's headquarters in Üsküdar (Istanbul) opened their first official representative office

in Baku as early as 1992, from which they operate half a dozen *madrasas* for youth between the ages of ten and fifteen. Without legal existence in the country, the *suleymanci*—the disciples of Suleyman Tunahan (1888–1959), leader of a movement close to the *nakshibandis*—also plays a role in the local revival of Islam. Their action is based on the motto "everything for and by the Qur'an" and on loyalty to their leader who cared only for the need to educate and encourage every Muslim in the reading of the Qur'an, as a *sine qua non* for gaining access to paradise.

In parallel, the Turkish state initiated its own actions in terms of religious cooperation, although these were not particularly successful. As early as 1991, Turkish diplomatic services became interested in the Turkic world and tried to answer the need for cooperation.[15] Although secular, the Turkish republic does have a religious policy inside as well as outside its national borders. The status of the *Diyanet*, the State Board for Religious Affairs, is very similar to that of a ministry of cults and serves as a tool of the Turkish state to manage and control domestic Islam and to implement official religious cooperation abroad.[16] Until the 1990s, the *Diyanet*'s intervention abroad was limited to sending imams and religious advisors to France and Germany. The emergence of Turkic post-Soviet states favoured its transformation. Enjoying increased budgets, the *Diyanet* is able to exert a greater influence on the Islamic revival in the different countries of the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

In Azerbaijan, the *Diyanet* opened a representative office in 1992, from which it operates a quite dynamic religious cooperation policy. The *Diyanet*, among other projects, issues and disseminates large amounts of literature and is responsible for the education of religious managers and officers. Thus, Turkey has funded one of the two religious universities in the city of Baku and it also runs a theological institute for undergraduate students. Besides this, for almost two decades now, the Faculty of Theology at the University of Marmara in Istanbul and others across Turkey educates Azerbaijani students in religion and thus takes part in the spreading of Turkish Islam (i.e. of a moderate Sunnite form of Islam that has learned to compromise with a secular state).

Shiite and Sunnite community interactions and state religious policy

Foreign and domestic dynamics at work in the Islamic revival, whether Shiite or Sunnite, have been interacting for almost two decades. It is interesting to study how these interactions have affected the Sunnite and Shiite cleavage.

Among the Shiites, the most influential movement—which until recently has had serious conflicts with the official religious establishment—is led by Hadji Ilgar Ibrahimoglu. Ibrahimoglu is a highly educated and incredibly charismatic religious leader, often nicknamed by the media as the "Caucasian Moqtada Al-Sadr" and he has a no less original background. He grew up in a very pious and conservative family from the old city of Baku. Aged twenty when his country gained independence, he was sent by his family to pursue higher education in Iran where he graduated in philosophy and theology after a number of years spent in Teheran, Qazwin, and, for a shorter period, in Qom, where he supposedly attended the preaching of the highest religious authorities.

After eight years in Iran, Ibrahimoglu returned to Azerbaijan, where he advocated for faith as much as for democracy and human rights. A stay in Poland in a centre for the defence of human rights and his extensive experience of cooperation with Western organizations for the defence of religious freedom enabled him to round off his knowledge on the connection between human rights, democracy and religious freedom, which was to become his main concern in later years.

While Hadji Ilgar Ibrahimoglu is an eminent religious leader, he is also an active politician and militant intellectual fighting for human rights. His theological knowledge and his position as the Imam of the historical mosque of Baku's old city centre until 2004—when the mosque was officially confiscated and closed by the authorities—have strengthened his legitimacy to such an extent that even his opponents do not dare to question him. Advocating a radically modern interpretation of religion, he was the first in Azerbaijan to promote a civilized practice of *"Ashura"*, as opposed to the traditional, spectacular and blood-soaked self-flagellation commemorating the assassination of Imam Hussein in Kerbala. On the grounds that blood should not be shed in a country where thalassemia (a genetic blood disease) affects 2000 children and requires twelve to thirteen tons of blood transfers a year, he promotes a progressive and community solidarity action replacing self-flagellations by free blood collecting to the benefit of the sick children.

Eventually, the young Imam drew closer to the opposition to Aliyev's regime and openly accused him of corruption and nepotism. He condemned his subjugated religious leaders, such as the official *Sheikh ul Islam* Allahshukur Pashazadeh, for being a puppet and for serving all the consecutive regimes since 1980. Ibrahimoglu also challenged the regime's right to impose a religious policy and religious control over the followers by forcing

them to swear allegiance to the *Sheikh ul Islam*. In addition, he denounced creeping corruption across all the state organs, which are the vassals of foreign oil companies, and accused the electoral commissions of ballot rigging. In November 2003, immediately after the presidential elections that were condemned as undemocratic by all of the international observation organizations, Hadji Ilgar Ibrahimolgu marched in a demonstration organized by the opposition party he supported, the Musavat. Arrested, he was jailed for two months on the grounds of vandalism and breach of the peace.

The trial of strength between the militant Imam and the regime turned to the former's disadvantage when he was expelled from the old city's mosque, deposed from his position of Imam, and deprived of his *minbar*—a flight of steps used as a platform for preaching.

Being aware that international popularity would secure his political immunity in the country, the former Imam jumped at all the opportunities to appear and talk on the international public scene. His first interventions date back to 2003, when 150 Azerbaijani soldiers joined the American coalition in Iraq. He protested against US interference in Iraq and rejected the Americans' "democratic hypocrisy when everybody knows energetic and economic interests prevail". Neither did he spare Iraqi Muslims in his harsh criticism, pointing to the community's weaknesses that had encouraged the Shiite and Sunnite confrontation. He then developed contacts and made efforts to reconcile both branches of Islam. In February 2006, when the Muhammad cartoons controversy initiated by the Danish *Jyllands-Posten* began, he was the first in Azerbaijan to denounce the "humiliation of Islam" and, when the people massively joined his views, religious and secular authorities had no other option than to also reject the cartoons.

At the opposite end of the spectrum stands Gamet Suleymanov, the leader of the Salafi line in the Abu Bakir mosque. Both religious and political authorities have never particularly liked this radical charismatic imam. He faces harsh criticism and fuels a bizarre fantasy about the real nature of the Salafi movement, as indeed the ideological line is not clear to anybody and brings together the most heterogeneous people, from fundamentalists to moderate followers.[17] Whereas the Salafis in Azerbaijan claimed to be a quietist rather than a jihadist movement, the media regularly accuses the movement of collusion with al-Qaida and global terrorism. During the first Chechen war, and at the beginning of the second, the Abu Bakir mosque actually served as a back-up base for Chechen combatants as well as for foreign volunteers to join the Chechen side. However, Azerbaijan's territory

was a transit zone only until the authorities locked it up and hermetically closed the borders with Russia to put an end to all initiatives of support of the Chechens.

In most of the post-Soviet countries, and in the first years after independence, Salafism gained popularity because its leaders virulently criticized the post-Soviet regimes and the old political elites that had remained in power. Providing quantitative estimates of the Salafi presence in Azerbaijan is not an easy task. The community seems to be quite strong, if only to judge by the number of followers who attend the Abu Bakir mosque every day, or by the number of bookshops and abundant literature on sale, by the number of "converted" Shiites to Salafism, and by the links they have with Salafis in Russia, and in Dagestan in particular. During Friday prayers, there is not enough room in the Abu Bakir mosque's building and courtyard for those who pray, so the crowd overflows onto the surrounding roads. However, the movement recently split when Gamet Suleymanov showed a certain inclination to compromise with the regime. This led to the formation of a dissident group called the *khawarej*—the outgoing ones—on more radical and jihadist terms, which brings together militants from the northern parts of the country, close to Dagestan where Salafism is much stronger.

The rapid expansion of religious influence among the younger generation during recent years triggered a major crackdown by the government. Since the last quarter of 2006, many religious TV and radio shows along with so-called "Qur'an teaching courses" in mosques and several religious bookstores have been closed. Many items of Sunnite and Shiite literature have been seized. In some northern Sunnite regions police launched a so-called "hunt on beards", which involved forcibly shaving off the beards of believers. Surprisingly, this time, *nurcu* and certain Salafi communities that are usually loyal to the ruling elite were chosen as the first targets. The most popular prayer houses of Salafis in the capital city Baku, Abu-Bakr (built by Arabica charity foundations in 1997) were closed in 2008. At the same time, some small *nurcu* non-registered *madrasas* were forced to close their doors. Some recently built Shiite mosques were also forced to close.

There is no doubt that the measures imposed by the government created an environment of fear and to some extent have reduced the pace of the growing interest in religion. But it should be taken into account that in recent history we have witnessed several periods of stagnation or even "backsliding". However, these periods did not last long and the phenomena re-emerged even stronger than before.

The state policy for administrating Islam

On top of all foreign influences and interactions between Shiites and Sunnis, Islam in Azerbaijan is also facing interference from the state, which seeks to control and arbitrate between the different movements and trends. And yet, Article 6 of the constitution on the secular nature of the state, Article 19 on the separation of the state and religion, and Article 37 on the freedom of conscience and equality of all religions determine the relationship between religion and the state in Azerbaijan. But the legacy from the Soviet times makes it almost impossible to have these principles applied, as the state organs prevail on the religious sphere. The control exerted over religion is justified by the state on the basis of domestic security concerns as well as by the necessary *entente cordiale* between all branches of Islam and between all lines within each branch, and the need to contain foreign missionary groups. The state has two levers to do so—the Board of Caucasus' Muslims and the State Committee for Coordinating with Religious Organizations.

The former is the highest religious institution in the country and has been managed for the last thirty years by the "unbudgeable" Allahshukur Pashazadeh. The Islamic organizations that emerged after independence disapprove of him. But the Board is still responsible for naming imams and *akhunds* (local Shiite heads of mosques), for supervising religious education, for organizing religious events and both Sunnite and Shiite ceremonies as it is the board's duty to serve both branches of Islam. Closely connected and loyal to the regime, the board lacks efficiency and popular legitimacy, while it also now has to face competition from the State Committee for Coordinating with Religious Organizations, which was established in 2001.

The latter is run by high-ranking officials with a secular education and bears comparison with a ministry of cults. It is in charge of the execution of the state religious policy. Managed by a well-known and respected scholar, Refig Aliev, the purpose of the committee is to keep a close watch on the evolution of Islam and in particular on the activities and impact of foreign missionary movements. The overall objective is to favour the emergence of a "national Islam" that would remain loyal to the ideological orientations of the regime. As Refig Aliev and Allahshukur Pashazadeh do not get along personally, and because the regime has not clearly separated and defined the prerogatives of the committee against those of the board, numerous frictions have set the two at odds. In 2007, when Refig Aliv was replaced by Hidayet Orujov, relations with the board were eased, which enabled coop-

eration. Besides, the board regained a certain degree of popularity following deep reforms undertaken to strengthen and legitimate it, like the naming of new imams with foreign religious education or the upgrading of religious educational establishments in Azerbaijan.

Conclusion

Since 1828, Azerbaijan has evolved under the political and cultural influence of "European" Russia and, later on, of the Soviet regime. The atheist communist ideology and secularization policy placed Islam under pressure and weakened the public presence of Islam as well as contributing to the smoothing-out of differences between the Shiite and Sunnite denominations. By 1991, society had become secular and people hardly recognized any differences between Sunnis and Shiites, and few individuals knew if they had a Sunnite or Shiite family background. Azerbaijanis defined themselves as Muslims, for cultural identity purposes more than religious ones, and to demonstrate their opposition to the Christian Russians and Armenians.

In a still very secularized society, the multifarious revival of Islam in Azerbaijan has served to reawaken Sunnite or Shiite consciences, especially among the "clergymen". Along with Islamic faith, rivalry revived between the two denominations and relations between Sunnis and Shiites might deteriorate within the national community. Even though religious groups are cautious not to express open criticism against one another, the sole promotion of their own ideas can only stimulate other branches to express theirs.

Thriving Shiite, Sunnite and Salafi groups[18] barely accept the supervision of the Board for Religious Affairs or of the State Committee. Often in their combined efforts to control Islam, the emergence of a national form of Islam is relegated to a second plan after the strengthening of the regime's legitimacy across the country. And in the end, it turns out that the regime—consciously—gives its preference to Turkish Islamic influence (because of the good political relations and common geopolitical interests between Turkey and Azerbaijan) than to local and Iranian dynamics of revival.

Thus, until recently the Sunnite branch seemed to prevail over its Shiite concurrent as it benefited from indirect support from the state, which had better diplomatic relations with Turkey than with Iran. Foreign policy orientations towards the West, including Turkey, have granted significant

advantages to the rise of Sunnism in Azerbaijani society. But the silent competition between Sunnis and Shiites is still limited to a rivalry between "clergymen". The religious communities of followers hardly take part in it and hardly have relations with one another. So far, the absence of dialogue has prevented any open conflict, and one can only hope that the communities at large will remain smarter than their leaders and not get involved in fierce competition and the split of the nation.

12

Conclusion

Analyzing Contemporary Sunnite-Shiite Relationships

Brigitte Maréchal and Sami Zemni

While visiting the archaeological site of Little Petra in Jordan with a group of students in 2007, one of the authors of this chapter became acquainted with a Palestinian family from Hebron. As is usually the case, the family asked where my "foreign" Arabic accent comes from. As revealing that I am from Belgium normally puzzles people a little, I always add that I have Tunisian roots on my father's side. More recently, people started adding the question as to whether I was Muslim or not, but I was unprepared for the latest enquiry from this family: "*Are you a Muslim or a Shiite?*" To me, this was clearly something new, something I had not experienced on my prior trips to the region. The anecdote made me realize that something has changed over the course of recent years in the relationship between the two major branches of Islam.

When one looks from afar to political-religious trends in the Islamic world, one is often struck by a double-bind process. On the one hand, Muslims have—as from time immemorial—stressed the longing for oneness. Louis Gardet reminds us of Louis Massignon's definition of Islam as a "willingness to live together",[1] capturing well the universality of Islam. The Quranic verse 49:10 emphasizes that all believers are brethren and verse

34:28 states that Islam has been sent to the totality of mankind. The desire for unity or the aspiration to transcend all differences, divergences and divides within Islam is still a major idea (or "*une idée force*" as the French would say) in our contemporary globalized word. In fact, if the Islamic longing for unity has been an important constant feature of its history, it is perhaps only today, under the gradual emergence of a transnational Muslim public sphere[2] amounting to a diversity of global/glocal Islams,[3] that the dream of unity might seem plausible. On the other hand, however, looking at the conflict-ridden Middle East and Central Asia today, one is indeed confronted with a much more complex reality in which differences and antagonisms are commonly perceptible. We are witnessing the growing political presence and public visibility of Shiite and Sunnite communities, movements (state and non-state) and identities around the region, while we are simultaneously witnessing numerous manifestations of violence, clashes and strife between them. Again, this is not new in the history of the region because a "unity-diversity dialectic", as Louis Gardet calls it, has been and still is at work within Islam.

How can we account for these realities and changing relationships? And how can we understand the dynamics that inform new forms of interaction between and change within the different currents of Islam? In our globalized world, where globalization is always "glocalization",[4] it has become imperative to develop a sociology of "logic of actions" embracing multi-level processes, embedded in various contexts. When we deal with relationships, we have to clarify what exactly is meant by them. Are we to focus on the numerous encounters, frictions, clashes or dialogues between contextually situated actors (movements, groups, individuals, states...) or do we focus on theological connections constructed through intellectual discussions?

Not only do we have to ask ourselves the question to what extent the changes in the relationship have transformed and in what ways, but we also have to take into account the shifting and changing representations within and between Sunnism and Shiism. We cannot understand the relationships between Sunnis and Shiites as if these were occurring in a vacuum: we need to take into account the broader intra-Islamic interactions, conflict ridden or not. We need to integrate, among others, both the very vibrant Salafist trend—a trend that denies that Shiites are Muslims owing to their particular worship of Ali, thus questioning their practice of the *Tawhîd*[5]—as well as the multifaceted revival of different types of Sufism, ranging from traditional practices to modernizing shapes of spiritualities.[6] The relations

between these different streams of Islam need of course to also be set against the backdrop of larger geopolitical, economic, cultural and even technological changes as well as internal evolutions within each of the streams, either (re)affirming some fundamentals or being increasingly auto-reflexive towards their own developments.

In what follows we aim to propose the outline of a global socio-ethnography of these relationships.[7] Firstly we will focus on "forces"; that is, the different forms of power relations that are forged in the interactions between different strands of Islam. As the internal Islamic dynamics and notably its two main streams and their reciprocal relationships have been mainly dealt with by theologians, religious leaders, intellectuals and historians, we will first refer to the vocabularies and etymologies that are used in intra-Muslim discourses, both historically and in contemporary times. Especially, we will focus on how some historians have interpreted the relations between the different strands of Islam. Then, we will question the relationships between Sunnite and Shiite Islam through the recourse to various analytical concepts taken from the sociology of religion in order to propose a new way to qualify the forces involved in these contemporary relationships between Sunnis and Shiites.

Secondly we will focus on "connections", in which we will scrutinize the concrete interactions between individuals, groups, communities, parties or movements and how these give rise to specific forms of networks and/or relations. Here we will focus more on how to read the political, religious and communal conflicts between Sunnis and Shiites when we know that only 10 per cent of the Muslims worldwide are Shiite, and keeping in mind, as Gilles Kepel reminded us in an op-ed published in the French daily *Le Monde*, that the three axes of conflict and crisis that shape the Levant today (that is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its Syrian-Lebanese followings, the Gulf states with regard to oil and the Arab-Iranian/Sunnite-Shiite tensions, and the Afghan-Pakistani area where the Taliban are threatening both NATO troops and the cohesion of the Pakistani state) are also closely intertwined.[8] Furthermore we have to identify the major actors of change and where they are located. Is there any role played at all by Western states or Western Islamic groups in the transformations of these relationships? How are multi-confessional states performing, especially those like Lebanon and Iraq whose internal stability depends on the symbiosis between the different branches of Islam? And what is the impact of the growing attempts to

maintain some kind of national(ist) identity despite the growing success of the Islamic identities of populations in the Muslim world?

Thirdly, we will look into the "imaginations" of the Sunnite-Shiite relations (i.e. how different images and representations are produced and spread and how these in turn influence groups and movements). How should we understand the relationships between Sunnism and Shiism knowing that, if Iran is still the major country incarnating Shiism today, both the statute of its specific Islamic regime (Velayat-i-faqih) as well as its leadership are called into question? The popularity of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in the Arab streets (mostly linked to his support of Hizbollah and opposition to Israel) is today internally and externally challenged with the many political demonstrations contesting or even denying the results of the presidential polls of June 2009, and the denunciations by Mir Hossein Moussavi concerning physical abuses or crimes perpetuated against some civilians.

Forces: Streams, branches, sects or schools of Islam?

In the Islamic doctrinal discourses, the universal character of Islam is usually promoted by all Muslims, as well as the unity of the *umma* where Muslims are viewed as one sole community, where each believer in particular is submitted to one sole God through a personal relationship and enjoys a close spiritual link to all other believers. This is claimed in order to create a harmonious cohesion between the Muslim believers and to overcome various antagonisms between them. But, from its very early stages, as Bernard Lewis reminds us, "Islam has known the flowering, the need and the fear of sects". In a well-known hadith, the Prophet said "*My people will be divided in seventy-three sects and the partisans of all of these seventy-three sects will go to hell except one of them*" and another hadith specifies that "*my community will never agree on a mistake*".[9]

Throughout Islamic history, many different groups emerged and developed their own specificities while much of the Islamic doctrine was built on pluralism and tolerance toward deviancy, accentuating the "unity-diversity dialectic". But some of these groups soon thrived and taxed each other with the labels of orthodoxy or heterodoxy through their respective religious, ideological and socio-political discourses. More precisely, Jean-Paul Charnay reminds us of the various historical distinctions that were used: these groups differentiated internally between *madhhab*-s (schools, rites linked to the observance and to law, acknowledging that, from an

etymological point of view, these rites are understood as both in opposition and in complementarity); divergences (*ikhtilâfât*, on norms between different *mujtahidûn* inside the same rite); *firaq* (sects, the etymology is putting the emphasis on theological differences); or, inversely, *t'awâ'if* (to refer to the coexistence of different religious communities, either Muslim or non-Muslim); or mystical paths gathering together as *tariqas* (through *silsila*, special chains of transmission).[10]

According to this author, the Arabic term *firqa* (pl. *firaq*) is usually translated as sect or schism, and the root *f.r.q* refers to both an idea of separation, distinction, but also to that which differentiates the licit from the illicit. But Charnay also reminds us about the (potential) plasticity of the meaning accorded to any word: he mentions that when the four remaining theological-juridical Sunnite schools of thought mutually recognized each other (between the third and the fifth century of Hijra), in order to constitute what is now called "the orthodoxy", the term *madhhab* lost its initial meaning of "sect", in the strong sense of the term, while Iranian Shiism as the major "sect" was then ipso facto rejected, which led to reciprocal ignorance.[11] For Charnay, Shiism then became the "name for the major (internal) dichotomy" in Islam, although, according to another author, Louis Gardet, the *firqa* does not have the pejorative connotation that it has usually had in Western history: to him, *firqa* is perhaps best translated as groups differing from one another, thus meaning all spiritual families of Islam.[12]

The content of the concept "sect" always depends on the historical changes affecting the social scene. At the time of Louis Gardet's book, and already from the 1960s onwards, an ecumenical dynamic was re-emerging as Shiism was sometimes also understood as a "fifth" school of thought, geographically and culturally implanted, as are the four contemporary recognized Sunnite jurisprudential schools. We can mention the initiative of Shaykh Mahmûd Shaltût, the rector of the University-Mosque of al-Azhar in Cairo, who officially published a *fatwa* in 1959 authorizing instruction in Shiite jurisprudence in this prestigious institution, meaning that he was recognizing Shiism on an equal footing with the four Sunnite legal schools.[13] We also think about the changes that happened during the Iranian Revolution: there was a (temporary?) attempt from Shiites to get out of their particularist position as those "elected"—*al-khassa*—[14] and Ayatollah Khomeiny also stipulated that "there are no differences in Islam, especially between Shia and Sunni". These attempts at rapprochement were promoted within the main Shiite stream but also, on the Sunnite side, by

various Islamist currents such as the Muslim Brotherhood.[15] Although the decision of Shaykh Mahmûd Shaltût has had only few if any practical consequences, Charnay later confirmed that this opinion spread, as he wrote, at the beginning of the 1990s, that "under a specific angle, Shiism is nearly considered as a fifth rite".[16] Parallel to these softening attitudes of Sunnism towards Shiism, he nevertheless also observed a changing use of the concept of "sect", now referring mostly to religious movements that are looked at suspiciously by governments and public opinion such as the Ahmadiyya, Babism and/or Bahaism, as these movements valorize specific qualities of their founders and thus affect the final character of Muhammad's prophecy. These movements were thus increasingly considered as external protests to Islam whereas religious-political activism such as that of the Muslim Brothers was (and is) considered as internal contest. For Jean-Paul Charnay, the spread of sects in Islam, in comparison to Christianity, is rather limited; ever since the fragmentation of Muslim empires into separate dynasties, sects were historically an answer to socio-economic troubles and the affirmation of particular identities under the cover of promoting a "better" Islam.

Today, the relationships between Sunnis and Shiites are nevertheless very contrasted. On the one hand, the term "sect" is sometimes used by Sunnis in order to emphasize their own "orthodoxy". Yet a minority group that has become prominent worldwide since the middle of the 1990s, the Salafis—whose movement was initially rooted at the heart of the geographical origin of Islam and which promotes a so-called return to the core of the spirit of pristine Islam—express especially harsh criticism of Shiism. The Salafis, implicitly understood by some Muslims as becoming potentially a Sunnite sect as such, may qualify Shiites with words such as *al-rafida*—the rejectionists, referring to all those who deny the legitimacy of the first three rightly-guided caliphs—or even *kuffar*, unbelievers. On the other hand, new ecumenical dynamics emerged in order to promote tolerance and peace through an inclusive orthodoxy. The signing of the Amman Message in July 2005 by major Islamic religious authorities worldwide, in which the main Shiite schools of thought are more or less implicitly recognized on an equal footing to Sunnite schools of law constitutes a good example. (See the introduction of the present volume.)

Focussing especially on the evolution of the doctrinal relationships between Sunnis and Shiites, some historians remained attached to the importance of theological concepts such as those of orthodoxy, heterodoxy

and sects. Among others, the historian Hamid Algar speaks about "two parallel orthodox perspectives of the Islamic revelation that cannot converge, in their exoteric aspects, for reasons inherent in the nature of each". To Algar, writing about the eighteenth century, the conciliation of the two perspectives is only possible at the level of action and, more importantly, at the level of the esoteric, but not at the doctrinal level.[17]

In comparison, Hamid Enayat brilliantly focussed on the twofold process of both conflict and concord between Sunnism and Shiism throughout history, and especially in the twentieth century. He estimates that the internal dynamism between the two branches of Islam has been largely underestimated and he thus refers to those branches as "the two main schools or sects in Islam" to underline that both are in fact part of a creative tension. Enayat is convinced that Sunnite-Shiite relationships are changing "towards a cross sectarian fertilisation". Indeed, as he argues, the polemics between Sunnis and Shiites are not concerned with the fundamentals of religion—such as debates on the nature of God or the basic duties of a Muslim—and, in its original form, the split between the two major currents of Islam (only) revolved around the question of who was to lead the Muslim *umma* after the disappearance of the prophet Muhammed. But Hamid Enayat especially invokes the symbolic importance of the rupture between Sunnis and Shiites in the early history of Islam as it has shaped the historical religious memories of both groups, linked to the understanding of Islamic history, and historical personalities, and also the understanding of some specific concepts or doctrines. To him, this situation degenerated from a political quarrel into "a ritual, theological and legal rift" while divergences have obliquely affected certain basic beliefs and attitudes. Ultimately, he refers to the progressive development of a particular ethos of Shiite Muslims compared to that of the Sunnis: the different historical trajectories of communities and ideas have led to separate mentalities and memories that serve as distinctive features.[18] These differences impinge "on the way in which the Qur'anic injunctions are applied to the nature of Man, the method of interpreting and conveying the divine message, the meaning of justice, and the philosophy of history",[19] besides the emergence, growth and finally the institutionalization of a clerical institution within Shiism, while Sunnism remained with a diffused and largely fragmented body of "men of religion" without a clear, stable or obvious hierarchy.

From a sociological point of view inspired by an economic approach, we could describe the internal Islamic diversity of the many active and diverse

religious currents, promoting diverse ways of being, as one conglomerate[20] mainly pre-framed by a major duopoly; namely Sunnism and Shiism, who only together incarnate Islam, although each branch remains autonomous in its own organization. Despite reciprocal ignorance, the two branches together retain a monopoly over Islam[21] and the dynamism of each is partially dependent on the changes in the other. Indeed, as Louis Gardet hypothesized, Sunnite thinking tends to stagnate if cut from its Shiite counterpart.[22] We prefer these concepts to the more classic terms such as "sect" and "orthodoxy" as classical and contemporary sociologies of religion define the latter in ways that do not match the realities that are covered in the aforementioned doctrinal and historic literature.

Even if the question of denominating a group as a sect is always at first, and most of all, a question of social construction and, above all, a question of power relations as to who is going to dominate the social scene, the adoption of a nominal point of view may also sound inspiring for those who want to take some distance from the subject. The term "sect" has indeed, in its Weberian usage, classically been considered as an ideal-type in opposition to the ideal-type of "church". On the one hand, Max Weber underlined how the concept "sect" is appropriate to refer to an institution privileging an intense participation of its members, primarily involved on an individual voluntary basis (while adherents of any church, defined as an institution for salvation of all, are so by birth, without making any choice). On the other hand, Ernst Troeltsch goes further and underlines the fact that the members of a "sect" share an exclusivist vision of who will be saved in the after-world, believing that only a happy few will gain access to the truth and be saved (while churches usually promote inclusive ambitions, meaning that they try to integrate and influence as many people as possible).[23] In contemporary times, Nathalie Luca redefined the ideal-type of the sect by including the presence of a charismatic personality with uncontested power and benefiting from the trust of the adherents as well as, among other things, a locked system of communication.[24]

Considering these typologies, we think that the use of the concept "sect" is not appropriate to define Sunnism and Shiism in relation to Islam. In fact, both branches could be more fruitfully associated with the concept of "church" as their adherents are usually so by birth and both affirm universal inclusive attitudes. And if we would want to focus on the fact that Sunnism and Shiism are also generally living side by side, we could also call them "denominations", referring to the writings of Richard Niebuhr who devel-

oped this concept in relation to the pluralist but quite peaceful American context, as a middle way between the concepts of the church and the sect. A distinctive feature concerning Sunnite and Shiite reciprocal relationships is that the members of each branch of the duopoly usually recognizes the other branch as Muslim, but they also show some limitations to this recognition. Hisham Hellyer clarifies this situation by stating that each branch usually considers the other as proposing "mistaken" religious views and "the differences (of opinions between Sunnis and Shiites) are (only) grudgingly tolerated".[25] Thus, even if some of the characteristics of the denominations described by Niebuhr fail to neatly describe Sunnism and Shiism—as both branches still claim to be closer to the right interpretation of the truth and do not openly accept that the other religious branch is also promoting some important elements of the truth—the concept helps us to think of Sunnism and Shiism as a sort of Siamese twin denomination where one cannot be separated from the other, and which requires both to put up with each other. Both branches are clearly separated but they are part of the same tree. Especially, they have the same roots, and they cannot think of themselves or even exist on their own despite the importance of the aforementioned symbolic separation and internal competition.

These considerations are also to be linked to the concept of "orthodoxy". Many questions also arise as far as the latter is concerned. Sociologically, "orthodoxy" refers to the rightful character of a belief or a doctrine considered as true, versus any other belief or doctrine that would be considered as perverting the common doxa. Ultimately, the "orthodoxy" is related to the building of an order with norms and evaluating the so-called distances taken from it.[26] Again, as far as the relationships between Sunnism and Shiism are concerned, at least two types of considerations quickly appear that question the pertinence of such a conceptual recourse, notably that of "two parallel orthodoxies".

On the one hand, referring to Jean-Paul Charnay's analysis of dissidence within Islam, any dissidence does not so much posit itself as a new form of orthodoxy but rather as restoring "real Islam", as re-establishing "real orthodoxy".[27] Three theological and legalistic discussions have always informed the unity-diversity dialectic; namely, the impossibility of *kufr* (unbelief), the danger of *shirk* (or associationism) and the threat of *bidaʿ* (blameworthy innovations). These concepts were and are used in many debates between schools, groups and sects in sometimes vehement and passionate ways. This seems to be true for the diverse fractions within Sunnism and Shiism as well

as between them, as both always appear to be willing to confront themselves with a greater truth. Both branches are seen by their followers as the norm and the orthodoxy, but it is only together that both incarnate Islam. For Jean-Paul Charnay, the recognition of both branches may even paradoxically valorize Islam's internal coherence and dynamism by stimulating the tensions between diverse oppositions such as legalism versus mysticism, *bât'in* versus *z'âhir*, individual versus collective obligations, submission to God versus human effort and so on.

On the other hand, the concept of "orthodoxy" can be put into question to qualify Sunnism and Shiism as we cannot refer to any centre-periphery framework or dynamic.[28] It is difficult if not impossible to determine in the process of separation which "peripheral" group has departed from or was expelled by the other religious group and formed a new and separated group in opposition to the "church" from which it sprang. Each branch does consider the other as schismatic, but it is indeed impossible to say who is "running away" from whom. Both are on an equal footing in regard to this question, and leaders of both branches usually do not go as far as to present the other branch as perverting the common spirit, doxa.[29]

Beyond these problems of terminology, both branches are built and defined through their actions, and their (denied) relationship to the other. Beyond the sharing of a common initial memory, the diversity of their historical trajectories, actors and institutions, among other things, implies that their relationships are framed within a permanent dialectic of cooperation and conflict, themselves shaped by a plurality of actors and situations for action.

Generally speaking, even if the contemporary situation seems to acknowledge a need (or even a growing need?) for recognition of both branches by each other,[30] their various interactions usually take the shape of reciprocal influences that rarely lead to any formal agreement (except, for example, the very broad stance taken in the Declaration of Amman or, more locally, the eight-point Understanding signed by Lebanese Salafists and Hizbullah in Lebanon in August 2008, as described by Joseph Alagha in this volume). But both main branches of the Islamic tradition allow quite a limited space for common ground as they have both implemented some practical tools to comfort their own legitimacy and their importance at least among their own believers. Two examples illustrate this.

First, Sunnism is not only promoted by the professionals of the religion but by the activism of the majority of the believers who are personally

defending their religion against any aggression. As the jurist Yadh Ben Achour explains, the strength of Sunnism relies not only on the guardianship of political power or on the knowledge of the theologians but mainly on the "orthodoxy of the masses".[31] Defined as the religion of the majority, Sunnism precisely seems to be "invincible" because it is exempt from any real internal criticism and also because it is pushed forward explicitly by its adherents. We would argue that a recent example of this attitude is provided in the written discourse of the grand mufti of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mustafa Ceric, who is imposing himself as a representative of Muslims at the European level and who did not hesitate to promote publicly, in 2007, the idea of a single Muslim authority in Europe. His claims as a religious leader are quite ambivalent and falsely open to Shiism. While he pretends that he is trying to bring the Sunnite and Shiite concepts of authority closer to one another, and wishes to fuse the intellectual and spiritual energy of both, he concludes his reasoning by saying that "*there is therefore no reason for the Shi'ite not to accept the logic of the Muslim majority*",[32] roughly meaning that in fact Shiites should give up their specificities.

Second, Shiites do not seem to be impressed or intimidated by the demographic weight of Sunnis in the Muslim world, as they seem to be precisely opposed to this rule of the majority. As Hamid Enayat points out: "perhaps the most outstanding feature of Shi'ism is an attitude of mind which refuses to admit that majority opinion is necessarily true or right and—which is its converse—a rationalised defence of the moral excellence of an embattled minority".[33] Enayat confronts the positions of the two branches when he refers to the hadith where the Prophet claimed "My community will never agree in error", founding the Sunnite belief in the sanctity of the consensus of the community (ijmâ), and the posture of the Shiites, notably through one example among many the memory of Husayn Ibn 'Alî, and his seventy-two companions, in 61/680 to the Shiites of all times to brave their numerical inferiority in the face of firmly established majorities. But such an opposition to the rule of the majority does not prevent Shiites themselves from trying to impose their own rule on Sunnis when the situation allows it. As mentioned in the contribution of Farian Sabahi on the Islamic Republic of Iran in this volume, Sunnis have been disfavoured in many ways (mosque building, political representation, representation in the media etc.) as a consequence of an official pretence that Islam is one. And, as Sabrina Mervin noticed in the debate, Shiites are no longer the oppressed because they are dominating the Muslim world. If

such a formulation may seem to go too far for the authors of this chapter, we share Mervin's position on the fact that with the success of Nasrallah in Lebanon, among other things, there is a shift in the Shiite identity, in the way they represent themselves and in the way others perceive them, whether they accept it or not.

Connections: the politics of place

A superficial look at the rising regional power of Iran, the power politics of Hizbullah in Lebanon, the new central role played by Shiite politicians and religious figures in post-Saddam Iraq and the numerous examples of conflicts, strife and tensions between Shiites and Sunnis on the Arabian Peninsula could easily be mistaken for a religious resurgence amongst Shiites leading to what some scholars have called a Shiite revival. It is Vali Nasr's much-acclaimed thesis that the changing fortune of the Shiite minority amidst a Sunnite majority is reigniting the long struggle over the soul of Islam. "By liberating and empowering Iraq's Shiite majority, the Bush administration helped launch a broad Shiite revival that will upset the sectarian balance in Iraq and the Middle East for years to come".[34] Sunnite extremists and radicals are mobilizing against this supposed Shiite preeminence. Especially in the context of the Iraq War, where, since 2005, Shiites have regularly been the target of violent actions (ascribed to radical and violent groups rallied around the figure of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and his Salafist ideology), some scholars and politicians have read into it a re-emergence of age-old hatreds between different religious understandings of Islam. The idea that there is some deep-seated cultural structure embedded within local histories of an inherent hatred between Sunnism and Shiism is a recurrent theme of political and academic discourse.

The weakness of these types of analyses is that they cannot account for longer periods of more or less peaceful cohabitation and interactions. When trying to explain why there was no evidence of Sunnite-Shiite hatred during certain periods, those holding on to this type of reasoning can only turn to residual and anecdotal evidence (Shiites conceal their belief, the so called *taqiyya*, or rulers administered cohabitation by sheer force).

Today's conflicts between Sunnis and Shiites are perhaps best understood as part of a tension between the dream of unity and the reality of internal divisions. These conflicts cannot be downplayed as crude manifestations of recurrent religious or confessional strife, nor can they be seen as "only"

(geo-)political conflicts,[35] cloaked and framed in a familiar religious discourse. Rather, these conflicts are manifestations of complex interactions between different or even divergent understandings and ways of being Muslim (couched in specific memorial histories). Muslim communities have been, for ages, engaged in conflicts that were heralded in the name of purity and of truth (i.e. in the name of the Qur'an and the teachings of the prophet Muhammad, but the first divisions appeared firstly from political divergences that the young *umma* was facing). It is from highly political issues (on the legitimacy of the ruler) that doctrinal differences ensued. These conflicts were also largely tributary of the conditions of life and the social categories that were carrying the ideas. For example, Laurence Louër pointed out in her presentation how the kind of relations that developed between the two branches of Islam in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia is first and foremost dependent upon the modalities of state formation. Religious cleavages may overlap with other cleavages such as those opposing aliens and natives, conquerors and conquered, Bedouin (*badu*) and settlers (*hadhar*). In Kuwait, the same author stated that, "the state was formed through the progressive aggregation of groups and people from various geographic and religious backgrounds who all had a vested interest in the construction and preservation of the state". Here the Sunnite-Shiite divide, "is not overlapping with strong socio-historical antagonisms and has hence not degenerated into conflicts".

Contemporary clashes and strife are predominantly a postcolonial fact and are embedded within the forces of globalization. As these conflicts partake in the redrawing and redefining of local political, religious and ideological fault lines, they also reinvent and relabel different Sunnite and Shiite identities. The use of renewed religious differences and/or communal feelings within the framework of conflicts can (and will) spread violence, suspicion and, alas, hatred. This is notably the case in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan, described in this volume by Mariam Abou Zahab, who mentions the use of sectarian strife by the Taliban which has allowed them to expand their influence. This is also the case for post-Soviet Azerbaijan, as Bayram Balci and Altay Goyushov depict the strong foreign influences behind the religious resurgences and how the secular state fails to reduce the cleavage between the two communities. Today, states, political and religious movements as well as (transnational) networks interact in complex and different ways, redrawing the political and religious cartography and boundaries of the region. Never has this become clearer than in the

case of Iraq. With the war in Iraq, the collapse of Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime and the ensuing occupation, people fell back on factors other than national solidarities to foster a sense of security: religious sect, tribe, and language all played a complex and nuanced role in this process. Even after two decades of hardship and embargos, and almost a decade of occupation, Sunnite and Shiite identities have not, as Reidar Visser convincingly argues in this volume, materialized into a territorial sense of belonging. In other words, while there is indeed a confessional dimension to Iraqi politics, the US-led imposition of confessionalism onto the new political institutions and constitution, has not altered the sacrosanct character of the territorial political unity of Iraq in both Sunnite and Shiite discourses.

Iran's growing power and influence in the region and its pan-Islamic (or pan-Islamist) agenda have scared many Sunnite milieus throughout the region. The 1979 Revolution, however, while strongly embedded in the reality of Iranian Shiism, impacted on the consciousness of numerous Sunnis. In his biographical work, the Tunisian leader Rashid al-Ghannoushi explains that this event, initially perceived as a Shiite revolution, then seen as simply Islamic in the wider sense, produced a tremendous impact in more than one way. According to Rashid al-Ghannoushi the revolution increased the popularity of Islam among Muslims worldwide by appearing to be an act on behalf of the poor and the oppressed. Based on various interviews and the work of Azzam Tamimi, Brigitte Maréchal has shown in her research that the Iranian Revolution demonstrated, in most Sunnite activists' eyes, that organized forces could overthrow a secular regime that had been influenced by the West. While rejecting the method, Rashid al-Ghannoushi, like many others, has drawn a parallel between the Iranian Revolution led by Ayatollah Khomeiny and the teachings and works of Hassan al-Banna and Abu Al-'Ala al-Mawdudi. The parallel, according to him, has to do with the manner in which each of these figures considered Islam to be a global project, with the importance given by each to the people, to the nation, to its independence, and to the fundamental sources of religion and confidence in God's help, in addition to the role played by an organized network of members and sympathizers.[36] However, while there might have been an Islamist sympathy towards the Iranian Revolution, other Sunnite movements and institutions (as well as states) were less positive. There gradually emerged a scepticism and sometimes even downright animosity towards what was seen as an Islamic revolution, which suddenly became a Shiite revolution again.

The change in attitude towards Khomeiny's Iran made it more difficult for Iran to accomplish its pan-Islamic agenda. A more pragmatic and realist foreign policy was crafted that targeted the support of Shiite minorities and groups abroad (Lebanon, Bahrain, Iraq) to a much greater extent, without nevertheless being anti-Sunnite. On the contrary, where Sunnite groups were following policies that were consistent with Iran's interest, alliances were forged. This is very clear in the case of the Palestinian Hamas movement. Hamas, a scion of the Sunnite Muslim Brotherhood, is seen by Teheran as fighting the "American-Zionist project" and thus an ally in its anti-imperial policy.

It is obvious that national interests can easily be more important than religious concordance or ecumenism. While Shiism remains one of the most important parts of the regime's legitimating elements, and while it is deeply embedded in Iran's identity, the state of Iran has a much more pragmatic and at times functionalist usage of Shiism.[37] Jelle Puelings sums up well how Shiism can be mobilized as a vehicle for the ambitions and interests of Iran:

> In this way, the promotion and dissemination of its militant (Shiite) Islamic ideology can exist together with the different local realities, thus allowing Iran to ride the wave of Shiite activism, while running parallel with more apolitical interpretations of Shiism, and keeping in touch or reaching out to Shiite communities throughout the Islamic world. At the same time, it can try to gain at least some control over the very amorphous network of the *marja'iya*, that might run across the regional political objectives of Iran. So, towards the future, Najaf might indeed grow further in prominence as a center of religion, for Iran it will only be the political influence that matters.[38]

Paying closer attention to the complexities of each conflict might thus reveal some deeper and more complex insights than the so-called inevitable rise of Shiites. Indeed, evidence presented by different researchers in different contexts has shown that Sunnite-Shiite strife might better be understood as the consequence of a transformation of local dynamics between Sunnite and Shiite communities that are simultaneously part of political shifts and religious changes across the region and of sociological processes that are dependent on globalization (growing connections worldwide, growing influence of the means of communication that reduce, or even abolish, the distances in time and space, individualization of religiousness and increased revivalisms of community belongings). In many countries of the Middle East with substantial Shiite minorities, Shiites have struggled to

improve their economic and social status in the postcolonial context. They have done this mainly by joining the existing (largely socialist and/or communist) parties. It is only from the 1980s onwards, after the Iranian Revolution and after the political failure of more secular political ideologies in the region, that Shiites have organized themselves more along religious and sometimes sectarian lines.[39] But even so, these movements, parties, organizations and associations have largely "evolved towards political participation and national accommodation, rather than following or serving a transnational cause, or destabilizing the societies concerned".[40] The same can be said about the Sunnis in Iran, who promote respect for the territorial integrity of Iran. According to Stéphane Dudoignon "the adoption by a growing amount of Sunnite clerics of the ideology of the Jam'iyyat al-'Ulama party (which was hostile to the secession of Pakistan from India) has driven Iranian Deobandis [...] towards the promotion of a central national state perceived as a possible laic arbiter between confessions".[41]

Nevertheless, there is also "a tense present, [...] characterised by open and discomforting sectarianism" nearly everywhere in the Muslim world, as Rainer Brunner describes the contemporary political situation at the beginning of this century. Next to the conflict zones between Sunnis and Shiites, there is also a growing Sunnite-Shiite mistrust between states of the region, and mainly in countries where Shiites are only a (tiny) minority. Governments in the region sometimes denounce the transnational ties that exist between Shiite communities across state boundaries. Over the last few years several Arab states (like Morocco or Egypt) have accused Shiite citizens or the state of Iran of proselytizing their citizens and therefore endangering the Sunnite identity of the country. These episodes have further put the Sunnite-Shiite relationships under pressure and duress, as is discussed below.

In pluralist countries such as the United Kingdom, the cohabitation of Sunnis and Shiites may also remain difficult. In the general debate of our conference, Sayyid Yousif al-Khoei referred to reciprocal misconceptions and to the lack of communication between Sunnis and Shiites.[42] He mentions how Shiites struggle to find ways to express themselves in mainstream society and, more particularly, in the Muslim community; for example, Shiite students encounter difficulties in finding their place within student associations, and with the disappearance of Shiite books in libraries, among many other things.[43]

But this cohabitation of Muslims representing a minority in Europe facing a growing trend of far right groups and the rise of Islamophobia can

also create a sense of solidarity. It can also lead to innovative and collaborative practices in various fields such as those of community representation, religious education and development of curriculums in schools, prisons and hospital chaplaincies, interfaith relations and so on. For example, the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB)[44] was jointly founded by the Shiite Al-Khoei Foundation and other (Sunnite) Muslim associations such as the British Muslim Forum, the Muslim Association of Britain and the Muslim Council of Britain in 2007. Representing the diversity of Islam, this national body aims to raise standards and promote good governance for mosques and imams. Its mottos are connectivity, respect, and empowerment.

As has already been mentioned, a specific form of interaction between Sunnis and Shiites has been the encounter between Shiism and Salafism. Despite tensions and even conflicts between them,[45] it is fair to state that present-day Salafism is tributary of the teachings of Wahhabism. Historically, Wahhabism has always condemned Shiism for two doctrinal reasons: Shiites were accused of venerating Imams who are deemed infallible, something that, to many Sunnis, is a clear form of *shirk*. Secondly, Shiites deny the legitimacy of three of the four Rightly Guided Caliphs and therefore also the Companions of the Prophet and thus seem to undermine the core idea of Wahhabism (i.e. its return to the early period of Islam). Now it is the modern day Salafi discourses that dominate the anti-Shiite feelings across the region; and their most violent offshoots, the so-called jihadi-Salafis, have been mainly responsible for anti-Shiite violence in the Middle East in general and in Iraq in particular. Anti-Shiite feelings became an ideological weapon in the hands of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (d. 2006), who directed most of his violent actions against Iraqi Shiites who were accused of collaborating with the occupying forces and thus "proving", as it were, their treachery in working with the enemies of Islam.[46]

Besides the limits and boundaries that still remain for an authentic respectful reciprocal recognition, each branch of Islam is a source of influence for the other, whether this influence is of a spiritual, an intellectual or of an organizational nature. This reciprocity falls short of mutual fertilization and processes of co-inclusion as the distance between the two branches is often highlighted more than their proximity. Stéphane Dudoignon offers some examples of such influences in the context of Iranian Baluchistan. The emergence of the Dar al-'Ulum Madrasa of Zahedan as a religious centre rivalling Qom shows the influence of a Shiite context on a Sunnite minor-

ity. Another example of such influence is the Sunnite adaptation of the Shiite notion of marja' (guide), adapting the centralized hierarchical structuring of Iranian Shiite religious personnel to a Sunnite environment. In parallel, according to Dudoignon, the Dar al-Ifta' (Fatwa Office) of Zahedan has been promoting Sunnite jurisprudences within the overall Shiite legal system of the Islamic Republic—a key, though understudied aspect of the permanent negotiations and mutual adjustments of the last three decades between the leaders of the two confessions.

Beyond his sometimes harsh criticisms of Shiite extremism, Yusuf al-Qaradawi himself has surprisingly expressed his strong interest for the *marji'iyya*, using directly the Shiite term, when claiming that Sunnis are in need of a reliable religious authority which can guide them.[47] Jakob Skovgaard-Peterson adds that this is what Qaradawi "hopes the International Union of Muslim Scholars will provide", based on the collaborations of ulemas from various sensitivities such as Sunnite, Shiite, Sufi or Salafi.

An example where Shiites are showing their interest for the Sunnite heritage is found when a religious production such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi's successful book *The Lawful and the Prohibited* is re-appropriated in Iran. The Iranian Ministry of Culture and Religious Guidance has published a critically annotated version of the book in English. As has been noticed by the author of this data, although Qaradawi's influence, recognized by many as the most important Sunnite religious thinker, is notably smaller outside Sunnism, "the need for such an edition suggests both the appeal of Qaradawi within Shia circles, including those in the West, and, at the same time, the limits of his authority beyond the Sunni tradition".[48]

Beyond the failure of a previous revolutionary approach at first inspired by Sunnite and Shiite thinkers—such as Sayyid Qutb, Ali Shariati and Khomeini—Roel Meijer and Joas Wagemakers explain in this volume how some Shiites, as a minority in Saudi Arabia, nowadays call for equal rights for all citizens and support of pluralism, on the basis of justice, reason and empowerment both for the individual and the community, through discourses that clearly invert the meaning of the Salafiyya terminology. All of these examples are just the visible part of the iceberg. Clearly, the influences may be taken from very diverse subjects and reflect diverse intensities.

Daily life and the power of imaginations

As Cornélius Castoriadis wrote in his book *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, representations and the imaginary have always played a crucial role

in producing the social throughout history. Notwithstanding a number of important initiatives of *taqrîb* or bringing Sunnis and Shiites closer to one another, Sunnite and Shiite reciprocal representations have—especially during the last decades—stirred emotions, brought about conflicts opposing believers of the two branches and even ignited diplomatic crises between countries. There is of course a different logic to be analysed between conflicts that arise between individuals or groups of individuals (however defined) on the one hand, and states, on the other.

To the majority of Muslims, whether one is Sunnite or Shiite, has not and is not always an important question. Differences among Sunnis and Shiites are not clearly conceived and people saw and see each other as believers of the same faith, albeit with some different rituals and beliefs. Mariam Abou Zahab even states that in Pakistan there are plenty of people who do not know whether they are Sunnis or Shiites. Among the differences in the daily practices of Sunnis and Shiites, let us mention the following by way of example: the fact that the surname Aicha is almost never chosen for a Shiite female as she is partially considered to be the origin of the conflict between Sunnis and Shiites; the time of Ashura is considered as a mourning time for Shiites and possibly a feast for Sunnis; and the moment to stop the daily fast during the month of Ramadan is slightly later for Shiites.[49] Stéphane Dudoignon added, however, that in the past, in Iran, a mosque used to be a mosque while today it is either a Sunnite or a Shiite mosque.[50] In most cases confessional violence starts, according to Guido Steinberg, when radical Sunnis believe that true Islam is in danger and that Shiites and/or Shiism form a part of that threat.[51] With the growing influence of Iran in recent decades, it appears that mutual suspicion has only increased.

People, groups and states have different readings of Iran's growing influence, depending on whether or not they distinguish between Iran's political goals and religious policies. Heads of state, state officials and several ulama have, over the course of the last few years, regularly denounced Iran's policies on two levels, that is, its so-called "conversion policy" (i.e. threatening to convert Sunnis to Shiism) as well as influencing Shiite minorities in Sunni-majority states to further its own interests. Governments in the region from Saudi Arabia to Egypt and Morocco have regularly denounced these transnational ties—connecting Shiite minorities with their fellow believers in Iran—accusing Shiite citizens of being disloyal to the nation-state in which they live.[52]

Since 2006 several Sunnite states, mostly from the pro-Western camp such as the Palestinian Authority of Ramallah, Jordan, Egypt and Saudi

Arabia[53] have warned and acted against the perceived threat of Shiitization. The idea that Shiites are actively promoting their faith within Sunnite environments and urging Sunnis to convert to Shiism has prompted several governments to take action.[54] Complaints over Shiite missionary work are not new in Islamic history. These complaints go back as far as the Safavid era[55] but have, since the Iranian Revolution, taken on a new life. The phenomenon is not new in itself, but what is new is the fact that it has become a geopolitically politicized issue today.

All the actors involved in the discussion on the presumed growing influence of Shiism (states, scholars, political and social movements, networks of interest) mobilize themes that are couched in religious terms but that often, if not always, overlap with political issues such as Iran's regional power, the power of Hizbullah in Lebanon, and the power of the Shiites in the new Iraq. Let us turn to some examples to clarify this complex set of interactions that are, in a lot of cases, more based on representations than on facts.

The involved actors mobilize the conversion theme for several reasons. States can, first of all, stress and exaggerate the danger of Shiite conversions so that they can conversely emphasize a monolithic, national(ist), religious identity that should infer legitimacy onto the regime. Secondly, through the support of a "mainstream" Sunnism, governments hope to counter the influence of Salafism within their countries on the one hand, and possible pro-Shiite feelings through a constant de-legitimation of their actions on the other. Trying to counter the growing influence of Salafism has become part of the religious politics of several Middle Eastern and North African states. This goal is pursued through different means. On the one hand, regimes have regularly criticized Salafism on the basis that it is a "foreign" rite that "infiltrates" a certain monolithic religious identity. On the other hand, at the same time these governments tend to recuperate the critique that Salafi sheikhs (or alims close to this current) have regularly voiced against Shiism. In this respect, the governments presumably hope to co-opt some of these scholars. Thirdly, by focusing on culture, cultural issues and sectarianism, the governments are hiding to a certain extent their political impotence in the numerous conflicts throughout the region. Their support of Sunnism is also a way of putting (political) pressure on the national (Islamist) opposition. Islamist parties and movements throughout the region are indeed put under pressure when they want to support Hizbullah's politics towards Israel (something that is very popular throughout the region) while the government sees this as "foreign influence" in national affairs.

Let us turn to some examples to highlight the complex interplay between religious and political discourses through the analyses of different actors in different contexts. In Spring 2009 the Moroccan police started a major campaign against Moroccans who had presumably converted to Shiism. Through the round-the-clock monitoring of several websites which—according to the police—contribute to the spread of Shiism in the country, the police were able to pinpoint the locations of the largest "concentrations of Shiites" and to identify some of them.[56] The Moroccan Ministry of Interior also ordered its departments across the country to begin monitoring public libraries and bookshops and confiscate any books concerned with Shiite beliefs, Iran or the Lebanese Hizbullah. Arrests have been made mainly in the shanty towns on the outskirts of the economic capital Casablanca, the same shanty towns that have been regularly targeted as strongholds of the Salafiyya Jihadiyya, the violent Salafi groups responsible for the 16 May 2003 attacks in Casablanca killing more than forty citizens. The tension rose to such a level that Morocco even severed its diplomatic ties with Iran.

On 18 March 2009, the Moroccan scholar Abdelbari al-Zemzemi, said in a statement to Al-Arabiya.net: "The source of Shi'ization in Morocco is mainly Europe, and particularly Belgium where thousands of Moroccans are living and where the Shi'i movement enjoys utter freedom". He thus accused Iran of "intelligently exploiting this freedom and using the Moroccan community that has been living there for over ten years to allow the expansion of Shi'ism".[57] Abdelbari al-Zemzemi is a radical Salafi sheikh who regularly confronts the Moroccan king without, however, attacking his position as the "Commander of the Faithful".[58] Furthermore, al-Zemzemi also alleged that one of the reasons the Shiite faith was successfully entering Morocco was because Iran would give financial incentives to those who convert.[59] This rumour—which has never been proved—echoes the same hearsays that spread earlier in the year in Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries. This was not the first time the sheikh had warned of "the spread of the Shiite and Christian doctrine" that, according to him, is active in Morocco under the supervision of the Iranian and US embassies. In July 2008 he accused Iran and its embassy of playing an active role in distributing publications and deploying preachers to convince Moroccan youths to convert to Shiism: "Shi'ism has become widely spread among Moroccan youths, and it is increasing gradually, especially in northern Moroccan cities. This is due to the propaganda of the Iranian embassy which distributes

publications among youths and deploys preachers who talk to Moroccan youths about Hezbollah's resistance for Israel and Iran's opposition to the US, in a bid to convince those who are against American and Israeli policies to adopt Shi'i ideology…".[60]

Ahmed Raissouni on the other hand, a sheikh close to the Islamist opposition of the PJD and main ideologue of the Movement for Unity and Reform, expressed a different opinion. While he did not deny the spread of Shiism in Morocco, he nevertheless saw no specific danger in it. He stated: "If we want to uphold Morocco's unity, let us do it in the face of Shi'ism and in the face of other things. Let us start with what is worse and what is more harmful to us", wondering: "How many Christians and atheists do we have in Morocco? How many neither pray nor fast? And if the Shi'is allow pleasure marriages, what about those who allow fornication, prostitution, sex tourism and homosexuality? What about those who allow and promote alcohol?". He concluded by saying "The Shi'ization movement in Morocco is not a threat in itself. It has no future and is only seen now due to the frailty of the religious, cultural and political situation in Morocco and in the majority of the Sunni states. It is also linked to the 'victories and accomplishments' of the religious and political Shi'i leaderships. It is a way for the people to rebel against the failure of the Sunni leaderships on all religious, worldly and political levels […]".[61]

In the *al-Tajdid* newspaper, the critical mouthpiece of the Islamist opposition, the PJD formulated its position on the issue. True to its political strategy of the last decade, it fully backed the government's decision as it was obvious that on such matters it is the king himself who calls the shots.

> "While scientific studies have revealed the depth of the Sunni religion among Moroccans and the marginal impact that these challenges could have, the fact that they are being backed up by foreign sides calls for a stringent action in accordance with a comprehensive approach that features multiple mechanisms: a deterring and pre-emptive mechanism in which positive intervention tools are developed without pushing toward tensions and boycotts and diplomatic tools which necessitate the severance of relations and are only resorted to in drastic cases after all other available options have failed […] In short, one can only value sovereign decisions aiming at barricading sectarian unity against foreign attacks".[62]

At the same time, however, the newspaper's editorial warned of much bigger dangers and threats to Morocco's sectarian unity (i.e. Christianization, especially the evangelical movement, the normalization of homosexuality and the normalization of "the Zionist project").

Since 2006 there have been several Sunnite-Shiite dialogues, debate forums and other joint statements that have tried to bridge the sectarian divide. At the Doha Conference for Dialogue of Islamic Schools of Thought, which was held in the Qatari capital from 20 to 22 January 2007, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, head of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, stressed the need to put an end to Shiite preaching activities in some Sunnite societies. He said: "Shi'i preaching is a systematic process for which budgets are allocated and which has practical agendas". Al-Qaradawi also stressed the need for "Shi'is to adopt a clear and open position on the issue of directing insults at the companions of Prophet Muhammad". He said that, "no Sunni-Shi'i rapprochement can be achieved as long as the companions of the prophet and the mothers of the faithful are being insulted".[63] These statements, from a leading Sunnite scholar who for years spread an ecumenical idea of Sunnite and Shiite unity, stirred up a lot of emotions and was proof that the issue was seen as being serious enough to a number of scholars. Especially the issue of the cursing of the first caliphs had become a bone of contention between Sunnite and Shiite scholars. When Iraqi, Lebanese and Iranian Shiite scholars had made it clear that they were indeed against this cursing, several Sunnite scholars reverted to an appeasing mode. Appointed and independent scholars have increased the number of statements that stress that between Sunnis and Shiites there is no real religious difference. The Mufti of the Egyptian state, Ali Jomaa stated: "It is okay to follow the Shi'i faith. The Islamic nation is one body and there is no difference between a Sunni and a Shi'i as long as they both turn their faces towards Al-Masjid al-Haram."[64] While Farid Wassel, the former mufti of Egypt stated in an interview with the Kuwaiti daily al-Rai al-Am: "[t]he conflict between the Sunnis and the Shi'is is baseless. The general principles governing both sides are common in terms of believing in God, his Prophet [pbuh], the Holy Koran, and the Sunna of the Prophet. So the principles are common and fixed. The conflicts are secondary and simple and pertain to politics. It has nothing to do with religion".[65]

However, this religious stance is related in a complex way to the same scholar's political point of views. Especially since the Israeli-Hizbullah war in the summer of 2006, several scholars have taken contradictory positions towards Shiism and Hizbullah. While scholars like al-Qaradawi or Salman Al-'Awda had officially supported Hizbullah in its war with Israel, they have nevertheless both stated that, "a Shia flood was engulfing the Levant countries, particularly Syria".[66] Other (more Saudi-based) scholars tagged Hizbullah as being heretics.

In Egypt, the anti-Shiite feelings were exacerbated even more. After the Egyptian government arrested what it called a Hizbullah terrorist cell that was out to cause violence in Egypt and thus destabilize the country, a vast reaction against Shiite movements, organizations and individuals followed suit. Hizbullah reacted by stating that its intention was not to perpetrate violence or attacks in Egypt or against the Egyptian state, but that its goal was to see how it could help the Palestinians of Gaza. Mubarak's government exaggerated the Shiite "infiltration" of Egypt thus also putting under pressure its main political opposition (i.e. the Muslim brotherhood). If the MB would side with Hizbullah, then that would give the government ample opportunity for another round of repression and arrests and for accusing the movement of being "agents of foreign interests", while opposing Hizbullah could possibly estrange the MB from its support base as Hizbullah (as a political movement), in its fight against Israel, is popular throughout the Arab World. As usual, the MB by word of its general guide Mehdi Akef, tried to find the "middle road". Akef stated that Sunnite states are attacking the Shiites because of their weakness and divisions and added that the Sunnite states are "oppressive". Quite interestingly, he stayed on the political field, adding that the religious issues and the question of sects "are a matter for religious experts". From there, he could regain his political oppositional stance towards Mubarak's regime by criticizing what he called the "*exploitation of the Hezbollah cell*". He added angrily: "this is the Egypt of today: an Egypt that besieges its brothers in Palestine. This is the Egypt which has no weight or value in the Arab and Islamic worlds".[67]

Concluding, we could say that, as such, the Sunnite-Shiite divide becomes much more a discursive tool of power that produces and naturalizes specific political realities rather than a neutral description of religious phenomenon.

Conclusion

Seen from the perspective of Sunnite-Shiite interactions, Islam appears as a conglomerate religion dominated by a major duopoly that, just like Siamese twins, cannot be separated. Through their reciprocal dependency, the two major branches of Islam are in a way condemned to one another throughout a wide range of complex interactions, without distance from each other, while remaining stuck in a competitive construction of power relationships.

Ultimately, relationships between Sunnis and Shiites refer to a question of symbolic power as the two parts of the duopoly both want to be accepted as the (only) authentic heir to the original Islamic tradition through the recognition of a doctrinal body, separately constructed. Thus, the relationship depends on the ability of each branch to present itself as reliable, trustworthy and/or accurate while marginalizing the other's point of view. It reflects the ability to qualify the other as more distanced from the truth, whose vision should be marginalized, put aside. Thus when evaluating contemporary Sunnite-Shiite relationships, and especially when considering the politicization of that question, one should remember that affirming the superiority of one's own quantitative weight on the world scene is also a way to express what is seen as a proof of one's own extra legitimacy (that is why the question of intra-Muslim "conversions" remains so sensitive, as Muslims are still, today, in a case of unresolved management of a debate on the origins of their religion).

As Muslims are still stuck in this unsolved fundamental debate on the legitimate vision of the origins of Islam, Sunnite-Shiite relations are not indifferent. And within our globalized world in which national states still remain the most important actors and may appropriate this religious distinction in order to reinforce the loyalty of their citizens in a process of nation-building, these relationships are rarely pacified. They remain imprinted with a lack of trust between adherents of both branches as there are divergent dynamics affecting Sunnite-Shiite relationships in the making. On the one hand, due to conflicting situations, linked or not to the growing influence of Wahhabism and/or Salafism, mistrust between members of the two branches may increase and even lead to bloody encounters. On the other hand, progressive processes of formal recognition, putting the emphasis on a respectful attitude, are organized, even if they are still very moderate or just aim to stop or contain violence.

The difficulty for Muslim communities to accommodate the new challenges of coexistence seem to increase as each branch, either Sunnite or Shiite, happens to be experiencing a transformation from religious identities into ethno-religious identities. The valorization and consolidation of religious "elective affinities", either indirectly influenced—or not—by the important contemporary political instrumentalization of the differences between Sunnis and Shiites are an influential element: the quality of an affective relationship, the lived character of the fraternity progressively become as important, or even more important than the sole recognition of

a common ascendency to Islam. The Muslim identity, as with any other collective identity, is not taken for granted any more as the focus is increasingly put on questioning one's own belonging to any group and how the group is constituted. As mentioned by Danièle Hervieu-Léger, making a clear reference to the work of Dominique Schnapper,[68] the various elective fraternities refer to a community of values and references that were created in the partake of interests, experiences or common field events. At this stage, as far as Sunnite and Shiite relationships are concerned, they seem to enter into a stage of direct tension with the idea of a common religion itself: intra-Islamic conversion may even indeed be perceived as a simple way out from religion. To explain the phenomenon of ethno-religious identifications on a theoretical level, Danièle Hervieu Léger writes: "the absorption of religion in the ethnic is complex because we can indeed observe that, while the ethnic instrumentalizes religion of which it incorporates symbols and values, it also tends to function religiously each time that it provides a social group [...] the possibility to 'write itself into a history that bypasses itself' to give meaning to its existence. The convergence of the ethnic and the religious is thus double, operating simultaneously through the ethical-symbolic homogenization of the traditional (confessional) religious identities and through the neo-religious recharging of the ethnic identities".[69]

Some reciprocal influences are nevertheless at work, modifying perceptions and ways of being for believers worldwide. Additionally, new political references are also emerging beyond the traditional religious vocabulary that used to be the major reference. Thus, even if the religious terminology, beliefs and practices remain a solid anchorage for Muslim societies, politics is increasingly influenced by the importance of concepts such as "human rights", "citizenship" or "recognition of minorities". All this, as we have seen in different contributions to this volume, is testimony to a progressive autonomy of the political sphere. Should we not then speak of a gradual secularization of Muslim societies, and/or even of an internal secularization of Islam itself, characterized by a growing reflexivity of its leaders on themselves and their religion? Even if religion remains a major founding structure for these Muslim societies, both for the private but also for the collective dimensions, it does not provide the whole and sole reference for the society anymore.

The demise of Arab nationalism, the success of the Iranian Revolution (even if it has been increasingly questioned internally in recent years), the growing socio-cultural influence of both Sunnite Islamist activism and

Salafism in Muslim societies as well as the end of the Cold War have definitely propelled Islam on to the stage of world politics. The public visibility of Islamic identities has, since 1979, induced much attention for the politics of Islam and a concomitant constricting of socio-political and economic change of the Muslim world to the question of Islam. The attacks of 9/11 further narrowed down this view by a biased (and at times blatantly racist) overemphasis on Islam and (worldwide) terrorism and the synchronous mounting debate on the question of Islam in Europe with its Islamophobic undertones have obfuscated important changes in the role and place of Islam in Muslim societies and polities.

Asef Bayat, for example, was one of the first to focus on the immense transformations of political Islam, and hypothesized the advent of a post-Islamist trend. He defines "post-Islamism" as both a condition and a project that typify the combination of religiousness and rights, faith and freedom, Islam and liberty. As such, post-Islamism is an attempt by individuals and social and political movements to transcend Islamism in social, political, and intellectual domains by emphasizing rights rather than merely obligation, plurality instead of singular authoritative voice, historicity rather than fixed scriptures, and future instead of the past.[70] This trend has become visible throughout the Arab and Islamic world, as emerging new intellectual discourses, new practices and political ideals are debated, discussed and politically fought over.

These changing patterns of religiosity are not only visible within the two main branches of Islam as well as between them, but seem to be a global phenomenon. Indeed, religious reactivations do not seem to be the main motor of change. There are worldwide new realignments between state, society and religion that are greatly impacting on the historically grown arrangements between politics and religion, between state and church. While there are, of course, tremendous differences in context, Muslim societies and countries are also engaged in a process of redefinition of secularism just like the European or American contexts. The terms of the debate are different and the actors are diverse, but the patterns of religious adaptation are comparable. If following Peter Beyer's developments on glocalization, the paradigm of secularization/modernization is itself also in concurrence or even now subordinated to the consequences of the explosion of religious diversity and exponential plurality, the implications for this on Sunnite-Shiite relationships will have to be assessed again.[71] The adoption of a systemic approach may help in this task.

13

A Post Scriptum

The Arab Spring and the Sectarian Issue

Sami Zemni and Brecht De Smet

The Arab uprisings of 2011 and the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions have engendered both widespread enthusiasm as well as realistic fears. While each country in the region is facing different forms of protest, it is obvious that there is no clear blueprint as for what will come next. International observers and academics alike have been quick to posit that the genuine cry for freedoms and justice across the region can only lead to two possible outcomes: either the Arab Middle East will witness a transition to democracy, or counterrevolutionary forces will "steal" the people's revolt and conjure the spectre of an outbreak of confessional or sectarian violence.

While the focus of our volume is on the relationships between Sunnis and Shiites, sectarianism is as much a question of relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims, mainly Christians. The continued clashes between Muslims and Coptic Christians in Egypt have led to fears that the disappearance of authoritarian leadership could open a Pandora's box of religious violence. For Syria too, many observers fear that a loss of power for Bashar al-Asad could drag the country into a religiously-inspired civil war. The fear of this type of sectarian violence presumably arises from the events in Iraq after the US-led invasion. Regime change in Syria, as stated

in the Washington Post on 1 May 2011,[1] would look a lot more like Iraq in 2003 than Egypt in 2011. But while there is certainly a historical sectarian dimension to Iraqi politics, the question remains whether the US-led occupation has not imported and supported sectarian affiliations.

Against these pessimistic accounts of the ongoing upheaval, there are numerous other facts that should be taken into account. Across the region, more and more people are demanding their rights and striving for justice in political idioms that reflect universal concerns. This does not mean that people's claims are necessarily secular in nature, but that the type of inclusive citizenship that is strived for transcends ethnic, religious, linguistic or other cleavages. Indeed, while many protesters across the region have couched their mobilization in a secular framework, others have—through an active and original religious discussion—found the idea of modern citizenship within their creed.

In Lebanon for example, an increasing number of civil society organizations that operate outside the realm of the classic political formations have organized rallies and manifestations that clearly call for a non-confessional political system in Lebanon. Criticizing the archaic nature of the political system, a young and progressive youth movement—only loosely structured—has called for major reforms in several domains of public life. Some organizations, like *Laique Pride*, go as far as to press for the gradual establishment of a secular Lebanon where all citizens would be equal regardless of their religion or gender.

Bahrain's predicament

The call for a more universal citizenship where everybody can enjoy the same rights regardless of religion or sect lies at the heart of Bahrain's pro-democracy movement. Inspired by the events in Tunisia and Egypt, and influenced by ten years of calls for reform, in this small but economically and geopolitically important kingdom, a young pro-democracy movement took shape on Pearl Square in the capital of Manama. While the Kingdom counts only 1.2 million inhabitants, 54 per cent of these (666,000) are expatriates. This means that only about 568,000 inhabitants are considered Bahraini. The ruling family, the al-Khalifa family, and the elite, are mainly Sunnis and account for 30 per cent of the population. The majority of Bahrainis feel somehow marginalized as second-rate citizens because of their Shiite affiliation. While the ruling elite and the al-Khalifas have a history of

playing the sectarian card to divide and rule the population, the pro-democracy movement made clear from the beginning that their cause was national. The slogans that were very visible during their rallies, sit-ins and manifestations clearly rejected any sectarian reference.

While the al-Khalifa regime based its accusations of stirring up sectarian division against the movement on the fact that most of the protesters were Shiite, political discontent with the status quo cuts across sectarian lines. This becomes clear when one takes a closer look at the composition of the pro-democracy movement, as well as the history and genealogy of the reform movement.

Already in 2000–2001 Emir (now King) Hamad al-Khalifa promised to turn Bahrain from an absolute into a constitutional monarchy. Two political groups (parties being forbidden) kept the pressure on the regime to keep to its word. The Shiite-led and Islamist-inspired al-Wifaq and the non-sectarian and leftist Wa'ad movements proved unsuccessful in curbing the power of the Emir and his family. After boycotting several elections, the two groups finally legitimized the al-Khalifa's rule by agreeing to run in the elections of 2006. As a consequence, "alternative centers of dissent" emerged, as Cortni Kerr describes, and notably the Haqq Movement for Liberty and Democracy and the Bahrain Center for Human Rights. While the first movement, led by the charismatic figure Hassan Mushayma, called for grassroots organizing, up to and including civil disobedience, and reached out to Western governments, the second organization, through the language of human rights, was able to inspire younger Bahrainis to get involved in civic affairs and became involved in instructing them in how to build potent grassroots organizations.[2] While these two movements did not lead or control the massive mobilizations of February 2011, they nevertheless played an important organizing role. As the reform movement became more and more organized it became clear that it wanted to transcend the sectarian issue. One of the most powerful and successful slogans was "No Shiites, No Sunnis, Only Bahrainis".

It was not only the al-Khalifa regime that played the sectarian card. The famous and influential preacher, "global mufti" Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, has stated in a much publicized interview on 20 March 2011 with the Arab CNN that the Bahraini revolution was sectarian and targeting Sunnis![3] The same day a letter in the name of "The People of Bahrain" responded to al-Qaradawi's accusation. The letter harshly criticized the portrayal of the uprising as a sectarian one, and it also invited the Shaykh to oversee the

formation and implementation of an independent committee to "meet with all groups in order to discover the truth" about the uprising.

Retrospectively, we can state that what commenced as a popular and loose movement, through the manifestations on Pearl Square and the violent response of the Bahraini police and the intervention of the GCC, leading to the death of several protesters, has ended in a more organized and centralized movement. On 7 March a Coalition for a Republic was founded. In its opening statement it said: "In the name of our glorious religion and international conventions on human rights and on the principle of the right of nations to decide their destiny, and based on our long struggle and sacrifices against the oppressive and corrupt Al-Khalifa regime, we hereby declare a tripartite coalition between the Wafa'a, Haqq and Bahrain Freedom Movements that has chosen to fight for a complete downfall of the regime, and the establishment of a democratic republic in Bahrain. We have named this—the Coalition for a Bahraini Republic. We will work with the free people of this country, and the 14th February Youth and all others who believe in this legitimate and rightful choice through all means of civil and peaceful resistance".[4]

The Bahrain uprising has been crushed far away from the cameras of the world media. The Saudi military intervention, officially under a GCC mandate, is the first of its kind. Saudi Arabia has of course a special interest in suppressing Shiite movements in its tiny neighbouring kingdom. Its eastern province of al-Khassa, where most of its untapped oil wealth lies, is also the home of a substantial Shiite minority. As Meijer and Wagemakers have convincingly shown in this volume, this minority shares much of the grievances of their Bahraini co-religionists. Furthermore, they have strived for more than a decade for reforms of the Saudi political architecture. Interestingly, and well argued by Meijer and Wagemakers, this trend has evolved from a more communitarian and religious framework towards a reform movement basing its actions on the concept of citizenship.

Egypt: sectarian turmoil?

The 25 January Revolution has produced a novel practical and discursive context for the politics of religion. The main actors in the politico-religious field—the Muslim Brotherhood, the Shiite community, the Sufi groups, the Copts, the Salafis, the jihadists and the al-Azhar Imams—are renegotiating their position towards the state, the public, the secular opposition and each

other within the boundaries of a newly emerging civil society. The political unity of all opposition forces, temporarily realized during the revolutionary moment, fell apart once the movement achieved its main aim: the removal of President Mubarak from his post. The constitutional referendum of 19 March was an important event as it brought to the surface the different aims and interests of the various political actors. Secular and radical democratic parties advocated the drawing up of a completely new constitution. Pope Shenouda III called for an additional clause for non-Muslims in Article 2 of the constitution, which states "Islam is the Religion of the State. Arabic is its official language, and the principal source of legislation is Islamic Jurisprudence (shariʿa)".[5] Conversely, most Islamist groups backed the changes recommended by the committee of the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF), especially because the proposed amendments left Article 2 untouched. The yes vote of more than 77 per cent of the electorate for minor constitutional changes prompted concern among secular groups of a "sectarian turn" of the revolution, while Salafi shaykhs such as Mohammed Hussein Yaqoub called the outcome a "victory for religion".[6] Observers, however, pointed out that most people voted yes because they wanted stability and were supportive of any step towards more democracy and civil rights.[7] Religious slogans and mobilizations played a role in the referendum but they did not determine the end result. Nonetheless they affirmed religion as a differentiating factor among the (post-)revolutionary political players.[8] Ironically, by framing the result of the referendum along sectarian lines, both secular and Islamist forces reinforced the role of religion in the political process.[9]

The Muslim Brothers did not formally support the revolution until the Day of Anger, when both the scale of the protests and the *de facto* participation of a large number of their members forced them to join in the revolution. At first the Brotherhood aligned itself with opposition figures such as el-Baradei and Amr Musa, but after Mubarak stepped down, the conservatives dominating the Guidance Bureau swiftly moved to a position of complete support for the transition regime of the Supreme Council of Armed Forces (SCAF).[10] This pro-army stance increasingly alienates the internal reformist opposition and the radicalized members of the Muslim Brotherhood Youth, who wish to continue the protests calling for the completion of the objectives of the January 25 Revolution.[11] Apart from seeking to balance these potential internal centrifugal forces, the Brotherhood wants to consolidate its position as the primary kingmaker of the post-Mubarak

era. Therefore it presents itself as the mediator of choice in the conflict between secularists and Islamists, Copts and Muslims, Salafis and moderate Islamic activists, Sunnis and Shiites. During sectarian clashes the Brotherhood frequently acts as arbiter, trying to negotiate a truce between religious groups, and especially between the Salafis and other religious factions.[12] The Muslim Brothers have a complex agenda, as they seek to: (1) absorb the moderate Salafi groups, al-Azhar Imams and (ex-)jihadist factions such as Al-Gamaa al-Islamiyya; (2) reassure the Shiite, Sufi and Coptic groups that they will respect their rights; and (3) forge a consensus around civil rights and freedoms with the secular opposition. However, their alliance with the Salafis and the SCAF during the referendum and their reluctance to put pressure on the transition regime to continue its reforms have isolated them from other political groups, making it difficult for them to play their preferred role as a political arbiter. In addition, the presence of many Muslim Brotherhood Youth on the Second Day of Anger on Friday 27 May—a call for protest which was not supported by the Brotherhood—signifies a widening gap in the Society between members whose main concern is the struggle for civil and democratic rights and those for whom the moral Islamization of society is a priority.[13] Not coincidentally, activists of the first category often have good relations with the secular opposition, the Copts, the Sufis and the Shiites, while Muslim Brothers of the other type frequently find themselves in the same camp as the Salafis and jihadists.

The Egyptian Salafis are a diverse group traditionally sharing a literalist attitude towards Islam and a passive stance towards politics, which is seen as a corruptive force. After decades of quietism the Egyptian Salafis are entering the political arena, organizing demonstrations, issuing statements and establishing parties. Most Salafi groups did not participate in the 25 January Revolution, but they acknowledged its legitimacy *post factum*, especially after being pressured by their more militant youth.[14] After years of successfully consolidating their influence in the Islamic public sphere, Salafis now move to the political front in order to safeguard their gains. Apart from establishing new parties such as the Alexandria-based Nur (Light)[15] and Cairo-based Fadila (Virtue) party,[16] they try to pressure the Muslim Brotherhood into defending a more militant Islamic and conservative agenda, as their own capacity for mass mobilization and experience in electoral politics is still weak.[17] This creates an ambiguous relation between Salafis and Muslim Brothers as both groups simultaneously see each other as allies and rivals. For example, Fadila has agreed with the Brotherhood

that the party will not field candidates in districts where the other group is positioning their candidates in the parliamentary elections of September.[18] On Saturday 8 May the Brotherhood organized a rally together with Salafi groups, calling for the application of the shari'a, while at the same time condemning the sectarian violence against Copts.[19]

Several incidents have aroused animosity between Salafis and Copts after the revolution. On 4 March the Church of the Two Martyrs in Helwan was burnt down because of a "classic" sectarian problem: a relationship between a Coptic man and a Muslim woman. Copts started to protest in front of the Maspero radio and television building to demand inclusion in the post-Mubarak era. The following days saw renewed inter-religious violence in the poor neighbourhoods of Muqattam and Imbaba, where two churches and Coptic homes and stores were set on fire because of a relatively "new" sectarian issue: the conversion of a Coptic woman to Islam and her subsequent kidnapping by the church. Respectively in 2004 and 2010, Wafa Constantine and Kamiliya Shehata, both wives of Coptic priests, were believed to have converted to Islam and held against their will by the church.[20] Since then, Salafis have regularly organized demonstrations and sit-ins, calling for the prosecution of the Coptic Pope. In reaction, Coptic groups, and since the revolution especially the Maspero Youth Union, mobilized their ranks to protect the cathedral.[21] Coptic, Sufi, Shiite activists and moderate Islamists in the periphery of al-Azhar often find each other in their political struggle against Salafi agitation. Copts and members of the Shiite community protested together against what they perceive as the growing Wahabi influence in Egypt.[22] When Salafis set fire to Islamic shrines, Sufi leaders organized rallies and set up popular committees to protect the shrines.[23] They were supported by Shiite activists who accused Salafis of destroying national unity. This led the Salafi leader of Fadila to blame the Shiites of being the fifth column of Iran in Sunnite Egypt.[24]

Both at the left and right side of the political spectrum, the sectarian conflict is often interpreted as a conspiracy from within (the NDP, the army, the Islamists) or without (the USA, Saudi Arabia) aimed at destabilizing Egypt and sidetracking the revolution. At the core of the inter-religious clashes, however, is the problematic social, cultural and political inclusion of religious minorities in a state and civil society which are both formally and substantively Islamic.[25] While it is true that sectarian practices and discourses have penetrated the politics of the post-Mubarak era, the revolution has changed the dynamics of sectarianism as well. Formerly apolitical

groups such as the Salafis, but also the Copts, the Sufis and the Shiites are forced to participate in the newly opened arena of civil society politics in order to protect their rights and interests. It remains to be seen if the engagement of politico-religious factions with notions of civil and democratic rights and social justice, which have dominated the public narratives since the revolution, either results in an evolution towards a politics of inclusion in the context of a genuine civil state; assimilation of minorities into a singular identity; or the institutionalization of segregated, sectarian subjectivities.

Sectarianism: a danger looming large?

While there are certainly positive signs in the region that indicate a willingness to transcend societal cleavages (however they may be defined), there are also worrisome signals that point to another direction.

The regional and worldwide silence on the Bahraini crackdown on its opposition movement have stirred up emotions through the region—even though, as we have already discussed, the opposition movement never defined its action in a sectarian manner. The fact that King Hamad was able to announce on 21 March that he had foiled an external plot against his little kingdom illuminates the ease with which the government has played the sectarian card and how it is able to stir up strong emotions. King Hamad stressed the fact that the plot had been in preparation for more than three decades, clearly accusing Shiites of being subversive, Iranian-backed agents plotting against Bahrain. Throughout the region many Sunnis started to spread, by word as well as through the internet, renewed accusations against Shiites of being treacherous and not trustworthy. Several programmes on the Sunnite satellite dish channels also spawned a very anti-Shiite message, backing the Bahraini royal family, criticizing Iran and its treatment of Sunnis in Baluchistan, among many other things.

Iraqi Shiites and the Lebanese Hizbullah accused many Arab observers of measuring the different Arab revolts by two standards. What is the difference, Hizbullah leader Nasrallah asked in a 19 March speech, between the regimes of Mubarak, Qadhaffi or al-Khalifa? "Is it because it is mostly Shiites demonstrating in Manama that you turn against this revolt?", he asked.

Unfortunately, as Nir Rosen formulates well, more and more Sunnite groups have taken over a more extremist anti-Shiite discourse and senti-

ment. "And when the confrontation happens then the intolerant schools of Islam, such as the Salafis and Wahhabis, will dominate and become the universal Sunni vision of Shiites. Sunnis and Shiites alike are thinking of the conflict more and more as a regional one, with national borders meaningless. There is more violence to come".[26]

Let us hope that this grim forecast can be counterbalanced by the more positive, anti-sectarian initiatives that are emerging throughout the region. A (post-)revolutionary solution to the problems of universal citizenship, equal rights, political representation and social stratification may well cut the grass under the feet of the sectarian dynamic.

Notes

INTRODUCTION: EVALUATING CONTEMPORARY SUNNITE-SHIITE RELATIONS: CHANGING IDENTITIES, POLITICAL PROJECTS, INTERACTIONS AND THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSIONS

1. This idiom is translated from José Ortega y Gasset, *La révolte des masses (The Revolt of the Masses)*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2010, p. 91 (1930 for the first edition in Spanish).
2. Jean-Paul Charnay, *Sociologie religieuse de l'islam (Religious sociology of Islam)*, Paris: Hachette, 1994, p. 174.
3. Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought—The response of the Shî'î and Sunnî Muslims to the Twentieth Century*, London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005 (with foreword by Roy. P. Mottahedeh—first published in 1982 by Macmillan Press Ltd), p. 18.
4. While the demonstrators mostly used the term "taifi" in a pejorative way (as referring to sectarianism), the concept is, of course, in and of itself more complex in its etymology and genealogy. In general taifa means a group or company of men as mentioned in the Qur'an. Later on, it also referred to trade groups and professional corporations; in modern usage it came to encompass religious (or sectarian) groups. The word taifiyya refers to a confessional order in which a system of proportional power sharing between different religious groups is instituted as in Lebanon.
5. More especially, we only took the *Imami* branch of Shiite Islam into consideration. Other branches of Shiite origin, such as the *Isma'iliya*, the *Zaydiya*, or even the *Alevis* are not taken into account mainly due to their minority position within the Shiite world.
6. See Jelle Puelings, *Fearing a 'Shiite Octopus'—Sunni-Shi'a relations and possible implications for Belgium and Europe*, Brussels: Egmont Institute-Academia Press, January 2010, p. 41, available at http://www.egmontinstitute.be/paperegm/ep35.pdf (Accessed 1 June 2011).

7. Let us think, among other phenomena, of the increasing frequency and volume of interconnections, beyond frontiers, but also of the abolishment of distances in time and space between events or places.
8. Among other references: Roland Robertson, "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity", in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson (eds), *Global Modernities*, London: Sage, 1995, pp. 25–44.
9. For a short but very enlightening panorama see Philippe Corcuff, *Les nouvelles sociologies—Constructions de la réalité sociale* (The new sociologies—Buildings up of the social reality), Paris: Nathan Université, 2000 (1995 for the first edition).
10. Bernard Péloile "Enquête sur une disparition. La notion d'identité nationale comme négation de la nation" (Enquiry on the disappearance. The notion of national identity as the negation of the nation) in *La Pensée* (The Thinking), Paris: 308, 1996, pp. 97–114 cited by Claude Dubar, *La crise des identités—L'interprétation d'une mutation* (The crisis of identities—The interpretation of a change), Paris: PUF, 2007 (first edition in 2000), p. 1.
11. See Luc Boltanski, *Les Cadres—La formation d'un groupe social*, Paris: Minuit, 1982. In this book dealing with the objectivation of a social group such as the "white collars", the author pinpoints the continuing mobilizing role of political and symbolic dimensions, always leading to no more than a "relative homogeneïsation".
12. In India, for example, it is interesting to acknowledge that, according to the journalist Mahan Abedin, twenty to twenty-five per cent of the 175 million Muslims in the country are Shiite; the relationships between Sunnis and Shiites in India seem to be completely different to the situation in neighbouring Pakistan. See Mahan Abedin, "Islam: reviewing Shiite-Sunni relations in India—an interview with Seyed Mohammad Asgari", in *Religioscope*, 12 January 2011, p. 7 www.religion.info/english/interviews/printer_513.shtml last accessed on 13 March 2011.
13. Maurice Godelier, "Fabriquer les sociétés: les rapports entre politique et religieux" (To build up societies: the relationships between the politics and the religious), conference organized by the Laboratoire d'Anthropologie Prospective (LAAP) at the Université catholique de Louvain, Louvain-la-Neuve, on 11 February 2011 (our translation).
14. Peter Beyer, *Religion and Globalization*, London: Sage, 1993.
15. Jean-Paul Willaime, "Œcuménisme/Oecuménicité" in Régine Azria and Danièle Hervieu-Léger (dir.), *Dictionnaire des faits religieux*, Paris: PUF, 2010, pp. 821–8.
16. The Declaration of Amman can be read in full at http://ammanmessage.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=16&Itemid=30&lang=en (Accessed 10 June 2011).
17. According to Yahya Birt, it was not only representatives of the eight schools—

Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'I, Hanbali, Ja'fari, Zahiri, Ibadi and Zaydi—who endorsed this declaration, but, according to one eyewitness account, it was even more inclusive as "the Isma'ili followers of the Aga Khan and the Bohra Isma'ilis, as well as the Shi'a Zaydis of north Yemen signed off on this document". Cf. Yahya Birt, "Signing up for Moderation: Endorsing the Amman Message", 27 March 2007, available at http://www.yahyabirt.com/?p=66 (Accessed 10 June 2011).

1. ON SUNNITE-SHIITE DOCTRINAL AND CONTEMPORARY GEOPOLITICAL TENSIONS

1. Qur'an, 112:1.
2. Qur'an, 42:13; 3:103; 3:105.
3. There are Ibadite pockets in various regions of the Maghreb, as well as in Zanzibar and, especially, in Oman.
4. Hanafism, Malikism, Shafi'ism and Hanbalism.
5. The Akhbârî are vastly in a minority today; they are particularly to be found in the south of Iraq (around Basra), the Persian Gulf States (Bahrain, Saudi Arabia/Qatif), where they are in decline, and in India (Hyderabad). On the history of the doctrines, cf. Robert Gleave, *Scripturalist Islam: The History and Doctrines of the Akhbârî Shî'î School*, Leiden: Brill, 2007.
6. In Najaf is the tomb of 'Alî; in Karbala that of Husayn and his half-brother 'Abbâs; in Kazimiyya, those of the seventh and ninth Imams; in Samarra, that of the tenth and eleventh; in Mashhad, that of 'Alî al-Ridâ, the eighth; in Qom that of his sister Fâtima, in Sayyida Zaynab, that of Husayn's sister, etc.
7. In Baqî', we find the tombs of the fourth, fifth, and sixth Imams, as well as Fâtima's, the daughter of the Prophet and other *ahl al-bayt*.
8. Pious visits to shrines; sessions of lamentation where, day after day, episodes of the epic are retold; public processions; theatrical representations of the drama, etc.
9. Haydar is the surname of 'Alî; it means lion.
10. On these debates, see Werner Ende, "The Flagellations of Muharram and the Shi'ite 'Ulamâ", *Der Islam*, 55/1, March 1978, pp. 19–36. See also Sabrina Mervin, *Un réformisme chiite*, Paris: Karthala, 2000, pp. 236–274 and Sabrina Mervin, "'Âshûrâ': Some remarks on ritual practices in different Shiite communities (Lebanon and Syria)" in A. Monsutti, S. Naef and F. Sabahi (eds), *The Other Shiites: From the Mediterranean to Central Asia*, Berne, Frankfurt and New York: Peter Lang, 2007, pp. 137–147.
11. Khomeini made a slogan of this *hadîth*.
12. On the *mut'a*, cf. Werner Ende, "Ehe auf Zeit (*mut'a*) in der Innerislamischen Diskussion der Gegenwart", *Die Welt des Islams*, 20/1–2, 1980, pp. 1–43. See also Shahla Haeri, *Law of Desire. Temporary Marriage in Iran*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1989, and Sabrina Mervin, "Normes religieuses et loi du silence: le mariage

temporaire chez les chiites du Liban" in B. Drieskens (ed.), *Les métamorphoses du mariage au Moyen-Orient*, Beirut: IFPO, 2008, pp. 47–58.

13. The rationalist theological school of the Mu'tazilites flourished in Baghdad and Basra from the eighth to the tenth century.
14. The battle of al-Qâdisiyya, in 637, led to the collapse of the Iranian Sassanids. The Shu'ûbiyya is a cultural, social and political movement of non-Arabs, especially Persians, protesting against the Arab domination during the Abbasid period and claiming equality.
15. The word comes from bâtin (esoteric), which is opposed to zâhir (exoteric). As for the Shiites, they brand their Sunnite detractors with the term nasîbî (plur. nawâsib) meaning enemies of 'Alî and the Alides. These polemic epithets are much used today in controversies between Wahhabis and Shiites.
16. On the Shiites during the Ottoman rule, see Marco Salati, "Toleration, Persecution and Local Realities: Observations of the Shiism in the Holy Places and the Bilâd-al-Shâm (16th-17th centuries)" in *La Shīa nell'Impero ottomano*, Roma: Accademia Nationale dei Lincei, Fondazione Leone Caetani, 1993, pp. 121–148. See also Abdul-Rahim Abu Husayn, "The Shiites in Lebanon and the Ottomans in the 16th and the 17th Centuries" in *La Shīa nell'Impero ottomano*, *op.cit.*, pp. 107–119. For the Shiites under the Mamluks, see Stefan Winter, "Shams al-Dīn Muhammad ibn Makkī "al-Shahīd al-Awwal" (d. 1384) and the Shi'ah of Syria", *Mamluk Studies Review*, 3, 1999, pp. 149–82.
17. Sabrina Mervin, *Un réformisme chiite*, Paris: Karthala, 2000, p. 278.
18. On the spread of Shiism in Iraq, see Yitzhak Nakash, "The Conversion of Iraq's Tribes to Shiism", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 26, no. 3, August 1994, pp. 443–63.
19. Mervin, *Un réformisme chiite*, pp. 278–80.
20. Martin Kramer, *Islam Assembled. The Advent of the Muslim Congresses*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, pp. 131–33.
21. See Rainer Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century. The Azhar and Shiism between Rapprochement and Restraint*, Leiden: Brill, 2004, pp. 121–152 and also Wilfried Buchta, "Teheran Ecumenical Society (*Majma' al-taqrîb*): a Veritable Ecumenical Revival or a Troyan Horse of Iran?" in R. Brunner and W. Ende (eds), *The Twelver Shi'a in Modern Times, Religious, Culture and Political History*, Leiden: Brill, 2001, pp. 333–353.
22. If Hassan al-Banna participated in the works of the *Jama'at al-taqrîb*, Muhibb al-Dîn al-Khatîb accused it of being a missionary institution of Iran. Cf. Werner Ende, "Sunniten und Schiiten in 20. Jahrhundert", *Saeculum*, 36, 1985, p. 224.
23. It would be interesting to document the exceptions. For example, V. Adam mentions an interesting initiative of writing an irenical history of the beginnings of Islam. Cf. Volker Adam, "Why do they cry? Criticisms of Muharram

Celebrations in Tsarist and Socialist Azerbaïdjan" in R. Brunner and W. Ende (eds), *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times*, *op.cit.*, pp. 114–134.

24. Thus, for example, the book by 'Abd al-Husayn Sharaf al-Dîn, *al-Murâja'ât*, published in 1936, and presented as an exchange between himself and sheikh al-Azhar Salîm al-Bishrî, is an apologia for Shiism in dialogue form. For that matter, it brought replies, but after the Iranian Revolution. See Mervin, *Un réformisme chiite*, pp. 304–310 and Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century*, pp. 51–81.
25. Guido Steinberg, "The Shiites in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia (Al-Ahsa'), 1913–1953" in R. Brunner and W. Ende (eds), *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times*, Leiden: Brill, 2001, pp. 248–251.
26. We refer to Ahmad Shâkir (d. 1911/12), cadi of Basra, and Mahmûd Shukrî (d. 1924) al-Alûsî.
27. Mervin, *Un réformisme chiite*, pp. 288–301.
28. On Muhibb al-Dîn al-Khatîb and his journal, see Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen, "Les débuts d'une revue néo-salafiste: Muhibb al-Dîn al-Khatîb et al-Farth de 1926 à 1928", *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée*, no. 95–98, 2002, pp. 227–255.
29. Buchta, "Teheran Ecumenical Society (*Majma' al-taqrîb*)", *op.cit.*, p. 338–348.
30. Ende, "Sunniten und Schiiten in 20. Jahrhundert", pp. 226–227; Meir Litvak, "More harmful than the Jews: anti-Shi'i polemics in modern radical Sunni discourse" in M. A. Amir-Moezzi, M. Bar-Asher and S. Hopkins (eds), *Le shî'isme imâmite quarante ans après. Hommage à Etan Kohlberg*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2009, pp. 296–297; Guido Steinberg, "Jihadi-Salafism and the Shi'is. Remarks about the Intellectual Roots of anti-Shi'ism" in Roel Meijer (ed.), *Global Salafism, Islam's New Religious Movement*, London: Hurst, 2009, pp. 118–121.
31. Litvak, "More harmful than the Jews", *op.cit.*, pp. 299.
32. Henri Laoust, *Essai sur les doctrines sociales et politiques de Takî-d-Dîn Ahmad b. Taimîya*, Cairo: IFAO, 1939; Henri Laoust, "La critique du sunnisme dans la doctrine d'al-Hillî", *Revue des Eudes Islamiques*, no. 34, 1966, pp. 35–60.
33. Litvak, "More harmful than the Jews", *op.cit.*, p. 295.
34. Werner Ende, *Arabische Nation und islamische Geschichte, Die Umayyaden im Urteil, Arabischen Autoren des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Beirut: BTS, vol. 20, 1977.
35. On temporary marriage, see Haeri, *Law of Desire*; Ziba Mir-Hosseini, *Marriage on trial: A Study of Islamic family Law. Iran and Morocco Compared*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2000; Mervin, "Normes religieuses et loi du silence", *op.cit.* On the discussions about the subject between Sunnis and Shiites, see Ende, "Ehe auf Zeit (*mut'a*) in der Innerislamischen Diskussion der Gegenwart", *op.cit.*, *passim*.
36. Ende, *Arabische Nation und islamische Geschichte*, particularly chap. IV; Ende, "Sunniten und Schiiten in 20. Jahrhundert", pp. 189–193; Mervin, *Un réformisme chiite*, pp. 310–18.

37. Isaac Hasson, "Les Shiites vus pas les Néo-Wahhabites", *Arabica*, vol. 53, no. 3, 2006, pp. 299–330.
38. Olivier Roy, "L'impact de la révolution iranienne au Moyen-Orient" in S. Mervin (ed.), *Les mondes chiites et l'Iran*, Paris: Karthala-Ifpo, 2007, pp. 29–72.
39. See news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7996665.stm
40. Cf. http://www.maroc-hebdo.press.ma/Site-Maroc-hebdo/archive/Archives_831/html_831/casse.html
41. http://www.khaleejtimes.com/displayarticle.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2009/August/middleeast_August563.xml&section=middleeast&col="
42. See "Monde musulman: craintes de prosélytisme chiite", 15 April 2007, http://religion.info/french/articles/printer_309.shtml
43. http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/south_asia/8067628.stm
44. "Denied dignity. Systematic Discrimination and Hostility Toward Saudi Shia Citizens", Human Rights Watch Report, 3 September 2009, see www.hrw.org/en/reports/2009/09/03/denied-dignity
45. Cf. http://www.ammanmessage.com
46. Communiqué of the press office of Sayyid Fadlallah, 26 August 2009.
47. Sabrina Mervin, "Quelques jalons pour une histoire du rapprochement (*taqrîb*) des alaouites vers le chiisme" in R. Brunner et al. (eds), *Islamstudien ohne Ende, Festschrift für Werner Ende*, Würzburg, Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft: Ergon Verlag, 2002, pp. 281–8.
48. A Kharijite, Ibn Muljam, killed 'Alî in 661.
49. See, for example, *Hishâm al-Qutayt, Al-Mutawahhilun. Haqa'iq wa watha'iq tunshiru li-awwal marra. Al-zahira al'alamiyya li-l-tahawwul nahw madhhab ahl al-bayt* [The Converted. Truths and documents published for the first time. The world phenomenon of conversions towards shiism], Beirut: Dâr al-mahajja al-bayda, vol. 7, 2005–2007.
50. http://www.maroc-hebdo.press.ma/MHinternet/Archives_535/html_535/chiite.html. Driss Hani, who studied in the *hawza* of Sayyida Zaynab, is considered to be the spiritual leader of the Shiites in Morroco.
51. The course is divided into three cycles, the last of which, called *khârij*, is particularly long.
52. I was able to observe this, in the 1990s in Damascus and, more recently in the early 2000s, I met Morrocans who had been living in Qom for years.
53. Cf., for example, those of Bassâm Karbalâ'î.
54. Jean-Pierre Filiu, *L'apocalypse dans l'Islam*, Paris: Fayard, 2008.

2. SUNNIS AND SHIITES IN MODERN ISLAM: POLITICS, RAPPROCHEMENT AND THE ROLE OF AL-AZHAR

1. This last-mentioned classification is certainly the most widespread and persistent one; it echoes in numerous accounts of Islamic history since the 19th century. To

give only two examples: Ignaz Goldziher, *Vorlesungen über den Islam*, Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Carl Winter, 1925, pp. 188–253 ("Das Sektenwesen"), Malise Ruthven, *Islam in the World*, London: Penguin, 1991, pp. 174–218 ("Sects and Solidarity"); a recent definition (not very convincing in the present writer's opinion) was suggested by Tarif Khalidi, according to whom the Sunnis were those who focused on the unity of the community, whereas the Shiites would lay the emphasis on the personal integrity of the ruler; cf. his *Images of Muhammad. Narratives of the Prophet in Islam across the Centuries*, New York: Doubleday, 2009, p. 62; on Islamic heresiography in general, cf. Josef van Ess, *Der Eine und das Andere. Beobachtungen an islamischen häresiographischen Texten*, Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011, esp. II, pp. 1201–1369.

2. Bernard Lewis, "The Shi'a in Islamic History", in idem: *Islam and the West*, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 155–165.
3. For the Fatimids cf. Heinz Halm, *Das Reich des Mahdi. Der Aufstieg der Fatimiden*, Munich: Beck, 1991 (English translation: *The Empire of the Mahdi. The Rise of the Fatimids*, Leiden: Brill, 1996) and idem, *Die Kalifen von Kairo. Die Fatimiden in Ägypten 973–1074*, Munich: Beck, 2003; on the Safavids cf. Rula Jurdi Abisaab, *Converting Persia. Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire*, London: Tauris, 2004.
4. An excellent introduction to this topic is given by Patricia Crone, *Medieval Islamic Political Thought*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004, esp. pp. 17–32 and pp. 110–24.
5. This holds true only for what today is the most significant group of Shiites, the so-called Twelver Shiites or Imamiyya; other currents, such as the Ismailiyya or the Zaydiyya (who in the course of history had exerted greater influence), have different concepts which, however, still focus on the figure of an *imam*; cf. Heinz Halm, *Die Schia*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988, pp. 193–249. The idea of the *mahdi* itself is older and was a constant feature of earlier Muslim heresiography; with the formation of Twelver Shiism, however, it started to prevail over all other currents within Shiism.
6. For what in terms of Max Weber's theory would be called "routinization of charisma" among Shiite scholars, cf. Rainer Brunner, "Le charisme des songeurs. Husayn al-Nuri al-Tabrisi et la fonction des rêves dans le shi'isme duodécimain", in Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi et al. (eds), *Le shiisme imamite quarante ans après. Hommage à Etan Kohlberg*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2009, pp. 95–115; modern interpretations of the doctrine of the *mahdi* are treated by Mariella Ourghi, *Schiitischer Messianismus und Mahdi-Glaube in der Neuzeit*, Würzburg: Ergon, 2008; Ze'ev Maghen, "Occultation *in perpetuum*: Shi'te Messianism and the Policies of the Islamic Republic", *Middle East Journal*, 62, 2008, pp. 232–57, draws the conclusion (p. 232) that "religio-historical developments in the medieval and modern periods gradually turned Twelver Shi'ism into the most resolutely anti-messianic movement in Islam, and perhaps in the world".

7. Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival. How Conflicts Within Islam Will Shape the Future*, New York: Norton, 2006; Rainer Brunner, "Shiism in the Modern Context: From Religious Quietism to Political Activism", *Religion Compass* 3, January 2009, pp. 136–53.
8. In this context, it is also worth mentioning the Iranian policy aiming at an Islamic internationalism and a political rapprochement with Sunnite Islam; cf. in detail Wilfried Buchta, *Die iranische Schia und die islamische Einheit 1979–1996*, Hamburg: Deutsches Orient-Institut, 1997.
9. For statistical data (often only estimations) regarding the number of Shiites in Muslim countries today cf. Vali Nasr, "When the Shiites Rise", *Foreign Affairs* 85, April 2006, pp. 58–74.
10. Yitzhak Nakash, *Reaching for Power. The Shi'a in the Modern Arab World*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006, 158ff.
11. The Shiite majority in Iraq is a relatively new phenomenon which goes back only to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; cf. Yitzhak Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, pp. 25–48.
12. Nakash, *Reaching for Power*, pp. 94–98.
13. Already at the beginning of Saddam Husein's rule, Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, a cousin of Muhammad Sadiq, was executed in April 1980, after a series of attempted assassinations; Baqir al-Sadr had founded the first Shiite political party in Iraq, *ad-Da'wa*, in 1958; cf. Faleh A. Jabar, *The Shi'ite Movement in Iraq*, London: Saqi, 2003, pp. 78–142.
14. International Crisis Group, "Shiite Politics in Iraq: The Role of the Supreme Council", *Middle East Report* 70, 15 November 2007, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-syria-lebanon/iraq/070-shiite-politics-in-iraq-the-role-of-the-supreme-council.aspx
15. "Irak, la maturité", *Le Monde*, 3 February 2009; "After Iraqi Elections, Next Big Test is Acceptance", *New York Times*, 10 February 2009.
16. Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah. A Short History*, Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007, 11f.
17. Regarding the history of the two groups, cf. Norton, *Hezbollah*, and idem, *Amal and the Shi'a. Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987; see also Nakash, *Reaching for Power*, pp. 99–128, 139–44.
18. Fouad Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa al Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986, 21ff.
19. It is rather typical of the delicacy of Lebanese demography that Vali Nasr's article in *Foreign Affairs* (see above, note 9) provoked a letter to the editors in which the "Deputy Vice President for Regional External Programs" at the American University of Beirut contested the numbers given by Nasr (45 per cent) and offered his own estimation of "less than 29%"; cf. Muhammad A. Faour, "Counting Shiites", *Foreign Affairs* 86, January-February 2007, p. 181.

20. International Crisis Group, "Lebanon: Hizbollah's Weapons Turned Inward", *Middle East Briefings*, 23, 15 May 2008, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-syria-lebanon/lebanon/b023-lebanon-hizbollahs-weapons-turn-inward.aspx; for the chronology of events, cf. *Middle East Journal* 62, April 2008, 687f; this event also meant a severe blow to Hizbollah's previous alliance with the Maronite general Michel Aoun.
21. For the background, cf. International Crisis Group, "Bahrayn's Sectarian Challenge", *Middle East Report* 40, 6 May 2005, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iran-gulf/bahrain/040-bahrains-sectarian-challenge.aspx
22. Fouad Ibrahim, *The Shi'is of Saudi Arabia*, London, Saqi Books, 2006; International Crisis Group, "The Shiite Question in Saudi Arabia", *Middle East Report* 45, 19 September 2005, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iran-gulf/saudi-arabia/045-the-shiite-question-in-saudi-arabia.aspx. There is also a very small Shiite minority in Medina (the so-called Nakhawila), whose religious, political and social influence, however, has always been negligible; see Werner Ende, "The *Nakhawila*, a Shiite Community in Medina Past and Present", *Die Welt des Islams*, vol. 37, no. 3, 1997, pp. 263–348.
23. Werner Ende, "'Teilhaber an dem einen Vaterland': Die Petition saudischer Schiiten vom 30. April 2003", in Markus Ritter et al. (ed.), *Iran und iranisch geprägte Kulturen. Studien zum 65. Geburtstag von Bert G. Fragner*, Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2008, 336–44; cf. also Y. Admon, "Recent Rise in Sunnite—Shi'ite Tensions (Part III): Sectarian Strife in Saudi Arabia", *MEMRI*, Inquiry and Analysis, no. 482, 16 December 2008 http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=subjects&Area=relations&ID=IA48208
24. On the history of Wahhabism, cf. David Commins, *The Wahhabi Mission and Saudi Arabia*, London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006.
25. Isaac Hasson, "Les Shiites vus par les néo-Wahhabites", *Arabica* 53, 2006, pp. 299–330.
26. The important case of Pakistan must not be neglected either. Its 20 per cent minority of Shiites (out of a total estimated population of 160 million) turns the country into the second largest Shiite community after Iran. In the past twenty years, sectarian conflict in Pakistan has turned more and more violent and ultimately poses a danger to its political stability which must not be underestimated: since 1989, more than 900 clashes have caused more than 4000 deaths; see Nasr, *The Shia Revival*, 159ff.; International Crisis Group, "The State of Sectarianism in Pakistan", *Asia Report*, 95, 18 April 2005, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/pakistan/095-the-state-of-sectarianism-in-pakistan.aspx. Tahir Kamran, "Contextualizing Sectarian Militancy in Pakistan: A Case Study of Jhang", *Journal of Islamic Studies* 20, 2009, pp. 55–85.
27. For 'Abdallah cf. Nakash, *Reaching for Power*, 154; for Mubarak see *al-'Arabiyya*, 8 April 2006 and *al-Ahram Weekly*, 13 April 2008.

28. For a detailed history of this association see Rainer Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century. The Azhar and Shiism between Rapprochement and Restraint*, Leiden: Brill, 2004; short introductions into the subject of Islamic ecumenical thinking among Sunnis and Shiites in modern times are given in the articles on "Taqrib", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd. edition 10/139f. and "Shi'ite Doctrine iii: Imamite-Sunnite Relations since the Late 19th Century", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, available at http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/shiite-doctrine-iii
29. For the early history of the Azhar, see Bayard Dodge, *Al-Azhar. A Millennium of Muslim Learning*, Washington: Middle East Institute, 1961.
30. *al-Ahram Weekly*, 25 May 2006; for the classical background, cf. Devin J. Stewart, "Popular Shiism in Medieval Egypt. Vestiges of Islamic Sectarian Polemics in Egyptian Arabic", *Studia Islamica* 84, 1996, pp. 35–66.
31. See above, note 5.
32. For a detailed discussion of the argumentation of the *Jama'at al-taqrîb* cf. Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism*, 208–48. The term *fitna* (lit. "trial") is today the common expression for any kind of civil war or other severe political or religious turmoil; it is derived from the armed conflict between 'Ali, son-in-law of the Prophet and forefather of Shiism, and Mu'âwiya, governor of Syria, in 656/57, which brought about the irreversible split of the Muslim community; cf. Wilferd Madelung, *The Succession to Muhammad. A Study of the Early Caliphate*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 184–238.
33. Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism*, pp. 255–75, 320–37.
34. Ibid., pp. 284–320.
35. Rudi Matthee, "Arab Commentaries on the Iranian Revolution", *Iranian Studies* 17, 1984, pp. 303–12; one of the most glowing Sunnite advocates of Khomeini was the Palestinian Fathi 'Abd al-'Aziz Shiqaqi, who in 1979 wrote a book entitled *al-Khumayni. al-Hall al-islami wa-l-badil* ("Khomeini: the Islamic solution and the alternative").
36. On Jarallah and Khatib cf. Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism*, 56f. and 255ff.
37. Werner Ende, "Sunni Polemical Writings on the Shi'a and the Iranian Revolution", in David Menashri (ed.), *The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World*, Boulder/Col.: Westview, 1990, pp. 219–32; this equation of Shiism and Iran was already an integral part of older polemical writings and goes back to the conflict between the Safavids, who converted Iran to Shiism (1501–1722), and the Ottoman Empire which acted as the protecting power of Sunnism.
38. Ihsan Ilahi Zahir, a relentless Pakistani author of Wahhabi anti-Shiite zeal, was killed by his enemies during a public rally in Lahore in 1987.
39. For the history of this organization (established in 1962) cf. Reinhard Schulze, *Islamischer Internationalismus im 20. Jahrhundert. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Islamischen Weltliga*, Leiden: Brill, 1990.

40. Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism*, 384ff.; 'Abdallah al-Qummi, the son of Muhammad Taqi al-Qummi (who in the meantime had died in exile in Paris), acted as secretary general.
41. Buchta, *Die iranische Schia*, pp. 102–10.
42. Ibid., pp. 251–74.
43. In consequence, the issues of *Risalat al-Islam* are available on the *Majma'-e taqrib* website, side by side with *Risalat al-taqrib*, http://www.taghrib.org/?p=tex&gr=3
44. http://www.taghrib.org and http://www.taghrib.ir
45. The final communiqué is accessible at http://www.taghrib.org/pages/bayan.php?id=22
46. In 2008, delegates from more than twenty countries participated in the conference, among them the President of the Central Council of Muslims in Germany ("Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland"), Ayyub Axel Köhler, and Muhammad Fu'ad al-Barrazi, the leader of the Muslim Brothers in Denmark, whose commentaries on the Muhammad cartoons published in the newspaper Jyllands-Posten contributed decisively to the mobilization of mass protests in the Muslim world in February 2006.
47. For al-Sistani, cf. Mehdi Khalaji, "The Last Marja. Sistani and the End of Traditional Religious Authority in Shiism", The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, *Policy Focus 59*, September 2006, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/pubPDFs/PolicyFocus59final.pdf
48. *The Muslim World League Journal* 28/3 (June 2000), pp. 20–23; *Majallat al-Azhar* 73/3 (June 2000), 448f.; previously, the former Azhar Rector, Jad al-Haqq 'Ali Jad al-Haqq (d. 1996) had received this award (which is sometimes called the "Islamic Nobel Prize") in 1995.
49. *al-'Arabiyya*, 4 December 2006, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2006/12/04/29625.html; for the classical background, cf. Etan Kohlberg, "Some Imami Shiite views on the Sahaba", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 5, 1984, pp. 143–75.
50. Cf. the obituaries in *al-'Arabiyya*, 11 March 2010, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2010/03/11/102685.html and http://www.alarabiya.net/views/2010/03/11/102727.html
51. *al-'Arabiyya*, 9 May 2007, http://www.alarabiya.net/views/2007/05/09/34260.html
52. *al-'Arabi*, 24 September 2006, http://www.al-araby.com/docs/article2631.html; *al-Misriyyun*, 23 March 2007, http://www.almesryoon.com/ShowDetails.asp?NewID=32009
53. Cf. Rainer Brunner, "Interesting Times—Egypt and Shiism at the Beginning of the 21st Century", in Ofra Bengio and Meir Litvak (eds), *The Sunna and Shia in History, Division and Ecumenism in the Muslim Middle East*, New York: Pal-

grave, 2011, pp. 223–51; on the phenomenon of Sunnite converts to Shiism in general see idem, "'Then I was Guided'—Some Remarks on Inner-Islamic Conversions in the 20th and 21st Centuries", *Orient* 50, April 2009, pp. 6–15.

54. *al-'Arabiyya*, 29 March 2007, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2007/03/29/33006.html; *IslamOnline*, 31 March 2007, http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=ArticleA_C&cid=1175008761205&pagename=Zone-Arabic-News/NWALayout. The former vice-rector of al-Azhar, Mahmud 'Ashur, was nominated president of the new *Jama'at al-taqrîb*, and, as in 1992, 'Abdallah al-Qummi took over the office of secretary general.
55. *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 1 April 2007, http://www.asharqalawsat.com/print/default.asp?did=413059
56. *al-'Arabiyya*, 7 February 2008, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2008/02/07/45312.html and 19 February 2008, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2008/02/19/45863.html
57. *al-Misriyyun*, 29 September 2008, http://www.almesryoon.com/ShowDetails.asp?NewID=54578 and 25 October 2008, http://www.almesryoon.com/ShowDetails.asp?NewID=55546
58. *al-'Arabiyya*, 16 June 2009, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2009/06/16/76177.html
59. *al-'Arabiyya*, 2 April 2010, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2010/04/02/104746.html; in October 2010, however, he defended Shiism against the accusation that they claimed to possess a different version of the Qur'an (for the subject of *tahrif*, see below, note 63) and against efforts to declare them infidels (*takfir*); *al-'Arabiyya*, 16 October 2010, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2010/10/16/122427.html
60. *al-Ahram Weekly*, 24 May 2007, http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2007/846/eg3.htm, 4 October 2007, http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2007/865/eg2.htm
61. Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism*, pp. 228–48; *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 4 August 2004, http://www.asharqalawsat.com/print/default.asp?did=252186; *al-Misr al-yawm*, 11 November 2006, http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=36016
62. On Qaradawi (born in 1926) cf. Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen and Bettina Gräf (eds), *Global Mufti. The Phenomenon of Yusuf al-Qaradawi*, London: Hurst, 2009.
63. *IslamOnline*, 1 September 2006, http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/news/2006–09/01/04.shtml; *al-'Arabiyya*, 2 September 2006, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2006/09/02/27111.html; cf. also Israel Elad-Altman, "The Sunni-Shi'a Conversion Controversy", in Hillel Fradkin et al. (eds), *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, Vol. 5, Washington: Hudson Institute, 2007, pp. 1–10, http://www.futureofmuslimworld.com/research/ctID.9/ctrend.asp. For the debate about the alleged falsification of the Qur'anic text cf. Rainer Brunner, "La ques-

tion de la falsification du Coran dans l'exégèse chiite duodécimaine", *Arabica* 52, 2005, pp. 1–42.

64. *IslamOnline*, 22 January 2007, http://www.islamonline.net/Arabic/news/2007–01/22/08.shtml; *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 29 January 2007, http://www.asharqalawsat.com/print/default.asp?did=403946; *al-Ahram Weekly*, 25 January 2007, http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2007/829/re71.htm; on the Doha conference in general, cf. Behnam Said, *Islamische Ökumene als Mittel der Politik. Aktuelle Tendenzen in der Annäherungsdebatte zwischen Sunna und Schia auf der Doha-Konferenz 2007*, Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2009.
65. E. Glass, "Recent Rise in Sunni—Shi'ite Tension (Part II): Anti-Shi'ite Statements by Sheikh Al-Qaradhawi", *MEMRI*, Inquiry and Analysis, no. 481, 16 December 2008, http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=subjects&Area=relations&ID=IA48108
66. Lewis, "The Shi'a in Islamic History", p. 159.

3. THE SHIITE PERIL IN PALESTINE: BETWEEN PHOBIAS AND PROPAGANDA

1. Read for example: Anonymous, "Iran's fifty-year Plan to export the revolution and spread Shiism".
2. http://www.haqeeqa.com/
3. http://www.alrased.net/ and http://www.alrased.info/
4. http://osamash.maktoobblog.com/
5. http://www.dd-sunnah.net/forum/showthread.php?t=72466
6. Interview on 17 August 2008, reproduced on the jihadist internet site al-Hesbah http://alhesbahweb.net/v/showthread.php?t=189194
7. http://www.muslm.net/vb/showthread.php?t=297744
8. *Washington Post*, 7 December 2004, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/mmedia/world/120704–20s.htm. For a critical approach, read the excellent synthesis of Pierre Pahlavi, "Croissant chiite: fondements et limites" and David Rigoulet-Roze, "'Arc sunnite' versus 'Croissant chiite': deux faces d'un même Janus conflictuel?".
9. Documented in David Rose, "The Gaza Bombshell", *Vanity Fair*, April 2008, http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2008/04/gaza200804
10. Mark Langfan, "Iran: the fourth Reichastan", *Jewish Voice and Opinion*, January 2007.
11. Jean-François Legrain, "L'impasse politique et institutionnelle palestinienne", *Critique Internationale*, no. 36, July-September 2007, internet document put online in January 2008, http://www.gremmo.mom.fr/legrain/impasse_politique.pdf
12. http:/www.palpress.ps/arabic/print.php?ChannelID=74148
13. As was the case, for example, for the Army of Islam quoted *supra*, whose founder,

Mumtâz Dughuch, was an officer in the Preventive Security Forces headed by Muhammad Dahlân.

14. http://www.fatehforums.com
15. http://portal.idc.ac.il/
16. http://www.terrorism-info.org.il/
17. Shmuel Bar is director of studies at the Institute for Policy and Strategy, at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya. He served in the Israeli intelligence community for thirty years.
18. Ex intelligence officer in the Israeli army and the Mossad, Yossi Alpher served as special adviser to Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak during the Camp David talks in 2000. He now serves on the executive committee of the Council for Peace and Security.
19. For example, Oded Yinon, "Strategy for Israel in the Nineteen Eighties", a translation by Dr Israel Shahak (http://cosmos.ucc.ie/cs1064/jabowen/IPSC/articles/article0005345.html) of an essay which originally appeared in Hebrew in *Kivunim (Directions), A Journal for Judaism and Zionism*, no. 14, Winter 5742, February 1982, published by the Department of Publicity/The World Zionist Organization, Jerusalem. Oded Yinon was formerly a senior Israeli Foreign Affairs Ministry official who became a journalist for the *Jerusalem Post*. According to him, all the Arab States should be broken down by Israel into small units on religious and ethnic lines.
20. For example, Ralph Peters, "Blood borders. How a better Middle East would look", *Armed Forces Journal*, June 2006, http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/2006/06/1833899/. A retired United States Army (military intelligence) Colonel, Ralph Peters is a member of "Project for the New American Century", a neoconservative think tank.
21. http://www.aqaed.info/mostabser/all/
22. http://www.14masom.com/mostabsiron/index.htm
23. Fathî Shqâqî, in fact, had denied any conversion in an interview given to the Lebanese *Liwâ'* on 3 October 1990.
24. http://www.factjo.com/newsletterPrintable.aspx?id=1304
25. http://www.thu-alfiqar.com/
26. http://shiafalasteen.myfreebb.com/
27. http://shiafalasteen.jeeran.com/
28. http://www.pas-shia.com/
29. http://www.passhia.com
30. http://omat-alzahraa.com/, http://omat-alzahraa.net and http://omatalzahraa.org
31. http://ommatalzahraa.maktoobblog.com/
32. http://kenanaonline.com/omatalzahraastudiescenter
33. http://www.palsh.net/ and http://www.palsh.org/

34. http://psa12th.com/vb/
35. He was eliminated by the Israeli army in Gaza in January 2009 due to his military responsibilities. I would like to thank Dr Walid Charara for his stimulating remarks about my research on the subject.
36. As I am too ignorant of the arcane mysteries of Iranian policy-making, I shall content myself with reminding readers that its Palestinian policy makes the object of debates and rivalries between various poles of power, for instance between the Ministry of Intelligence and that of the Revolutionary Guard. The recent history also shows that the supposed pan-Shiism of Iranian foreign policy has some limits, as was the case, for instance, with the support granted to Christian Armenia against Shiite Azerbaijan. Far from obeying a religious logic, Iranian policy is pragmatic and is based on a classical comprehension of the defence of its economic interests (particularly in terms of energy).
37. Nicolas Dot-Pouillard, "De Pékin à Téhéran en regardant vers Jérusalem: la singulière conversion à l'islamisme des 'Maos du Fatah'" and Mohamed Tahar Bensaada, "La théologie de la libération de Munir Chafiq", oumma.com, 24 April 2007, http://oumma.com/La-theologie-de-la-liberation-de,2401
38. Advisor of Musa al-Sadr for the creation of Amal movement, he was the first minister of defence after the Islamic Revolution and founded the core of what would become the Revolutionary Guard; he perished during fights in Iranian Ahwaz in 1981.
39. Nicknamed Ayatollah Ringo for his devotion to weapons, he was Ayatollah Hosein Ali Montazeri's son and represented the internationalist tendency of the Islamic Revolution. In spring 1979, he founded, with Mehdi Hashemi Satja, the first structure in charge of the exportation of revolution. He died in 1981 in the explosion of the building of the Party of the Islamic Revolution in Teheran.
40. Later an ambassador in Syria and interior minister, he was assigned by Ayatollah Khomeini to the monitoring of Hizbullah but was marginalized at the end of the 1980s.
41. Minister of the Revolutionary Guard, he later assumed the presidency of the Foundation for the Oppressed and Disabled, one of the largest semi-public welfare foundations in Iran.
42. In 1978, he asked Yasser Arafat to grant in Iran itself military training of certain elements of a new regime, an initiative that was immediately abandoned. He planned to be a candidate in the first Iranian presidential election but was barred by Ayatollah Khomeini due to his Afghan origins.
43. Hizbullah General Secretary Hasan Nasrallah, on 19 July 2004, just after the assassination of Ghâlib 'Awâlî, acknowledged the assistance brought by his movement to the insurgents in Palestine, support that the persons concerned recognized in their turn. In March 2006, Zakaryâ Zubaydî, the leader of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades in Jenin, acknowledged the help given by Hizbullah in financ-

ing and in training matters. Cooperation between Hizbullah and Palestinian groups of the Fatah trend has thus proved to be active. Certain files, however, are controversial as for their true originators or beneficiaries, particularly those concerned with the massive importation of weapons by the sea, San Torini (January, 2001), Karine A (2002) or Abû Hasan (May, 2003).

44. Khadr Abu Hasan Salâla, also known as 'Alî Hasan Dhîb (killed on 16 August 1999 in Sidon), 'Imâd Mughniyya (killed in Damascus on 12 February 2008) and 'Abd al-Hâdî Hammâdî had been called "the Shiite Fatah clan" and, although Lebanese, had held high responsibilities in Force 17, nowadays the Palestinian presidential guard. 'Alî Husayn Salâh (killed on 2 August 2003 in southern Beirut) and al-Hâjj Ghâlib 'Awâlî (killed on 19 July 2004) had succeeded 'Alî Dhîb. All three were killed in attempts due to a Lebanese network linked to the Mossad and dismantled in June 2006. They were replaced by 'Imâd Mughniyya, himself killed in Damascus in an attempt whose sponsors have not yet been officially identified.
45. When announcing their foundation in October 2008, http://www.sawtakonline.com/forum/showthread.php?p=599811, their spokesperson, a certain Abû al-Hasan, underlined that the Brigades are "sunni and have no affiliation with the Lebanese Hezbollah even if they consider the Islamic resistance in Lebanon an exemplary model of resistance ideology". Such an absence of an organic link is confirmed by Sâlim Thâbit, who has a relationship with Hizbullah. Nevertheless, from the announcement of their foundation, the Brigades provoked a number of questions that went so far as to even query the reality of their existence as an entity. Press releases and statements of their spokesman, in effect, were made in a context where Israel, Fatah and various Salafist groups were denouncing the direct or indirect infiltration of Hizbullah and Iran in Gaza.

4. IDEOLOGICAL TENSIONS BETWEEN HIZBULLAH AND *JIHADI* SALAFISM: MUTUAL PERCEPTIONS AND MUTUAL FEARS

1. Joseph Alagha teaches Modern Middle Eastern Studies at Leiden University, the Netherlands. He is the author of *Hizbullah's Identity Construction* (AUP: Amsterdam University Press, 2011); *Hizbullah's Documents* (Amsterdam: Pallas Publications, 2010); and *The Shifts in Hizbullah's Ideology* (AUP, 2006).
2. FaI is not the only *takfiri* group in Lebanon. The author is in no way referring to the mainstream Salafis (*ahl al-Hadith*) as "terrorists", but rather to a particular radical-militant group that employs *takfir* as a way of life. Nor is it his intention to classify groups into "good" or "bad" Salafis. Noteworthy, only a small minority of the Sunnis adhere to this ideology, and less than 1 per cent of Muslims engage in so-called "terrorist" activities.
3. It is estimated that around 30 per cent of FaI's members were Palestinians, the rest hail from different Arab countries, most notably Lebanon, Syria, Jordan,

Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco. Around a hundred fighters come from further a field: Bangladesh, Pakistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Russia, Moldavia, Chechnya, Germany, Kosovo, Bosnia, Denmark, UK, Italy, France, Belgium, Australia, and Argentina. See Itani, 2008, p. 256 and p. 265; *Al-Safir*, 11 June 2007, no. 10720, p. 6; *al-Safir*, 25 June 2007, no. 10732, p. 1 and p. 6; *al-Safir*, 28 June 2007, no. 10735, pp. 4–5; *Daily Star*, 29 June 2007; *al-Safir*, 27 August 2007, no. 10784, pp. 1 and 16; *al-Bayraq*, 29 August 2007, no. 19247, pp. 1 and 14; *al-Nahar*, 16 October 2007, no. 23153; *al-Hayat*, 3 October 2007.

4. My reliance on publicly available primary and secondary sources, especially media sources, has its own inevitable limitations in exposing FaI's clandestine nature, given the largely secretive nature of the organization and its operations.
5. Meijer clarifies, "Purist Salafism recognizes the legitimacy of any ruler even if the ruler is unjust, unless the ruler admonishes the believers to act contrary to the *shari'a*. It rejects the right to rise up in revolt and believes that Muslims must concentrate on following the path of the pious ancestors...[In other words,] Quietist, conservative Salafism or 'apolitical' Salafism emphasizes correct behaviour and a positive attitude that is based on civilized norms (*akhlaq*) as its main task, as well as propagating the right creed and promoting the right *manhaj*, or practice". Meijer, Roel,"Towards a Political Islam", *Clingendael Diplomacy Papers* no. 22, July 2009, p. 30.
6. Wiktorowicz, Quintan, "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 29, 2006, p.208.
7. Meijer, Roel (ed.), "Towards a Political Islam", *Clingendael Diplomacy Papers* no. 22, July 2009, p. 30.
8. Mainly compiled from FaI's statements posted on affiliated Salafi websites or reported in the media, newspapers, magazines, etc.
9. Hawari, Zuhayr, "Fatah Al-Islam in Nahr Al-Barid: The Boiling Palestinian Camp" in *Al-harakat al-Islamiyya fi lubnan* (Islamic Movements in Lebanon), Beirut: Al-Markaz al-'Arabi li Al-Ma'lumat, 2007, pp. 204–220; Gade, Tine, *Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon: Between Global and local jihad*, Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI), 2007, p. 4.
10. *Dunya al-Watan*, 10 January 2007; *al-Safir*, 8 September 2007, no. 10795, p. 5; *al-Anwar*, 16 September 2007.
11. *Al-Masira*, 18 June 2007, no. 1129, p. 15.
12. *Al-Kifah al-'Arabi*, 19 March 2007, no. 3890, pp. 22–23; "New Face of Jihad Vows Attacks", *New York Times*, 16 March 2007, pp. 1–7, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/0316/world/middleeast/16jihad.html? (Accessed 5 June 2007); a political declaration released in April 2007 as posted on: http://www.al-khayma.com/HomePage (Accessed 9 July 2007).
13. Lynch III, Col Thomas F., *Sunni and Shi'a Terrorism Differences that Matter*,

Occassional Paper Series, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 29 December 2008, p. 24.

14. Kepel, Gilles, *Jihad: The Trial of Political Islam*, translated by Anthony F. Roberts, London: I.B. Tauris, 2002, p. 220.
15. Ayubi, Nazih, *Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Arab World*, London: Routledge, 1991, p. 102; Roy, Olivier, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2004, pp. 1–9.
16. Roy, Olivier, *The Failure of Political Islam*, Translated by Carol Volk, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994, pp. 153–54; Roy, *Globalized Islam*, pp. 98–9.
17. *Elaph* http://www.elaph.com/ (Accessed 22 May 2007).
18. Al-Rifa'i came to this conclusion after carefully studying FaI publications issued in Nahr al-Barid. Interview with Shaykh 'Usama al-Rifa'i, *al-Kifah al-'Arab*, 9 July 2007; "Brothers in Islam", *New TV*, 23 September 2007; *al-Akhbar*, 27 September 2007, no. 339, p. 9.
19. *Al-Akhbar*, 9 January 2008, no. 421, p. 5.
20. *Al-Mustaqbal* and *al-Safir*, 26 July 2007; *al-Anwar*, 28 July 2007.
21. http://www.2s2s.com/vb/t106893/ and http://alsaha.fares.net/sahat/.3baa9b12 (Accessed 5 January 2007); *al-Akhbar*, 9 January 2008, no. 421, p. 5.
22. Sometimes it is also referred to as the Base of Victory (*Qa'idat al-Nusra*), where believers aid other believers who are being attacked or under pressure.
23. Where believers fight against invaders.
24. Where believers hold fast to their land, which belongs to them in the first place. The jihadi Salafis regard typically Palestine, Syria, Jordon, and Lebanon as *ard al-ribat*.
25. *Al-Safir*, 4 September 2007, no. 10791, p. 16. See also the interview with Faris bin Hazm, a Saudi expert on terrorism and al-Qaida, *al-Akhbar*, 13 September 2007, no. 327, p. 9.
26. In contrast to *fard kifaya*, which refers to a religious obligation incumbent upon the entire Muslim *umma*, where the requirement stipulates its satisfaction by some members in the name of and as a homage to the rest.
27. *Al-Safir*, 8 September 2007, no. 10795, p. 5.
28. *Al-Nahar*, 16 October 2007, no. 23153. Clarified below in the paragraph on al-Bishi.
29. Saab, Bilal Y. and Magnus Ranstorp, "Securing Lebanon from the Threat of Salafist Jihadism", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, vol. 30, no. 10, 2007, p. 843.
30. *Al-Mustaqbal*, 16 September 2007, p. 2. See al-'Absi's interview with the *New York Times* published on 16 March 2007. Before this incident, which occurred on 13 February 2007, FaI managed to keep a low profile. After the arrest of the FaI cell, the LAF encircled the Nahr al-Barid camp.
31. *Al-Afkar*, 28 May 2007, no. 1293, p. 18; *al-Jazeera News Bulletins* of 20 and 27 May 2007.

32. Building on an erroneous interpretation of *Surat al-Anfal* (Spoils), especially verses (8:9, 36), FaI sanctions, as religiously legitimate, stealing from anyone who does not believe in their ideology. *Al-Safir*, 8 September 2007, no. 10795, p. 5; *al-Riyadh*, 18 September 2007; *al-Hayat*, 21 May 2007; *al-Masira*, 18 June 2007, no. 1129, p. 16; *al-Akhbar*, 19 September 2007, no. 332, p. 9.
33. Trad, Toni, *Tazim Fatah Al-Islam: Mashru' Huzima fi Lubnan* [Fatah Al-Islam Organization: A Defeated Project in Lebanon], Beirut: Jalakh Press, 2008, p. 151.
34. See also, *Sada al-Balad*, 13 July 2007, no. 1242, p. 5; *al-Anwar*, 14 July 2007.
35. This is one of the maxims of Islamic jurisprudence (*qawa'id al-fiqh*).
36. The media and the press unequivocally exposed these practices in their coverage of the Nahr al-Barid battle. FaI did not hesitate to fatally shoot, in cold blood, two Christian Red Cross volunteers who were evacuating dead and wounded from the camp, see *al-Safir*, 12 June 2007, no. 10721, pp. 1 and p. 5; See "Samples of the booby traps" at http://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/article.asp?ln=ar&id=15549, *al-Jaish*, July 2007, no. 265. (Accessed 10 August 2007).
37. http://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/ and http://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/ArmyMagazine.asp?ln=ar&issue=265 *al-Jaish*, June/July 2007, no. 264/265, p. 66 and pp. 158ff (Accessed 5 September 2007).
38. NNA; *Sawt Lubnan* http://vdlonline.com/index.php, *Sada al-Balad*, 13 July 2007, no. 1242, p. 5; *al-Afkar*, 28 May 2007, no. 1293, p. 18; *al-Nahar*, 3 June 2007; "Fatah al-Islam Unmasked", *OTV*, 11 November 2007; "Brothers in Islam", *New TV*, 23 September 2007; "The Trade of Death *[Sina'at al-Mawt]*" *al-Arabiya* TV, 1 August 2007.
39. *Al-Safir*, 6 September 2007, no. 10793, p. 6.
40. See his interview with the *New York Times* published on 16 March 2007; *al-Wasat* (Yemeni Daily), 30 May 2007.
41. *Al-Kifah al-'Arabi*, 19 March 2007, no. 3890, pp. 22–23.
42. *Al-Afkar*, 28 May 2007, no. 1293, p. 17.
43. On the eve of the *'Ayn 'Alaq* bombings in February 2007, he was arrested while trying to cross the Lebanese-Syrian border.
44. Living "in the world of delinquency (*lhu wa inhiraf*)", Toni Trad, *Tazim Fatah Al-Islam: Mashru' Huzima fi Lubnan* [Fatah Al-Islam Organization: A Defeated Project in Lebanon], Beirut: Jalakh Press, 2008, p. 121.
45. *Al-Safir*, 8 September 2007, no. 10795, p. 5; "Al-Qa'ida's delegate left Lebanon after FaI threatened to liquidate him due to differences in opinion in considering Lebanon as the Land for Jihad", *al-Riyadh*, http://www.alriyadh.com/2007/09/18/article280633.html (Accessed 18 September 2007).
46. See "Annals of National Security: Watching Lebanon: Washington's Interests in Israel's War", *New Yorker*, 21 August 2006, pp. 28–33.
47. *Al-Intiqad*, no. 1223, 13 July 2007, p. 15.

48. Saab and Ranstorp, "Securing Lebanon from the Threat of Salafist Jihadism"; Gade, *Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon: Between global and local jihad*; Itani, Fidaa, *Al-Jihadiyyun fi Lubnan: min 'Quwwat Al-Fajr' ila 'Fatah Al-Islam'* [The Jihadis in Lebanon: From 'Al-Fajr Forces' to 'Fatah Al-Islam'], London: Al-Saqi, 2008; Moussalli, Ahmad, *Wahhabism, Salafism and Islamism: Who is the Enemy?*, A Conflicts Forum Monograph: Beirut-London-Washington, January 2009.
49. He tried to form a coalition of Sunnite militant groups as an umbrella to fight the Lebanese Shiites, most notably, Hizbullah and Amal. However, his initiative received limited success as it failed to muster overwhelming support (Itani, Fidaa, *Al-Jihadiyyun fi Lubnan: min 'Quwwat Al-Fajr' ila 'Fatah Al-Islam'* [The Jihadis in Lebanon: From 'Al-Fajr Forces' to 'Fatah Al-Islam'], London: Al-Saqi, 2008, p. 257). Also Itani notes that al-Daher is the one who negotiated with Bassam Kanj the leader of the renegade militant Sunnite *Diniyyé* group of *Al-Takfir wa al-Hijra* that fought the LAF in January 2000. Kanj was killed along with forty other fighters. The rest were either arrested or managed to flee to neighbouring Palestinian refugee camps, where they managed to join jihadi Salafi groups that later formed the backbone of FaI (pp. 114, 99–130).
50. Itani, *Al-Jihadiyyun fi Lubnan: min 'Quwwat Al-Fajr' ila 'Fatah Al-Islam'*, 2008, p. 280.
51. Saab and Ranstorp, "Securing Lebanon from the Threat of Salafist Jihadism", p. 831.
52. Gade, *Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon*, p. 47.
53. Ibid. p. 49.
54. On 24 June 2007 FaI ideologically affiliated militants targeted the UNIFIL in South Lebanon by an apparent suicide operation that claimed the lives of six Spanish UNIFIL soldiers and seriously injured two. On 16 July 2007 Jund al-Sham exploded a roadside bomb while a Tanzanian UNIFIL patrol was passing near Tyre. No causalities were reported.
55. On 6 July 2007 FaI members in custody admitted that their leading cadres, most notably Abu Yazan, killed the Lebanese Minister of Industry MP Pierre Jumayyel on 21 November 2006 and masterminded the 'Ayn 'Alaq bombing. See Lebanese daily newspapers of 7 July 2007; *al-Safir*, 25 July 2007, no. 10758, p. 1; *al-Mustaqbal*, 3 October 2007, no. 2752; *al-Safir* and *Okaz*, 8 September 2007.
56. Cheterian, Vicken, "Désarroi des militants au Liban", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, December 2000, http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2008/12/CHETERIAN/16616
57. *Al-Hayat*, 1 June 2007, no. 16131, p. 1 and p. 7; *al-Safir*, 2 June 2007, no. 10713, pp. 1; 16; *al-Safir*, 4 September 2007, no. 10791, pp. 1 and 16.
58. This was just a propaganda statement, since, in actual practice, FaI used Palestinian refugees as human shields, indiscriminately fired rockets at Lebanese civilians, and even booby trapped young children, exploding them at the advancing Lebanese Army.

59. *Al-Kifah al-'Arabi*, 19 March 2007, no. 3890, pp. 22–23.
60. Dib died in the ISF attack on the residential complex in Tripoli on 20 May 2007. He was a member of the 2000 Diniyyé group and was also imprisoned in Syria (Trad, 2008, pp. 150; 209).
61. *Al-Safir*, 8 September 2007, no. 10795, p. 5.
62. *Al-Safir*, 14 August 2007, no. 10774, pp. 1 and 16.
63. Hawari. "Fatah Al-Islam in Nahr Al Barid: The Boiling Palestinian Camp", p. 211.
64. *Okaz*, 29 August 2007, no. 2264, http://www.okaz.com.sa
65. Gade, *Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon*; Saab and Ranstorp, "Securing Lebanon from the Threat of Salafist Jihadism"; Moussalli, *Wahhabism, Salafism and Islamism: Who is the enemy?*
66. So far FaI's place of operations has been in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories. FaI succeeded in attacking the LAF, the UNIFIL stationed in Lebanon, the northern Israeli settlements across the Lebanese border, and the southern Israeli cities bordering the Gaza strip. The PLO spokesman in Gaza, Ahmad Abd al-Rahman, labelled FaI "as a group of mercenaries" who exploited the opportunity to penetrate Gaza after Hamas had taken over of the Strip in June 2007. http://www.maannews.net/en/index.php?opr=ShowDetails&ID=26884# (Accessed 25 December 2007). On 11 January 2008 FaI appointed Shaykh Abd al-Rahman al-Gazawi as its Emir in Gaza. FaI has around 150 heavily equipped fighters in Gaza, and has targeted Israel with a new breed of rockets called the "Zarqawi", not used before by militant organizations. (Itani, 2008, p. 296); *Al-Safir*, 17 January 2008, no. 10899.
67. When al-'Absi announced the formation of FaI on 27 November 2007, he branded Syria an "infidel regime". *Dinya al-Watan*, 10 January 2007. This is in line with al-Qa'ida's ideology that brands Arab regimes with *kufr* (infidelity). http://www.al-khayma.com/HomePage (Accessed 9 July 2007).
68. Kepel, *Jihad: The Trial of Political Islam*, 2002, p. 221. Kepel notes that the jihadi Salafis "were even angrier with the Muslim Brothers, whose excessive moderation they denounced on the grounds that it led the Brothers to take liberties with the letter of the wholly texts [...] they were branded" (Kepel, 2002, p. 220). By way of an elaboration, I would like to add that FaI and other jihadi Salafis label *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun* (the Muslim Brothers) as al-*Ikhwan al-Muflisun* (the Bankrupt Brothers) because, according to the former, their Islam failed to offer the solution to the political and social crises of the day, as their slogan "*al-Islam huwa al-hal*" portrayed. The erudite Egyptian religious scholar, Gamal al-Banna, the brother of Hassan al-Banna, the late founder of the Muslim Brothers, argues that Salafi thinking "freezes" Islam and "radicalises" Islamic thought. http://www.metransparent.com/spip.php?page=article&id_article=4027&var_lang=ar&lang=ar (Accessed 16 June 2008).

69. In order to undercut and isolate FaI, on 18 August 2008 Hizbullah and the political Salafis signed an eight-point Understanding, including mutual military support in case of aggression, as point five stipulates: "If Hizbullah or the Salafists are oppressed or attacked by any domestic or foreign actor, then the other party must stand firm with the aggressed party as much as its capabilities allow." See *al-Intiqad*, 18 August 2008, no. 1291, p. 5.
70. One day later, in a tactical move, Lebanon recognized "The State of Palestine" and upgraded the PLO's Office to the status of an embassy. This move coincided with the LAF tightening the screws on the 'Ayn al-Hilwé camp in an attempt to pressure the Palestinian factions to hand in six FaI convicted felons hiding in the camp.
71. Son of Rafiq Hariri and the current PM.
72. Moussalli, *Wahhabism, Salafism and Islamism: Who is the enemy?*, p. 38.
73. Basing itself on German sources, on 4 October 2008 *al-Liwa'* claimed that al-'Absi was arrested in Syria and is being used as a bargaining chip to improve relations with the West, most notably France. When the French President Sarkozy visited Syria, rumour surfaced that the Syrian president told him that he has apprehended al-'Absi. *Sawt Lubnan* http://www.vdl.com.lb/news/more.php?id=14133&type=2 (Accessed 5 October 2008).
74. On 11 October 2007 *al-Sharq al-Awsat* claimed that the Lebanese judicial authorities had revealed that FaI has a brigade in 'Ayn al-Hilwe headed by 'Awad.
75. See "2008–11–29.al-faloja.info.Fatah al-Islam in al-Shams issues truth on aggression against it", and "2008–12–08.al-faloja.info.Fatah al-Islam issues statements on events post Nahr al-Bared", at: http://al-faloja.info/vb/index.php. See also http://www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/7F962077-9E07-49D6-AA68-B6F075EB-7DCC.htm; http://www.zawya.com/Story.cfm/sidDS111208_dsart14/Fatah%20al-Islam%20says%20leader%20was%20killed%20or%20captured%20in%20Syria/ (All accessed 8 December 2008).
76. Hariri was assassinated on 14 February 2005 by a massive suicide truck bomb attack in the predominantly Muslim West Beirut. The explosion killed MP Basil Flayhan and twenty-two other people from Hariri's motorcade and innocent pedestrians. An unknown group by the name of "The Organization for Victory and Jihad in the Levant" claimed responsibility through a video message read by the Palestinian Abu 'Adas. Lebanese security forces at the time tried to implicate the Salafis with the assassination.
77. See "Political Opposition to Damascus: If the Syrian surprise is Bellemare's interrogation to al-'Absi, then it is not a surprise because al-'Absi is the product of the Syrian intelligence". http://www.metransparent.com/spip.php?article8146&lang=ar (Accessed 1 September 2009).
78. See Lebanese daily newspapers of 15–18 August 2010; and *Al-Afkar*, 23 August 2010, no. 1462, pp. 10–11.

79. "*Fitna* is worse than slaughter" (2:191); "Fight them until there is no *fitna*" (2:193); "And know that your wealth and your children are a *fitna*, and with Allah is a great reward" (8:28); "As to the unbelievers, they are friends of one another. If you do not support the Muslims and subdue the unbelievers, there will be great *fitna* and corruption in the land" (8:73).
80. Fadlallah, Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn, *Al-Islam wa Mantiq al-Quwwa* [Islam and the Logic of Power], Third Edition, Beirut: Dar Al-Ta'arruf, 1985, pp. 171–2.
81. Fadlallah, Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn, *Min Ajl Al-Islam* [For the Sake of Islam], Beirut: Dar Al-Malak, 1985, p. 129.
82. *Al-'Ahd* (Friday, 3 *Jamadi al-Thani* 1405 AH, 22 February 1985), p. 8, as cited in Alagha, 2006, p. 236.
83. Al-Tufayli held a high post in the leadership of Hizbullah in the early 1980s. But he later created a minor dissent in the party for reasons that, apparently, were social but, in fact, were for control of the *B'albak* region. Al-Tufayli today represents that category of Hizbullah which still upholds the Iranian revolutionary ideology of the 1980s. He was officially fired from the party by a political declaration issued on 24 Januray 1998.
84. *Al-'Ahd*, 7 February 1986; *Kayhan*, 27 July 1986; *Al-'Ahd*, 11 *Sha'ban* 1407 AH/ 10 April 1987.
85. *Al-'Ahd*, 12 Shaban 1407 AH/ 10 April 1987, no. 146, p. 7.
86. Chapter II: "Lebanon", Section 6: "Lebanon and Islamic Relations", p. 53.
87. Established in the wake of the Israeli invasion in June 1982.
88. Aided by Maher Uwayid who takes care of military and security aspects.
89. Rougier, Bernard (ed.), *Qu'est-ce que le salafisme?*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2008, pp. 42–44, 46–50, 57; Saab and Ranstorp, "Securing Lebanon from the Threat of Salafist Jihadism", p. 839; Gade, *Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon*, p. 10, 12; Itani, *Al-Jihadiyyun fi Lubnan* [The Jihadis in Lebanon], pp. 127–130.
90. *Al-Akhbar*, 25 September 2007, no. 337, p. 9. It is interesting to note that Muhammad Shaqir claims that "Fatah al-Islam, Jund al-Sham, and Ansar Allah are Multiple Names for One Multinational Corpus", *al-Hayat*, 21 May 2007, as cited in Tine Gade, *Fatah al-Islam in Lebanon: Beetween global and local jihad*, Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI), 2007, p. 44. Saab and Ranstorp share the same observation in "Securing Lebanon from the Threat of Salafist Jihadism", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, vol. 30, no. 10, 2007, p. 839.
91. Itani, *Al-Jihadiyyun fi Lubnan* [The Jihadis in Lebanon], p. 128.
92. As Hizbullah had supported the Palestinians logistically in the War of the Camps in the 1980s, this time Hizbullah's NGOs spearheaded relief efforts to the Palestinians who sought refuge in the nearby Beddawi camp.
93. *Al-Intiqad*, 1 June 2006, no. 1217, p. 7, and *al-Safir*, 28 May 2007, no. 10708, pp. 2 and 4.

94. Noe, Nicholas (ed.), *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*, London: Verso, 2007, pp. 312–3.
95. Norton adds: The rise of violent Sunni movements [...] which are virulently anti-Shiite and frequently deny that the Shi'tes qualify as Muslims, has encouraged Shiite Muslims across the Middle East [...] to identify themselves more in sectarian than secular terms" (Norton, 2009, p. 123).
96. Noe, 2007, p. 312.
97. Kepel, *Jihad: The Trial of Political Islam*, p. 220.
98. Salman, Talal, *Sira Dhatiyya li Haraka Muqawina 'Arabiyya Muntasira: Hizbullah* [An Autobiography of a Victorious Arab Resistance Movement: Hizbullah], Beirut: Al-Safir, 2000, p. 4.
99. Al-Tufayli argued: "This is not the Hizbullah that I have founded; and this is not the Iran of Imam Khumayni". On these grounds, he censured Hizbullah for protecting the borders of Israel and criticized Iran for serving the interests of the US, as he contended. See Tha'ir 'Abbas's interview with Subhi al-Tufayli in *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 25 September 2003, no. 9067.
100. See Nasrallah's speech on the first day of *Muharram* 1425 AH, 20 February 2004.
101. Meijer, "Towards a Political Islam", p. IX.
102. The Shiites consider the companions Abu Bakr, 'Uthman, and 'Umar as non-normative, and, as such, their rulings are nonbinding. This is the main reason why the Salafis label the Shiites *rafida* (rejectionists).
103. National News Agency (NNA), http://www.nna-leb.gov.lb/ (Accessed 27 December 2009).
104. al-Saffar, Hasan Musa, *Al-Mushkil al-ta'ifi wa-l-mas'uliyya al-wataniyya* [The problem of sectarianism and national responsibility], al-Qatif: Atyaf li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzi', 2005.
105. al-Sadiq, Ali, *Madha Ta'rif ann Hizbullah?* [What Do You Know About Hizbullah?], 2006, pp. 133–4.
106. Ibid. p. 146.
107. http://www.alintiqad.com/essaydetailsf.php?eid=1156&fid=11 (Accessed 18 September 2008); *al-Intiqad*, 15 August 2008, no. 1290; *al-Intiqad*, 18 August 2008, no. 1291, p. 5; *al-Intiqad*, 29 August 2008, no. 1294, p. 3; (Qasim, 2010, pp. 275–9; Alagha, 2008, pp. 414–5; NNA, 18 August 2008).
108. http://www.aicp.org/. Their founder is al-Shaykh al-Habashi al-Hurashi.
109. NNA, 30 April 2010.
110. Lebanese Daily Newspapers of 2 September 2010, http://www.tayyar.org/Tayyar/News/PoliticalNews/ar-LB/ahbash-pb-16978.htm
111. Itani, p.2.
112. See http://www.sunna.info/Sheikh Nizar/ and "*'Usbat Al-Ansar* Consider all the Regimes as Apostates and its Emir Abu Muhjin is a Fugitive Accused of

Terrorism". *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat* 17 October 2001 (no. 8359) http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=62027&issueno=8359 (Both accessed 25 August 2010).

113. Itani contends that around 150 FaI fighters and cadres were able to escape *Nahr al-Barid* after the end of hostilities (2008, p. 394).
114. *Future TV* News: 8:00 pm, local Beirut time.
115. Chapter II: "Lebanon", Section 4: "Lebanon and Palestinian-Lebanese Relations", pp. 45–6.

5. THE TERRITORIAL ASPECT OF SECTARIANISM IN IRAQ: THE CASE OF ANBAR

1. Reidar Visser, "Proto-political Conceptions of Iraq in Late Ottoman Times", *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies*, 2009.
2. Reidar Visser, *Basra, The Failed Gulf State: Separatism and Nationalism in Southern Iraq*, Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2005.
3. Hamid al-Bayati, *Shiat al-iraq bayna al-taifiyya wa al-shubhat* [the Shiites of Iraq between Sectarianism and Accusations], London: Al-Hikma, 1997.
4. Visser, *Basra, the Failed Gulf State*, 2005, p. 171.
5. Reidar Visser, "The Two Regions of Southern Iraq" in R. Visser and Gareth Stansfield (eds), *An Iraq of Its Regions: Cornerstones of a Federal Democracy?*, London: Hurst, 2007.
6. *Al-Ittihad*, 14 November 2009.
7. "Insurgents Assert Control Over Town Near Syrian Border", *Washington Post*, 6 September 2005.
8. Brian Fishman, *Fourth Generation Governance: Sheikh Tamimi Defends the Islamic State of Iraq*, West Point: Combating Terrorism Center, 2007.
9. Hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 11 September 2007.
10. Interviews with Robert Gates and Joe Biden, *Fox News Sunday*, 17 September 2007.
11. Buratha news agency, 15 August 2009.
12. Radio Sawa, 14 February 2009.
13. Kitabat.com, 14 March 2010.
14. Alhurriyanews.net, 26 July 2010.
15. "Thalatha anfar min al-anbar" [Three Individuals from Anbar], Kitabat.com, 25 September 2010.
16. Salim al-Janabi, "Taqsim al-Iraq min al-Anbar", http://www.iwffo.org, 18 June 2010.
17. *Al-Dustur*, 13 December 2010.
18. *Al-Taakhi*, 12 January 2011.
19. Iraqi Islamic Party, press release dated 2 June 2010.
20. *Al-Dustur*, 13 December 2010.

21. *Al-Usbuiyya*, 14 December 2010.
22. NINA news agency, 30 January 2011.
23. *Al-Akhbar*, 15 November 2010.
24. See for example, "Iraqi Sunni Lands Show New Gas and Oil Promise", *The New York Times*, 19 February 2007.
25. Reidar Visser, "The Akkaz Revolt: A Test Case for Iraq, and for Iraqiyya", gulf-analysis.wordpress.com, 20 October 2010.
26. *Al-Arab* (Doha), 21 October 2010.
27. Al-Iraqnews.net, 20 October 2010.
28. Reidar Visser, *Shiite Separatism in Iraq: Cyberspace Reverie or Real Constitutional Challenge?*, Oslo: NUPI, 2005.
29. Fishman, *Fourth Generation Governance*.
30. Said Amir Arjomand, *Authority and Political Culture in Shiism*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988.
31. For the endurance of Iraq as a territorial framework despite competing nationalist visions, see Fanar Haddad, *Sectarianism in Iraq: Antagonistic Visions of Unity*, London: Hurst, 2011.

6. KARBALA IN THE UMAYYAD MOSQUE: SUNNITE PANIC AT THE "SHIITIZATION" OF SYRIA IN THE 2000s

1. Observation by the author.
2. In this chapter, "Shiite Islam" strictly designates Twelver-Imami-Ja'fari Islam, to the exclusion of the Alawite, Ismaili, and Druze faiths.
3. For a well-documented example of this narrative, see *Al-ba'th al-shī'ī fī Suriyya* [The Shiite Renaissance in Syria] *1919–2007*, s.l., 2008, p. 17, http://www.mediafire.com/?nmkdjmm3mzm (Accessed 13 April 2010).
4. See the contribution of Legrain in this volume.
5. *Al-ba'th al-shī'ī*. p. 12.
6. Sabrina Mervin, *Un réformisme chiite: ulémas et lettrés du Jabal 'Amil (actuel Liban-Sud) de la fin de l'Empire ottoman à l'indépendance du Liban*, Paris: Karthala, 2000, pp. 163–77.
7. On this rapprochement, see Martin Kramer, "Syria's Alawis and Shi'ism" in M. Kramer (ed.), *Shi'ism, Resistance, and Revolution*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1987, pp. 237–54; Sabrina Mervin, "Quelques jalons pour une histoire du rapprochement (*taqrîb*) des alaouites vers le chiisme" in R. Brunner (ed.), *Islamstudien ohne Ende, Festschrift für Werner Ende*, Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2002, pp. 281–8; Kais Firro, "The 'Alawis in Modern Syria: From Nusayriya to Islam via 'Alawiya", *Der Islam*, 82, 1, 2005, pp. 1–31; *al-ba'th al-shī'ī*, pp. 33–46.
8. See Falih 'Abd al-Jabbar, *The Shiite movement in Iraq*, London: Saqi, 2003, pp. 216–22; Laurence Louër, *Transnational Shia Politics: Religious and Political Networks in the Gulf*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, pp. 88–99.

9. *Al-ba'th al-shī'ī*, pp. 42–4.
10. Sabrina Mervin, "Sayyida Zaynab, Banlieue de Damas ou nouvelle ville sainte chiite?", *CEMOTI*, 22, 1996, p. 150; *Office Arabe d'Information* (reports consulted at the IFPO, Damascus), 714–5, V, 16–9, 20–22 April 1955 and 955, V, 5–8 October 1957.
11. Myriam Ababsa, "The Shi'i Mausoleums of Raqqa: Iranian Proselytism and Local Significations" in F. Lawson (ed.), *Demystifying Syria*, London: Saqi, 2009, pp. 85–104.
12. *Al-ba'th al-shī'ī*, pp. 63–5.
13. In 2008, 361,000 Iranians entered Syrian territory (Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Yearbook*, Damascus: CBS, 2009, p. 229). On these pilgrimages, see Ababsa, "The Shi'i Mausoleums", pp. 88–92; Paulo Pinto, "Pilgrimage, Commodities, and Religious Objectification: The Making of Transnational Shiism between Iran and Syria", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 1, 2007, pp. 109–25.
14. Mervin, "Sayyida Zaynab"; *Al-ba'th al-shī'ī*, p. 98.
15. Despite the fact that its main spiritual leaders still reside in Iran, the Shiraziyya has become increasingly autonomous during the last two decades. In the Gulf monarchies, Shirazis even define their political identity by stressing their loyalty to their respective homelands, as opposed to the posture of their pro-Iranian rivals. Louër, *Transnational Shia Politics*, pp. 197–8; 225 ff.
16. According to the Syrian authorities, there were two hundred Syrian students in Sayyida Zaynab in 2006 (*Al-ba'th al-shī'ī*, p. 106).
17. On Iranian cultural diplomacy in Syria, see Nadia Von Maltzahn, "The Case of Iranian Cultural Diplomacy in Syria", *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication*, 2, 2009, pp. 33–50.
18. See its website: http://al-najma.org/home/ (Accessed 4 April 2010).
19. *Al-ba'th al-shī'ī*, pp. 79–80.
20. Ibid. p. 52.
21. Ibid. p. 77.
22. See Rainer Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century: the Azhar and Shiism between Rapprochement and Restraint*, Leiden: Brill, 2004.
23. Mervin, *Un réformisme chiite*, pp. 170–6.
24. Ibid.
25. On al-Zanjani, see Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism*, pp. 113 sq.
26. "Bayān mu'tamar al-'ulamā' al-awwal al-mun'aqad bi-Dimashq 11–13 rajab 1357 [Communiqué of the First Congress of the 'Ulama held in Damascus from 6 to 8 September 1938]", in *Rabita 'Ulama al-Sham*, 1 May 2006, http://www.islamsyria.com/Details.php?QType=1&Id=6 (Accessed 1 August 2009).
27. See Werner Ende, "Sunni Polemical Writings on the Shi'a and the Iranian Revolution" in D. Menashri (ed.), *The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1990, pp. 219–32.

28. Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism.*
29. *Al-mujāhid al-sāmit, al-shaykh Muhammad al-Ashmar* [The Silent Fighter, Sheikh Muhammad al-Ashmar], Beirut, 2002. p. 77.
30. Bernard Botiveau, "La formation des oulémas en Syrie. La faculté de Sharī'a de l'Université de Damas" in G. Delanoue (ed.), *Les intellectuels et le pouvoir: Syrie, Égypte, Tunisie, Algérie*, Cairo: CEDEJ, 1986, pp. 71–2.
31. 'Adnan Zarzur, *Mustafa al-Siba'i. Al-dā'iyyat al-mujaddid* [Mustafa al-Siba'i. The Preacher and Renovator], Damascus: Dar al-Qalam, 2000, p. 360.
32. *Al-ba'th al-shī'ī*, pp. 77–9.
33. Ahmad Mu'adh al-Khatib, "Ghufrānuka Allahum fa-l-Husayn lā yashrab al-dimā" [Your Pardon, O God, al-Hussein does not drink blood], *Darbuna*, 3 January 2007, http://www. darbuna.net/archive/text.php?CID=9&ID=416 (Accessed 2 August 2009).
34. Umar Abdallah, *The Islamic Struggle in Syria*, Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1983, pp. 186–7.
35. Ende, "Sunni Polemical Writings", p. 226; Guido Steinberg, "Jihadi-Salafism and the Shi'is" in R. Meijer (ed.), *Global Salafism. Islam's New Religious Movement*, London: Hurst, 2009, pp. 118–21.
36. *Al-ba'th al-shī'ī*, p. 56.
37. Ibid. p. 81.
38. *Akhbar al-Sharq*, 27 April 2005 (dead link).
39. *Al-ba'th al-shī'ī*, p. 83.
40. Ibid. pp. 76–7;93.
41. The first writing on this issue was published in 2004 by a Salafi ('Abd al-Sittir Al Hussein), *Tahdhīr al-barriyya min nashāt al-shī'a fī Suriyya* [Warning to the People of the Desert against the Activities of the Shiites in Syria], s.l., 2004.
42. *Al-ba'th al-shī'ī*, pp. 141–2.
43. Nikolaos Van Dam, *The Struggle for Power in Syria: Politics and Society under Asad and the Ba'th Party*, London: I. B. Tauris, 1996, p. 122.
44. Ibid. pp. 122–3; *Al-ba'th al-shī'ī*, pp. 29–33.
45. *Al-ba'th al-shī'ī*, p. 53.
46. For background information and bibliography on the Syrian Sunnite clergy, see Thomas Pierret, "Sunni Clergy Politics in the Cities of Ba'thi Syria" in F. Lawson (ed.), *Demystifying Syria*, London: Saqi, 2009, pp. 70–84.
47. Friday sermon of 10 March 2006 (observation by the author).
48. Sa'id Ramadan al-Buti, "Friday sermon of 28 April 2006", *Personal website*, http://www.bouti.com/article.php?PHPSESSID=c8cefb70281053937fe7e7654379d082&id=244 (Accessed 4 August 2009).
49. Ibid.
50. *Al-Ra'i al-Amm*, 1 May 2006.
51. *Al-Watan al-'Arabi*, 12 June 2006.

52. *Akhbar al-Sharq*, 30 June 2006 (dead link).
53. *Al-ba'th al-shi'ī*, pp. 98–107.
54. Observations by the author, Damascus, July 2006.
55. *Al-Thawra*, 18 August 2006.
56. *Al-Hayat*, 2 August 2006.
57. See for instance Amir Taheri, "The Iranization of Syria", *Jerusalem Post*, 2 November 2006.
58. See for instance *Akhbar al-Sharq* (newsletter of the Syrian Muslim Brothers), 1 September, 8 October, and 12 November 2006; Khalid al-Ahmad, "Al-sharq al-awsat al-īrānī" [The Iranian Middle East], *Website of the Syrian Muslim Brothers*, 2 September 2006 (dead links).
59. Khalid al-Ahmad, "Bashar yubī' Suriyya li-l-safawiyyīn" [Bashar sells Syria to the Safavids], *Rabita 'Ulama al-Sham*, 18 November 2006, http://www.oda-basham.net/show.php?sid=9230 (Accessed 4 August 2009). "Safavid" is a term commonly used by Sunnite anti-Iranian polemicists. It refers to the Safavid dynasty, which ruled Iran from 1501 to 1722 and imposed Shiism as the state religion.
60. *Akhbar al-Sharq*, 27 October 2006 (dead link). These accusations are uncritically presented as facts by Khalid Sindawi, "The Zaynabiyya Hawza in Damascus and its Role in Shi'ite Religious Instruction", *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 45, no. 6, 2009, pp. 864–5.
61. *Akhbar al-Sharq*, 31 October 2006 (dead link).
62. *The Washington Post*, 6 October 2006; *Christian Science Monitor*, 16 February 2007; *New York Times Magazine*, 29 April 2007.
63. *Time Magazine*, 22 February 2007.
64. *Al-Hayat*, 3 September 2006.
65. *Akhbar al-Sharq*, 26 October 2006 (dead link). See also the article published by the famous Syrian Salafi exile and long-standing anti-Shiite polemicist Muhammad Surur Zayn al-'Abidin: "Al-tashayyu' fī Suriyya—Muhāfadha Dar'a" [Shiitization in Syria—The governorate of Daraa], *Personal website*, 28 October 2006, http://www.surour.net/index.php?group=view&rid=762 (Accessed 4 April 2010).
66. *Al-'Arabiyya.net*, 6 November 2006, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2006/11/06/28855.html (Accessed 4 August 2009); *Al-Ittihad*, 16 January 2007.
67. *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 8 June 2007.
68. *Al-Watan al-Arabi*, 13 November 2007.
69. *Al-'Arabiyya TV*, 27 November 2006 and 12 March 2007; *al-Jazeera.net*, 25 February 2007, http://www.aljazeera.net/ NR/exeres/31A743FD-DB83–4F43–9130-FCDEA8ACDEDA.htm (Accessed 4 August 2009).
70. The Kaftaro Academy is the largest private Islamic school in Syria. It has enjoyed strong state support since its creation in 1982.

71. *All4Syria*, 19 November 2006, http://www.all4syria.biz/index.html/printme.php?id=2693 (Accessed 5 September 2009).
72. *SANA*, 27 July 2007, http://www.almotamar.net/47119.htm (Accessed 5 August 2009).
73. *Al-Ra'i*, 19 May 2007.
74. *All4syria*, 8 July 2009, http://all4syria.info/content/view/11194/113/ (Accessed 10 July 2009).
75. *Al-Hayat*, 25 February 2007.
76. "Dirāsāt Qur'āniyya" [Koranic Studies], *Syrian National Television*, 10 January 2007.
77. *Akhbar al-Sharq*, 11 January 2007 (dead link).
78. *Al-Jazeera*, 9 February 2007.
79. Ibid.
80. *Amaliyyat al-tashayyu' fī Sūriyya 1985–2006: Dirāsa ijtimā'iyya—ihsā'iyya* [The Process of Shiitization in Syria, 1985–2006: a Sociological and Statistical Study], s.l., 2006.
81. *Al-ba'th al-shī'ī*, pp. 126–7.
82. *ADN Kronos International*, 3 January 2008.
83. *All4Syria*, 4 July 2009, http://all4syria.info/content/view/11070/113/ (Accessed 14 September 2009).
84. *Mirsad Suriyya*, 3 March 2010, http://www.syriahr.com/9–3–2010-syrian%20observatory12.htm (Accessed 5 March 2010).
85. *All4Syria*, 23 May 2010, http://all4syria.info/content/view/26667/113/ (Accessed 2 August 2010).

7. THE STRUGGLE FOR CITIZENSHIP OF THE SHIITES OF SAUDI ARABIA

1. Toby Jones, "Saudi Arabia's not so New Anti-Shi'ism", *Middle East Report*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2007, p. 29; Maximillian Terhalle, "Are the Shia Rising?", *Middle East Policy*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2007, p. 69.
2. Stéphane Lacroix, "Between Islamist and Liberals: Saudi Arabia's New 'Islamo-Liberal' Reformists," *Middle East Journal*, vol. 58, no. 3 (summer 2004), pp. 356–8.
3. Fouad Ibrahim, *The Shi'is of Saudi Arabia*, London & San Francisco: Saqi Books, 2006.
4. Ibid. pp. 17–8; International Crisis Group (ICG), *The Shiite Question in Saudi Arabia*, *Middle East Report* no. 45, 19 September 2005, p. 1; Toby Jones, "The Iraq Effect in Saudi Arabia", *Middle East Report*, vol. 35, no. 4, 2005, p. 21. The relative number of Shiites in Saudi Arabia seems quite stable, judging from older estimates. See Jacob Goldberg, "The Shi'i Minority in Saudi Arabia" in Juan R. I. Cole & Nikki R. Keddie (eds), *Shi'ism and Social Protest*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1986, p. 230.

5. The origin of the name "Nakhawila" is unclear but has likely been derived from the Arabic word *nakhl/nakhla* or *nakhil* (date palm) because the Shiites are said to have worked in the palm groves surrounding Medina. For a detailed analysis of the name, see Werner Ende, "The *Nakhawila*, a Shiites Community in Medina: Past and Present", *Die Welt des Islams*, vol. 37, no. 3, 1997, pp. 293–8.
6. Laurence Louër, *Transnational Shia Politics: Religious and Political Networks in the Gulf*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2008, pp. 12–5.
7. Ibid. pp. 15–21.
8. The early period of Saudi history has been described in many publications. See, for instance, Madawi al-Rasheed, *A History of Saudi Arabia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 15–23; George S. Rentz, *The Birth of the Islamic Reform Movement in Saudi Arabia*, London: Arabian Publishing Ltd., 2004; Alexei Vassiliev, *The History of Saudi Arabia*, London: Saqi Books, 2000 [1998], pp. 81–8.
9. The ideas of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab are rooted in the broader and longer tradition referred to as Salafism. We refer to Salafis as those Muslims who claim to adhere to a pure and unadulterated form of Islam that is supposedly based on the lives of the first three generations of Islam, the pious predecessors (*al-salaf al-salih*, hence the name Salafis). The best publications on Salafism and its ideological tenets are Roel Meijer (ed.), *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, London/New York: Hurst/Columbia University Press, 2009; Bernard Rougier (ed.), *Qu'est-ce que le salafisme?*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2008.
10. Goldberg, "Shi'i", pp. 231–2; Ibrahim, *Shi'is*, pp. 22–3.
11. Joshua Teitelbaum, "The Shiites of Saudi Arabia", in Hillel Fradkin, Husain Haqqani, Eric Brown & Hassan Mneimeh (eds), *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, vol. 10, Washington, D.C.: Hudson Institute, 2010, pp. 73–4.
12. Ibid. p. 74; Guido Steinberg, 'Jihadi-Salafism and the Shi'is: Remarks about the Intellectual Roots of anti-Shi'ism', in Roel Meijer (ed.), *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement*, London/New York: Hurst/Columbia University Press, 2009, p. 113. The term *rafida* or *rawâfid* is much older than Wahhabism, however, and is said to have been applied to specific groups of Shiites before becoming a negative designation of the whole Shiite sect.
13. Goldberg, "Shi'i", p. 232.
14. Ibid.; Harry St. John Philby, *Saudi Arabia*, Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1968 [1955], p. 93.
15. Goldberg, 'Shi'i', p. 233.
16. Guido Steinberg, "The Shiites in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia (Al-Ahsa'), 1913–1953" in Rainer Brunner & Werner Ende (eds), *The Twelvers Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture & Political History*, Leiden: Brill, 2001, pp. 236–8.
17. Ibid. pp. 245–52.

18. Louër, *Transnational*, pp. 40–2.
19. Ibrahim, *Shi'is*, pp. 32–5.
20. For more on these and other organizations and their development, see Ibrahim, *Shi'is*, pp. 73–208. See also ICG, *Shiite*, pp. 2–4.
21. Ibrahim, *Shi'is*, pp. 99–101.
22. Ibid. p. 117. For an in-depth analysis of this uprising, see Toby Craig Jones, "Rebellion on the Saudi Periphery: Modernity, Marginalization, and the Shi'a Uprising in 1979", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2006, pp. 213–33. On the influence of the revolution in Iran, Jones points out (p. 215) that "although the symbolic power of Iran was central [...] the 1979 uprising reflected the convergence of external factors with specifically local grievances and objectives".
23. Ibid. p. 109.
24. Steinberg, "Jihadi-Salafism", pp. 115–6; Joas Wagemakers, "Soennitische islamisten en de erfenis van de Islamitische Revolutie" [Sunnite Islamists and the Heritage of the Islamic Revolution], *ZemZem: Tijdschrift over het Midden-Oosten, Noord-Afrika en islam*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2008, p. 57.
25. Jones, "Rebellion", pp. 227–9.
26. For instance, Hasan al-Saffar is quoted in Ibrahim, *Shi'is*, p. 125, as saying that the "Islamic revolution is a religious duty on all Muslims" in *Kalimat al-haraka al-islamiyya fi-l-Jazira al-'Arabiyya*, Islamic Revolution Organization, London, 1993, p. 30. An article in the magazine of the IRO, stated, "The contradiction between people and government could not be eliminated without removal of the infidel government." (quoted Ibrahim, *Sh'is*, p. 129). There is, however, a basic tension in the ideas of the leaders as revolution does not have to be a violent overthrow of a regime but can also mean a cultural revolution (Ibrahim, *Sh'is*, p. 128).
27. Ibrahim, *Shi'is*, pp. 143–55.
28. See for more on this topic Roel Meijer, "Towards a Political Islam", *Clingendael Diplomacy Papers*, no. 22, July 2009.
29. Stéphane Lacroix, "Between Islamists and Liberals: Saudi Arabia's New Islamo-Liberal Reformists," *The Middle East Journal*, Summer 2004, vol. 58, no. 3, pp. 345–365.
30. Hasan Musa al-Saffar, *al-Ta'addudiyya wa-l-hurriyya fi-l-islam: bahth hawl hurriyya al-mu'taqad wa-ta'addud al-madhahib* (Pluralism and freedom in Islam: The search for freedom, belief and pluralism of the schools of jurisprudence), Beirut: Dar al-Manhal, second print 1996/ first print, 1989.
31. Hasan Musa al-Saffar, *al-Madhhab wa-l-watan: Mukashafat wa-hiwarat sariha ma' simaha al-shaykh Hasan al-Saffar ajraha ustahd 'Abd al-'Aziz Qasim* (School of jurisprudence and the nation: Revelations and clear debates with His Eminence shaykh Hasan al-Saffar), Qatif: Dar al-Kifah, 1st print 2005, 2nd print 2008.

32. Ibid. p. 97. For a detailed exposé of al-Mudarrasi's ideas and the MVM, see Fuad Ibrahim, 75ff.
33. Toby Matthiesen, "Hizbullah al-Hijaz: A History of the Most Radical Saudi Shi'a Opposition Group," *Middle East Journal*, vol. 64, no. 2, (Spring 2010), pp. 18–21.
34. Hasan Musa al-Saffar, *al-Salafiyyun wa-l-Shi'a nahwa 'alaqat afdal* (The Salafis and the Shiites towards better relations), al-Qatif, Atyaf li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzi ', Beirut: Dar al-Waha li-l-Taba 'a wa-l-Nashr, first print, January 2004/ Qatif: Atyaf li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzi', 2nd print 2007, p. 29.
35. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Ta'addudiyya wa-l-hurriyya fi-l-islam: bahth hawl hurriyya al-mu'taqad wa-ta'addud al-madhahib* (Pluralism and freedom in Islam: The search for freedom, belief and pluralism of the schools of jurisprudence), Beirut: Dar al-Manhal, second print 1996/ first print, 1989, p. 54.
36. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Ta'addudiyya wa-l-hurriyya fi-l-islam* (Pluralism and freedom in Islam), p. 70.
37. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Ahadiyya al-fikriyya fi al-saha al-diniyya* (Enclosement of the mind in the field of religion), Beirut: al-Dar al-'Arabiyya li-l-Ulum Nashirun, 2008, first print, pp. 46, and 63.
38. For praise of the National Dialogue, see Hasan Musa al-Saffar, *al-Madhhab wa-l-watan: Mukashafat wa-hiwarat sariha ma' simaha al-shaykh Hasan al-Saffar ajraha ustahd 'Abd al-'Aziz Qasim* (School of jurisprudence and the nation: Revelations and clear debates with His Eminence shaykh Hasan al-Saffar), Qatif: Dar al-Kifah, second print 2008/ first print 2005, pp. 27 and 45; Muhammad Mahfuz, *al-Hiwar wa-l-wahda al-wataniyya fi-l-mamlaka al-'Arabiyya al-Sa 'udiyya* (Debate and national unity in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia), London: Dar al Saqi, 2004, pp. 50 and 54–8; Muhammad Mahfuz, *Tariq ila al-tasamuh* (The road to tolerance), al-Khobar: Salman Group, first print 2009, p. 10; Muhammad Mahfuz, *Didd al-ta'ifiyya: awraq fi al-'alaqat bayn al-ta'duddiyya al-madhhabiyya wa-l-muwatana* (Against sectarianism: Documents on the relationship between the plurality of the schools of jurisprudence and citizenship), Beirut/ Casablanca: al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-'Arabi, 2009, first print, pp. 117–8.
39. See especially the books: DT, 117 and for the Riyad attacks, Muhammad Mahfuz, *al-Hiwar wa-l-wahda al-wataniyya* (Debate and national unity), pp. 132, 135–6.
40. This petition is available in Arabic on www.aljazeera.net under the title *Nass wathiqat 'shuraka' fi l-watan'* (Text on the participants in the nation). An English translation can be found in Ibrahim, *Shi'is*, pp. 257–62.
41. Teitelbaum, 'Shiites', pp. 79–80.
42. For the optimistic books see, Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Salafiyyun wa-l-Shi'a* (Salafis and the Shi'ism), pp. 49–50 and Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Mushkil al-ta'ifi wa-l-mas'uliyya al-wataniyya* (The problem of sectarianism and national responsibility), al-Qatif: Atyaf li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzi', 2005, p. 23.

43. For a good overview of the demands of the Saudi Spring, see *Rabi' al-Sa'udiyya wa-makhrajat al-qam': Da'at al-islah al-siyasi* (The Saudi spring and the results of repression: An appeal for political reform), Beirut: Dar al-Kunuz al-Adabiyya, 2004.
44. Already in 2007 Zaydi thinker Zayd bin 'Ali al-Fadil was skeptical that national dialogue will lead to political reform. See Zayd bin 'Ali al-Fadil, "al-Hiwar bayn al-mashhad al-madhhabi wa-l-thaqafi fi al-mamlaka: humumuhu wa-ghayatuhu," (Debate between the assembly of a school of jurisprudence and an intellectual in the kingdom: its importance and absence) in Muhammad Mahfiz (ed.), *al-Hiwar al-Madhhabi fi al-Mamlaka al-'Arabiyya al-Sa'udiyya: Ru'ya mutannaw'a* (The debate between the schools of jurisprudence in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia: A diversity of opinions), p. 23. See also the contribution of the Shiite scholar from Medina, Fahd Ibrahim Abu al-'Asari, in the same anthology, who stated that spirit of the national dialogue had "evaporated" by 2007 because the recommendations were never followed up, "al-Hiwar al-madhhabi al-waqi' wa-l-ma'mul" (The debate between the schools of jurisprudence, reality and the hoped for), p. 67.
45. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Ahadiyya al-fikriyya* (Enclosed minds), p. 14.
46. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Mushkil al-ta'ifi wa-l-mas'uliyya al-wataniyya* (The problem of sectarianism and the responsibility of the nation), pp. 19–20.
47. John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2005.
48. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Salafiyyun wa-l-Shi'a* (Salafis and Shiism), p. 48. See also Mahfuz, *didd al-ta'ifiyya* (Against sectarianism).
49. For references to sectarianism, see Hasan Musa al-Saffar, *al-Salafiyyun wa-l-Shi'a*, (Salafis and Shiism) p. 48; Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Mushkil al-ta'ifi wa-l-mas'uliyya al-wataniyya* (The problem of sectarianism and the responsibility of the nation), pp. 24–5; Muhammad Mahfuz, *Didd al-ta'ifiyya* (Against sectarianism), p. 35.
50. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Madhhab wa-l-watan* (School of jurisprudence and the nation), p. 148.
51. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Mushkil al-ta'ifi wa-l-mas'uliyya al-wataniyya* (The problem of sectarianism and the responsibility of the nation), pp. 37–8.
52. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Ta'addudiyya wa-l-hurriyya fi-l-islam* (Pluralism and freedom in Islam), p. 154. Although al-Saffar does not mention Salafism in this regard, it is obvious it refers to the Saudi establishment.
53. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Ta'addudiyya wa-l-hurriyya fi-l-islam* (Pluralism and freedom in Islam: The search for freedom, belief and pluralism of the schools of jurisprudence), p. 61.
54. Muhammad Mahfuz, *al-Hiwar wa-l-wahda al-wataniyya* (Debate and national unity), p. 99.
55. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Ta'addudiyya wa-l-hurriyya fi-l-islam* (Pluralism and freedom in Islam), p. 196.

56. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Ahadiyya al-fikriyya* (Enclosed minds), p. 24.
57. Muhammad Mahfuz, *al-Akhar wa-huquq al-muwatana* (The other and citizen rights), Jedda: Markaz al-Raya li-l-Tanmiya al-Fikriyya, 2005/6, p. 8; Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Ahadiyya al-fikriyya* (Enclosed minds), pp. 31–2; Hasan Musa al-Saffar, *al-Infitah bayn al-masalih wa-l-hawajis* (Openness between interests and ideas), al-Qatif: Atyaf li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzi', 2009, first print, p. 18.
58. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Mushkil al-ta'ifi wa-l-mas'uliyya al-wataniyya* (The problem of sectarianism and the responsibility of the nation), pp. 30–3; Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Madhhab wa-l-watan* (The school of jurisprudence and the nation), p. 135. For more on the concept of opening up, see Hasan al-Saffar pamphlet, *Infitah bayn al-masalih wa-l-hawajis* (Openness between interests and ideas), al-Qatif: Atyaf li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzi', 2009.
59. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Ta'addudiyya wa-l-hurriyya fi-l-islam* (Pluralism and freedom in Islam), p. 76.
60. Ibid. p. 143; Muhammad Mahfuz, *al-Akhar wa-huquq al-muwatana* (The other and citizenship rights), pp. 17–8; Muhammad Mahfuz, *Didd al-ta'ifiyya* (Against sectarianism), pp. 17–18.
61. Muhammad Mahfuz, *al-Akhar wa-huquq al-muwatana* (The other and citizenship rights), p. 32; Muhammad Mahfuz, *Tariq ila al-tasamuh* (The road to tolerance), p. 47.
62. Muhammad Mahfuz, *al-Akhar wa-huquq al-muwatana* (The other and citizenship rights), p. 36.
63. See also Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Ta'addudiyya wa-l-hurriyya fi-l-islam* (Pluralism and freedom in Islam), pp. 61–3.
64. Ibid. pp. 133–4, 137.
65. Ibid. p. 193.
66. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Ahadiyya al-fikriyya* (Enclosed minds), p. 61.
67. Ibid. pp. 61–2, 81.
68. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Ta'addudiyya wa-l-hurriyya fi-l-islam* (Pluralism and freedom in Islam), pp. 58, 60.
69. Muhammad Mahfuz, *al-Akhar wa-huquq al-muwatana* (The other and citizenship rights), p. 94.
70. Zayd bin 'Ali al-Fadil, "al-Hiwar bayn al-mashhad al-madhhabi wa-l-thaqafi fi al-mamlaka: humumuhu wa-ghayatuhu," in *al-Hiwar al-Madhhabi fi al-Mamlaka al-'Arabiyya al-Sa'udiyya: Ru'y mutannaw'a* (The debate between the schools of jurisprudence in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Diverse opinions), pp. 24–5.
71. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Ta'addudiyya wa-l-hurriyya fi-l-islam* (Pluralism and freedom in Islam), p. 138, 154.
72. Ibid. p. 162.
73. Muhammad Mahfuz, *Tariq ila al-tasamuh* (The road towards tolerance), pp. 19, 21, 35.

74. Muhammad Mahfuz, *al-Hiwar wa-l-wahda al-wataniyya* (The debate and national unity), p. 113.
75. Muhammad Mahfuz, *Didd al-ta'ifiyya* (Against sectarianism), p. 12; Muhammad Mahfuz, *Tariq ila al-tasamuh* (The road towards tolerance), p. 6.
76. *Turath*, the Islamic heritage, is mostly used as an inclusive concept that encompasses all aspects of Islamic cultural production, such as the *shari'a*, poetry, and architecture, but also Christianity and its culture. Here I use it to include the works of Ibn Taymiyya, which the reformists reject as part of the *turath* on utilitarian grounds.
77. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Salafiyyun wa-l-Shi'a* (Salafism and Shiism), p. 53.
78. This is a common theme in especially Muhammad Mahfuz' writings, Muhammad Mahfuz, *Tariq ila al-tasamuh* (The road towards tolerance), p. 13, Muhammad Mahfuz, *al-Akhar wa-huquq al-muwatana* (The other and citizenship rights), p. 121. But also of Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Ahadiyya al-fikriyya* (Enclosed minds), pp. 59–60.
79. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Ahadiyya al-fikriyya* (Enclosed minds), p. 65.
80. Muhammad Mahfuz, *Tariq ila al-tasamuh* (The road towards tolerance), pp. 7–8.
81. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Ta'addudiyya wa-l-hurriyya fi-l-islam* (Pluralism and freedom in Islam), p. 61.
82. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Salafiyyun wa-l-Shi'a* (Salafism and Shiism), p. 53.
83. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Ahadiyya al-fikriyya* (Enclosed minds), p. 43.
84. Muhammad Mahfuz, *al-Hiwar wa-l-wahda al-wataniyya* (The debate and national unity), pp. 99–100, 107, 113; Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Ta'addudiyya wa-l-hurriyya fi-l-islam*, p. 186; Muhammad Mahfuz, *Tariq ila al-tasamuh* (The road towards tolerance), pp. 30–34.
85. Muhammad Mahfuz, *al-Akhar wa-huquq al-muwatana* (The other and citizen rights), p. 98. Saudi counter-terrorism discourse also uses these terms, but in that case it is much less convincing as the programme is mainly executed by the Wahhabi clerical establishment. The main difference is that while the Wahhabi establishment is calling for more religion to combat terrorism and fanaticism, the Shiite reformers are calling for less, and are trying to find a common neutral ground.
86. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Ta'addudiyya wa-l-hurriyya fi-l-islam* (Pluralism and freedom in Islam), p. 190, and Muhammad Mahfuz, *al-Hiwar wa-l-wahda al-wataniyya* (Debate and national unity), pp. 132–6; Muhammad Mahfuz, *al-Akhar wa-huquq al-muwatana* (The other and citizenship rights), pp. 8–9, 123–4; Muhammad Mahfuz, *Didd al-ta'ifiyya* (Against sectarianism), pp. 118–120.
87. He even calls it the "citizen's tax" (*dariba al-muwatana*), Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Ta'addudiyya wa-l-hurriyya fi-l-islam* (Pluralism and freedom in Islam), p. 71 and p. 87.
88. Muhammad Mahfuz, *al-Hiwar wa-l-wahda al-wataniyya* (The debate and national unity), pp. 66–7.

89. Ibid. pp. 137 and 168.
90. Muhammad Mahfuz, *al-Akhar wa-huquq al-muwatana* (The other and citizen rights), p. 4.
91. Ibid. p. 5.
92. Ibid.
93. Muhammad Mahfuz, *Didd al-ta'ifiyya* (Against sectarianism), pp. 35 and 134, and Muhammad Mahfuz, *Tariq ila al-tasamuh* (The road towards tolerance), p. 100.
94. Muhammad Mahfuz, *Didd al-ta'ifiyya* (Against sectarianism), p. 133.
95. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Madhhab wa-l-watan* (Schools of jurisprudence and the nation), p. 172.
96. Ja'far al-Shayib, "al-Mujtama ' al-madani wa-qadaya al-wahda al-wataniyya," (Civil society and the issue of national unity) in *al-Muwatana fi-l-wahda al-wataniyya fi al-Mamlaka al-'Arabiyya al-Sa'udiyya* (Citizenship and national unity in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia), Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Intishar al-'Arabi, 2008, pp. 163–76.
97. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Ahadiyya al-fikriyya* (Closed minds), pp. 15–6.
98. Ibid. p. 19.
99. Muhammad Mahfuz, *Didd al-ta'ifiyya* (Against sectarianism), p. 98.
100. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Madhhab wa-l-watan* (The school of jurisprudence and the nation), p. 133 and p. 135, Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Salafiyyun wa-l-Shi'a* (Salafism and Shiism), p. 45 Hasan al-Saffar, *Al-mushkil al-ta'ifi wa-l-mas'uliyya al-wataniyya* (The problem of sectarianism and the issue of nationalism), p. 37; Muhammad Mahfuz, *Didd al-ta'ifiyya* (Against sectarianism), pp. 11–12, 122.
101. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Madhhab wa-l-watan* (The schools of jurisprudence and the nation), p. 132; Muhammad Mahfuz, *Didd al-ta'ifiyya*, (Against sectarianism), p. 117.
102. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Madhhab wa-l-watan* (The school of jurisprudence and the nation), p. 135; Muhammad Mahfuz, *Tariq ila al-tasamuh* (The road towards tolerance), p. 36.
103. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Mushkil al-ta'ifi wa-l-mas'uliyya al-wataniyya*, p. 36; Muhammad Mahfuz, *al-Akhar wa-huquq al-muwatana* (The other and citizenship rights), p. 19, and Muhammad Mahfuz, *Didd al-ta'ifiyya* (Against sectarianism), p. 72; Muhammad Mahfuz, *Tariq ila al-tasamuh* (The road towards tolerance), p. 36.
104. Muhammad Mahfuz, *Didd al-ta'ifiyya* (Against sectarianism), p. 72, in Fahd Ibrahim Abu al-'Asari, "al-Hiwar al-madhhabi: al-waqi' wa-l-ma'mul," (The debate of the schools of jurisprudence: reality and the hoped for) in Muhammad Mahfiz (ed.), *al-Hiwar al-Madhhabi fi Mamlaka al-'Arabiyya al-Sa'udiyya: Ru'y mutanawwa'* (The debate between the schools of jurisprudence in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Diverse opinions), al-Qatif: Atyaf li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzi', 2007, p. 60.

105. Muhammad Mahfiz (ed.), *al-Hiwar al-Madhhabi fi Mamlaka al-'Arabiyya al-Sa'udiyya: Ru'ya mutanawwa'* (The debate between the schools of jutisprudence in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Diverse opinions), al-Qatif: Atyaf li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzi', 2007, p. 59.
106. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Madhhab wa-l-watan* (Schools of jurisprudence and the nation), p. 135; Muhammad Mahfuz, *al-Akhar wa-huquq al-muwatana* (The other and citizenship rights), p. 36.
107. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Mushkil al-ta'ifi wa-l-mas'uliyya al-wataniyya* (The problem of sectarianism and National responsibility), p. 37.
108. Muhammad Mahfuz, *al-Akhar wa-huquq al-muwatana* (The other and citizenship rights), p. 53.
109. Ibid. p. 98; Muhammad Mahfuz, *Didd al-ta'ifiyya* (Against sectarianism), p. 73.
110. Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Ahadiyya al-fikriyya* (Closed minds), pp. 43–5; Hasan al-Saffar, *al-Infitah bayn al-masalih wa-l-hawajis* (Openness between interests and ideas), al-Qatif: Atyaf li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzi ', 2009, 1st print, pp. 22–3.
111. ICG, *Shiite*, pp. 9–10.
112. Michaela Prokop, "Education in Saudi Arabia: The Challenge of Reforming the System and Adapting the Message", *Orient*, vol. 43, no. 4, 2002, p. 568; idem, "Saudi Arabia: The Politics of Education", *International Affairs*, vol. 79, no. 1, 2003, p. 81; idem, "The War of Ideas: Education in Saudi Arabia" in Paul Aarts & Gerd Nonneman (eds), *Saudi Arabia in the Balance: Political Economy, Society, Foreign Affairs*, London: Hurst, 2005, p. 68.
113. Jones, "Saudi", pp. 29–31.
114. *Gulf Times*, 5 August 2006.
115. These groups have not been a significant factor for more than a decade, however. For more on them, see Toby Matthiesen, "Hizbullah al-Hijaz: A History of the Most Radical Saudi Shi'a Opposition Group", *Middle East Journal*, vol. 64, no. 2, 2010, pp. 179–97; Joshua Teitelbaum, *Holier than Thou: Saudi Arabia's Islamic Opposition*, Washington, D.C.: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000, pp. 83–98.
116. Jones, "Iraq", p. 21.
117. Ibid. p. 23.
118. Toby Matthiesen, "The Shi'a of Saudi Arabia at a Crossroads", *Middle East Report Online*, http://www.merip.org, 2009. For a more recent example, see *Rasid*, www.rasid.com, 17 January 2011.
119. Human Rights Watch, *Looser Rein, Uncertain Gain: A Human Rights Assessment of Five Years of King Abdullah's Reforms in Saudi Arabia*, http://www.hrw.org, 2010, pp. 38–41.
120. Several sermons by Muhammad al-Urayfi in which he speaks in similar terms on Shiites and al-Sistani can be found on YouTube. See, for example, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=opPM_6ihq3M

121. The term "Magian" refers to the priestly cast of the Zoroastrian religion with which Shiites are sometimes compared or even equated by Wahhabi scholars. The Arabic term *majus* is more often used to indicate this. Both *zindiq* and *fajir* are probably references to Shiites' religious rituals, which are seen as deviant and as forms of superstition by some Wahhabis.
122. *Al-Jazeera*, 30 January 2010; *Al-Madina*, 18 January 2010; *Al-Riyad*, 21 January 2010; *Ukaz*, 6 January 2010.
123. *Rasid*, http://www.rasid.com, 7 January 2010.
124. *Al-Arab*, 8 January 2010.
125. *Al-Watan*, 17 January 2010.
126. *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, 21 January 2010.
127. *Al-Ittihad*, 17 and 27 January 2010.
128. *Al-Hayat*, 28 January 2010; *Al-Ittihad*, 18 January 2010; *Al-Jazeera*, 16 February 2010.
129. *Al-Arab*, 8 January 2010; *Ukaz*, 6 and 10 January 2010.
130. *Ukay*, 25 January 2010. For more on al-Sayf's ideas on citizenship, see for instance his interview with the satellite channel Al-Jazeera, which can be read on the website of *Rasid* (http://www.rasid.com), 3 December 2010.
131. *Al-Watan*, 29 January 2010.
132. *Al-Watan*, 1 February 2010.
133. For an analysis of a similar debate between liberals and Salafi conservative critics on the separation between sexes, see Roel Meijer, "Reform in Saudi Arabia: The Gender Segregation Debate," *Middle East Policy*, vol. 17, no. 4 (Winter 2010), pp. 80–100.
134. *Al-Arab*, 29 January 2010.
135. *Al-Madina*, 27 December 2010.
136. *Rasid*, http://www.rasid.com, 24 and 27 December 2010.
137. Ibid. 30 December 2010.
138. Ibid. 25 and 28 December 2010.
139. Ibid. 27 December 2010.
140. Ibid. 29 December 2010.
141. Ibid. 31 December 2010.
142. Ibid.
143. Ibid. 5 January 2011.
144. Ibid. 14 January 2011; *Al-Madina*, 14 January 2011.

8. SUNNIS AND SHIITES IN IRAN SINCE 1979: CONFRONTATIONS, EXCHANGES, CONVERGENCES

1. Suffice it to mention the chapter by Farian Sabahi in the present volume. In recent years, new interest in Sunnite movements in modern-day Iran has mainly focused on specific regions, with special attention for Kurdistan in the west and

Baluchistan in the east. The two contributions on the Sunnis of Iran in the present volume are, to the best of the author's knowledge, among the very first academic attempts at assessing Sunnite Islam as a distinct category within modern and contemporary Iran. See also, Stéphane A. Dudoignon, 2009b. "Un sunnisme iranien? Marginalité et centralité des renouveaux sunnites du xxe siècle en Iran oriental." Paper to the colloquium *Trente ans de république islamique, et puis après?*, Free University of Brussels, 5–6 March, 2009.

2. On the continuation of Safavid coercive conversion campaigns until the early seventeenth century, see in particular: Rosemary Stanfield Johnson, "Sunni Survival in Safavid Iran: Anti-Sunni Activities under the Reign of Tahmasp I." *Iranian Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1–4, 1997, pp. 123–4 ; for an example for a possible regionalised approach: 'Abd al-Wadud Sipahi, "Baluchistan dar manabi'-i safawiyya [Baluchistan in Safavid Sources]", *Haft iqlim* (Zahedan) 9, 2004, pp. 19–25; for a tentative assessment of the available primary sources of the twentieth century, and of the bibliography, see Stéphane A. Dudoignon, "Zahedan vs. Qom? L'émergence du Baloutchistan d'Iran comme foyer de droit hanafite sous la monarchie Pahlavi" in Denise Aigle, Isabelle Charleux, Vincent Goossaert, Roberte N. Hamayon (eds), *Misceallanea Internae Asia: Frestschrift in Honour of Françoise Aubin*, Sankt-Augustin: Monumenta serica, 2010a, pp. 278–290.
3. Expressed notably by the *kulah-i nadiri*, a four-peak ornamented hat symbolising the Four Righteous Caliphs; on Nadir Shah's religious policy, especially after the signature of the null and void 1746 treaty with the Ottoman Empire recognising the conversion of Iran to Sunnite Islam, see allusions by Riza Sha'bani, *Mukhtasar-i Tarikh-i Iran dar dawraha-yi Afshariyya wa Zandiyya* [An Abridged History of Iran in the Afshar and Zand Periods], Teheran: Sukhan, 1999, pp. 324–8, 355–67; Ernest S. Tucker, "Nadir Shah and the Ja'fari Madhhab Reconsidered." *Iranian Studies* 27/1–4, 1994, pp. 175–8, Michael Axworthy, *The Sword of Persia: Nader Shah, from Tribal Warrior to Conquering Tyrant*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2006.
4. Oral testimonies to the author by members of the teaching staff in the Ahmadiyya Madrasa of Turbat-i Jam, December 2005.
5. Though, paradoxically, Twelver Shiite Qizil-Bash Kurds have been playing a leading role in the establishment and in the preservation of Ottoman domination in the region from the early sixteenth-century onwards: see the astute synthetic historical remarks by Martin van Bruinessen, *The Kurds and Islam*, Tokyo: Islamic Area Studies Project (Working Papers: 13), 1999, pp. 17–8.
6. See van Bruinessen, 1999, p. 20 and Dudoignon 2010a, chapter 1.
7. Ghulam-'Ali, Ariya, *Tariqa-yi chishtiyya dar Hind u Pakistan wa khadamat-i payrawan-i in taraqa ba farhang-i islami wa irani* [The Chishtiyya in India and Pakistan, and the Services Given by the Great Figureheads of this Path to the Iranian Islamic Culture]. *s.l.*: Kitabfurushi-yi Zuwwar, 1986.

8. Marie Ladier-Fouladi, *Iran: un monde de paradoxes*, Nantes: L'Atalante (Comme un accordéon), 2009, pp. 164–5.
9. In most studies on elections, the poor results of the conservatives in the country's periphery, from 1993 to 2009, are attributed to general disappointment ahead of durable underdevelopment, or slow reconstruction after the war with Iraq. The participation of Sunnite religious clerics in the campaigns is never mentioned, and nor are the promises of some candidates in terms of confessional rights. See for instance Ladier-Fouladi, *Iran: un monde de paradoxes*: p. 242, 255–6, 261–2, 268, 289–92, and the tables pp. 343–5 about the presidential election of June 2005.
10. The Kurdish-peopled southern regions of Ilam and Kermanshah, predominantly Shiite, are generally credited by most observers with loyalty to the Islamic Republic.
11. Historical reminders, notably on the Jaf tribal chiefs, in Nader Entessar, "The Kurds in Post-Revolutionary Iran and Iraq," *Third World Quarterly* 6/4, 1984, p. 923; on the general evolution of relations between tribes and state in twentieth-century Iran, see notably Stephanie Cronin, "Re-Interpreting Modern Iran: Tribe and State in the Twentieth Century," *Iranian Studies* 42/3, 2009, pp. 357–88. For an Iranian political science approach, see for instance Akbar Khwaja, "Qawmiyatha wa jaygah-i hukumat-i markazi dar Iran [Kinships and the Rank of the Central Government in Iran]," *Haft Iqlim* (Zahedan), 2003, pp. 7–8, 49–51.
12. Martin van Bruinessen, "Irans Koerden en de islamitische revolutie" in *De Iraanse Revolutie: Achtergronden*. Nijmegen: MOI (MOI-publicatie: 5), 1980, pp. 95–120; Martin van Bruinessen, *The Kurds and Islam*, pp. 33–4; Nader Entessar,"The Kurds in Post-Revolutionary Iran and Iraq...", 1984, pp. 924–928.
13. On Husayni see the apologetic blog http://www.mijoo4.blogfa.com/ and its numerous links; also Shaikh Izzedin Husseini, 1983, "A Dictatorship under the Name of Islam"; Interview with Fred Halliday, *MERIP Reports* 113: 9–10.
14. Martin van Bruinessen, "Kurdischer Nationalismus und Sunni-Shi'i Konflikt" in Kurt Greussing (ed.), *Geschichte und Politik religiöser Bewegungen im Iran*, Frankfurt: Syndikat, 1981, pp. 372–409; Martin van Bruinessen, "The Kurds between Iran and Iraq," *MERIP Middle East Report* 141, 1986, pp. 14–27; Soheila, Ghaderi-Mameri, "The Kurds in the Islamic Republic: A Survey" in Michel Korinman and John Laughland (eds), *Shia Power: Next Target Iran?* Edgware, MDX: Mitchell Valentine & Co, 2007, pp. 251–63.
15. About the Rigi tribe of the Sarhadd region of Iranian Baluchistan, bordering upon British India then Pakistan, and about this tribe's strategy under the Qajar and Pahlavi dynasties from the 1890s to the 1970s (especially under British military presence in the region from WWI to WWII), see notably, Iraj Afshar-Sistani, *'Ashayir wa tawayif-i Sistan u Baluchistan* [Tribes and Clans of Sistan

and Baluchistan], Teheran: Mu'assisa-yi intisharati wa amuzishi-yi, 2001; Nasl-i danish & Paul Titus, "Political Alignment of Baluchi Sardars in Relation to the Government of Pakistan", *Newsletter of Baluchistan Studies* 7, 1990, pp. 59–67.

16. Sima Sultani, 1998, *Zahidan* [Zahedan], 1: *Paydayish-i shahr* [The Appearance of the City], Zahedan: Sazman-i barnama wa budja-yi Sistan u Baluchistan, 1998, Hassan Afrakhteh, "Social, Demographic and Cultural Change in Iranian Balochistan: Case Studies on the Three Urban Regions of Zahedan, Iranshahr, and Chabahar" in Carina Jahani, Agnes Korn, Paul Titus (eds), *The Baloch and Others: Linguistic, Historical and Socio-Political Perspectives on Pluralism in Baluchistan*, Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2008, pp. 197–224; Qasim Siyasar, *Ta'rikh-i paydayish-i shahr-i Zahidan (Faraz u furud-i Zahidan)* [A History of the Appearance of the City of Zahedan (The Rise and Fall of a City)], Zahedan: Intisharat-i Taftan, 2003.
17. Vahe Boyajian-Sureniants, "Notes on the Religious Landscape of Iranian Baluchistan (Observations from the Sarhadd Region)", *Iran and the Caucasus* 8/2, 2004, pp. 199–213. Hoshang Noraiee, "Change and Continuity: Power and Religion in Iranian Baluchistan" in Carina Jahani, Agnes Korn, Paul Titus (eds), *The Baloch and Others: Linguistic, Historical and Socio-Political Perspectives on Pluralism in Baluchistan*, Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2008, pp. 345–64.
18. Dudoignon, *Zahedan vs. Qom?* Chapter 5.
19. Barbara M. Metcalf, *'Traditionalist' Islamic Activism: Deoband, Tablighis, and Talibs*, Leiden: ISIM (ISIM Papers), 2002; Marc Gaborieau, *Un autre islam: Inde, Pakistan, Bangladesh*, Paris, Albin Michel, 2007; Sana Haroon, "The Rise of Deobandi Islam in the North-West Frontier Province and Its Implications in Colonial India and Pakistan 1914–1996", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 18/1, 2008, pp. 47–70.
20. Charles H. Kennedy, "Jam'īyatul 'Ulamā'-i Islām" in John L. Esposito (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, New York—Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 2, pp. 364–5; Barbara M. Metcalf, *'Traditionalist' Islamic Activism*, 2002, p. 7.
21. Barbara M. Metcalf, *'Traditionalist' Islamic Activism*, 2002, p. 7; Marc Gaborieau, *Un autre islam*, 2007; Mumtaz Ahmad, "Tablīghī Jamā'at" in John L. Esposito (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Modern Islamic World*, New York—Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 4, pp. 165–9; Yoginder, Sikand, *The Origins and Development of the Tablighi Jama'at (1920–2000): A Cross-Country Comparative Study*, Hyderabad (India): Orient Longman, 2002.
22. Philip Salzman, *Black Tents of Baluchistan*, Washington—London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000, pp. 341–345.
23. *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 1908, Provincial Series, *Baluchistan*, Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing, p. 82
24. 'Abd-Allah Nasiri, *Farhang-i mardum-i baluch* [The Culture of Baluch People],

s.l.: s.n., 1979, pp. 76–78; Muhammad-Siddiq Dihwari, *Sarawan, shukuh-i gudhashta* [Sarawan, Splendour of the Past], Sarawan: Andisha-yi Khallaq, in association with the Khalid b. Walid Bookstore, 2005, pp. 86–87.

25. Sabir Badalkhan, "Zikri Dilemmas: Origins, Religious Practices, and Political Constraints" in Carina Jahani, Agnes Korn, Paul Titus (eds), *The Baloch and Others: Linguistic, Historical and Socio-Political Perspectives on Pluralism in Balochistan*, Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2008, pp. 293–326.
26. "Of Mecca," a place where Mawlana 'Abd al-'Aziz spent several years in his youth, an exceptional feature in the life of a scholar from Iranian Baluchistan.
27. See for instance the recently edited text "Sukhanrani-yi Mawlana 'Abd al-'Aziz Mullazada (r.A.) dar Majlis-i Tadwin-i Qanun-i islami [A Discourse by the Late Mawlana 'Abd al-'Aziz Mullazada at the Islamic Constituent Assembly]," *Nida-yi islam* (Zahedan) 6/1 [21], spring 1384/spring 2005, pp. 4–5.
28. For an apologetic reappraisal within the Deobandi trend: 'Abd al-Basat Buzurgzada, "Wahdat-i shi'a wa sunni dar guftar-i Mawlana 'Abd al-'Aziz *r.A.* [The Union of Shiites and Sunnis in the Discourse of the Late Mawlana 'Abd al-'Aziz]," *Nida-yi islam* 6/2–3 [16], summer-autumn 1384/summer-autumn 2005, pp. 14–16; Muhammad-Riza Hakimi, "Munadiyan-i taqrib-i madhahib-i islami (4) [The Heralds of a Rapprochement of Islamic Rites (4)]," *Haft Iqlim* (Zahedan 7–8, 1382/2003), pp. 14–24.
29. E.g. Mawlawi Ghulam Sarwar, "Ittihad-i salibi wa luzum-i wahdat-i jahan-i islam [The Crusaders' Coalition and the Necessity of the Union of the World of Islam]," *Nida-yi islam* special issue, Mihr 1382/Rajab1424[/Ocotober 2003], pp. 28–34.
30. See for instance the recent stencilled lampoon, now in circulation in London among the tiny Iranian Baluch émigré community, by Mawlana 'Abd al-Rahim Mullazada, *Wirangiriha-yi tashayyu' dar islam wa naqsh-i yahud dar tahrif-i an* [The Provocations of Shiism in Islam and the Trace of the Jew in Its Falsification], London: s.n., s.d. [*c.* 2009].
31. 'Abd al-Ghani Damani, *Sima-yi tarikhi-yi Baluchistan* [A Historical Portrait of Baluchistan], Teheran: Pasargad, 2001, pp. 298–299.
32. Stéphane A. Dudoignon, "Un *mawlawi* contre les pasdaran?" *La pensée de midi*, 2009, p. 27, pp. 92–100.
33. On this event, see for instance "Musahiba ba Mawlana 'Abd al-Ghani Badri mu'awinat-i amuzishi-yi Dar al-'Ulum-i Zahidan [Conversation with Mawlana 'Abd al-Ghani Badri, the Vice-Rector for Teaching Affairs of the House of Learning of Zahedan]," *Nida-yi islam* special issue, Mihr 1382/Rajab 1424[/October 2003], pp. 20–2.
34. See for instance: Mawlawi 'Abd al-Ghafur Dawrani, "Hamayish-i marasim-i farigh al-tahsili-yi tullab-i Dar al-'Ulum-i Zahidan ba huzur-i Mawlana Mufti Muhammad-Rafi' 'Uthmani, mufti-yi a'zam-i Pakistan wa ra'is-i Dar al-'Ulum-

i Karachi [An Account of the Celebrations of the Graduation of the Students of the House of Learning of Zahedan, in the Presence of Mawlana Mufti Muhammad-Rafi' 'Uthmani, the Chief Mufti of Pakistan and the Chairman of the House of Learning of Karachi]," *Nida-yi islam* 5/3 [19], autumn 1383/ autumn 2004, pp. 52–4.

35. Audun K. Wiig, *Islamist Opposition in the Islamic Republic: Jundullah and the Spread of Extremist Deobandism*, Oslo: s.n., 2009, pp. 24–30.
36. See for instance the anonymous chronicle "Si nafar ba ittiham-i dakhalat dar bumb-gudhari-yi Zahidan i'dam shudand [Three Men Hanged on the Accusation of Participation in the Bombing in Zahedan]," on the website of the Dar al-'Ulum "Makki": http://www.sunnionline.com (Khurdad 9, 1388/30 May 2009), photo from the official Iranian press agency IRNA: the text is a short evocation of the public execution of three Baluch men for their alleged participation in the attack against the 'Ali b. Abi-Talib Shiite Mosque, the main Shiite shrine of the city of Zahedan, in April 2009.
37. Marie Ladier-Fouladi, *Iran: un monde de paradoxes*, 2009, pp. 261–262.
38. Stéphane A. Dudoignon, "Sunnis online: The Sunni Confessional Internet in Iran", *Asiatische Studien/Etudes asiatiques* 63, 2009, p. 1, pp. 29–66.
39. Marie Ladier-Fouladi, 2009, *Iran: un monde de paradoxes*, p. 262.
40. Notably during the Guide's visits to Kurdistan, for instance in May 2009 in the immediate aftermath of the Jund-Allah's attack against the 'Ali b. Abi Talib Shiite Mosque of Zahedan in Sistan and Baluchistan: see: http://www2.irna.ir/fr/news/view/line-96/0905201671193257.htm

9. IRAN, IRANIAN MEDIA AND SUNNITE ISLAM

1. On Jundullah see Audun Kolstad Wiig, *Islamist opposition in the Islamic Republic. Jundullah and the spread of extremist Deobandism in Iran*, published by the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI), 2 July 2009. Available online: http://rapporter.ffi.no/rapporter/2009/01265.pdf
2. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10359415
3. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-11997679
4. http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm
5. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-10672780
6. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8312964.stm
7. Islamic Republic News Agency/IRNA NewsCode: 286597.
8. Farian Sabahi, "The White Tent programme: Tribal Education Under Muhammad Reza Shah" in Faleh A. Jabar and Hosham Dawod (eds), *Tribes and Power. Nationalism and Ethnicity in the Middle East*, London: Saqi, 2003, pp. 234–253. In this chapter the authors explain that "tribes are not always nomadic" and thus the terms tribes and nomads cannot be used as synonyms.

9. Abbas William Samii, "The nation and its minorities: ethnicity, unity and state policy in Iran", *Comparative studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 20, no. 1&2, 2000, p. 1. Available online: http://cssaame.com/issues/20/Samii.pdf
10. The term "Persian chauvinism" often recurs in news referring to the Azeri minority. See for instance Oqtay Atakhan, "Persian chauvinism is a reason of all pressures on Azerbaijani language" in Today.az, http://www.today.az/news/politics/48911.html
11. http://www.irna.ir/ENNewsShow.aspx?NID=30126716
12. Hamid Algar, "Religious forces in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Iran", *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 7, 1991, p. 729.
13. According to Samii, "The nation and its minorities: ethnicity, unity and state policy in Iran", p. 131 the rate is 10 per cent. See also the contribution by Stéphane Dudoignon in this volume.
14. Quoted by Stephen Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men. An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*, Hoboken: Wiley, 2003, p. 21. Also quoted by Sandra Mackey, *The Iranians, Persia, Islam, and the Soul of a Nation*, New York: Penguin Group, 1998, pp. 62–63.
15. Mangol Bayat-Philip, "Mirza Aqa Khan Kirmani: A Nineteenth Century Persian Nationalist" in Elie and Sylvia Kedourie (eds), *Towards a Modern Iran: Studies in Thought, Politics, and Society*, London: Frank Cass, 1980, p. 81.
16. http://www.iranonline.com/iran/iran-info/government/constitution-2.html (Accessed 5 May 2010).
17. Wiig, *Islamist opposition in the Islamic Republic. Jundullah and the spread of extremist Deobandism in Iran*, p. 12, and Samii, "The nation and its minorities: ethnicity, unity and state policy in Iran", p. 131.
18. Fathi al-Maraghi, *The Sunni Vote in Iran's Election. Who Would Iranian Sunnis Vote for?*, in http://www.islamonline.net/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_C&cid=1243825243243&pagename=Zone-English-Muslim_Affairs%2FMAELayout (Accessed 1 May 2010).
19. Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival*, New York-London: Norton, 2006, p. 225.
20. http://www.iranonline.com/iran/iran-info/government/constitution-9–1.html (Accessed 5 May 2010).
21. Minorities at Risk Project, *Chronology for Kurds in Iran*, 2004, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/469f38a5c.html (Accessed 3 May 2010).
22. On this topic see Annabelle and Gholam Khiabany, *Blogistan. The Internet and Politics in Iran*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2010.
23. Stéphane Dudoignon, "Sunni online. The Sunni confessional Internet in Iran", *Asiatische Studien*, vol. LXIII, no. 1, 2009, p. 63. See also the chapter "Sunni & Shiites in Iran since 1979: Confrontations, Exchanges, Convergences" in this volume.

24. Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982, pp. 536–7.
25. Nikki Keddie and Yann Richard, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006, p. 312.
26. http://iranfederal.org/en/?p=5 (Accessed 3 May 2010).
27. *Kayhan* (Teheran), 1 February. 1994; *Radio Tehran*, 1 February 1994. Quoted by David Menashri, *Post-revolutionary Politics in Iran. Religion, Society and Power*, London: Frank Cass Publisher, 2001, p. 123.
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29. On British support to the Arab Sheykh Khazal see Gavin R.G. Hambly, "The Pahlavi Autocracy: Riza Shah, 1921–1941", *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 7, 1991, p. 222.
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31. Busby Edwards, 1986, pp. 225–6.
32. Svante Cornell, "Iranian Azerbaijan: A Brewing Hotspot", http://southaz.blogspot.com/2008/03/iranian-azerbaijan-brewing-hotspot.html (Accessed 6 January 2011).
33. Juan Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2002, pp. 195–6.
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60. Mahmoud, 28 April 2010 (Accessed 1 May 2010).
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10. "IT'S JUST A SUNNI-SHI'A THING": SECTARIANISM AND TALIBANISM IN THE FATA (FEDERALLY ADMINISTERED TRIBAL AREAS) OF PAKISTAN

1. The seven tribal agencies which constitute FATA cover some 27,500 square kilometers on the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan and are home to over 3.5 million Pashtun tribesmen and at least 1 million Afghan refugees. After 1947, the Pakistani government continued to follow the policy of the colonial rulers towards the tribal areas and maintained the autonomous status of the FATA. The tribal areas fall under the control of the federal government through the Political Agent. Universal adult franchise was introduced in 1996 but political parties are not allowed to function. This means that elections do not involve political parties and that candidates run as independents even if everyone knows which party they support. For details see Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema and Maqsudul Hasan Nuri (eds), *Tribal Areas of Pakistan: Challenges and Responses*, Islamabad Policy Research Institute/Hanss Seidel Foundation, 2005.
2. The reformist school of thought associated with the madrasa founded in Deoband in 1867.
3. Ismailis and Barelvis (the Barelvi movement embodies the Sufi tradition of the subcontinent) were not targeted until recently.
4. See Mariam Abou Zahab, "Sectarianism as a Substitute Identity: Sunnis and Shias in Central and South Punjab" in S. Mumtaz, J-L. Racine, I. Ali (eds), *Pakistan. The Contours of State and Society*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002,

pp. 77–95; Mohammad Qasim Zaman, "Sectarianism in Pakistan", *Modern Asian Studies*, 32/3, 1998, pp. 687–716.

5. This was the first drone attack in Kurram. It targeted the former Afghan refugee camp of Surkh Pul, 18 km south of Sadda, which had become a Taliban base after the refugees left for Afghanistan.
6. An umbrella group of around forty Pakistani Taliban groups active in the FATA created in December 2007 under the leadership of Baitullah Mehsud.
7. The name of the North West Frontier Province was changed into Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa in April 2010.
8. The six main Sunnite tribes in Kurram are Bangash, Mangal, Para Chamkani, Zaidashat, Alisherzai and Maqbal.
9. Teepu Mahabat Khan, *The Tribal Areas of Pakistan. A Contemporary Profile*, Lahore: Sang-e Meel Publications, 2008.
10. The Turi of Kurram began paying revenues to the Afghan state in 1850 when a governor was appointed by Kabul. Christine Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan*, London: Curzon, 1997.
11. "The district of Kurram, from Thall to the crest of the Shutargardan Pass, [...] will remain under the protection and control of the British government."
12. Shiite places of worship are called imambargah (or imambarah) in South Asia.
13. A training camp (Muaskar Sadda) run by Abdul Rab Rasul Sayyaf and the Ittihad-e Islami (a Salafi group) was established in Sadda in the 1980s next to a large Afghan refugee camp.
14. Council of elders.
15. *Dawn*, Karachi, 19 November 2007.
16. *Daily Times*, Lahore, 11 November 2007.
17. *The News*, Islamabad, 30 July 2000.
18. *Gulf Times*, 7 September 2005.
19. *The News*, 19 September 2008.
20. *Dawn*, 9 April 2007.
21. *The News*, 6 April 2008.
22. Mansur Khan Mahsud, *The Battle for Pakistan. Militancy and Conflict in Kurram*, New America Foundation, 2010; *Dawn*, 7 April 2007.
23. Particularly Bahawalpur: Dar ul Ulum Madania (the director is Sohaib Ahmed, Rashid Rauf's brother-in-law, graduated from Deoband), Jamia Siddiqia, Jamia Farooq-e Azam.
24. Criminal groups use the Taliban name or label to carry out their activities in total impunity.
25. *Pak Tribune*, 20 May 2007.
26. *Frontier Post*, 27 December 2007.
27. After the peace agreements between the Pakistani government and the Waziristani Taliban in 2005 and 2006, the militants wanted to use routes through Kurram for cross-border infiltration into Afghanistan, which the Shiites of Kurram refused.

28. Qari Hussain Mehsud, the trainer of suicide bombers, claimed to be born in South Waziristan around 1988, joined the SSP/Lashkar-e Jhangvi when he was studying in a Deobandi madrasa in Karachi. He was killed in a drone attack in October 2010.
29. *Daily Times*, 2 January 2008.
30. *Daily Times*, 18 February 2008.
31. Mansur Khan Mahsud. *op. cit.*
32. *Dawn*, 26 September 2008.
33. *The News*, 15 February 2009. Afridis from Kohat and Dara Adam Khel migrated to Kurram to engage in anti-Shi'a violence, under the command of Tariq Afridi, the head of the TTP in Dara Adam Khel, who has close links with the SSP.
34. *Dawn*, 6 September 2008.
35. Mansur Khan Mahsud, *op. cit.*
36. *Dawn*, 2 September 2008.
37. *The News*, 7 December 2008; 17 December 2008.
38. *The News*, 9 April 2009.
39. Jane Perlez and Pir Zubair Shah, "Power Rising. Taliban Besiege Pakistani Shi-ites", *The New York Times*, 26 July 2008.
40. This 89 km stretch of road is the only link between Parachinar and Kohat. Zulfiqar Ali, "NATO starts mediation between rival Kurram factions", *Dawn*, 27 May 2009.
41. *Dawn*, 24 May 2009.
42. *Dawn*, 26 September 2008.
43. *Dawn*, 1 July 2009.
44. *Dawn*, 27 March 2010.
45. *Dawn*, 23 March 2010.
46. *Daily Times*, 4 November 2010.
47. *The News*, 29 October 2010; *Dawn*, 21 October 2010.
48. *Daily Times*, 4 November 2010. *BBC South Asia*, "The Pakistani tribe that is taking on the Taliban", 21 October 2010.
49. *Dawn*, 30 November 2010.
50. *The Nation*, 10 November 2010; *The Long War Journal*, 22 October 2010.
51. Orakzai Agency was created in 1973. Previously it was a part of Frontier Region (FR) Kohat. The headquarter is located on Kohat-Thall road near Hangu since 1989, it was originally built in Kalaya but could not be occupied.
52. Teepu Muhabat Khan, *The Tribal Areas of Pakistan*, *op. cit.*
53. *Herald Monthly*, October 2008.
54. For details, see Abida Azim Afridi, *Syeds of Tirah*, Pakistan Study Centre, University of Peshawar, 1999.
55. Sana Haroon, *Frontier of Faith. Islam in the Indo-Afghan Borderland*, London: Hurst, 2007.

56. *Afghan News Center*, 18 January 2001.
57. *Daily Times*, 4 October 2006; *Pak Tribune*, 6 October 2006; *Dawn*, 7 October 2006.
58. *The News*, 10 March 2009; *Dawn*, 6 January 2010, "Militants blow up six shrines in Orakzai".
59. *The News*, 13 June 2009.
60. Sikhs and Hindus who had been living in Orakzai as hamsaya for a long time and never faced harassment have also been forced to pay jizya or to convert. Many of them have moved to Peshawar to save their lives; at least one Sikh was beheaded in 2009 after he had been kidnapped for ransom. *Dawn*, 3 May 2009.
61. *The News*, 11 February 2009.
62. *Dawn*, 21 April 2009.
63. At least 23,000 people had been displaced from Orakzai Agency in early 2010.
64. *Daily Times*, 9 December 2010.
65. *Reuters*, 5 December 2008.
66. Hangu has long been a very sensitive area. In 2005, a suicide bomber attacked an Ashura procession in Hangu. Forty people were killed, a curfew was imposed for four months and Hangu bazaar was torched.
67. *The News*, 21 February 2009.
68. *Dawn*, 8 October 2008.
69. The commander of the troops in Kurram said: "I am 200 per cent sure we cleared the militants". "Fear belies Pakistan's boasts of becalmed borderlands", Reuters, 8 July 2010.
70. *The News*, 2 September, 2008.

11. CHANGING ISLAM IN POST-SOVIET AZERBAIJAN AND ITS WEIGHTING ON THE SUNNITE/SHIITE CLEAVAGE

1. Firouzeh Mostashri, *On the Religious Frontier: Tsarist Russia And Islam in The Caucasus*, London-New York: I.B. Tauris, 1992, p. 129.
2. Sädaqät Hüseynova, *"Füyuzat" jurnalı vä dil problemläri ("Fuyuzat" journal and problems of the language)*, Baku: Elm, 2006, pp. 12–3.
3. Altay Goyushov, "Islamic Revival in Azerbaijan", *Current trends in Islamist Ideology, Center on Islam, Democracy, and the Future of the Modern World*, 7, Hudson, Hudson Institute, 2008, p. 68. See also R. Huseyinli, *Azerbaycan Ruhaniliyi* (Spirituality of Azerbaijan), Baki, Kur Neshriyati, 2002, pp. 131–139.
4. Reyhan Hüseynli, *Azərbaycan ruhaniliyi: Xanlıqlar çağından Soviet işgalınadəbaycan ruhani* (Azerbaijani clergy: from Khanates Period to Sovietization), Baku: Kur, 2002, p. 129.
5. Altay Goyushov and Elchin Askerov, "Islam and Islamic Education in Soviet and Independent Azerbaijan" in Michael Keloer, Raoul Motika and Stefan Reichmuth (eds), *Islamic Education in the Soviet Union and Its Successor States*, London: Routledge, 2009, p. 198.

6. Sofie Bedford, *Islamic Activism in Azerbaijan, Repression and Mobilization in a Post-Soviet Context*, Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2009, p. 229.
7. Bayram Balci, "Between Sunnism and Shiism: Islam in post-Soviet Azerbaijan", *Central Asian Survey*, June 2004, vol. 23, no. 2, pp. 205–217.
8. Grand Ayatollah Meshkini was the head of Iran's most influential governing bodies Khobregan (Assembly of Experts of the Leadership).
9. Bayram Balci, "Le chiisme en Azerbaïdjan postsoviétique: entre influences iraniennes et dynamiques internes" in Sabrina Mervin (ed.), *Les mondes chiites et l'Iran*, Paris: Karthala, 2007, p. 484.
10. Hamid Algar, *Wahhabism: a Critical Essay*, New York: Oneonta, 2002, p. 96.
11. International Crisis Group, "Azerbaijan: Independent Islam and the State", *Europe Report*, no. 191, 25 March 2008.
12. Hakan Yavuz, "Towards an Islamic Liberalism? The Nurcu Movement and Fethullah Gülen", *Middle East Journal*, vol. 53, no. 4, 1999, pp. 584–604.
13. Bayram Balci, "Between Da'wa and Mission: Turkish Islamic Movements in the Turkic World (Central Asia and the Caucasus)" in Rosalind I.J Hackett (ed.), *Proselytization Revisited, Rights Talk, Free Markets and Culture Wars*, London: Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2008, pp. 367–389.
14. Bayram Balci, *Missionnaires de l'Islam en Asie centrale, les écoles turques de Fethullah Gülen*, Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 2003, p. 300.
15. Bülent Aras, *The New Geopolitics of Eurasia and Turkey's Position*, London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001, p. 160
16. Istar Gözaydin, *Diyanet, Türkiye Cumhuriyetinde Dinin Tanzimi (Diyanet, The Organization of Islam in the Republic of Turkey)*, Istanbul: Iletisim Yayinlari, 2009, p. 352.
17. International Crisis Group, *op.cit.*
18. We make a distinction between Sunnite and Salafi groups because in Azerbaijan the hostility between Salafism and the rest of Sunnism is huge. In all of the former Soviet Union, Salafism is a sort of fifth madhab because of its antagonism with the moderate hanafite Islam which is on good terms with the state and its official Islam.

12. CONCLUSION: ANALYSING CONTEMPORARY SUNNITE-SHIITE RELATIONSHIPS

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2. Peter Mandaville, *Transnational Muslim Politics: Reimagining the Umma*, London: Routledge, 2001.
3. Olivier Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah*, Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2004.
4. Among other references: Roland Robertson, "Glocalization: Time-Space and

Homogeneity-Heterogeneity" in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson, (eds), *Global Modernities*, London: Sage, 1995, pp. 25–44.

5. On Sunnite and Jihadi-Salafi intellectual roots and polemics on Shiism, see Werner Ende, "Sunni Polemical Writings on the Shi'a and the Iranian Revolution", in David Menashri (ed.), *The Iranian Revolution and the Muslim World*, Boulder: Westview, 1999. See also the chapter of Guido Steinberg, "Jihadi-Salafism and the Shiis: remarks about the intellectual roots of anti-shiism" in Roel Meijer (ed.), *Global salafism—Islam's New Religious Movement*, London: Hurst, 2009, pp. 107–125.
6. Due to their emphasis on spirituality, Sufis are usually more open or, at least, tolerant towards Shiism. But some brotherhoods may show a strong opposition to Shiism, such as in the *tariqa* Naqchbandiyya since the time of its founder in the fourteenth century (cf. Thierry Zarcone, "La Naqchbandiyya" in A. Popovic & G. Veinstein (dir.), *Les voies d'Allah—Les ordres mystiques dans le monde musulman des origines à aujourd'hui (Allah's paths: the mystical order in the Muslim world from the origins to nowadays)*, Paris: Fayard, pp. 451–60).
7. We are largely indebted to Michael Burawoys' method of global ethnography even though he applies his research foci differently to what we suggest here. Michael Burawoy et al. (ed.), *Global Ethnography: forces, connections and imaginations in a postmodern world*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.
8. Gilles Kepel, "Les fractures du Levant" (The fractures of the Levantine), *Le Monde*, 7 June 2009.
9. Bernard Lewis, "Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam", *Studia Islamica*, 1953, no. 1 cited by Jean-Paul Charnay, *Sociologie religieuse de l'islam* (Religious Sociology of Islam), Paris: Hachette, 1994, p. 169. See also the contributions of Sabrina Mervin and Rainer Brunner in this volume.
10. Jean-Paul Charnay, *Sociologie religieuse de l'islam*, Paris: Hachette, 1994, pp. 169–77.
11. Ibid. p. 84.
12. Louis Gardet, *Les hommes de l'islam*, p. 197.
13. Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought—The response of the Shî'î and Sunnî Muslims to the Twentieth Century*, London-New-York: I.B. Tauris, 2005 [1982] (with foreword by Roy. P. Mottahedeh), p. 48. See also the chapter of Rainer Brunner in this book and his volume *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century. The Azhar and Shiism between Rapprochement and Restraint*, Leiden: Brill, 2004.
14. Akbar S. Ahmed, *Discovering Islam: Making Sense of Muslim History and Society*, London: Routledge, 1988, p. 56 cited by Akbar S. Ahmed, *Islam today—A short introduction to the Muslim World*, London-New York: I.B. Tauris, 1999 [1993], p. 43.
15. Ahmed, *Islam today*, p. 110.

16. Charnay, *Sociologie religieuse de l'islam*, p. 176.
17. Hamid Algar, "Shi'ism and Iran in the eighteenth century" in T. Naff and R. Owen (eds), *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History*, London: Feffer & Simons, 1977, p. 288 mentioned by Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, p. 51.
18. Enayat extensively depicted the traditional attitudes that continue to shape the Shiite world view, in contradistinction to Sunnism, although he also noted that "none of the features has been explicitly acknowledged by the Shi'is among the fundamental principles". These specificities may be summarized as "particularism, esotericism, historicism, idealism, a pessimistic conception of human nature, a paradoxical apathy in politics and emotionalism" (see Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, p. 30). According to the current authors, some caution is nevertheless to be adopted towards this notion of "mentality" as it contains an idea of coherence and stability of recurring schemes of ideas and behaviour as if changes could hardly take place. This is why, as mentioned previously, we prefer to emphasize the plurality of contexts and logics of actions.
19. Ibid. p. 50.
20. This idiom linked to an economic approach to the study of religious change was inspired by the article of Yang Fenggang, "Oligopoly dynamics: official religions in China" in J.A. Beckford and N.J. Demerath III, *The SAGE Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, London: Sage, 2009 [2007], pp. 635–53. The term "oligopoly" refers to a market where only a small number of big enterprises own the monopoly of the offer. We consider the concept as acceptable to describe the reality of Islam only if the aforementioned small number of those owning the monopoly of the offer could even be reduced to two only, that is precisely the two branches of Sunnism and Shiism, The term "conglomerate" refers to a concentration of enterprises that are partially dependent on each other, in relation to the diversity of their activities and products (on a religious market, we would probably speak of the diversity of the offers such as beliefs and activities).
21. From a classical academic point of view, Kharidjism is presented as the third branch of Islam. Despite the historical symbolic importance of its emergence, the number of its adherents is today so insignificant on the world scene that it seems inappropriate to refer to it here.
22. Louis Gardet, *Les hommes de l'islam*, p. 201.
23. Inger Furseth and Pål Repstad, *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion—Classical and contemporary perspectives*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007 [2006], pp. 133–50.
24. Nathalie Luca, *Les sectes (The Sects)*, Paris: PUF "Que sais-je?", 2004.
25. See Hisham Hellyer, "Sunni or Shi'a, we are all Muslim", *Common Ground News Service*, http://www.commongroundnews.org/print_article.php?artId=23134&dir=left&lan=en&sid=1, 19 May 2008 (Accessed 1 June 2011).
26. Philippe Simay, "orthodoxie-hétérodoxie" in R. Azria & D. Hervieu-Léger (dir.),

Dictionnaire des faits religieux (Dictionnary of Religious Facts), Paris: PUF, 2010, pp. 846–50.

27. Charnay, *Sociologie religieuse de l'islam*, pp. 100–2.
28. This comment was inspired by the article of Patricia Wittberg, "Orders and Schisms on the Sacred Periphery" in J.A. Beckford and N.J. Demerath III, *The SAGE Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, London: Sage, 2009 [2007], pp. 327–44.
29. At the level of individuals, it is enlightening to discover that while some speak of "converting" to or from Shiism, others prefer the idiom "taking the Shiite (or Sunnite) identity", thus strongly expressing the idea that it is not a question of an in-out religious change.
30. Axel Honneth has developed Hegel's reflections on the crucial importance of the quest for recognition by individuals and social groups. Honneth considers the growing imperative for recognition as a "moral mobile" that is thought of by the actors themselves, who wish to gain visibility and respect towards their perceptions or their aspirations. See Axel Honneth, *La lutte pour la reconnaissance* [The fight for recognition], Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2000. See also Alain Caillé (dir.), *La quête de reconnaissance—nouveau phénomène social total* [The quest for recognition—a new total social phenomenon], Paris: La Découverte, 2007.
31. Yadh Ben Achour, *Aux fondements de l'orthodoxie sunnite*, Paris: PUF, 2008.
32. Mustafa Ceric, "The challenge of a single Muslim authority in Europe", *European View* (Religion and Politics), vol. 6, December 2007, pp. 41–8.
33. Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, p. 19.
34. Vali Nasr, "When the Shiites Rise", *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2006, http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/61733/vali-nasr/when-the-shiites-rise
35. An Islamist militant such as Azzam Tamimi, actively promoting the unity of the *umma*, pinpoints political conflicts as the main source of tensions between Sunnis and Shiites. He clearly denies the importance of religious and ideological tensions. He precisely invokes religious arguments, for example, that reference to Imam al-Shafei who would have said "if I do not include *Ahl al-bayt* in my prayers, my prayer is not to be taken into account". But, as Sabrina Mervin reminded us, we should not forget that even if tensions arise from rivalries and political conflicts, they are also underpinned by doctrinal polemics and are often expressed in those terms.
36. Brigitte Maréchal, *The Muslim Brotherhood in Europe—Roots and Discourses*, Brill: Leiden, 2008, p. 47 based on interviews and, for this part, the book written by Azzam Tamimi, *Rachid Ghannouchi—A democrat within Islamism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 53–56.
37. Iran has also pursued a strategy of membership of international Islamic organizations. It is an active member of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

in which it tries to further the interests of Muslims worldwide. On the other hand it is not a member of the Muslim World League as this organization's main mission is the spread of shari'a according to the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunna (i.e. Sunnism).

38. Jelle Puelings, *Fearing a 'Shiite Octopus'—Sunni-Shi'a relations and possible implications for Belgium and Europe*, Brussels: Egmont Institute—Academia Press, 2010, p. 18, http://www.egmontinstitute.be/paperegm/ep35.pdf, (Accessed 29 June 2011).
39. Sectarianism refers to discriminations, violence, hatred or bigotry that are legitimized from attaching importance to perceived differences between one's own group and another (however defined). Sectarianism can be couched in religious terms between denominations (Sunnite-Shiite, catholic-protestant,...) but also in political terms (social democrats versus communists in revolutionary Russia, or Fascism against the left) or within a certain communal group (the idea of "salvation" in comparison to the other groups within the community). This means that sectarianism has, in the first place, a descriptive function, even though with its pejorative connotation, it can quickly become normative. Sectarianism differs from communalism, communitarianism or confessionalism. These terms refer much more to forms of societal organization in which religion, communities or confessions should play an important role. They help to pacify cleavages and find solutions to conflict, whereas sectarianism only describes conflicts based on religious and/or communal differences.
40. Puelings, p. 10.
41. Presentation 1 October 2009.
42. On various Islamic forums dealing with the relationships between Shiites and Sunnis such as http://www.yabiladi.com/forum/chiites-comment-sont-musulmans-4–983062.html or http://omgili.com/shiite-sunni, some questions concern the (il)licit character of a marriage between a Shiite male and a Sunnite female or vice versa, the (il)licit character of a Sunni praying behind a Shiite in his mosque etc.
43. Despite the predominant "no problem" discursive stance of Sunnis concerning the reciprocal relationship with Shiites, it is interesting to discover how Moroccan Shiites converted from Sunnism in Belgium constantly (feel the need to) reaffirm their Shiite tradition as both part of the Islamic discursive tradition and of an authentic Moroccan cultural heritage (in order to try to make themselves accepted as Muslims); see Imane Lechkar, "Modalities of authentification among Moroccan Belgian Shi'ites?" in Brigitte Maréchal and Farid El Asri (dir.), *Islam belge au pluriel* (Plural Belgian Islam), Louvain-la-Neuve: Presses Universitaires de Louvain, 2012, p. 113–126.
44. Their website is available from http://www.minab.org.uk
45. On the major tensions (and therefore distinctions) between Wahhabism and

Salafism, see Meijer, *Global Salafism*, 2009. The oral contribution of Stéphane Lacroix pinpointed how the Sahwa movement, which blends traditional Wahhabi thought with the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood and represents the mainstream of Saudi Islamism, has developed quite an ambiguous approach to the sectarian issue, and especially the Shiites, since its inception in the 1970s.

46. Guido Steinberg, "Jihadi-Salafism and the Shi'is. Remarks about the intellectual roots of anti-Shi'ism" in Roel Meijer, (ed.), *Global Salafism. Islam's New Religious Movement*, London: Hurst, 2009, pp. 107–125.
47. "Sharia and Life", 4 July 2004, cited by Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, "Yûsuf al-Qaradâwî and al-Azhar" in Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen and Bettina Gräf (eds), *Global mufti—The Phenomenon of Yusuf al-Qaradawi*, London: Hurst, 2009, p. 46.
48. Hassan Muhammad Taqî al-Jawâhirî, *Annotations & Commentary on The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam of Dr Yousif al-Qaradhâwi*, Qom: ICRO, 1998, cited by Alexandre Caeiro & Mahmoud al-Saify, "Qaradawi in Europe, Europe in Qaradawi?—The global mufti's European politics" in Skovgaard-Petersen and Gräf, *Global mufti*, p. 122.
49. The two last examples are taken from the article of Lechkar, "Modalities of authentification among Moroccan Belgian Shi'ites?" in Brigitte Maréchal and Farid El Asri (dir.), *Islam belge au pluriel*, 2012.
50. Both statements were made during the concluding general debate of the conference (1 October 2009).
51. Guido Steinberg, "Jihadi-Salafism and the Shi'is. Remarks about the intellectual roots of anti-Shi'ism" in Meijer, *Global Salafism*, p. 108.
52. Just like there is a tenacious and persistent debate in Europe whether Muslims can be loyal citizens of democratic states, Arab regimes ask the question whether Shiites can be loyal citizens when they are presumably subservient to the Shiite clerical hierarchy. Especially since the 1979 Iranian Revolution, Shiites are easily accused of following the teachings and rulings of Khomeini or other influential clerics, more than they would follow their national interests.
53. See Jean-François Legrain in this volume, writing on the manipulation of a Shiite threat in Palestine, with references to othet countries.
54. Contrary to these states, the Syrian state, as is very well explained by Thomas Pierret, has supported Shiite dynamics, entailing serious tensions between the regime and its Sunnite ulemas, especially since Shiite rituals made their way into the Old City of Damascus.
55. The Safavid dynasty carried out a rather brutal programme of converting the people of Persia (then Sunnite) to Shiism.
56. *As-Sabah*, 22 April 2009.
57. Quotes from http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2009/03/18/68715.html (translated by Mideastwire.com).

58. Malika Zeghal, *Les islamistes Marocains. Le défi à la monarchie* [Moroccans Islamists. The challenge to the monarchy], Paris: La Découverte, 2005.
59. This allegation is also regularly used to denounce the work of "Christian sects" trying to convert Moroccan youth.
60. Quotes from http://www.qudspress.com/look/sarticle.tpl?idlanguage=17&idpublication=1&nrarticle= 41628&nrissue=1&nrsection=3 (translated by Mideastwire.com).
61. Quotes from http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2009/03/18/68715.html (translated by Mideastwire.com).
62. Quotes from *al-Tajdid*, 14 March 2009 (translated by Mideastwire.com). http://www.attajdid.info/def.asp?codelangue=6&infoun=48550&date_ar=2009/3/11
63. *Al-sharq al-Awsat*, 26 January 2008.
64. *Alarabiyya.net*, 4 February 2009, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2009/02/04/65714.html (translated by Mideastwire.com).
65. *Al Rai al-Am*, 27 November 2008. http://www.alraimedia.com/alrai/article.aspx?id=94991 (translated by Mideastwire.com).
66. I. Elad-Altman, The Sunni-Shia Conversion Controversy, 6 April 2007, http://www.futureofmuslimworld.com/research/detail/the-sunni-shia-conversion-controversy
67. Quotes from http://www.aawsat.com/details.asp?section=4&article=516956&issueno=11109 (translated by Mideastwire.com).
68. See her article Dominique Schnapper, "Le Religieux, l'Ethnique et l'Ethnico-religieux", *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, n. 81, 1993.
69. Danièle Hervieu-Léger, *La religion pour mémoire* (Religion for Memory), Paris: Cerf, 2008, pp. 235–6.
70. For an in-depth elaboration see Asef Bayat, *Making Islam Democratic Social Movements and the Post-Islamist Turn*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007. The term, however, had already been introduced in the late 1990s.
71. Peter Beyer, *Religions in Global Society*, London: Routledge, 2006.

13. A POST SCRIPTUM: THE ARAB SPRING AND THE SECTARIAN ISSUE

1. http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/unrest-in-syria-threatens-regional-stability/2011/05/01/AF3OQtUF_story_2.html
2. See Kerr, Cortni, *A Revolution Paused in Bahrain*, MERIP online 23 February 2011. This text can be read at: http://www.merip.org/mero/mero022311
3. Statement can be read at: http://arabic.cnn.com/2011/bahrain.2011/3/19/qaradawi.bahrain/
4. Statement can be read in full at: http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/839/bahraini-coalition-for-a-republic-issues-first-sta
5. http://www.egypt.gov.eg/english/laws/constitution/chp_one/part_one.aspx
6. *Al-Masry al-Youm*, 22 March 2011.

7. Galal Dweidar, *Al-Akhbar*, 22 March 2011; Khalid Idris, *Al-Wafd*, 22 March 2011.
8. Nevine Mossad, *Al-Shorouk*, 22 March 2011.
9. Hesham Sallam, *Jadaliyya*, 31 May 2011.
10. *Al-Masry al-Youm*, 21 February 2011.
11. *Al-Ahram Online*, 28 May 2011.
12. *Al-Masry al-Youm*, 10 April 2011.
13. *Daily News Egypt*, 29 May 2011.
14. *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, 23 March 2011.
15. The Nur-party originates from the Salafi Da'wa organization, established at Alexandria University in the 1970s. *Al-Masry al-Youm*, 18 May 2011.
16. The establishment of the Fadila-party has been announced through Facebook and receives support from prominent Islamic figures such as Mohammed Abdu from al-Azhar University. *Al-Masry al-Youm*, 19 May 2011.
17. Ashraf el-Sherif, *Al-Masry Al-Youm*, 29 March 2011.
18. *Al-Masry al-Youm*, 24 May 2011.
19. *Al-Masry al-Youm*, 8 May 2011.
20. Anthony Shenoda, *Jadaliyya*, 18 May 2011.
21. *Al-Masry al-Youm*, 29 March 2011.
22. *Al-Masry al-Youm*, 10 May 2011.
23. *Daily News Egypt*, 7 April 2011.
24. *Al-Masry al-Youm*, 31 May 2011.
25. Anthony Shenoda, *Jadaliyya*, 18 May 2011.
26. Nir Rosen, Prospects for the sectarian terrain (Part II), *Jadaliyya*, 2011, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/1268/prospects-for-the-sectarian-terrain-(part-ii)

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Glossary

Alim/ulama	religious scholar
Ahl al-Bayt	The Prophet's family
Ahl al-Sunna	followers of the normative usage of the Prophet's tradition
Ahl al-Sunna wa al-jamâ'a	followers of the normative usage of the Prophet's tradition and of the community
Al-firqa al-nâjiyya	the saved sect
Al-fitna al-kubrâ	The internal strife of the Islamic community
Al-jama'a	the community
Bid'a/Bida	illegitimate or reprehensible innovation
Dar al-Harb	'Abode of War'
Dar al-Islam	'Abode of Peace'
Fajir	sorcerer
Firqa/firaq	sect
Fitna	dissension
Ghayba	occultation
Ghulât	extremists
Ghuluw	extremism
Hadîth	tradition or saying of the prophet Muhammad
Hakimiyya	sovereignty of God
Halal	licit
Haram	prohibited, or illicit
Hijra	to take one's distance
Husayniyya/huseyniyye/husayniyyât/Husayniyyas	place of worship
Ibada	worship
Ihsan	good deeds

Ijaza(t)	license provided by an 'alim' to his student
Ijmâ	consensus of the scholars
Ijtihad	effort made for the interpretation of the two sources of Islamic law
Ikhtilâfât	differences
Imamate(s)	prayer leader
Inhiraf	deviation
Insaniyya	humanity
Jâhiliyya	period of ignorance
Jihad	struggle or religious war
Jirga	council of elders
Jizya	poll tax imposed on non-Muslims
Kabira	worst sin
Karama	dignity
Kufr/Kuffâr	unbelief/unbelievers
Latmiyyât	ritual chants of Ashura
Madhhab(s)	school of jurisprudence
Marja'iyya	guidance of the jurist
Maslaha	public welfare or interest
Melas	Kurdish Mullahs
Minbar(s)	chair for the predicator
Mujtahid	Sunnite jurist
Mullah(s)	Shiite jurist(s)
Murtaziq	apostate
Mut'a	temporary marriage
Muwatana	citizenship
Nazr	donation to local shrine
Râfida/Rawâfid	rejectionists
Ridda	apostate
Sabb al-Sahâba	insult of the companions of the Prophet
Sadaqa	spontaneous donation
Shafa'a	intercession
Shafi'i sm	Sunnite legal school
Shari'a	Islamic law or way of life
Shirk/Mushrikun	associationism/associationists
Silsila	chain of transmission
Ta'addudiyya	pluralism
Ta'assub	fanaticism

Tabshir	proselytizing
Tahdi'a	détente
Tahrîf	falsification
Takfîr	anathema
Taqiyya	dissimulation
Taqlid	imitation
Taqrîb	rapprochement
Tariqa(s)	Sufi brotherhood
Tasamuh	tolerance
Tatbîr	Act of mourning of Shiites through self-flagellation in grief for the death of Ali
Tawhîd	oneness of God
Turath	cultural heritage
Umma	Muslim community
Usûl al-fiqh	foundations of the Islamic jurisprudence
Usûlism	rationalist school of thought within Shiism, opposed to Akhbarism
Wilayat al-Faqih	The rule of the jurisprudent
Zakât	religious alms, one of the five pillars of Islam
Zindiq	person believed to held religious views that are considered as contradictory to Islamic orthodoxy

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