EXPORTING JIHAD

IRAN'S USE OF NON-STATE ARMED GROUPS

Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy Thesis

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Abstract

This paper examines Iran's use of non-state armed groups to achieve its political and security objectives. It recognizes the use of non-state armed groups as being a critical component to an Iranian security doctrine that is guided by strategic asymmetry. Specifically, it examines: the political and strategic cultures that contribute to the use of non-state armed groups; the structural components that facilitate their use; the operational particulars of the groups which Iran utilizes; the broader implications of their strategic employment.

To achieve this qualitative study, this paper uses an architecture for the study of non-state armed groups. This architecture was developed by Professors Richard Shultz, Douglas Farrah, and Itamara Lochard in the US Air Force INSS Occasional Paper (57), entitled "Armed Groups: A Tier-One Security Policy." This framework provides four categories of non-state armed groups, and it utilizes six variables for the analysis of individual groups.

Analysis leads this study to conclude the following: Iran's senior leadership sees the exportation of jihadi insurgencies as paramount to achieving its long-term ideological goals.

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INTRODUCTION

Iran Uses Non-State Armed Groups

Summary

Iran uses non-state armed groups (NSAGs) to achieve its political and security objectives. The use of NSAGs by states to achieve their political objectives is not uncommon. Well before the Westphalian notion of the nation state, "fifth columns" have played a role in international security. However, the significance of such groups to Iran's security program is disproportionately high in relation to other states. The more common use of NSAGs is in a supplementary role to a conventional military program. Iran, in contrast, uses a combination of covert assets and indirectly linked political-military groups to form the primary vehicle of state security: ideologically motivated NSAGs.

The near exclusive utilization of covert assets poses distinct challenges to military leaders and decision makers when dealing with Middle East regional security, economic, and political issues. Therefore, in order to develop a comprehensive security strategy for the region, a careful examination of Iran's use of NSAGs is important. This study attempts to add to the study of Iran's strategic culture by examining the following question: How does Iran use NSAGs to further its political objectives?

Thesis

Analysis will show that Iran uses NSAGs to achieve two objectives: (1) To achieve political objectives that are grounded in a unique brand of political Shiism – specifically the establishment of a Shiite Caliphate; (2) As a means to achieve international political and security goals in an inexpensive and efficient manner.

Statement of the Problem

The NSAGs which Iran utilizes are most often derived from internationally dispersed Shiite communities. These communities are found in nearly every state with a significant Muslim population, including most Western countries. Thus, the existence of Shiite communities within a given state provides Iran with a potential recruitment pool for the purpose of establishing a subversive militant organization.

Most often, Shiite NSAGs already exist before Iranian overtures are made (e.g., Hezballah, Hazari militias). In large part, this is the result of social conditions dictated by historic confrontation with their Sunni counterparts. In many areas of the world, Shiite communities exist under repressed conditions. [1] This condition occurs whether the Shiite population is a minority (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan) or enjoys numeric superiority (as was the case in Iraq). Thus, Shiite NSAGs often function as protective militias for a besieged cultural group. This is especially true in states with a weak tradition of rule of law.

However, preexisting militants are not necessary for an Iranian approach to materialize. In some cases, calculated self-interest draws Iranian attention to an area (e.g., Azerbaijan[2]). In other cases, the perception of oppression is enough to solicit Iranian interest (e.g., Pakistan, Malaysia). This is a result of Iran's role as the leading Shiite nation-state and the epicenter of revolutionary political-Shiism. Consequently, regardless of reason, the Iranian co-option of such groups or societies increases Tehran's

[1] See the International Religious Freedom Report, 2005, US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2005/

[2] Iranian involvement in attempts to destabilize Azerbaijan are recorded in the following report: U.S. House of Representatives, *Hearing Before the Subcommittee on Europe on the Committee on International Relations*, The Caucasus and Caspian Region: Understanding U.S. Interests and Policy, 10 October 2001, pages 33,-34, 37, 40 http://wwwc.house.gov/international_relations/107/75632.pdf

international strike potential in a highly efficient manner. By recruiting strategically-placed Shiite communities, Iran enjoys the potential to strike a state from within.

Furthermore, it is important to note that Iran does not utilize Shiite groups exclusively. In some cases, Sunni and Wahhabi[3] militant organizations have received Iranian support. At this time, it is difficult to recognize concrete strategic gains from this relationship. Consequently, the connection is problematic for Western strategists because it defies Western logic. Some of the Sunni and Wahhabi groups supported by Iran have openly targeted Shiite communities both outside and inside Iran. Thus, the use of Sunni and Wahhabi NSAGs adds another dimension of complexity.

Whereas the revolutionary political culture of Shiite Iran appears to support movements toward the advancement of Twelver Shiism[4] (Ithna Ashari Islam), Tehran's relationship with ideologically hostile groups betrays a more calculated level of opportunism. This makes the prediction and prevention of asymmetric attacks initiated by Iran more difficult. Western intelligence agencies and decision making bodies charged with analyzing Iran may ignore Iran's relationship to a certain NSAG because it

[3] The relationship of Iran with Wahhabi terror groups is problematic. On the one hand, Wahhabi terror groups target Shiite communities. On the other hand, Wahhabi terror groups target enemies of the Iranian state. Therefore, the cliché "the enemy of my enemy is my friend," seems to best encapsulate the Iranian relationship with Wahhabi extremists. As an example, Iran has supported Al Qai'da, a Wahhabi extremist group. This relationship is well documented [SEE Gunaratna, Rohan, Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror, pages 16, 146-147]. In fact, Iran appears to have assisted Al Qai'da in carrying out the 9/11 Attacks [SEE The 9/11 Commission Report, Chapter 7, "Assistance from Hezbollah and Iran to al Qaeda," pages 240-241]. However, by virtue of religious doctrine, Wahhabi Muslims consider Shi'ism to be blasphemous, and Shiites to be apostates [Schwartz, Stephen, The Two Faces of Islam: Saudi Fundamentalism and its Role in Terrorism, pages 83-86]. Two examples of Al Qai'da attacks on Iranian targets highlight this contradictory relationship: First, Ramzi Yousef, the Al Qai'da mastermind of the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993, has also been implicated in the 1991 bombing of a Shiite Mosque in Iran, [Gunaratna, page 237-239]; Second, Al Qai'da operatives assisted Taliban forces in the Taliban's eradication campaign against Hazari Shiite militants in Afghanistan, leading to the death of eight Iranian diplomats and one Iranian journalist in 1998. [SEE Tony Karon, Time Magazine, "The Taliban and Afghanistan: Understanding Bin Laden's hosts, the dilemma he poses for them, and the politics of the neighborhood," 18 September 2001, http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,175372,00.html]

[4] Twelver Shiism and the unique cultural characteristics of this religious variant are explained in further detail in the Iran section of this thesis.

has no apparent ideological relationship to Tehran (e.g., Al Qai'da). In fact, the relationship may seem hostile, and thus cooperation is summarily rejected.[5] In other cases, these bodies may ignore incidents in which Iran appeared to suffer from the outcome, such as the targeting of a Shiite religious site, when, in fact, Iran was wholly responsible for the incident.[6] Thus, the employment of NSAGs by Iran can equally confound analysts.

In summary, Iran's use of NSAGs poses a significant challenge to policy makers. The unique relationship that these groups enjoy with the various security apparatuses of Iran makes their strategic potential all the more potent. Unlike conventional military assets that can be measured in terms of troop numbers and technological advancement, Iranian backed NSAGs are unquantifiable. Iran's varied NSAG network is a force multiplier of unknown size, scope, penetration, intelligence, fanaticism, and lethality. Tehran enjoys the potential to galvanize support from multiple states that would otherwise be divorced from a confrontation involving Iran. This can include support from within a state that Iran is in conflict.

Furthermore, the inability to ascertain the depth of a given community's relationship with Iran poses a significant challenge to government agencies tasked with gathering intelligence. This problem is compounded when no relationship to Shiite Iran

[5] Western intelligence officials differ on this issue. Whereas the Central Intelligence Agency believes that Iran may have some relationship to Al Qai'da, the British Foreign Service rejects the possibility of a relationship, believing that "Iran shares with us and other countries a threat from Al-Qaeda terrorism." [SEE Report to Parliament, The Right Honorable Jack Straw, MP, *Third Report from the Foreign Affairs Committee*, Session 2003-2004, Iran, Response from the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, May 2004, http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/969804_CM6198.pdf]

[6] Speculation exists that the 20 July 1994 bombing of the Imam Reza Shrine in Moshad, Iran may have been conducted by Ministry of Intelligence Services (MOIS) – not former Mujahadeen fighters as Iran claimed. The bombing galvanized public support for the eradication of multiple Sunni communities accused of helping the Mujahadeen.

is apparent. Consequently, Iranian backed NSAGs pose a threat of unknown proportion with enormous strategic potential.

Structure and Methodology

This will be a qualitative study consistent with the discipline of international strategic studies. It attempts to answer the question: How does Iran use NSAGs to further its political objectives?

To answer this question, this paper begins with a foundation on the study of NSAGs. Specifically, it examines the state use of NSAGs as an outgrowth of a logical process of strategic asymmetry. Additionally, this paper will examine the impact of strategic asymmetry toward the establishment of new fourth generation of warfare.

Following this section is an examination into Iran's unique security culture. It will address the interconnected role of revolutionary Shiite theology by members of Iran's political elite and the security mechanisms that serve the state. It will further explore the dynamics of Iran's military and intelligence components as they relate to the establishment of working relationships with NSAGs.

This study will then look at the unique characteristics of Iranian backed NSAGs. This will include the following: the genesis of such groups, their political goals, Iran's role in their strategic development, and their utilization. This thesis will utilize the methodological framework for "Understanding Operational Characteristics" of NSAGs as laid out by Professors Richard Shultz, Douglas Farrah, and Itamara Lochard in the US

Air Force INSS Occasional Paper (57), entitled "Armed Groups: A Tier-One Security Policy."[7] This framework utilizes six variables for the analysis of NSAGs:

1. Leadership
2. Rank and file membership
3. Organizational structure
4. Ideology/political code of beliefs/objectives
5. Strategy and tactics
6. Linkages with other NSAGs

An analysis on Iran's gains from their employment will complete this section. This will include an examination on the threat and impact potential of Iran's relationship with these NSAGs.

After the cases are presented, an analysis of gains will be conducted. The thesis will conclude with a summary of its findings and a brief examination into the role such groups should play in the formation of any comprehensive strategic assessment of Iran.

Literature Review

In order to form a comprehensive analysis of a strategic culture and its employment, this report combines five separate bodies of independent academic and professional inquiry: (1) The strategic use of asymmetry; (2) The tactical and operational use of covert action and non-state armed groups/proxies; (3) Iran – its pre-and post-revolutionary political culture, and its current strategic culture; (4) Islamic fundamentalism; (5) Eurasian and Middle Eastern warfare. This report uses both primary and secondary sources to achieve its analysis.

The contributions of primary and secondary sources vary in degrees of contribution to each body of inquiry. Those sections dealing with strategic asymmetry

[7] Shultz, Richard H., Douglas Farrah, and Itamara V. Lochard, Occasional Paper 57, "Armed Groups: A Tier-One Security Threat," pages 47 - 52, US Air Force Academy, Colorado: US Air Force Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), September 2004, http://www.usafa.af.mil/df/inss/OCP/ocp57.pdf

and the tactical and operational use of NSAGs will incorporate a combination of primary and secondary source documentation. Sections dealing with the cultural aspects of Iran rely almost exclusively on secondary sources. Sections that document the use of NSAGs by Iran will be heavily based on primary sources, with secondary sources providing guidance and background information where appropriate.

Literature that contributed to the study of Strategic Asymmetry

For the purpose of understanding the use of strategic asymmetry, primary source documentation is derived from U.S. intelligence agencies, U.S. military studies, U.N. conflict analyses, and other Foreign Service agencies that can offer relevant insight into the practice of asymmetric warfare. Secondary sources are derived from relevant case studies or comprehensive examinations conducted by recognized experts within this security studies field. The analysis and utilization of these reports are framed by the small body of literature that examines this method of warfare. Of particular note, are the works of the following experts: Roy Godson, Richard Shultz, Douglas Farrah, Itamara Lochard, Thomas P.M. Barnett, Mary Kaldor, Jeffery Richelson, William Lind, Steven Metz, and Colonel (U.S. Army, ret.) Harry G. Summers.

Sources that contributed to understanding the dynamics of covert operations and NSAGs

For the purpose of understanding the tactical and operational use of covert operatives and non-state armed groups, primary sources will be derived from relevant military and intelligence service publications. Secondary source guidance is based on comprehensive analyses conducted by recognized experts in this field. Studies conducted by the following experts contributed greatly to this report: Daniel L. Byman, Roy Godson, Bruce Hoffman, Neil Livingstone, and H. John Poole.

Furthermore, biographical and autobiographical works have been examined to understand the use of asymmetry or terrorism. The works of the following persons contributed greatly toward understanding the use of terror tactics: Robert Baer (former case officer, Middle East, CIA), Tom Carew (former SAS, Afghanistan, 1981 - 1986), and Vo Nguyen Giap (Commanding General, People's Army of Vietnam).

For the purpose of understanding the operational particulars of groups employed by Iran, a number of primary source documents from multiple governments are utilized. Complimenting these sources is a variety of secondary source reports that deal with the dynamics of specific groups. Often these sources are in the form of investigative books or political studies. Of particular importance was the works of H. John Poole (USMC), and Middle East Professors Ziad Abu-Amr (Palestine), Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh (American University in Beirut), and Amal Saad-Ghorayeb (American University in Beirut). Information extracted from these sources will be cited accordingly.

Literature that contributed toward understanding Iran

To better understand Iranian culture and politics, both pre-and post-revolution, the following authors were utilized: Nikki R. Keddie (Professor of History, UCLA), Charles Kurzman (Professor of Sociology, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), Sandra Mackey (CNN and the *Wall Street Journal*), Kenneth Pollack (Director of Research, Saban Center for Middle East Policy, Brookings Institution), and Elaine Sciolino (*The New York Times*). These authors are highly respected contributors to the field of Iranian studies. Professor Nikki Keddie and Middle East Cultural Correspondent, Sandra Mackey provide insight into the roots of Iranian cultural, from its Persian past to its modern dynamics. Ms. Sciolino is a reporter for the New York Times, and provides an in

depth understanding of Iran's current cultural and political climate. Professor Kruzman examines the socioeconomic contributors to Iran's Islamic revolutionary movement. Dr. Pollack provides analytical insight into U.S.-Iranian relations. Primary sources are also utilized for this section of the report. Specifically, country analyses by the governments of the United States, Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom are used.

Literature that contributed toward understanding Iran's Strategic Culture

Primary sources that contributed to gaining a better understanding on the revolutionary Iranian strategic culture were derived from Australian, British, Israeli, Indian, and (to a lesser extent) U.S. government reports. Secondary sources were derived from a host of organizations committed to military studies. Of particular use were reports by Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), and a collaborative report by Daniel L. Byman, Shahram Chubin, Anoushiravan Ehteshami, and Jerrold Green of RAND Corp.

Literature that contributed toward understanding the dynamics of Islamic Extremism

A combination of primary and secondary sources was used to better understand the exponential growth of Islamic extremism. Authors that contributed significantly to this section of the study are: Ziad Abu-Amr, Rohan Gunaratna, Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh, Paul Pillar, Marc Sageman, Stephen Schwartz, Jessica Stern, and Thameem Ushama. Their worked enabled a better understanding on the growth of the Islamist movement in the 20th century. In most cases, however, these studies did not provide an understanding of Shiite extremism.

To better understand Shiite extremism, this report used the letters and speeches of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Grand Ayatollah Muhammed Baqir al-Sadr, Ayatollah Sayed Mohamad Baqir Al-Hakim, imam[8] Musa al-Sadr, and Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah.

Literature that contributed to understanding the strategic culture of the region

Finally, recognizing that Iran is an ancient culture with a complex strategic history, the roots of the regional strategic culture were also considered relevant. Much of the strategic dynamics of the state can be found in its historic interaction with its neighbors and invaders. Therefore, to better understand the roots of Iran's strategic culture, multiple sources, consistent with the study of Southwest Asia have been utilized. Specifically, literature that examined Eurasian and Middle Eastern strategy in its historic context was used. Subjects included anthropological examinations of the Eurasian warrior ethos, the writings of Herodotus and Plutarch, a biography of Genghis Kahn, and multiple sources on Turkish, British, and Russian military history in the region.

Operational Definitions and Transliteration

This paper will provide definitions to terms that are not commonly used within the discipline of international security studies as they arise. Furthermore, clarification will provided for those terms that may have multiple meanings to a security studies reader. This will be provided at the introduction of a given term.

However, there are two critical components that the reader should be aware of before they delve further into this report. The first is a clarification on transliteration. The second is an operational definition for the term "non-state armed group."

[8] This is not a typo. The lower case "I" is an indication of rank – an "imam" is lower in status then an "Imam."

Transliteration

Languages that utilize a different alphabet or script rarely fit neatly into the Roman alphabet. In the case of the two predominant Middle Eastern languages, Arabic and Farsi, this problem seems to be compounded. Thus, it is not uncommon to see multiple variations on spelling of the same term. Examples of this problem are the seemingly interchangeable use of al-Qaeda and Al Qai'da or Hezbollah and Hizballah.

To avoid this problem, this study will employ the following method:

- In instances where an organization provides an English variant of its own name, that spelling will be used. For example, Al-Manar, spells Hezbollah with an 'e' and an 'o.' Since, Al-Manar is the television arm of Hezbollah, its spelling of the organization it represents will be utilized.

- In instances in which no coherent spelling application is apparent, this paper will utilize spelling provided by the English version of the state newspaper in which that organization originates. For example, the *Sana News*, Yemen's state newspaper, refers to the "Zaydi" Shiite militants with the aforementioned spelling (Zaydi).

- In instances in which no coherent spelling can be ascertained from either an original source or a state newspaper, this report will use spelling provided by United States government reports as guidance.

Furthermore, the various contributing authors use a variety of names to describe the same organization (i.e., Saad-Ghorayeb spells Hezbollah "Hizbullah"). The use of an author's particular transliteration will not change a citation is directly extracted from a particular study. However, it will not effect the transliteration of this thesis, nor the section in which a particular report contributes.

Definition of Non-State Armed Groups

This study will use the framework laid out by Professors Richard Shultz, Douglas Farrah, and Itamara Lochard in the US Air Force INSS Occasional Paper (57), entitled

"Armed Groups: A Tier-One Security Policy."[9] (Hereafter, referred to as the "armed groups report").

The armed groups report provides a definition based on commonalities, while further providing categorical distinctions. The four characteristics of all non-state armed groups, as laid out by the armed groups report, are the following:

1. "All armed groups, to varying degrees, challenge the authority, power, and legitimacy of the state."[10]

2. They use "force" as the primary instrument to achieve their objectives.[11]

3. They enjoy both local and global capabilities. "They are able to expand the battlefield to attack state adversaries both at home and abroad."[12]

4. They are not "democratically based," nor do they "adhere to the rule of law."[13]

To add further clarity to the definition of a non-state armed group, the armed groups report identifies four categories of non-state armed group activities. These activities provide a basis by which operatives can be better classified. The four categories are listed as follows: Insurgents, Terrorists, Militias, and Organized Criminal Groups.[14] It is important that the definitions of their respective activities be given in order to provide greater clarity in the application of the terms. The following definitions are extracted directly from the armed groups report and they have not been modified.

[9] Investigation, Definition, and Taxonomy of non-state armed groups is provided within the following report: Shultz, Richard H., Douglas Farrah, and Itamara V. Lochard, Occasional Paper 57, "Armed Groups: A Tier-One Security Threat," pages 13-35, US Air Force Academy, Colorado: US Air Force Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), September 2004, http://www.usafa.af.mil/df/inss/OCP/ocp57.pdf

[10] IBID, page 16

[11] IBID, pages 16-17

[12] IBID, page 17

[13] IBID, page 17

[14] IBID, page 16, Listed in the order with which they are printed in the report

Because Iran employs groups from each distinct category, they form the foundation of this study:

> **Insurgency** is a protracted political and military set of activities directed toward partially or completely gaining control over the territory of a country through the use of irregular military forces and illegal political organizations. The insurgents engage in actions ranging from guerrilla operations, terrorism, and sabotage to political mobilization, political action, intelligence/counterintelligence activities, and propaganda/psychological warfare. All of these instruments are designed to weaken and/or destroy the power and legitimacy of a ruling government, while at the same time increasing the power and legitimacy of the armed insurgent group.[15]
>
> **Terrorism** is the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear by an armed group through the threat and/or use of the most proscribed kind of violence for political purposes, whether for or in opposition to an established government. The act is designed to have a far-reaching psychological effect beyond the immediate target of the attack and to instill fear in and intimidate a wider audience. The targets of terrorist groups increasingly are non-combatants, and large numbers of them, who under international norms have the status of protected individuals and groups.[16]
>
> A **militia** in today's context is a recognizable irregular armed force operating within the territory of a weak and/or failing state. The members of militias often come from the under classes and tend to be composed of young males who are drawn into this milieu because it gives them access to money, resources, power, and security. Not infrequently they are forced to join; in other instances it is seen as an opportunity or a duty. Militias can represent specific ethnic, religious, tribal, clan, or other communal groups. They may operate under the auspices of a factional leader, clan, or ethnic group, or on their own after the break-up of the states' forces. They may also be in the service of the state, either directly or indirectly. Generally, members of militias receive no formal military training. Nevertheless, in some cases they are skilled unconventional fighters. In other instances they are nothing more than a gang of extremely violent thugs that prey on the civilian population.[17]
>
> An **armed criminal group** possesses a clandestine or secret hierarchical structure and leadership whose primary purpose is to operate outside the law in a particular criminal enterprise. Such groups frequently engage in more than one type of criminal activity and can operate over large areas of a region and globally. Often, these groups have a family or ethnic base that enhances the cohesion and security of its members. These armed groups typically maintain their position through the threat or use of violence, corruption of public officials, graft, or extortion. The

[15] IBID, pages 17 & 18
[16] IBID, page 21
[17] IBID, page 23

> widespread political, economic, social, and technological changes occurring within the world allow organized crime groups to pursue their penultimate objective—to make as much money as possible from illegal activities—in ways that their earlier counterparts could not.[18]

As noted, the definitions provided above compose the foundation of this study. However, because this paper seeks to explore the international use of non-state armed groups by Iran, it is essential to this paper to recognize how the term is used in the international community. Furthermore, alternative definitions are provided and examined in order to avoid confusion or contradiction.

United Nations Definition

The 1998 United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) provides a working definition for the term "non-state armed group." This is derived from the Thematic Report of the 54th Session, in which the UNCHR provides the following description to use as a basis for its own internal reports:

> …the description of groups who have taken up arms against the government and notes: a number of appellations can be used terrorist groups, guerrillas, resistance movements, and so on with each term carrying different connotations; in the report, the terms "armed group" or "non-state armed group" are used to describe those who take up arms in a challenge to government authority, leaving aside the question of whether their activities and aims qualify them as "terrorists" or "freedom fighters"; the choice of the more neutral term, armed group, is in no way meant to imply any legitimacy for the group or its cause; and, it is recognized that such groups can, and frequently do, engage in acts of terrorism.[19]

It should be noted, however, that despite the fact that the UNCHR uses this definition to describe the character of non-state armed groups, there does not appear to be uniformity in this application within the international community. This is a reflection of contrasting political positions on the legitimacy of such groups. As a result, the very

[18] IBID, page 29

[19] United Nations Commission on Human Rights, 54th Session, Thematic Reports, "Minimum Humanitarian Standards: Substantive Issues," Reports of the Secretary-General, E/CN.4/1998/87 and E/CN.4/1998/87/Add.1., April 1998, http://www.hri.ca/uninfo/unchr98/theme3.shtml#18

same organization that so clearly provided a working definition on non-state armed groups in 1998 has more recently (19 January 2006) called for the creation of an operational definition for the same term.[20]

State Governments

Individual state use of the term appears to be somewhat sporadic. British government reports, for example, use the term "non-state armed group" interchangeably with the term "illegal armed group" (IAG).[21] Australia and Canada, on the other hand, use the term more frequently. This is most often within the context of human rights reports (i.e., child soldiery, rape, genocide). The U.S. government appears to use the term sparingly, more often employing the term "non-state actor."

Therefore, due to a lack of consistent application, the term "non-state armed group," as defined by the armed groups report (Shultz, Farrah, Lochard), provides the most comprehensive foundation by which to proceed with this study.

Iran's use of Non-State Armed Groups vs. "Terrorist" Organizations

There is a temptation to label all groups employed by Iran as "terrorist" organizations. It is true that most of the groups that Iran utilizes exploit terror to achieve their tactical objectives. However, a broad range of legitimacy exists for many of the groups that are affiliated with Iran. In some cases, such as Hezbollah, groups enjoy recognized political status by many states in the international community.[22] In other cases,

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[20] United Nations, *Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects*, 19 January 2006, Document A/CONF.192/2006/PC/CRP.17, http://www.un.org/events/smallarms2006/pdf/CRP.17.pdf

[21] Home Office of the United Kingdom, Country of Origin Information Service, Afghanistan, October 2005, http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs05/afghanistan_151105.doc

[22] In 2003, the Australian government conducted a thorough examination on the question of legitimacy for Hezbollah. This was due to contrasting positions between the United States and certain members of the European Union on the issue. The Australian government sought greater clarity on the subject as it

such as the Hazari militias of western Afghanistan, the fractious nature of Afghanistan's cultural climate almost requires the existence of militias.[23]

Furthermore, Iran does not simply utilize groups with a political motive. Significant evidence suggests that Iran's intelligence organizations and covert operatives have used organized crime groups in areas as diverse as Lebanon and Latin America. Thus, "terrorist" is a far too simple term to apply to all of the groups which Iran has an established strategic relationship. The use of NSAGs betrays a fundamental transformation in warfare that goes beyond the "terrorism" moniker.

Back to the Future

Twenty-plus years ago when the United States Congress was debating the reorganization of the Department of Defense, a critical examination was conducted and its findings were released in a report entitled "Defense Organization: The Need for Change." The following excerpt encapsulates the future of warfare envisioned by some policy makers in 1985:

> The proliferation of relatively inexpensive, highly destructive, and effective weapons to Third World countries has increased the likelihood and intensity of regional conflicts. Given modern technologies, states involved in regional rivalries and terrorist groups may find it easier to use force. Such relatively low intensity conflicts as the war in Lebanon and the Iran-Iraq war may be the most likely future challenge to U.S. military forces.[24]

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formulated its Criminal Code Amendment Bill of 2003. It chose to continue to label Hezbollah as a terrorist organization, following the American lead. However, in this report, clear divisions exist amongst those states that designate Hezbollah as a terror organization (U.S., Australia), those states that designate the militant wings of the group as terrorists, but exempt the political wing (U.K., Neatherlands), and those states that provide full legitimacy to Hezbollah (France, Germany). SEE report: Nigel Brew, Parliament of Australia, *Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Group*, Hezbollah in Profile, 2 June 2003, http://www.aph.gov.au/Library/Pubs/rn/2002-03/03rn42.htm . Furthermore, it should be noted that in June 2005, Hezbollah won all 26 seats available in Parliament for the Southern portion of Lebanon: Hussein Dakroub, Associated Press, Hezbollah Claims Win in Lebanon Election, 5 June 2005, http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory?id=822866

[23] To understand the militia culture of Afghanistan: Goodson, Larry P., Afghanistan's Endless War: State Failure, Regional Politics, and the Rise of the Taliban, 2001, University of Washington Press

[24] US Senate, United States Senate Armed Services Committee, 99th Congress, Staff Report to the Committee on Armed Services, Defense Organization: The Need for Change, 16 October 1985, Chapter 5, "Unified and Specified Commands," Section 2, *Broadening of the Missions of the Operational Commands*, Subsection b., "Proliferation of Threats to Western Interests," pages 283-284, http://www.ndu.edu/library/goldnich/9986.pdf

Chapter 1

STRATEGIC ASYMMETRY

The Role of Non-State Armed Groups in a New Fourth Generation of Warfare

Strategic Asymmetry

Before an analysis of Iran's use of NSAGs can be achieved, it is important to recognize their strategic benefit. As proxies, NSAGs provide strategic capabilities without culpability. Recognizing the benefits of proxy actors is not new. Professor Roy Godson, an expert on the study of covert action, highlights the use of subversives as far back as Elizabethan England.[25] He notes that "terrorism is an elemental political tool with a long history."[26] A more defined example on the state use of NSAGs is provided by Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr. (US Army, ret.).

In his contribution to the book, Low Intensity Conflict: The Pattern of Warfare in the Modern World, Colonel Summers explains the strategic logic of proxy actors:

> Those who wish to do the United States harm have reacted not by renouncing the use of force but by ratcheting it down to levels where the United States finds it difficult to respond and where they believe they have the best chance of success. That was the rationale for then Premier Nikita Khrushchev's adoption of "wars of national liberation" in the early 1960s. With direct military confrontation with the United States too risky… Khrushchev opted for an indirect confrontation and lent Soviet support to insurgencies directed against U.S. allies in the so-called Third World…. State-sponsored terrorism, like wars of national liberation, is an attempt to strike at an enemy while avoiding a direct confrontation.[27]

Still, the strategic use of proxies appears to be more then an attempt to avoid responsibility or direct confrontation. It is also a well-calculated response and deterrent mechanism for a state with limited means. This is the essence of "strategic asymmetry."

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[25] Godson, Roy, Dirty Tricks or Trump Cards: U.S. Covert Action & Counterintelligence, page 121, New York: Transaction Publishers, 2000

[26] IBID, 161

[27] Summers, Harry G., Colonel, U.S. Army (ret.), "A War is a War is a War is a War," Chapter 2, pages 28-29, printed in Thompson, Loren B., Low Intensity Conflict: The Pattern of warfare in the Modern World, Washington, D.C., Lexington Books, 1989

Definition of Strategic Asymmetry

Professor Steven Metz of the U.S. Army War College explored the concept of strategic asymmetry in a July/August 2001 edition of the U.S. Army's Combined Arms Command Military Review. In this piece, entitled, "Strategic Asymmetry," Dr. Metz analyzed the 1999 Joint Strategy Review's[28] definition of asymmetry which he records as the following: "Asymmetric approaches are attempts to circumvent or undermine US strengths while exploiting US weaknesses using methods that differ significantly from the United States' expected method of operations…"[29] Criticizing the Department of Defense (DOD) definition for its US-centric paradigmatic limitations and its failure to explore potential American military uses, Professor Metz went on to provide a more robust definition:

> A more general, complete definition of strategic asymmetry would be: In military affairs and national security, asymmetry is acting, organizing and thinking differently from opponents to maximize relative strengths, exploit opponents' weaknesses or gain greater freedom of action. It can be political-strategic, military-strategic, operational or a combination, and entail different methods, technologies, values, organizations or time perspectives. It can be short-term, long-term, deliberate or by default. It also can be discrete or pursued in conjunction with symmetric approaches and have both psychological and physical dimensions.[30]

From this definition, a criticism on the Western approaches toward the conduct of warfare can be drawn. Specifically, the regimentation of war as a systems-driven endeavor – incorporating humans and technology into a seamless weapon – appears to be viewed as a weakness. In fact, Dr. Metz goes on to explore the American experience in

[28] The Joint Strategy Review is a report constructed for the purpose of encapsulating the vision of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff. Its primary purpose is to act as a military policy guide – sometimes long term (10-20 years).
[29] Metz, Steven, "Strategic Asymmetry," Combined Arms Command Military Review, July/August 2001, page 24, http://usacac.leavenworth.army.mil/cac/milreview/download/English/JulAug01/metz.pdf
[30] IBID, page 36

both asymmetric warfare (American Revolution) and its attempts to systemize warfare (Vietnam). He argues that strategic asymmetry exploits this attempt to reduce combat to a scientific endeavor.

Using historic examples, Metz shows how the use of archetypical fighting strategies creates vulnerabilities for those who employ a repetitive method of combat, regardless of technological capacity. By approaching war in a mechanical way – or any other state enterprise for that matter, such as diplomacy – the state becomes predictable. Such predictability enables an adversary to disrupt the mechanical process.

Therefore, an enemy can cripple a state that is ill prepared for any system's disruption with very little effort exerted on its part. This is the true benefit of employing asymmetry. Strategic asymmetry does not necessarily exploit the military force that it is fighting; rather, it manipulates the intellectual method by which the enemy approaches and conducts war. Conducting warfare in this manner fits within the context of "Fourth Generation Warfare."

Fourth Generation Warfare

Iran's embrace of NSAGs is a reflection, in part, of a greater transformative process occurring in the nature and conduct of war. The traditional Western understanding of war as a violent, inter-state affair has changed. London School of Economics Professor Mary Kaldor's examination of this transformation summarizes the dynamics of modern conflict:

> Every society has its own characteristic of war. What we tend to perceive as war, what policy-makers and military leaders define as war, is, in fact, a specific phenomenon which took shape in Europe somewhere between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, although it has passed through several different phases since then. It was a phenomenon that was intimately bound up with the evolution of the modern state…. war was recognizably the same phenomenon: a construction of

> the centralized, 'rationalized', hierarchically ordered, territorialized modern state. As the centralized, territorialized modern state gives way to new types of polity emerging out of new global processes, so war, as we presently conceive it, is becoming an anachronism.[31]

The term that is frequently associated with this transformation is "Fourth Generation Warfare."

Definition of Fourth Generation Warfare

In October 1989, William S. Lind, a noted strategist on the changing dynamics of warfare, co-wrote[32] an article for the Marine Corps Gazette entitled "The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation." In this article, he and his contributors examined the potential changes of warfare as the 1990s drew near. Framing the question in the following way, Mr. Lind acknowledges a generational transition followed by a warning to the policy maker:

> If we look at the development of warfare in the modern era, we see three distinct generations. In the United States, the Army and the Marine Corps are now coming to grips with the change to the third generation. This transition is entirely for the good. However, third generation warfare was conceptually developed by the German offensive in the spring of 1918. It is now more than 70 years old. This suggests some interesting questions: Is it not about time for a fourth generation to appear? If so, what might it look like? These questions are of central importance. Whoever is first to recognize, understand, and implement a generational change can gain a decisive advantage. Conversely, a nation that is slow to adapt to generational change opens itself to catastrophic defeat.[33]

Lind describes the first three generations as the following:

> **First Generation**: "reflects tactics of the era of the smoothbore musket, the tactics of line and column."[34] This was the regimented drill that characterized warfare of the 16th through the early 19th centuries.

[31] Kaldor, Mary, New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era, pages 15-16, Stanford University Press, 1999
[32] The other contributors to this piece were Colonel Keith Nightengale, US Army (USA), Captain John F. Schmitt, US Marine Corps (USMC), Colonel Joseph W. Sutton, (USA), and Lieutenant Colonel Gary I. Wilson, USMC Reserve (USMCR).
[33] Lind, page 22
[34] IBID, page 22

> **Second Generation**: "Second generation warfare was a response to the rifled musket, breechloaders, barbed wire, the machinegun, and indirect fire. Tactics were based on fire and movement, and they remained essentially linear…. Perhaps the principal change from first generation tactics was heavy reliance on indirect fire… Massed firepower replaced massed manpower. Second generation tactics *remained* the basis of U.S. doctrine *until* the 1980s, and they are still practiced by most American units in the field."[35]
>
> **Third Generation**: A response to the second, developed by the German military post-1918 that emphasized maneuver warfare and mechanization. It is best characterized by the concept of "blitzkrieg."[36]

After laying out the principles of the previous three generations of warfare, Lind then begins an investigation into those principles of warfare that remain constant regardless of the generation. After this brief analysis, he begins to draw a picture of how fourth generation warfare might emerge.

First, he weighs the potential that technology will act as the primer for change. This is based on the assumption that "weapons that are effective in actual combat"[37] will probably become more lethal and more portable. He further considers the impact such weapons might have on tactics. After this short study, Lind then puts forth the notion that the more likely catalyst for a new era in warfare will be idea-driven: "Technology was the primary driver of the second generation of warfare; ideas were the primary driver of the third. An idea-based fourth generation is also conceivable."[38]

Lind puts forth the transformative potential of non-Western NSAGs in the following statement:

> For about the last 500 years, the West has defined warfare. For a military to be effective it generally had to follow Western models. Because the West's strength

[35] IBID, page 23 and 24. Italic emphasis is the author's own. NOTE: This article was written before the U.S. response to the August 1990 invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, and the subsequent Desert Shield and Desert Storm operations. Lind's description of Third Generation War better characterizes the tactical doctrine of the U.S. during those operations.
[36] IBID
[37] IBID, page 24
[38] IBID, page 24

> is technology, it may tend to conceive of a fourth generation in technological terms.
>
> However, the West no longer dominates the world. A fourth generation may emerge from non-Western cultural traditions, such as Islamic or Asiatic traditions. The fact that some non-Western areas, such as the Islamic world, are not strong in technology may lead them to develop a fourth generation through ideas rather than technology.
>
> The genesis of an idea-based fourth generation may be visible in terrorism. This is not to say that terrorism is fourth generation warfare, but rather that elements of it may be signs pointing toward a fourth generation.[39]

More then fifteen years later, on 10 June 2005, William Lind released a Fleet Marine Force Manual (FMFM 1-A, Fourth Generation War) designed to guide U.S. Marine Corps policy on fighting fourth generation warfare. Much of what Lind and the Marine Corps senior leadership predicted came to fruition. Throughout this FMFM, the reader is reminded of the current wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Lind observes the following in relation to fourth generation warfare and NSAGs: (Using the term "non-state actors")

> Despite the fact that Third Generation war proved its decisive superiority more than 60 years ago, most of the world's state armed forces remain Second Generation. The reason is cultural: they cannot make the break with the culture of order that the Third Generation requires. This is another reason why, around the world, state armed forces are not doing well against non-state enemies. Second Generation militaries fight by putting firepower on targets, and Fourth Generation fighters are very good at making themselves untargetable. Virtually all Fourth Generation forces are free of the First Generation culture of order; they focus outward, they prize initiative and, because they are highly decentralized, they rely on self-discipline. Second Generation state armed forces are largely helpless against them.[40]

Non-State Armed Groups as a Weapon

The state employment of NSAGs is well-suited for both Dr. Metz' defined strategic asymmetry and Lind's fourth generation war. Their use exploits the mechanical

[39] IBID, page 24
[40] Lind, William S., FMFM 1-A, Fourth Generation War, 10 June 2005, http://www.d-n-i.net/lind/4gw_manual_draft_3_revised_10_june_05.doc

process of Western war, which is laden with rules and codes of conduct. Specifically, the use of NSAGs manipulates rules designed to protect civilian non-combatants.

NSAGs are rarely uniformed, identifiable actors in the state tradition of an army. Thus, the "modern" military that encounters the NSAG has a difficult time distinguishing combatant from non-combatant. NSAGs, and the states that support them, are well aware of this difficulty. They know that the Fourth Geneva Convention explicitly prohibits conventional military forces from committing violence against "persons taking no active part in the hostilities [of a given war], including members of the armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed hors de combat by sickness, wounds, detention, or any other cause…"[41] Quoting FMFM 1-A: "While Marines will remain bound by the Geneva Conventions in Fourth Generation conflicts, their opponents will not be. Non-state forces are not party to law between states."[42]

Thus, a dilemma for the uniformed soldier emerges. How does he or she distinguish between combatants and noncombatants in the heat of battle when neither wears a uniform? Most often he or she cannot. The soldier needs to wait to identify hostile behavior before engagement. This is problematic because it surrenders the inherent advantage of the "first shot" to the NSAG combatant. This frustrates the systematic approach, which places a high value on the first shot against an identifiable enemy. It confounds the scientific process that Metz derides. Hence, not only do NSAGs enable a state to avoid direct confrontation as highlighted by Godson and Summers, they also become the weapon of choice in an overt war for a technologically inferior adversary.

[41] International Committee of the Red Cross, The Fourth Geneva Convention, Part 1, Article 3, Section 1, Subsections a through d, "Convention (IV) Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War," 12 August 1949, http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/0/6756482d86146898c125641e004aa3c5?OpenDocument
[42] FMFM 1-A, page 29

The problem is compounded for the intelligence operative, law enforcement agent, and counterterrorism professional. For the intelligence operative, it is difficult to distinguish between enemies and potential informants. Additionally, ascertaining the true motivations of a NSAG that appears to have no state ties is equally challenging, if not more so. What might seem as a group operating for its own sake may actually be a group that is facilitating the goals of a covert state enterprise. Members of a transnational crime group, for example, may be intercepted by law enforcement in a routine criminal investigation with no exploration into their possible connections with an adversarial state actor.[43] Thus, NSAGs provide a convenient cover that can produce a "false wall" to an intelligence operation. Without knocking down the wall to see what stands behind it, the intelligence operative might stop probing, believing the case to have come to an end prematurely.

The cover provided by NSAGs adds depth to the covert capabilities of the state that employs them. This better enables the internal penetration of a given enemy's geographic borders. When utilized inside the state of an adversary, a NSAG can yield a number of strategic benefits. The well-coordinated use of NSAGs can erode domestic political support for a military campaign or political objective by attacking the civilian population. It can strike a target that undermines the capacity for a state to continue a war by attacking critical infrastructure. Or, NSAGs can be used to divert attention from the nation-state in which the initial political challenges arose.

[43] The case of Asad Ahmad Barakat: Barakat, a Lebanese Mafia member that operated as the pivot man between Hizballah and the Latin American drug trade apparently enjoyed close ties to Tehran. There is some evidence that he facilitated IRGC operatives and activities in Latin America. Rex Hudson, Library of Congress Federal Research Division, Terrorist and Organized Crime Groups in the Tri-Border Area of South America, July 2003, http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/pdf-files/TerrOrgCrime_TBA.pdf

For the counterterrorism operative, identifying members of a cell is compounded by the ease of the NSAG to blend back into the very same society they seek to destroy. Thus, the strategic benefits are clearly evident. Not only can the aggressor maintain the element of surprise, they can also project power into the deepest geographic sectors of a state: its people.

Again, recognizing that a government cannot arbitrarily target its own citizenry, the NSAG becomes nearly indefensible. The state that employs NSAGs enjoys the opportunity of the critical first strike, much as it does in the aforementioned battlefield scenario. The only way to mitigate against such a strike is to identify and capture the operatives before they hit their targets.

Thus, the use of NSAGs provides an inexpensive power projection capability for a state like Iran. Unable to launch an assault overseas, Tehran can hit targets inside an enemy as distant as the United States without developing an Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) or an aircraft carrier. The NSAG becomes the ultimate long-range delivery vehicle for a less developed state. In an era defined by seemingly endless U.S. military capabilities, the employment of NSAGs is an attractive option for a state that cannot compete in a conventional manner. The problem is best described in the FMFM 1-A:

> As a practical matter, the forces of most of our non-state, Fourth Generation adversaries will be all or mostly irregular light infantry. Few Fourth Generation non-state actors can afford anything else, and irregulars do enjoy some important advantages over conventional forces. They can be difficult to target, especially with air power and artillery. They can avoid stronger but more heavily equipped opponents by using concealment and dispersal (often within the civil population). They can fight an endless war of mines and ambushes. Because irregulars operate within the population and are usually drawn from it, they can solicit popular support or, if unsuccessful, compel popular submission.[44]

[44] FMFM 1-A, page 25

Strategic Logic of NSAGs

There are two reasons that the transformation of warfare is likely to place a heavy emphasis on the NSAG – especially for the state. The first reason is the proliferation of interstate and intrastate actors that enjoy strategic capabilities. This makes the use of NSAGs a viable option with genuine advantages for the state. The second reason is "strategic choice" dictated by a military means gap. Iran's use of NSAGs is better categorized by the second reason. However, it is important to understand the nature of the first reason of war's transformation in order to understand the complications associated with the second reason.

The existence of a greater number of NSAGs not only enables Iran to exploit such movements with little consequence, it also increases the lethality of their use. Roy Godson notes that, "when [terrorism] is not part of a well-thought-out policy, or where there are few opportunities to exploit, terrorism achieves little politically."[45] Iran's use of NSAGs is well thought out. It is calculated to exploit the proliferation of NSAGs (reason #1) while operating from a conventionally weaker position that has contributed to the transformation of war (reason #2).

Reason #1: The proliferation of Non-State Actors and Armed Groups

Since the end of World War II, an increasing number of actors external to the traditional state architecture have emerged: transnational crime groups, millennialist terror groups, anti-colonialist rebels, ideological revolutionaries, and reactionary "defense forces" are only a few of the many new forms of interstate and intrastate actors.

[45] Godson, page 161

Professor Richard Shultz, an expert in the study of non-state armed groups, explains the proliferation of such groups in the following way:

> Over the last two decades, NSAs [Non State Actors] who operate both within and across state boundaries have increasingly challenged state supremacy. They can be divided into two principal categories—intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The former includes the UN, its sub-units, and regional counterparts. NGOs are far more diverse and far more numerous. Today they are estimated to number over 30,000. They seek to influence local, regional, and global agendas in ways consistent with their perspective or ideology. NGOs span virtually every facet of political, social, and economic life. While the image of the NGO is generally positive, those reporting on their growing numbers in the 1990s included in their classification violent armed groups—militias, insurgents, terrorists, and criminal cartels—in their classification.[46]

Dr. Thomas Barnett, a noted strategist and former professor at the U.S. Navy War College, further explains that much of the initial growth in NGOs and the people who join them (non-state actors [NSAs]) was a byproduct of the Cold War. He observes that the number of NSAGs with transnational capabilities and strategic potential grew as a result of numerous U.S.-Soviet proxy conflicts.[47] However, the post Cold War proliferation of communications technology, especially the Internet, has served to exponentially increase the number of NSAGs and their strategic potential. Additionally, these new actors are not bound to the same formalities of traditional Western interstate warfare. Civilians are viewed as enablers of the enemy and, thus, legitimate military targets. Whereas, previous Cold War politics would have limited attacks to (most often)

[46] Armed groups report, pages 11 & 12

[47] Barnett, Thomas P.M., The Pentagon's New map: War and Peace in the Twenty-First Century, pages 43-46, New York: Berkley Books, 2004. Barnett discusses the transition of terror groups from Soviet sponsorship to theologically guided organizations.

definable military targets,[48] the lack of a major state sponsor seems to have resulted in the loss of restrictions.[49]

Perhaps the best example of this new NSAG dynamic is the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group's (GCIM)[50] attack on Madrid in March 2004. The attacks of 11 March (11M) in Madrid highlight both the NSAG's transformation in strategic significance and lack of restraint. The fact that a little known group was able to sway the election of an advanced democracy, and change the dynamics of a thirty-two state alliance, highlights the strategic capabilities of the modern terrorist.[51] Not a single military target of consequence was hit. Rather, 192 people were killed, and approximately 2,050 were wounded. All of these victims were civilians. Yet, Spain changed governments and that new government withdrew from Iraq within weeks of the attack.

The emergence of NSAGs with strategic capacity is a new phenomenon that will challenge policy makers and operators for the foreseeable future. Dr. Shultz describes their transformative emergence as a "revolution in terrorist affairs…[which] is analogous to a revolution in military affairs (RMA)."[52] There are multiple reasons for the emergence

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[48] Target restraint was once the norm. However, in some cases, civilian locations were targeted, ostensibly to target military personnel that frequented these locations. Example: The 1986 terror bombing (Libyan supported) of the La Belle Discotheque in Germany, a civilian location, was still attempting to target US service personnel – the nightclub's primary customer base. Consequently, 2 of the 3 persons killed were US Army sergeants. Similar attacks were carried out by the Provisional Irish Republican Army against civilian locations known to host British military personnel. SEE Bell, J. Bowyer, IRA Tactics and Targets, Dublin: Poolberg Press, Ltd., 1993

[49] Smith, James M. and William C. Thomas, "Terrorism Threat and Response: A Policy Perspective," reprinted in the book by James M. Smith and William C. Thomas (editors), The Terrorism Threat and U.S. Government Response: Operational and Organizational Factors, USAF INSS, March 2001, http://www.usafa.af.mil/df/inss/terrorism.htm

[50] GCIM is derived from the group's French name, Groupe Islamique Combattant Marocain

[51] Keith B. Richburg, "Madrid Attacks May Have Targeted Election: Wiretaps Bolster Theory That Blasts Were Timed to Hurt Chances of Leader Who Backed Iraq War," The Washington Post, 17 October 2004, page A16, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A38817-2004Oct16.html

[52] Armed groups report, page 10

of such groups. However, the focus of this study is on Iran's use of NSAGs. Tehran not only exploits this proliferation, it contributes to it. The reason is a well-grounded logic guided by strategic asymmetry as defined in this paper. Like many states, Iran suffers from a significant conventional military deficiency in comparison to its primary ideological rival: the United States. Therefore, Iran's embrace of NSAGs is founded in the second reason that war has transformed: a conventional military means gap.

Reason #2: A logical solution to solve the conventional military means gap

The second reason for the changed nature of war can be attributed to a military means gap. This reason is best encapsulated by Dr. Martha Crenshaw's "Strategic Choice Theory." In her study on the operational logic of terrorism, Professor Crenshaw stated the following:

> The source of terrorist behavior [is] a willful choice made by an organization for political and strategic reasons…Organizations arrive at collective judgments about the relative effectiveness of different strategies of opposition on the basis of observation and experience, as much as on the abstract strategic conceptions derived from ideological assumptions.[53]

Thus, Crenshaw establishes the employment of terrorism as a calculated means to an end. The overwhelming technological superiority of the United States, and other advanced militaries, has created an environment in which potential enemies see that direct "strategies of opposition" are fruitless.[54] Thus, indirect methods of combat have been embraced. Often, this is in the form of terrorism, although the exclusive use of terror is not necessarily the case.

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[53] Crenshaw, Martha, "The logic of terrorism: Terrorist behavior as a product of strategic choice," pages 8-9. Reprinted in Reich, Walter, Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind, Washington, D.C.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998

[54] Direct attacks occurred more frequently in the early stages of the current Iraq War. Yet, insurgent attempts to fight U.S. troops directly proved to be fatal. The fight for Samara in November 2003 highlights this reality: http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2003-11-30-ambush-tactics_x.htm

In the 1962 English version of his book, People's War; People's Army, General Vo Nguyen Giap wrote the following in relation to fighting an enemy (French) of superior conventional military power. It was a harbinger of things to come:

> Thereafter, with the development of our forces, guerilla warfare changed into a mobile warfare -- a form of mobile warfare still strongly marked by guerilla warfare - which would afterwards become the essential form of operations on the main front, the northern front. In this process of development of guerilla warfare and of accentuation of the mobile warfare, our people's army constantly grew… From the military point of view, the Vietnamese people's war of liberation proved that an insufficiently equipped people's army, but an army fighting for a just cause, can, with appropriate strategy and tactics, combine the conditions needed to conquer a modern army of aggressive imperialism.[55]

Since the mid-1940s, asymmetric warfare has become the norm. Incapable of launching a war of liberation by conventional means, indigenous freedom fighters in former colonies chose asymmetric war with great effect in the aftermath of the Second World War. A pattern became apparent. As John Poole points out in his book Tactics of the Crescent Moon: Militant Muslim Combat Methods, "Not lost to the third world is how the superpowers fared in Korea, Vietnam, and Afghanistan."[56]

Consequently, the methods that such groups have chosen to achieve their goals often shock the sensibilities of populations that have grown accustomed to the luxuries afforded by the Geneva Convention. They also have a tendency to shock militaries. As Lind was quoted earlier, the United States (through the 1980s) trained its military to fight in a Second Generation linear method of combat. This has not changed. Despite post-basic training advanced combat arms schools for the U.S. soldier or Marine, the method of combat taught in the basic combat arms schools is antiquated. These schools still

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[55] Fall, Bernard B., Vo Nguyen Giap, Roger Hilsman, People's War; People's Army, page 30, New York: Praeger, 1962

[56] Poole, H. John, Tactics of the Crescent Moon: Militant Muslim Combat Methods, page xxvi, Emerald Isle, NC: Posterity Press, 2004

emphasize bayonet training and modified trench warfare through the use of "fighting holes" or "foxholes." This basic training regimen severely skews perceptions of combat for future field combatants.

The end result is that Western troops, and the intelligence agencies tasked with infiltrating them, are often wholly unprepared. Consequently, many of the groups that employ asymmetry are lumped under the broad umbrella of "terrorist" or their tactics are dismissed as "terrorism." In fact, this oversimplification often distorts the true nature of the participants. This adversely affects the formation of a more reasoned, comprehensive strategic policy. The new reality is that the international picture has changed. NSAGs will likely play a primary role in all future forms of combat for the foreseeable future, regardless of the nature of the enemy.

Strategic Asymmetry as a Strategic Culture

Recognizing the underlying principle of strategic asymmetry enables the strategist to better understand the use of NSAGs. NSAGs are more than a tactical development of the weak. They are a crucial component in a given way of war. Much of the study on covert action, NSAGs, and proxy actors focuses on their traditional Western uses. This biases most analyses. Despite the fact that asymmetry is studied in-depth, very little is done on the strategic evolution of asymmetry as a cultural method.

Tactical examinations exist on conflicts as wide ranging as the American French and Indian War (1754 – 1763), the Philippine Insurrection (1899-1913), and the French and American experiences in Vietnam (1945-1975), to name a few. Rarely do such studies examine the nature of warfare for societies engaged against Western forces. Categorizing methods of warfare as "asymmetric" or "conventional" is a foreign concept

to the world outside of the Westphalian experience. What the west designates as "asymmetric warfare" has been defined simply as "war" by many cultures. This is especially true of Eurasian powers.

In Eurasia, war has historically been a nonnegotiable zero sum game in an unforgiving physical environment. A loss meant the elimination of one's tribe or society. In order to win, a warrior employed whatever means were at his disposal and he exploited the weakness of his adversary. There were few rules – if any. Whereas the Western tradition of war developed codes, other societies did not enjoy the luxury of fratricide for its own political sake.

In order to appreciate the use of NSAGs by Iran, it is important to understand the foundations of Eastern warfare. Specifically, the practices of Eurasian and Middle Eastern warfare that have been developed over four millennia. It is characterized by speed, envelopment, confederated units, and irregulars. The military ethos of the region has been shaped by the belligerency of successful invaders – notably the Turkic invasions that materialized at the end of the first millennia CE, and the Mongolian invasions led by Genghis Khan.

In fact, one cannot overestimate the impact of these invaders on the regional strategic culture. It is important to understand that the strategic culture of the Middle East does not relegate the employment of NSAGs to such a subordinate level. On the contrary, NSAGs enjoy a historically large role for powers in the region.

The strategic evolution of the Middle East is very different from the West. As John Poole notes in his book Tactics of the Crescent Moon: Militant Muslim Combat Methods, "while Western soldiers were evolving technologically, Eastern soldiers may

have been compensating tactically."[57] Asymmetry, as defined by the West, is not asymmetry in the East.

Before the emergence of large-scale European armies, proxy actors and covert operatives were employed by political leaders in the region. An example of one such group, the Hashashiyyuns ("hash smokers"), played a crucial role in resisting Turkish advancement, and then Crusader encroachment, as early as the 11th century.[58] Thus, Iran's use of NSAGs is not new. Rather, it is a return to a more effective fighting method for the region.

This is a likely result of a series of defeats by Eastern armies to Western armies when each side chose to fight a Western style of warfare.[59] Consequently, the current post-invasion insurgency waged in Iraq by Baathist forces seems to indicate a return by Eastern powers to an indigenous form of confederated warfare. Given the fact that Western involvement in the region is likely for the foreseeable future, Western military leaders will have to recognize that warfare has fundamentally changed. Hezbollah will dictate the method of warfare, not West Point.

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[57] Poole, Tactics, page xxvi

[58] The term "Hashashiyyun" was ultimately corrupted to form the word "assassin" by Western Crusaders who ran up against these warriors.{SEE Hillenbrand,Carole, The **Crusades: Islamic Perspectives, page 500-501, New York: Routledge, 2000}The** history of this group forms a crucial component in the strategic culture of Iran and the cultivation of Iranian backed NSAGs. Therefore, the paper will go into further detail about the Hashashiyyuns in the next section.

[59] Poole, H. John, Chapter 12, "The Tactical Part of the Equation," Tactics of the Crescent Moon

Chapter 2

IRAN

Identifying a Strategic Culture and Political Goals

Background[60]

Iran is a Shiite theocracy of approximately 68 million people[61] situated at the cusp of the Middle East and Southwest Asia. The two primary contributors to its identity, Shiism and Persian ethnicity, define both Iran's security doctrine and the state. It is difficult to conduct a strategic analysis of Iran without knowing something of the country's identity. Additionally, if one attempts to research Iran's employment of NSAGs, he or she should also be aware of the broader regional security environment.

Iran's strategic culture is the combined product of Shiite fundamentalism, Persian nationalism, and an unforgiving geopolitical location. Iranian citizens are cognizant of their Persian history. The current political structure, however, insures that they are also saturated with reminders of their predominant Shiite faith. Considering their relative status in the region, both contributing elements place Iran at a strategic disadvantage.

As Persians, Iran is a state comprised of a regional ethnic minority. It is surrounded by Arabs to its South and West, Turkic peoples to its Northeast and Northwest, and Caucasians to its North. As Shiites, Iran is also comprised of a regional religious minority. It is almost completely encircled by Sunni Muslims, with a small scattering of Shiite populations on its immediate periphery.[62] Geographically, Iran's location, straddling East and West, has served as a transit point for foreign invaders for

[60] This section is comprised of information gained from books by Nikki Keddie, Sandra Mackey, Kenneth Pollack, and Elaine Sciolino. Where appropriate, pages will be cited.
[61] Iran, CIA Factbook, 2005, http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ir.html#Intro
[62] Iraq and Azerbaijan's Shiite majorities are the exceptions to this rule.

several millennia. During the 19th and 20th centuries, the location was geopolitically prized by imperial forces. Compounding to its besieged mentality has been the oil politics of the second half of the 20th century.

Thus, as a state comprised of a regional ethnic and religious minority on a valuable piece of property, Iranian governments have traditionally found themselves preoccupied with security. Given their distinct disadvantages, Tehran[63] has aggressively employed measures to insure its autonomy. Historically, these measures have varied in degrees of success. Most recently, Tehran has chosen an asymmetric path toward insuring its security. The reasons that Iran feels it must secure such arrangements are a manifestation of its unique history.

It is not the purpose of this paper to conduct a comprehensive examination into Iran's past. However, it is necessary to understand the underpinnings of this culture in order to understand Iran's employment of NSAGs. Furthermore, a cultural understanding of Iran is also significant to understanding the political dynamics of Shiite NSAGs. Professor Ahmad Nizar Hamzeh of the American University of Beruit notes the following with regard to Shiite NSAGs:

> …to understand Hizbullah's actions in the context of its ideology, one has to make an in-depth analysis… of Hizbullah's ideological doctrine….
>
> This doctrine is rooted and patterned after that of Ayatollah Ruhallah Khomeini's ideology….Hizbullah's response to crisis catalysts manifests itself through an Islamic juristical ideology. This political-legal-religious doctrine, which is distinctively Shi'ite, contains a salvational prescription of primordial values, beliefs, and practices that are to shape the actions and the future of the intended Islamic order…[64]

[63] For the purpose of this paper, Tehran will be used as an alternative term for the Iranian government from time to time.
[64] Hamzeh, Ahmad Nizar, In the Path of Hizbullah, page 27, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004

Therefore, before proceeding with an analysis of Iran's political and security needs, a brief introduction to the three cultural contributors is provided. Each contributor (Shiism, Persian ethnicity, Geography) will be briefly described before combining them to offer a more robust reasoning for Tehran's employment of NSAGs.

Shiite Iran

> *The official religion of Iran is Islam and the Twelver Ja'fari school [in usual al-Din and fiqh], and this principle will remain eternally immutable*. – Article 12, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran [65]

Paramount to a basic understanding of Iran is recognizing the significance of Shi'a theology in post-revolutionary Iran. Due to the 1979 Islamic Revolution of Imam Ruhollah Khomeini, Shiism appears to be the most significant contributor to the state's identity. This is due to the construction of a political architecture designed to insure the future of a Shiite theocracy.

The history of Shiism, especially its profound preoccupation with justice and martyrdom, transposes itself upon Tehran's current foreign policy. As a result, ideology influences political decision – albeit to varying degrees. This is the result of a carefully constructed Constitution, which insures religious leadership at the top of the political pyramid.

Political Structure of the Shiite Theocracy

From the time Khomeini successfully ascended to power, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been led by Shiite religious leaders. To date, only two men have held the distinction of Supreme Leader (velayat e-faqih): Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1979 – 1989) and Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Hosseini Khamenei (1989 to the present), a protégé of

[65] Article 12, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, http://www.iranonline.com/iran/iran-info/Government/constitution.html

Khomeini. Furthermore, Iran's legal composition is constructed to perpetuate a theocracy.

Article 107 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran stipulates that the Supreme Leader derives his power from the Assembly of Experts (Majles-e-Khobregan), an 86 member Parliament.[66] The Majiles, as it is popularly called, elect the Supreme Leader for life and, in theory, have the ability to remove him from power. However, in order to become a qualified candidate to run for office in the Majiles, one must be approved by the Council of Guardians of the Constitution (Shora-ye Negahban-e Qanun-e Assassi).[67] This body of 12 Guardians is constructed of 6 Islamic scholars, chosen by the Supreme Leader, and 6 civilian members, chosen by the Majiles. They are tasked with the following responsibility:

> [Article 91] With a view to safeguard the Islamic ordinances and the Constitution, in order to examine the compatibility of the legislation passed by the Islamic Consultative Assembly with Islam [Majiles], a council to be known as the Guardian Council is to be constituted…[68]

In other words, the body that provides oversight of the Supreme Leader is, in turn, overseen by a political body that is chosen by the Supreme Leader.[69]

Furthermore, the conditions set forth to become the Supreme Leader and the constitutionally constructed role envisioned for the Supreme Leader solidify a theocratic political hierarchy. As prescribed by Article 109 of the Constitution, the "following are the essential qualifications and conditions for the [Supreme] Leader:"

1. Scholarship, as required for performing the functions of mufti[70] in different fields of fiqh.[71]

[66] IBSID, Article 107
[67] IBSID, Articles 92 & 93
[68] IBSID, Article 91
[69] IBSID, Article 110
[70] High teacher.

2. Justice and piety, as required for the leadership of the Islamic Ummah.[72]
3. Right political and social perspicacity, prudence, courage, administrative facilities and adequate capability for leadership. In case of multiplicity of persons fulfilling the above qualifications and conditions, the person possessing the better jurisprudential and political perspicacity will be given preference.[73]

Thus, the executive leadership is directed by a senior member of the Shiite religious community.

Additionally, the decision-making and legislative process is further screened through the lens of Shi'a Islam. Not only does the Constitution require that "all civil, penal financial, economic, administrative, cultural, military, political, and other laws and regulations must be based on Islamic criteria,"[74] but such legislative decisions are required to undergo a review of their adherence to Sharia as determined by the Council of Guardians:

> [Article 96] The determination of compatibility of the legislation passed by the Islamic Consultative Assembly with the laws of Islam rests with the majority vote of the fuqaha' on the Guardian Council; and the determination of its compatibility with the Constitution rests with the majority of all the members of the Guardian Council.[75]

Therefore, in nearly all facets of governance, the political processes are an extension of Shi'a Islam.

Shi'a Islam's Unique Martyr Characteristic

The consequences of theocratic rule for Iran lay in the historic roots of Shiism. Shiism is a sect within Islam that is founded upon the tradition of the noble martyr. The term Shi'a is short for "Shi'at Ali" – or "followers of Ali ibn Abi Talib." According to

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[71] Islamic law – specifically Shiite dogma.
[72] Islamic People.
[73] IBSID, Article 109
[74] Article 4, The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran
[75] IBSID, Article 96

Shi'a tradition, Ali (the cousin and son-in-law of Mohammed) was the rightful successor to the Prophet Mohammed's Caliphate. After being kept from power by the hands of a treacherous wife of Mohammed's, Ali was finally placed into power. Guiding the Ummah[76] back toward righteousness after years of corrupt leadership, Ali was assassinated. Upon his death, he is purported to have said the following: "By The Lord of the Ka'bah, I have succeeded."

Thus, Ali, having been martyred for upholding Allah's will, is seen as a hero worthy of emulation. Sandra Mackey, an expert in Middle Eastern culture, describes the significance of Ali to the Iranian people:

> Because the Iranians are overwhelmingly Shia, Ali, in death as well as life, would profoundly mold Iranian morality, values, and character… In Ali, Iranians see the most perfect model of the noble virtue of justice which they believe has always been a central part of their cultural tradition.[77]

The martyrdom ethic is further entrenched by the events that took place as a result of a post-Ali power struggle. Shortly after the death of Ali, his son, Imam al-Hussein, found himself competing with the Sunnah,[78] led by the Umayyads. Ultimately, Hussein led a largely symbolic attack on Umayyad forces at modern day Karbala, Iraq. With approximately 75 soldiers, Hussein attacked 5,000 Umayyad troops. Hussein was killed in battle in October 680 CE; again, another example of the noble martyr. A religious day and a shrine in Karbala celebrate Hussein's martyrdom, and thousands of Shiites make a

[76] Ummah is a term used to label the community of all Muslims regardless of where they reside.
[77] Mackey, Sandra, The Iranians: Persia, Islam and the Soul of a Nation, page 54, New York: Penguin Books, 1998
[78] The Sunnah is the community of Sunni Muslins. This designation was given to those who chose to follow the lead of the Umayyads – a Syrian-based military-religious dynasty. The Umayyads challenged Ali's claim to the Islamic leadership after Mohammad's death. The Umayyads place Uthman into the leadership role. Sunni Muslims believe this was the will of Mohammad, whereas Shi'a Muslims consider this to be a usurpation of Mohammad's authority.

pilgrimage to Karbala every year for the purpose of paying their respects and seeking Allah's blessing. Furthermore, Hussein's birth and death are national holidays in Iran.

To understand the impact of Hussein on Iranian culture, Elaine Sciolino provides two excerpts from an Iranian handbook. The handbook from which Sciolino draws these quotes is entitled "The Martyr," a guide to instruct Iranian youths on how to be better Muslims:

> When Imam Hosein decided to leave for Kufa, some prudent members of his family tried to dissuade him. Their argument was that his action was not logical. They were right in their own way… But Imam Hosein had a higher logic. His logic was that of a martyr, which is beyond the comprehension of ordinary people.
>
> [Next Quote]
>
> The distinctive characteristic of a martyr is that he charges the atmosphere with courage and zeal. He revives the spirit of valor and fortitude… among the people who have lost it. That is why Islam is always in need of martyrs.[79]

After providing these quotes, Sciolino tells the story of the "Director of the Martyrs Section" at the largest cemetery in Iran, Hamid Rahimian. Rahimian, a veteran of the Iran-Iraq War, laments the fact that he did not die in battle. Instead, Rahimian was unfortunate to "only" suffer seared lungs and both of his arms and legs broken when his truck of martyrs was sent into the middle of an Iraqi armor column in 1988.[80] "I dream of martyrdom,"[81] he tells Sciolino, "The Koran says, 'Those who die for God are martyrs, and the martyrs never die. They live forever.'"[82]

Sciolino goes on to explain the following cultural component of Iranian martyr society:

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[79] Both quotes taken from Sciolino, Elaine, Persian Mirrors: The Elusive Face of Iran, page 172, New York: Touchstone Books, 2000
[80] Scioliino, page 173
[81] IBID, Page 172
[82] IBID, page 173

> Hamid is a Shiite, and he fervently believes in the Shiite version of history, its lore and its rituals. Ayatollah Khomeini had told the Hamids of Iran that martyrdom was a perfect death, and they believed him.[83]

Strategic Consequence

The martyr strategic culture adds a dimension of unpredictability and lethality for the strategic planner tasked with defending against an Iranian backed NSAG. The martyr is a central theme to the employment of key NSAGs with whom Iran enjoys relations. Most of the groups that Iran employs share its predisposition toward martyrdom as a noble goal. Consequently, potential recruits are vetted to determine their willingness to martyr themselves. After being admitted, they are further prepared through systematic training and psychological preparation.

Despite the mental and spiritual conditioning, however, martyrdom is not a tactic in itself. Suicide bombing is the tactic. Martyrdom is a cultural contributor especially relevant to the Shiite faith that makes suicide bombing an acceptable tactic. This distinction has important consequences.

Whereas martyrdom is revered, it is not required. This cultural characteristic transposes itself upon the Iranian backed NSAG. Operatives are trained to inflict as much damage on the enemy as they possible can. Iran's special service units invest time, money, and energy into cultivating well-rounded holy warriors. Thus, rarely are NSAG operatives trained solely for the purpose of suicide bombing. Special individuals make pledges to commit suicide as an exclusive tactic, rarely do NSAG operatives.[84] However, in the event that the operative can no longer achieve a maximum level of damage against

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[83] IBID, page 173

[84] Suicide drives are held frequently in Iran, especially at universities. The most recent drive was 20 February 2006, in which over 1000 students committed themselves to suicide martyrdom in the event of a strike on Iran by U.S. or Israeli forces. These students were not affiliated with security forces: http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1139395444269&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull

an enemy force, the operative can chose to run and fight another day, or attain martyrdom.[85] The option is most often dictated by combat conditions and the individual, rarely is it strategically preordained.[86]

The tactical patterns of the Iranian backed NSAG, therefore, are very different from the independent Sunni or Wahhabi terror cell. Whereas, Sunni and Wahhabi terror groups often utilize suicide as a primary delivery vehicle for an attack (i.e., hijackers who fly planes into buildings, women who carry bombs under baby carriages), Iranian backed NSAG operatives are trained to view suicide as one of many options. To martyr oneself in the course of battle is noble, yet one does not always approach battle with the goal of suicide as both a means and an end.

Persian Iran

> "Over the years I have discovered that Iran, even after a revolution in the name of religion, would not be simply an Islamic Republic. It would always be Persian as well." Elaine Sciolino[87]

The other primary contributor to Iran's identity is its ethnicity. Iran is a Persian state in a region dominated by Arabs and Turkic peoples. The ethnic differences between Iran and its regional neighbors became most apparent during the Iran-Iraq War, in which Saddam Hussein claimed to be defending the Arab world from Iranian encroachment. Hussein's "defense" justification[88] was premised on Khomeini's stated goals for the exportation of fundamental Shiism. The Arab world is predominantly Sunni. Still,

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[85] Poole, H. John, Militant Tricks: Battlefield Ruses of the Islamic Insurgent, Emerald Isle, NC: Posterity Press, 2005

[86] Drawn from Poole, and multiple primary sources.

[87] Sciolino, page 36

[88] Saddam Hussein claimed his operations were defensively motivated. He made this claim despite the fact that Iraq invaded neighboring Iran while Iran was still recovering from its post-revolutionary internal political chaos. Iran was not political organized enough to launch an offensive on anybody, least of all Iraq. SEE Pollack, Kenneth M., The Persian Puzzle: The Conlfict between Iran and Amercia, pages 182-198, New York: Random House, Inc., 2004

Persian-Arab historic animosities contributed to the approval of Arab states for Hussein's overt aggression despite its obvious questionable legitimacy.[89]

Of all the cohesive cultural identities in the Middle East, Persians are among the oldest. They enjoy a historical lineage that dates back into the 2nd millennia BCE. As a regional power, Herodotus places their ascendancy as far back as the 6th century BCE. Thus, Persian identity gives Iranians a sense of historic self that is very different from the rest of the region.

Once one of the world's largest recorded empires, Imperial Persia had long since vanished before Iran emerged.[90] Yet, despite relative global weakness, Persia was able to maintain most of its physical boundaries during the era of European colonial expansion into South Asia.[91] This was a significant accomplishment given Iran's location vis-à-vis India. British interests in India made Iran geopolitically important to the British.

Yet, despite territorial loss from time to time,[92] Iran was never absorbed by a dominant power. It did, however, suffer from British and Russian interference in its internal affairs. Such interference was largely achieved through financial means, as Russian and British interests bought political influence through loans. Still, Iran avoided a colonial heritage. Unlike the various territories that once found themselves under British, Russian, or Turkish domination, Persia avoided this type of suppression. During the Pahlavi period, this fact was exploited to foment Persian nationalism.

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[89] Interagency Intelligence Assessment, *Implications of Israeli Attack on Iraq*, 1 July 1981, http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB80/wmd01.pdf

[90] Reza Shah Pahlavi chose to change the name of Persia to Iran in 1935. Pollack, pages 30 – 31.

[91] Defined as the 18th century to the mid-20th century.

[92] Persian Gulf islands currently controlled by Saudi Arabia (1759), the absorption of Azerbaijan by Russia (1813), and border areas now in Turkmenistan (throughout the late-19th and early 20th centuries) are among the types of properties seized by regional powers in the past three centuries.

However, Iran's pre-European expansion history is replete with conquest and subjugation by external forces. In almost all cases, defeat came at the hands of societies that the Persians believed to be inferior. Assuming cultural supremacy while being defeated by lesser peoples adds a unique cultural characteristic. Iran appears to combine dual dimensions of arrogance and suspicion with regard to its neighbors. These dynamics contribute to a security-obsessed approach toward regional policy.

Ethnicity and Regional Relations

The Arabs appear to be the ethnic group for whom Persians have the least respect. This is culturally ingrained. Professor Sandra Mackey describes the particular tension between Arabs and Persians in her book The Iranians: Persia, Islam, and the Soul of a Nation. Citing the famous 10th century Persian poet, Ferdowsi, who had a particular dislike for the Arabs due to their invasion of Iran in the 7th century, Mackey states the following:

> … Most Iranians [cannot] forgive the Arabs [for conquering Persia]. Almost any educated Iranian can passionately quote Ferdowsi's lament uttered by a Persian general facing the Arab army.
>
> *Damn on this World, Damn on this Time, Damn on Fate,*
> *That uncivilized Arabs have come to force me to be a Muslim.*

Iranian views on the Turks are similar. Although disliked, Turkic peoples are not nearly as looked down upon as their Arab counterparts. Still, the existence within Iran of a large Azeri minority, a Turkic cultural group, exacerbates tensions. Domestic Turkic minorities suffer from systematic discrimination. Strained relations with Turkey contribute to the Turko-Persian cultural divide.

Strategic Consequence

These ethnic views have been exploited to engender Persian nationalism at times that such nationalism could benefit the Iranian hierarchy. This is especially true of the Pahlavi era, although other periods of leadership played on Persian pride as well.[93] The individual group that most exploited Persian nationalism has been the conventional military (the Artesh). For the current Shiite political leadership, however, Persian identity is a problem.

Persian nationalism detracts from a pan-Shiite vision. The current hierarchy believes that the Persian moniker separates the Iranian people from Shiite Turkic and Shiite Arab communities. For a political movement that envisions a broad Shiite Caliphate, national identities are prohibitively divisive.

The consequence of Persian identity, therefore, is that it is upheld within the conventional segments of the military and derided by those movements that operate asymmetrically, such as the IRGC. It is a source of internal division. Furthermore, the view on ethnicity by the political hierarchy of Iran underscores its view on the region. Iran's senior leadership does not recognize political borders. Thus, ethnicity is similarly not recognized. The vision of Khomeini was a unified Caliphate – premised on Shiism. For the religious elites, Persian ethnicity should not act as a hindrance toward joining with other Shiites – especially Iraqi and Lebanese Shiites.

Hence, when the IRGC or other segments of Iran's asymmetric forces approach a Shiite NSAG, it is done on the basis of Shiism. Persian nationalism is downplayed. The decision not to emphasize ethnicity may also be pragmatic. Persians are considered

[93] The Qajar Dynasty that preceded the Pahlavi Dynasty also appears to have exploited Persian nationalism despite being ethnically Turkic in origin.

arrogant by many in the region.[94] This division played a role in the Iran-Iraq War in which Iraqi Shiites served overwhelmingly for the Iraqi state. As Iran continues to expand its network of NSAGs, it will solidify relationships on the basis of religion. This dynamic will remain regardless of the true nature of an Iranian overture to a NSAG. Tehran may be drawn to a NSAG on the basis of interstate politics, but it will secure its relationship through a religious appeal. This is necessary toward understanding how Iran secures alliances with various NSAGs from multiple ethnic backgrounds.

Iran's Geography

The third and final primary contributor to both Iranian identity and its security doctrine is geography. Because of its geographic position, Iran shares land borders with seven states (Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Turkmenistan), Caspian access with two other states (Kazakhstan, Russia), and Persian Gulf access with six states (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, the United Arab Emirates). Of the fifteen states that effectively encircle Iran, only Oman (75%), Bahrain (65%), Azerbaijan (61%) and Iraq (55%) have populations of Shi'a Muslims that exceed 50% of the population. Iran's perception of its geographic region is that it is surrounded by at least eleven potential enemies.

An Italian Unione Scienziati per IL Disarmo (USPID) report on Iranian foreign policy states the following geographic reality and historical fact from which Iranian policy-makers operate:

> Iran has 15 neighbours, the second largest after Russia. Many of these countries are weak and security dependent on the outside forces. Iranian history is clearly indicative of the fact that given Iran's geopolitical uniqueness, the country has

[94] Approximately 40% of the populations of Iran's regional neighbors have an unfavorable view of its Iran. Information collected from Zogby International, collected in April 2004, http://80-poll.orspub.com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/poll/lpext.dll?f=templates&fn=main-h.htm

> never been able to rely on solid regional coalitions….Iran has always been a victim of external invasion.[95]

This view on its regional security is grounded in a number of strategic challenges. Wahhabi populations in Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Kuwait have supported anti-Shiite NSAGs that operate both inside and outside the borders of Iran. Saddam Hussein's Iraq attempted an invasion of Iran that led to the 20th century's most bloody two-state conflict. Turkey and Russia have been historic enemies of Iran, taking turns at conflict with Persia for centuries.

Of course, oil and geopolitics draw American and British involvement into the region as well. The navies of these two states enable them to make a littoral approach upon Iran with near impunity. U.S. strategic airpower has been witnessed in the region for more then two decades. However, of greatest concern to Tehran is the regional presence of U.S. ground troops. Massive U.S. land deployments as a result of the recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq cause enormous concern for Iran. In fact, the Iranians currently consider the US military presence in the region their most pressing, immediate security issue.[96]

For the medium and long term, a nuclear-armed Pakistan with a history of unstable political leadership is one of Iran's greatest regional threats. Not only does Pakistan house a large Wahhabi fundamentalist community that views Shiism as an apostate religion, it also has a history of violently overthrowing the executive authority.

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[95] Mahmood Sariolghalam, Missiles, Missile Defenses, Proliferation of WMD in the New International Scenario, Proceedings of the IX Castiglioncello Conference, Italy, "Iranian Foreign Policy After September 11," pg. 168, 20 September 2001

[96] British negotiators dealing with the current Iran Nuclear Crisis state that Iran has openly expressed this concern. The United Kingdom Parliament, Transcript on the Affairs of the Day, Volume No. 678, Part No. 103.9, Column 797, February 2006, "Iran," Statement of Lord Hannay of Chiswick retelling what Iran had told the EU-3 (defined as Great Britain, Germany, and France).
http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/1dhansard/pdvn/1ds06/text/60209-08.htm

Should Pakistan destabilize, Iran may find itself directly challenged by a new, radical millennialist theocracy armed with nuclear missiles.

Also to its east, Iran finds itself dealing with the problem of a perpetually fractured Afghanistan. Because Afghanistan has never enjoyed a sustained cohesive government for more then a few decades, Afghanistan's splintered make-up impacts Iran. No government in Afghanistan has ever been able to control the actions of a particular ethnic group without first soliciting the support of another ethnic group. Historically, this has translated into Sunni Pashtun dominance due to their demographic plurality. When radicalized, as was the case with the Taliban, Pashtuns create significant security problems for Tehran.

Equally problematic for Iran is the Baluchi transporter population[97] that enjoys significant ethnic representation in the tri-border area of Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. As Sunnis, they feel that Baluchis in Shiite Iran are experiencing unwarranted repression. Thus, they have recently begun a series of attacks on Iran, including an assassination attempt on the Iranian President Ahmadinejad on 15 December 2005, killing one of his bodyguards.[98] More recently, Jandallah fighters, a Baluchi NSAG, have kidnapped Iranian soldiers and created general havoc in Southeast Iran.

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[97] Iran's geographic location places it in the center of a number of regional ethnic groups. For the most part, post-colonial states were drawn on arbitrary political borders. Thus, many ethnic populations find themselves residing within multiple states. This is especially true of the cultural groups that formulate Pakistan. Pakistan is an acronym that stands for Punjab, Afghan, Kashmir, Sindh, and the "tan" comes from "Baluchistan." (SEE Rosser, Yvette Claire, Curriculum as Destiny: Forging National Identity in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, University of Texas, August 2003, http://www.lib.utexas.edu/etd/d/2003/rosseryc036/rosseryc036.pdf). Similarly, Afghanistan is equally comprised of multiple ethnicities. For Iran, being situated on the border of two states that are artificially created has caused a unique situation of free migration across political borders within culturally dominant areas. In other words, populations of certain ethnicities move in and out of state boundaries with little regard for political sovereignty. This is called a transporter population.

[98] Tarique Niazi, "Baluchistan in the Shadow of al-Qaeda," Terrorism Monitor, Volume IV, Issue 4, 23 February 2006, *Jamestown Foundation*, www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369909

Strategic Consequence

Iran feels besieged from almost all sides. It sees a region with few natural allies, and fewer potential partners. Thus, Iran has sought security from more distant states that are reliant on its oil – namely China, India, and, to a lesser extent, Russia. Of all the contributing elements to Iran's strategic culture, geography plays the most important role. Iran is compelled to defend itself from invasion and cultural erosion.

Thus, NSAGs enable Iran to project its power into potential threat states and, consequently, preoccupy security forces with internal crises. By exploiting deep-seeded ethnic and religious tensions, Iran can plausibly avoid responsibility. This is because many of the NSAGs that Iran supports would have existed regardless of Iranian involvement. They do not exist because of Iran, but they do thrive because of Iran.

The Combined Impact of Religion, Ethnicity, and Geography

Consequently, the combination of Shiite and Persian regional minority status creates a besieged mentality. It requires aggressive, proactive moves to counter perceived threats, of which Iran has many. The end result is a strategic culture that is guided by subjective notions of religiously inspired justice[99] and traditional realist pragmatism. In other words, there exists an idealistic sense of "divine right"[100] to lead the region, while employing practical solutions to political issues that would be familiar to any Western capital.

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[99] Mackey, pages 54, 93-94, and 266

[100] The term "divine right" is used purposely out of context. It usually refers to a unique Persian political characteristic. The belief, which dates back to the early days of Zoroastrian religiosity, established a morality for the leader. As Mackey describes it, the king's "right to rule came from righteous conduct, the outward sign that the 'divine force' shone upon him," Mackey page 23. [SEE Mackey, pages 17-32]. This tradition dictates that kings rise and fall by God's will, which in turn is achieved through proper behavior. As Shiites who believe that they are the true followers of Mohammed's true successor, there is a current that runs through the leadership that Iran's theocracy is divinely inspired, and thus naturally predisposed to lead the rest of the Ummah. This calling is evident in the speeches of Khmoeini.

Furthermore, a security culture that borders on paranoia is evident. The leadership is fearful of cultural, political, and territorial subversion[101] by actors inside and outside of Iran. Thus, Tehran takes internal steps to insure that it is not overthrown. For example, although Sunni Muslims, Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians (all monotheists) are afforded legal protections under the constitution, each group experiences varying degrees of suppression. This is, in part, to insure that their religious beliefs do not threaten Twelver Shiism's grasp on the people. However, in the case of Christian and Jewish minorities, these communities are seen as potential provocateurs for Western or Israeli intelligence agencies. Additionally, ethnic minorities, especially the Azeris and Baluchis, are similarly targeted for intelligence infiltration and repression.

External threats are also taken very seriously. The United States is seen as Tehran's greatest threat by members of the current ruling class. Most of the government's senior leadership remembers how the C.I.A. orchestrated the overthrow of Mossadeq in 1953.[102] Subsequently, they fear the same type of overthrow. Thus, Iran employs strict controls on its mass communications and media outlets. The Internet is seen as a particularly harmful subversive device. The *OpenNet Initiative*, a University of Toronto based organization that monitors Internet censorship, stated the following with regard to Iran in its 2004-2005 country profile: "Iran has adopted one of the world's most

[101] Jalal Al-e Ahmed coined the term "Westoxification" to describe Westernization in the 1960s (SEE Keddie, Nikki R., Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution, page 189, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). The potential for political subversion is embodied in the growing population of disaffected youths with mass communications outlets (SEE Timmerman, Kenneth R., "The Day After Iran Gets the Bomb," Chapter 5, pages 120-121 of: Sokolski, Henry, Patrick Clawson, Getting Ready for a Nuclear Iran, Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, October 2005).

[102] Mohammed Mosaddeq was a popularly elected Prime Minister of Iran, who in 1951 ascended to power on the promise of nationalizing the state's oil. This move endeared him to certain segments of society, but it also incurred the wrath of the British and U.S. governments which saw the move as threatening, and possibly illegal. Consequently, he was overthrown by a coup orchestrated by the CIA. The overthrow had an enormous impact on Iran's anti-Shah political movements and it is still used to this day to justify anti-Americanism (SEE Pollack, pages 48 – 71).

substantial Internet censorship regimes. Iran, along with China, is among a small group of states with the most sophisticated state-mandated filtering systems in the world."[103]

In terms of military and diplomatic measures to guard against foreign intrigue, Tehran employs a number of measures to insure against an overthrow. Diplomatically, Iran employs a combination of economic agreements and political alliance building with states that are similarly at odds with the United States.[104] Of particular interest to Iran are states that share a similar paranoid predisposition.[105] Militarily, Iran has chosen to use an alliance system that is largely based on NSAGs.

This is an outgrowth of strategic culture and capabilities. Iran is fearful of invasion, but it does not appear to have any interest in invading another state. Instead, Iran seems preoccupied with fending off perceived threats. To achieve this goal, Iran has chosen a strategy that relies upon a network of NSAGs.

Asymmetry is Iran's chosen strategy because it has few conventional options to exert influence in the region. Furthermore, oil insures that Iran cannot employ its conventional forces to any meaningful degree. This is because of guaranteed U.S. involvement in any overt act of aggression. Thus, Iran's conventional forces are structured to defend. They are not offensively oriented.

Still, even if it had the means, Tehran is not likely to employ overt aggression to obtain its goals in the same manner as Saddam Hussein. Rather, it chooses to back groups that, if they ascend to power, will be indebted to Iran. This is playing out in

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[103] OpenNet Initiative, Country Profile: Iran, http://www.opennetinitiative.net/studies/iran/

[104] John D. Negroponte, Director of National Intelligence, "Annual Threat Assessment of the Director of National Intelligence for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence," 2 February 2006, http://www.dni.gov/WWT%20Oral%20Statement%20UNCLASSIFIED%201%20February%20FINAL%20VERSION.pdf

[105] Iran has secured alliances, or pacts of mutual agreement, with states such as Belarus and Venezuela – both run by political leaders that employ anti-democratic measures to insure against an overthrow.

Lebanon and Iraq as Hezbollah and the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) gain prominence. In fact, the security mechanisms that Iran has in place are designed to achieve these types of gains. Their construction is a reflection of Iran's unique strategic culture. They are structured to capitalize on a NSAG strategy that seeks to maintain the integrity of the state while simultaneously expanding the influence of Shiism and Iran.

Often, this duality is misinterpreted. Security analysts approach Iran as a rogue theocracy, when in fact Iran's strategy appears to be guided, in part, by realpolitik – a familiar concept to Western defense planners. This confusion is based on an assumption that Iran does not apply a coherent foreign policy.[106] However, this seeming lack of cohesion is quite organized, and it is wholly consistent with the strategic culture of the state as described by Poole, Clawson, and other Iran security analysts.

Operational Origins of Iran's NSAG Use

It is impossible to designate an exact date as to when Iran began employing NSAGs, however the practice began shortly after Khomeini gained power. Although the strategic logic and cultural reasons have been provided in this paper, another element contributes to the use of NSAGs. A direct link exists between Ruhollah Khomeini and the various Shiite NSAGs that emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

During his exile at the Shiite Seminary in Najaf during the 1960s and 1970s, Khomeini was one of four promising young clerics that studied under Ayatollah Sayed Muhsin al-Hakim Tabatabai. The other three were: Grand Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir

[106] Byman, Daniel L., Shahram Chubin, Anoushiravan Ehteshami, Jerrold Green, Iran's Security Policy in the Post-Revolutionary Era, pg. 1, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, National Defense Research Institute, 2001 (Hereafter referred to as the RAND report)

al-Sadr (founder, Iraqi Da'wa Party), Ayatollah Sayed Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim (founder, SCIRI), and Grand Ayatollah Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah (founder, Lebanese Hezbollah).[107] These men formed the core of a new radicalized version of Shiism.

However, although these men became engaged in politics, their engagement in militancy was seen as unlikely at that time. This is because the traditional Shiite cleric role was one of removed moral beacon. In other words, Shiite religious leaders rarely became involved in politics, let alone belligerence. They would often provide moral guidance or condemnation from the proverbial "pulpit." Yet, in the 1960s, times had changed.

First, Jalal Al-e Ahmad put into writing what many in the religious classes already believed: westernization was (and still is) a corruptive influence. Thus, Ahmad's "westoxification" concept gained prominence.[108] Second, a broader movement of pan-Arab secular leaders were emerging, threatening the power of the clergy throughout the region.[109] Third, the revolutionary zeal of the era was contagious. Movements for freedom were sprung internationally. Fourth, technology made it possible to connect with the masses, enabling exiled political leaders to communicate with potential recruits for subversive movements. Finally, political conditions in key Shiite areas were moving the clergy toward action.

[107] SEE Amal Saad-Ghrayeb, Hizbu'llah: Politics, Religion, pages 13-16, London: Pluto Press, 2002
[108] Keddie, page 189
[109] Keddie, 170- 188

In Iran, the 1963 "White Revolution," which included land reform and women's suffrage,[110] angered the Shiite religious leadership. It was the fury that ensued which led to Khomeini's arrest and subsequent exile. Concurrent to this situation was a deteriorating political environment in Lebanon. A myriad of political contributors threatened the state with instability and religious tensions. As for, Iraq, another state with a large Shiite population, the 1963 overthrow of Abdul Karim Qasim by the socialist Ba'th Party created a turbulent period for the Shiite majority. Consequently, the Baathists, a pan-Arab political movement, wrestled for control over a period of years with internal challengers. Ultimately, in 1968, the Baathists secured power and a purging of potential future challengers to Ba'th authority took place. The Shi'a were particularly targeted for their hierarchical religious structure.

Thus, political conditions were ripe for radicalization. Subsequently, as the Baathists began to tighten their grip on power, Shiite students were being forced to return to their homelands or seek asylum elsewhere. Najaf, a center of religious significance and learning in Iraq, housed a large number of Shiism's future radical leaders, including the ones noted above. In his description on the origins of Hezbollah, Amal Saad-Ghrayeb states the following in reference to the significance of Najaf and the dispersion of radical militants:

[110] There is a dispute as to how much the "White Revolution" impacted Khomeini. Keddie states that it did not impact Khomeini because he backed land reform and he never objected to women's suffrage. She believes the true issues were "…dictatorship, subservience to the United States, and good relations with Israel." [SEE Keddie, page 146]. Mackey, on the other hand, contends that Khomeini was particularly outraged by the White Revolution. She points to the fact that the Shah used land reform to break the backs of the critical theological seminaries in Iran, especially the Faiziyeh Theological School in Qom. A clash occurred at that school on 22 March 1963 in which two unarmed students were killed. The remaining students purportedly ran to Khomeini's home in Qom. [SEE Mackey, pages 224-225]. Regardless, all of the authors used for this report agree that the political impact of the White Revolution was to enrage the clergy throughout the state.

> Along with other devout Shi'ites, the Najaf graduates, including several potential Hizbu'llah officials, set about recreating the Iraqi-based Da'wa Party in Lebanon, while others established the Lebanese Muslims Students' Union in the early 1970s. A political current co-extensive with Sadr's was thus born.[111]

Ironically, due to the repressive environment of Iran created by the Shah's secret service, SAVAK, Khomeini was late in beginning his own movement. He could not return to his homeland. Thus, he aggressively exploited the internal conditions of Iran from Paris using technology – namely through the use of audio taped speeches. One such speech was a harbinger of things to come:

> Islam is the religion of militant individuals who are committed to truth and justice. It is the religion of those who desire freedom and independence. It is the school of those who struggle against imperialism. But the servants of imperialism have presented Islam in a totally different light. They have created in men's minds a false notion of Islam. The defective version of Islam, which they have presented in the religious teaching institution, is intended to deprive Islam of its vital, revolutionary aspect and to prevent Muslims from arousing themselves in order to gain their freedom, fulfill the ordinances of Islam, and create a government that will insure their happiness and allow them to live lives worthy of human beings.[112]

Small, internationally dispersed Shiite communities make excellent proxy actors toward the achievement of this goal. The conditions within which they reside make them ripe for recruitment. Often they require Iranian assistance in order to survive. Revolutionary Iran recognized this and exploited it for its own strategic advantage.

This was achieved in the following way: Once he gained power, Khomeini began to reestablish the ties he had made while in Najaf. Hoping to incite a pan-Shiite movement, Khomeini set out to support movements that shared his ideological beliefs.

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[111] Sadd-Ghorayeb, page 13

[112] Imam Khomeini, Hamid Algar (translator), Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declaration of Imam Khomeini, (1941-1980), page 28, from the book "Islamic Government" a compellation of lectures given between 21 January and 8 February 1970, New York: Mizan Publsihing, 1981

However, the 1980 invasion of Iran by Saddam Hussein reoriented Khomeini's immediate strategic concerns.

Furthermore, the United States appeared to be making moves toward reconstituting its position in the region after the disastrous events of the late 1970s. This was largely an outgrowth of a more aggressive foreign policy conducted by the new Reagan Administration in the midst of the Cold War.[113] Yet, the recent hostage crises[114] between Iran and the United States intensified a distrust of one another. Reagan had a reputation of being a hawk. Thus, Khomeini saw the new Administration's policies in the region as encroachment – possibly with the objective of overthrowing Iran's revolutionary government.[115] Ultimately, Khomeini saw utility in the use of NSAGs to weaken his rivals, specifically the U.S., Israel, and Iraq. Beginning in Lebanon, Iran's support for Hezbollah would mark the beginning of a new Iranian security strategy: Alliances with NSAGs.

The initial underpinnings of these NSAG relationships were constructed upon Khomeini's personal relationship with other Shiite leaders. This relationship dynamic carried on after Khomeini's death. Many of the members of Khomeini's inner circle, such as Khameini and Rafsanjani, were in Najaf with Khomeini. Thus, personal relationships with Shiite leaders continued. Georgetown University Professor Daniel Byman explains the following with regard to this dynamic between Hezbollah and Iran:

[113] Pollack, pages 206-216
[114] This refers to both the November 1979 – January 1981 Embassy hostage crisis, and the Western hostage crisis in which Iran was suspected of taking a part in Lebanon during the 1980s.
[115] The Iran-Contra Agreement had not yet occurred - pre-Boland Amendment. This Amendment (signed December 1982, went into effect in late 1983) prohibited CIA or DoD funding to assist the Nicaraguan Contra Rebels (anti-communist, anti-Daniel Ortega).

"The religious ties between Hizballah's and Iran's leadership, many of whom studied together in Iraq, ensure regular communications between the two."[116]

Ultimately, as the utility of NSAGs became more apparent, and as the IRGC became more proficient, the NSAG network was expanded. Christian and Sunni groups were equally able to draw on support from Iran, provided their goals meshed with Tehran's policy objectives. The end result was that Iran created a large web of interconnected, yet disassociated NSAGs from which to draw strategic support. Initially, this web was regional; ultimately, it spread to enjoy global capabilities. At times they may appear to conflict with one another,[117] but ultimately they are well-coordinated tools of policy. They serve the Iranian state well.

The Dynamics of Iranian Security Policy

The relationship between NSAGs and Iran is designed to hide. Thus, their relationship to key groups (with the exception of Hezbollah) is most often denied. Furthermore, recognizable gains from the employment of NSAGs are sometimes difficult to recognize or contradictory. Thus, when a suspected Iranian backed NSAG did something that appeared to hurt Iran,[118] continued support for that group seemed inconsistent with practical policy. In fact, Iranian NSAG policy is quite consistent.

However, Tehran's internal dynamics contribute to misperceptions on its policy dynamics. First, Iran's internal security institutions are intricately linked to the internal political management of the state. Thus, domestic politics and foreign security policies

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[116] Byman, Daniel, Deadly Connections: States that Sponsor Terrorism, page 89, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005

[117] Badr Corps and Mahdi Army is an example of just such "competition."

[118] Ismail Khan, Afghani strongman of Heart, seemed to change sides multiple times during the emergence of the Taliban. Multiple times he switched in support of Taliban forces, hurting Iran's cause in Western Afghanistan, only to return to Iranian support at a latter date. He was ultimately imprisoned by the Taliban.

are often intertwined in a way that does not naturally fit. Second, Iran often appears to apply little or no consistent application of a foreign policy in the post 1979 revolutionary era. A RAND National Defense Research Institute report titled, "Iran's Security Policy in the Post-Revolutionary Era," begins with the following description of Iran's ambiguous foreign policy:

> Iranian security defies simple explanation. Religion, nationalism, ethnicity, economics, and geopolitics all are important factors influencing Iran's goals and tactics in its relationship with the outside world. So to are the agendas of key security institutions and the ambitions of their leaders. If anything, Iran's foreign policy is becoming more complex.[119]

In large part, the indefinable nature of Iranian foreign policy can be directly traced to its division of political power, some with competing agendas, but all dedicated to the advancement of Iran and Islam. A report published by the British House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee on Iran identifies seven official "Centres of Power:" The *Supreme Leader*, the *Assembly of Experts* (on Shi'a law/religion), the *President*, the *Majiles* (Congress), the *Council of Ministers*, the *Council of Guardians* (Judiciary), and the *Council for the Discernment of Expediency*.[120] Although these political bodies hold an enormous amount of authority through which they protect a combination of political strategies [121]and exclusive personal networks, [122]there is another sector of power that cannot be ignored.

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[119] SEE Rand Report

[120] United Kingdom, House of Commons, Foreign Affairs Committee, *Iran: Response of the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs*, Third Report, Session 2003-2004, pg. 9, May 2004, http://www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/969804_CM6198.pdf

[121] Politically, Iran employs a system of checks and balances that is remarkably similar to the United States, except that all decisions are filtered through Islamic law as interpreted through a Shi'a lens.

[122] Most senior policy-makers and public servants are either participants in the 1979 revolution or they have close family ties to those involved. The few senior government officials who do not enjoy this tie endure a severe and long vetting process to determine their revolutionary credentials.

An interconnected web of security agencies lies beneath the official political mechanisms. They play a crucial role in defining Iranian security policy. The organizations that comprise this sector are: the two armed services, the *Artesh*, or conventional forces, and the *Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps* (IRGC) or *Sepah-e Pasdaran*, which serves as a combination pseudo-special forces, Nazi-like SS Corp; the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS); the *Basij*, a dedicated militia system trained by the IRGC; *Ansar-e Hezbollah*, an internally focused paramilitary organization; and the *bonyads*, a series of non-government organizations (NGO) that are tightly linked to the major powers in Tehran – especially in a financial capacity.[123] Consideration of this sector of power is critical to any strategic assessment of Iran. Although they highlight the state's complexity, they each serve toward a shared political goal as defined by the aforementioned strategic needs outlined in the previous section.

Internal Security Service Divisions

Whereas the Artesh and the MOIS are both guided by nationalism, seeking to establish a strong Persian state, the other agencies are guided by strict Shiite fundamentalism.[124] These bureaucratic ideologies not only influence the way that these organizations carry out policy, but they also influence their respective views of operational responsibility and agency value. The two most important players operating within this dynamic are the Artesh and the IRGC.[125]

[123] Information on these groups has come from a combination of sources. The primary contributor was the RAND report.
[124] This division is highlighted in the following report: United Kingdom, Home Office, Science and Research Group, Iran, October 2005, pages 35-36, http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs05/iran_081205.doc
[125] Congressional Research Service Report, 27 August 2004

The Artesh is guided by Persian nationalism. For the Artesh, the survival, and preferably the prosperity of the Iranian state supersede all other priorities. The IRGC, in contrast, strictly adheres to the Islamic principles of the revolution. The IRGC concentrates its energy on both maintaining the domestic population's commitment to fundamentalism and the exportation of Shi'a fundamentalism by various covert methods. These principles, one nationalistic and one religious, often clash. Whereas the Artesh will act in a more pragmatic fashion to ensure the state's survival, the IRGC will often take risks that may potentially instigate retribution. Examples of the IRGC's antagonistic behavior are evident throughout the region over the past few decades. The Artesh, in contrast, has generally been the voice of reason and caution within policy circles. These juxtaposed views have played out in the political arena.[126]

Both the Artesh and the MOIS supported the moderate "Islamic Iran Participation Front," the reform party of President Mohammed Khatami. The IRGC heavily supported the conservatives, and worked diligently to affect their return to monopoly power achieved in 2005.[127] The political contrast is undoubtedly a byproduct of each agency's experiences in the early post-revolutionary era. Recognizing the potential that the Artesh held as a counter-revolutionary force, the early Khomeini government brutally purged the Artesh of its secular leadership.

To defend the new government, the revolutionary leaders created the IRGC as an independent armed service. The goal of this service was to defend the Shiite revolution

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[126] Professor Geoffrey Wawro explains the internal divisions of Iran's security mechanisms in his paper, "The Islamic Republic of Iran and the Terror War," 14 March 2002, reprinted in the U.S. Naval War College, Newport Papers, pages 62 – 63, http://www.oft.osd.mil/library/library_files/document_203_newport_papers.pdf

[127] Political dynamics described in the following article: Mark Gasiorowski, "The Causes and Consequences of Iran's June 2005 Presidential Election," Strategic Insights, Volume IV, Issue 8, U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, August 2005, http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2005/Aug/gasiorowskiAug05.asp#author

and spread the Shiite message. For several years the Artesh fell under the weight of the IRGC which received preferential treatment from its government allies until early Iraqi successes in the Iran-Iraq War proved the necessity for a strong conventional military. As a result, the purges stopped and the Artesh was once again allowed to cultivate military talent.

However, creative measures were employed to insure that the new military elites would find an investment in the revolution. Political marriages, nepotistic command placements, and surgical vetting of Shi'a credentials are a few of the methods designed to tie the Artesh to the new state.

Consequently, the Artesh has been marginalized. Its primary role is the defense of the state. The IRGC, in contrast, has been the prominent vehicle of state security. It sees a more active role for the state – preferring offense to defense. The IRGC has effectively infiltrated most aspects of society. Its penetration is augmented by the extra eyes and ears of the *Basij* and *Ansar-e Hezbollah*, both of whom are sympathetic to the hardliners' fundamentalist goals. Such internal oversight is critical for the Iranian development of external security planning. It allows the IRGC to concentrate on its external responsibilities, while confident that domestic concerns have not been neglected.

The construction of the IRGC is well suited for covert activity. Although it enjoys some conventional military capabilities, the IRGC is best in a light infantry and advisory role.[128] Of particular relevance is the Quds Force.[129] This unit exploits embassies to infiltrate a given state. The purpose of such infiltration is to establish ties with disaffected members of a society for the purpose of co-opting them for employment

[128] SEE Baer, Robert, See No Evil: The True Story of a Ground Soldier in the CIA's War on Terrorism, New York: Crown Publishers, 2003
[129] Also known as the "Jerusalem Force" or "Jerusalem Brigade."

against Iran's enemies. In other words, the primary objective of the Quds Force is to establish operational ties with NSAGs.[130] Given the elevated status of the IRGC, and the elite position of the Quds Force, it appears that the establishment of strategic relationships with NSAGs places a high priority for the senior political leadership of Iran. Or state as high as *what*…

NSAGs as an extension of Iran's security needs and culture

Iran is a weak state vis-à-vis the United States, Russia, China, and/or the United Kingdom. This statement is based on conventional military capabilities. Iran lacks power projection capabilities. When weighed against its neighbor states, Iran is similarly lacking. Although more powerful then most states in the region in terms of troop and equipment estimates, Iranian military spending is significantly less then its neighbors.[131] This has had a direct impact on weapons modernization programs. Furthermore, the US embargo has been effective in curtailing Iranian programs for conventional military modernization.[132] Thus, while regional actors have enjoyed robust U.S. military

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[130] U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, Testimony of Matthew A. Levitt, Senior Fellow and Director of Terrorism Studies, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, "Iranian State Sponsorship of Terror: Threatening U.S. Security, Global Stability, and Regional Peace," 16 February 2005, http://wwwa.house.gov/international_relations/109/Lev021605.pdf

[131] In terms of military spending proportionate to GDP, Iran ranked 35th internationally in 2004 (tied with the US). In terms of regional neighbors, Iran ranked 18th of 28 states. The region is defined by US Central Command (CENTCOM), (www.uscentcom.mil). I have added Iran's immediate neighbor states Azerbaijan, Armenia, Russia, and Turkey – all of which fall out of the CENTCOM Area of Responsibility (AOR). The following states are considered members of the region (In rank of spending – beginning with #1 – source CIA: http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/rankorder/2034rank.html): Jordan, Eritrea, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, Turkey, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Egypt, Iran, UAE, Lebanon, Sudan, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kenya, Somalia, Iraq. The choice of US CENTCOM's AOR was determined by the distance of the Shahab-6 missile capabilities. All states are within range of the Iranian Shahab-6 and/or Azarakhsh ("Lightening") – the indigenous fighter/bomber based on the F-5 Platform.

[132] Although often derided as ineffective in other areas of development/policy, the U.S. embargo on Iran has been successful in limiting Iranian military modernization programs. This is due to the fact that many states enjoy joint development agreements with U.S. defense contractors. Those companies found in violation of export controls imposed by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS), are subsequently banned from doing business with the U.S. military. This relationship extends to foreign subsidiaries. Therefore, rather then risk losing business in the world's largest defense

assistance, Iran has spent most of its small resources on antiquated technology. To counter this disadvantage, Tehran has focused its energy on two areas: 1. building a nuclear deterrent; 2. building a NSAG network.

National Defense University Professor Richard L. Russell explains the logic behind Iran's decision to pursue nuclear weapons:

> The Iranians have learned that the road to nuclear weapons is best paved with ambiguity. The Israelis, Pakistanis, Indians, and apparently the North Koreans successfully acquired nuclear weapons by cloaking their research, development, procurement, and deployment efforts with cover stories that their efforts were all geared to civilian nuclear energy programs, not to be harnessed for military applications. Tehran could not have failed to notice that once these states acquired nuclear weapons mated with aircraft and missile delivery systems, they escaped-so far, at least-military preemptive and preventive action by rival states.[133]

Still, a nuclear deterrent is a goal, not an accomplished security objective. In contrast, Iran has built a NSAG network. It has cultivated its relationship with NSAGs for almost a quarter of a century, beginning shortly after Khomeini's successful Shiite Islamist revolution. NSAGs serve as the primary vehicle of state security in the foreign arena. They enable Iran to achieve its security objectives – as defined by its unique security culture – despite its relative weakness in a hostile environment.

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market, most U.S. and European (mostly NATO affiliated) companies reject Iranian MoD solicitations. This has led Iran to seek alternative sources of defense technology – most of which is incompatible with pre-Revolution defense priorities/spending. More information included in "Attachment A. Unclassified Report to Congress on the Acquisition of Technology Relating to Weapons of Mass Destruction and Advanced Conventional Munitions," http://hongkong.usconsulate.gov/uscn/others/2004/jan_jun2003.htm#iran

[133] Richard Russell, Parameters, "Iran in Iraq's Shadow: Dealing with Tehran's Nuclear Weapons Bid," Autumn 2004, http://www.army.mil/professionalwriting/volumes/volume2/november_2004/11_04_2.html

Chapter 3

IRANIAN BACKED NON-STATE ARMED GROUPS

Leadership, Organizational Structure, Rank and File Membership, Ideology, Strategy and Tactics, Linkages with other NSAGs and State Actors, and Profile Summary

With regard to Iran's employment of NSAGs, the U.S. Army's Military Guide to Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century (2004) states the following:

> The example provided by the Soviet experience led other countries to adopt state sponsorship. Ranging from tenuous diplomatic support internationally, to direct operational control of a terrorist organization, state involvement in terror can be a flexible, low-risk tool for a variety of policy goals. Iran in particular has found sponsorship of terror to particularly suit its objective of militant Islamic revolution.[134]

As stated in the first chapter of this report, a strategic logic guides the employment of NSAGs. Therefore, this section will not concentrate on "why" Iran uses NSAGs. Rather, it will focus on "how" Iran employs NSAGs to include the following: which groups does Iran use; what are the dynamics of these groups using the methodology prescribed by the armed groups report cited in the introduction; contradictory NSAG usage; and a profile summary.

Iranian Backed NSAGs

There are three main levels of Iranian support for NSAGs: Tacit, Partial, and Full support. Tacit support describes those groups that operate from within Iran but receive very little additional assistance. Often these groups can be easily eradicated, but the government in Tehran chooses to look the other way. Iranian support for a group such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) is an example of a group that enjoys tacit support. The IMU uses Iran as a base of operations for many of its logistical and

[134] U.S. Army, Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence, A Military Guide to Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century. U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, DCSINT Handbook No.1, 15 August 2005, page 19, http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/army/guidterr/guidterr.pdf

technical needs, such as, the use of Iranian airwaves to broadcast messages to its supporters. However, it does not appear that the IMU receives much more support than a "blind-eye" from Tehran.[135] Many smaller, often ethnic groups with little international capabilities fall into this category.

The second category, partial support, covers a broad range of actors. The numbers of such groups are difficult to quantify. They may number into the twenties or thirties.[136] Partial support ranges from weapons sales and safe passage to money and periodic direct military support (most often in the form of training). Most of these groups do not fit a "Shiite" designation. They extend across a broad spectrum of ideological profiles, from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a Hindu minority group, to Al Qai'da.

Many cases of partial support appear to be motivated by an expected profit and are rarely ideological in nature. For example, Iranian support for Colombia's Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional (ELN) is clearly driven by cash and perhaps temporary shelter for Hezbollah operatives in South America.[137] In other cases, support for one group that is not ideologically compatible with Iran may assist groups that are aligned to Iran's political objectives. Support for Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's Al-Tawhid (now "Al Qai'da in the Land of Two Rivers" - Iraq) terror organization in Iraq is one such example.

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[135] Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), http://www4.janes.com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/subscribe/jtic/doc_view_groups.jsp?K2DocKey=/content1/janesdata/binder/jwit/jwit0465.htm@current&Prod_Name=JTIC&QueryText=&group=Islamic+Movement+of+Uzbekistan+%28IMU%29

[136] Based on information extracted from the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) "Armed Conflicts Database," http://acd.iiss.org.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/armedconflict/MainPages/dsp_nsagList.asp

[137] International Institute for Strategic Studies, Armed Conflict Database, Conflict: Colombia (FARC, ELN, and AUC), "Military and Security Developments," http://acd.iiss.org.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/armedconflict/MainPages/dsp_ConflictWeapons.asp?ConflictID=169&YearID=936

Although Zarqawi considers Shiites to be polytheists, and thus, openly targets Shiite Muslims, Iran still provides support to the group for reasons that will be explained latter in this chapter.[138] Similarly, Iranian forces have clashed with members of the PKK as recently as Spring 2005 while still funding and arming the group.[139] Thus, partial Iranian support can often confound logic. Groups that fit the partial support profile include the following:[140] Al Qai'da (international), Al Tawhid (Iraq), Ansar al-Islam (Iraq and Jordan), El-Gamaa el-Islamiyya (Egypt), Kongra-Gel (KGK – a.k.a. Workers' Party of Kurdistan or PKK - Turkey), Moro Islamic Liberation Front (Philippines), and Tanzim al-Qaeda fi Jazirat al-Arab (Saudi Arabia).[141]

Finally, a third category of full support is evident in Iran's relations with NSAGs. These are the groups that receive a host of services making them extensions of the state security apparatus. They share many of the same ideological goals as Iran's senior

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[138] *Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre*, Islamic Militant Profiles, Gulf States, "Al-Tawhid," http://www4.janes.com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/subscribe/jtic/doc_view_groups.jsp?K2DocKey=/content1/janesdata/binder/jwit/jwita007.htm@current&Prod_Name=JTIC&QueryText=&group=Al-Tawhid

[139] *Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre*, National Separatist Profiles, Gulf States, "Workers' Party of Kurdistan," http://www4.janes.com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/subscribe/jtic/doc_view_groups.jsp?K2DocKey=/content1/janesdata/binder/jwit/jwit0284.htm@current&Prod_Name=JTIC&QueryText=&group=Workers%27+Party+of+Kurdistan+%28PKK%29

[140] Individual group profiles were extracted from *Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre*, Islamic Militant Profiles, multiple regions, citation above connects to other group pofiles.

[141] This is a Saudi based variant of Al Qai'da. Since 2003, this group has broken its once close ties to Osama bin Laden and gotten much closer to the leadership of Iran – despite the fact that it is a Wahhabi organization (some reports just say Sunni). This organization is vehemently anti-royal Saud family. It appears to be transforming toward a more Iranian-style "full support" NSAG profile – similar to the direction taken by HAMAS, PIJ, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestinian-General Command (PFLP-GC) – none of which were Shiite militant groups. It will be interesting to see how this group transitions over the next several years, especially given the historic tensions between Wahhabi-extremist Saudi Arabians and Shiite extremist Iranians. More information can be found at *Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre*, "Tanzim al-Qaeda fi-Jazirat al-Arab," (a.k.a., Al Qai'da in 'Saudi' Arabia) http://www4.janes.com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/subscribe/jtic/doc_view_groups.jsp?K2DocKey=/content1/janesdata/binder/jwit/jwita023.htm@current&Prod_Name=JTIC&QueryText=&group=Tanzim+al-Qaeda+fi+Jazirat+al-Arab%3B+Saudi+Sunni+Insurgents#toclink-j1511131547515717

leadership and their relationship is tightly bound to Tehran. Very few groups fit this category. Hezbollah is the prototype.

Among the groups that fit in this category are: Al-Dawa al-Islamiyya and its militant wing the Mahdi Army (Al-Dawa - Iraq), Hezbollah (Lebanon), Harakat al-Muqawamah al-Islamiyya (HAMAS – Israel, Palestinian Authority), Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ – Israel, Palestinian Authority), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC)[142], the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and its militant wing, the Badr Corps (Iraq), Turkish Hezbollah, Ismail Khan's Herat militia (Afghanistan), the Hizb-i-Wahdat Hazari[143] militia (Afghanistan), and the Zaydi militants of North Yemen.[144] In the case of the three militia groups – Khan's Herat militia, Hizb-i-Wahdat Hazari, and the Zaydi militants – incomplete information unfortunately makes analysis impossible. However, an architecture can be drawn for the other groups using the six variables as provided by the armed groups report.

NSAG Threat

Not all NSAGs with whom Iran enjoys relations should be considered a definite threat to U.S. or Western national security interests. Often the relationship is mutually beneficial and unlikely to go beyond a partnership of convenience. Hence, a group such as the Tamil Tigers is unlikely to pose a direct threat to the United States, or other

[142] There are two PFLP organizations: the PFLP and the PFLP-GC. The PFLP receives some limited funding and support from Iran, but the PFLP-GC is the organization that is most closely aligned to Iran. Therefore, this paper will concentrate on the PFLP-GC.
[143] The continued existence (post-US invasion) of this group has been difficult to verify. Although a Hazari militia still operates, it is unknown whether or not it still operates as Hizb-i-Wahdat.
[144] Group listing comes from multiple sites including the following: [Middle East Terror Groups] U.S. Department of State, Country Reports on Terrorism, April 2005, http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/45313.pdf; [Afghanistan] – U.S. Marine Corps, Primer for Afghanistan (Information for U.S. Marine Corps officers before the 2001 invasion), http://www.tecom.usmc.mil/caocl/OEF_Afghanistan/Cultural_Guidance/Afghan%20Primer.pdf, the National Intelligence Council, Afghanistan and Regional Geopolitics after September 11, http://www.cia.gov/nic/PDF_GIF_confreports/afghanistan.pdf ; [Yemen] Jamestown Foundation, *Global Terrorism Analysis*, http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369665

Western countries. The primary concern for Western security planners should be those groups that offer a direct benefit to Iran, acting as surrogates and providing strategic gains for the state. Therefore, this section will focus on those groups that Iran utilizes as an extension of the state, primarily Shiite militant groups. The methodology that will be employed to analyze these groups are the six variables set by the armed groups report:[145] 1. Leadership; 2. Organizational Structure; 3. Rank and File Membership; 4. Ideology; 5. Strategy and Tactics; and 6. Linkages with other NSAGs and State Actors.[146]

1. Leadership

Origins of the Leadership

Although the specific origins of each group's leadership differ, profiles inherently remain the same. For SCIRI, Al-Dawa, and Hezbollah, the leadership is derived from a cadre of Shiite Islamic scholars that rose to prominence with Khomeini in Najaf during the 1960s and 1970s. Their ideological development is described in the preceding chapter.

For the Palestinian Islamist (separatist)[147] movements that Iran supports, specifically HAMAS, PIJ, and PFLP, they share different ideological foundations then their Shiite counterparts. However, their leadership patterns and structure display a similar Iranian influence (primarily through training by Hezbollah). This is an extension of the Palestinian militant flight and the refugee crisis that carried multiple groups into Lebanon in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Of these three groups, HAMAS' interaction

[145] This paper does not utilize the six variables in the order they are listed in the armed groups report.
[146] Since this paper has already established linkages with both Iran and various sister NSAGs, employment of this variable will concentrate on funding, methods of support, and the Sunni/Wahhabi extremist connection.
[147] I am placing the term "separatist" in brackets because the Palestinians would not see themselves as "separatists." Rather, they believe they are fighting a Jewish occupation of their land. Thus, they do not seek to separate – they seek to recapture. However, Western websites designate them as "separatists."

with Iranian, Syrian, and Hezbollah operatives has influenced the organization's structure to the point where, despite its Sunni dominance, it shares some Shiite militant group characteristics. In part, this is a reflection of its timing. HAMAS entered onto the scene in 1987. The other Palestinian groups are older and smaller. In fact, the PIJ and the PFLP-GC appear to be constructing closer relations with HAMAS.

Ideologically, PIJ, HAMAS, and the PFLP-GC are outgrowths of the broader, regional Muslim Brotherhood movement of the 1940s and 1950s.[148] With regard to the PFLP-GC, the group is small (a couple dozen members), exclusive, and violently unyielding. The group's leadership dynamics do not fit the same profile as the other groups in this section. Most likely this is due to PFLP-GC's smaller size. Still, the group enjoys significant support from Iran.

PIJ was founded in 1979 by Fathi Shqaqi, a Palestinian-born student living in Egypt. He was a member of the Egyptian variant of the Muslim Brotherhood until 1974. After 1974, Shqaqi and other Brotherhood members left the organization for its failure to embrace militancy. This break culminated in the founding of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ), which cultivated multiple extremists in the region, including Al Qai'da's number two, Ayman al-Zawahiri.[149]

After being arrested and later exiled to the Gaza Strip (where he was born), Shqaqi teamed with fellow students, Abd al-Aziz Odah and Bashir Musa where they

[148] PFLP-GC was founded by a Christian (Greek Orthodox), George Habash. As a child he was a Palestinian refugee that went on to study medicine and worked in a Palestinian refugee camp in Lebanon. Despite the fact that he was not involved with the Muslim Brotherhood, many of his founding members were clearly impacted by the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood movement – which was prolific through the 1960s. The Muslim Brotherhood, however, did not support the PFLP because of its Marxist leanings. SEE Abu-Amr, Ziad, Islamic Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad, pages 28, 51-52,and 59, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1994

[149] SEE Sageman, Marc, Understanding Terror Networks, Chapters 1-3, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004

began forming the PIJ. Ultimately, the group was forced into Lebanon where, in August 1988, Hezbollah and the IRGC began training PIJ operatives. The desire to assist PIJ was based on a combination of mutual interests (the destruction of Israel) and Shqaqi's pro-Iranian Revolution writings in Egypt dating back to 1979.[150]

Socio-economic

From a socio-economic perspective, the leaders derive from one of two primary social profiles: clerical class or the educated bourgeois. Again, as previously noted, much of the founding leadership of the Shiite militant groups was derived, and is still led by Islamic scholars. In contrast, both the PFLP and the PIJ were created by medical doctors. HAMAS was founded by Sheikh Ahmad Isma'il Yassin, a disabled teacher. Education, however, is a critical component. Rarely do uneducated members make it to the senior leadership.

Leadership Legitimacy

In both cases, the political conditions from which the organizations arose (i.e., Iraq's suppression of the Shiites, Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory) enabled the leadership to draw from a ready body of potential recruits. For those members that derived from a clerical background, their moral authority was established by their religious positions within their respective communities. For the secular Palestinian leadership, imprisonment acted as the vehicle for legitimacy. Many of the Palestinian groups began to foment relations in Israeli prisons. Often, these men were leaders of

[150] The *Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre* describes this move as "shocking" because Shqaqi was a Sunni, surrounded by Sunni extremists. Consequently, it lost Shqaqi some allies in his quest to create a powerful regional entity. The fact that he supported the Shiite Iranian revolution played an important role, however, in securing future Iranian support and trust. SEE *Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre*, Islamic Militant Profiles, "Palestinian Islamic Jihad," http://www4.janes.com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/subscribe/jtic/doc_view_groups.jsp?K2DocKey=/content1/janesdata/binder/jwit/jwit0549.htm@current&Prod_Name=JTIC&QueryText=&group=Palestinian+Islamic+Jihad+%28PIJ%29

Islamic militant gangs inside prison. One example of this networking and confidence building was the relationship built between the PFLP-GC's Ahmad Jibril and HAMAS' Yassin.[151]

2. Organizational Structure:

Shiite Militants

The structural organization of Iranian backed groups highlight the significance of NSAGs to Tehran's political goals. Leadership trees portray an intricate, hierarchical organization that emphasizes a commitment to Islam, the communities these militant groups serve, and the establishment of a local Shi'a-led, not dominated, society. Furthermore, their architectures are similar, but local conditions keep them from appearing identical. For example, whereas Hezbollah filters down many of its decisions through the "Political and Administrative Apparatus," SCIRI places public diplomacy units as lateral equals to militancy on a leadership tree. [SEE Figures 3.1 and 3.2] This is because Hezbollah, which operates in a multi-religious, democratic environment, has a highly developed sense of political image. Conversely, SCIRI and Al-Dawa have operated as political outsiders. Neither has enjoyed the benefit of a democracy, nor have they had to concern themselves with multicultural, multi-religious politics.[152]

Consequently, nearly thirty years of operating in Lebanon's fractious religious environment has led to an advanced bureaucratic system for Hezbollah. SCIRI and Al-Dawa, on the other hand, have not yet developed the same complex governance architecture. Again, whereas Hezbollah was filling a void, SCIRI and Al-Dawa sought to replace an existing government.

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[151] Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT), Herzliya, Israel, "HAMAS," http://www.ict.org.il/inter_ter/orgdet.cfm?orgid=13#leadership

[152] It will be interesting to see if this dynamic changes as the Iraqi democratic process matures.

Figure 3.1: Organizational Tree of SCIRI[153]

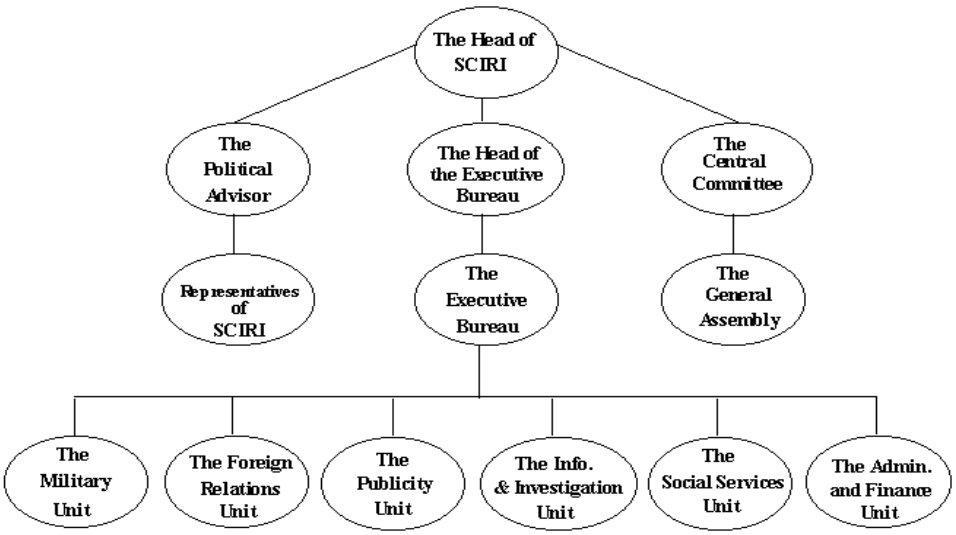
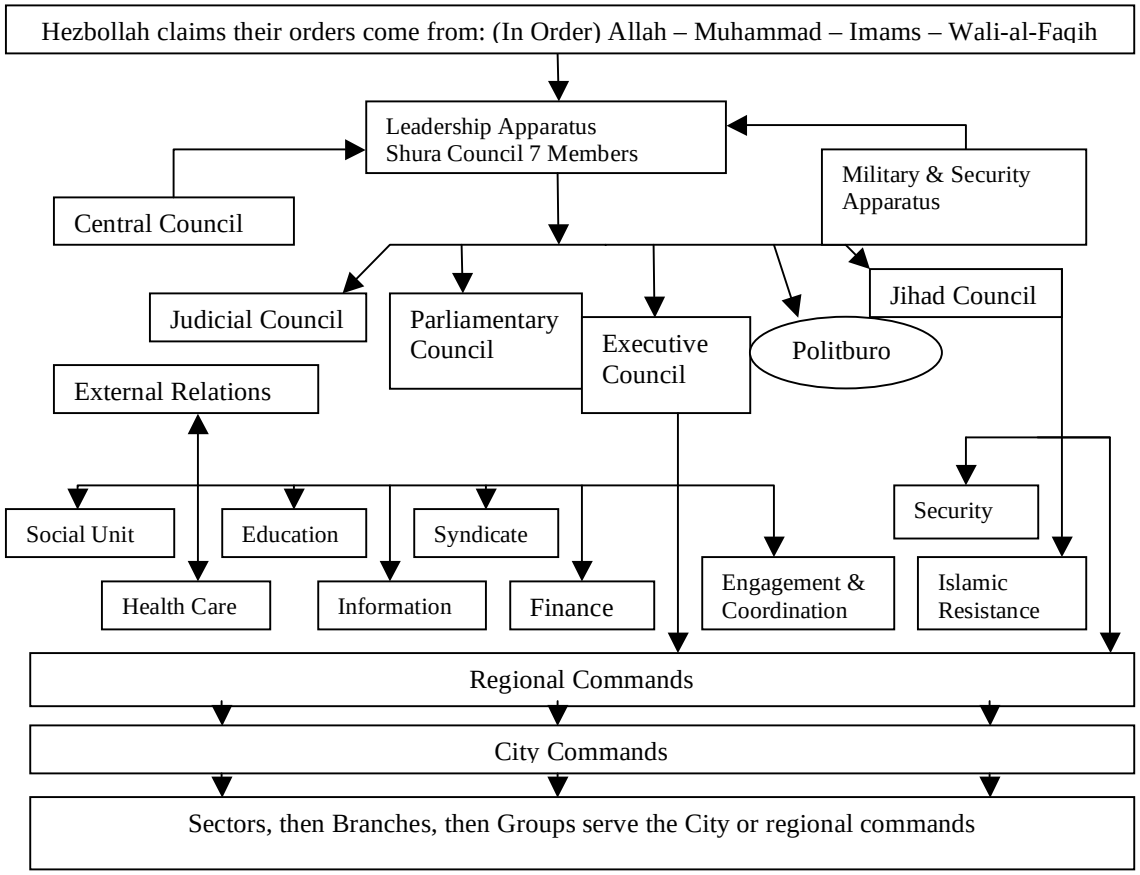


Figure 3.2: Organizational Tree of Hezbollah[154]

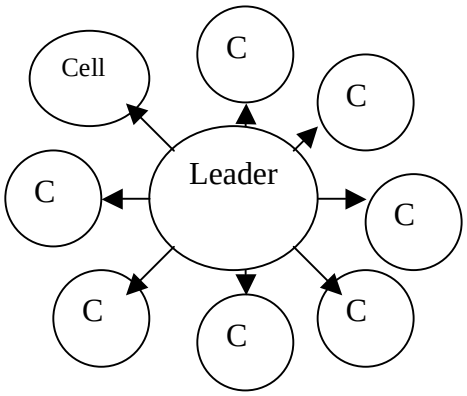


[153] Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, English Website, "Hirarcy," [sic], http://www.sciri.org/
[154] Hamzeh, page 46

Despite their clear differences, a hierarchical structure is apparent among all groups. This is typical of Shiite militancy. Furthermore, as SCIRI and Al-Dawa become more engaged in the political processes of Iraq they will likely build more complex governance structures. This is already apparent in SCIRI's decision to rename its military wing the "Badr Organization for Reconstruction and Development" from its previous name, the Badr Corps.[155] Similarly, Al-Dawa has made fundamental changes to its domestic political development strategy.[156]

This highly structured senior leadership dynamic is very different from the type employed by Sunni and Wahhabi extremists. Al Qai'da, for example, employs a "Hub and Spoke"[157] type model. [See Figure 3.3] This cell structure enables a group like Al Qai'da to avoid intelligence penetration of its organization by enemy operatives. It separates members and maintains independent cells. Only the Leader is aware of the operations of an individual cell, while other groups are wholly unaware of each other. This organizational structure was first widely employed by the Provisional Irish Republican

Figure 3.3: Hub and Spoke Terror Cell Model



[155] Lionel Beehner, Council on Foreign Relations, "Iraq: Militia Groups," 9 June 2005 http://www.cfr.org/publication.html?id=8175

[156] Rodger Shanahan, Middle East Review of International Affairs (MERIA), "The Islamic Da'wa Party: Past Development and Future Prospects," Volume 8, No. 2, June 2004, http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2004/issue2/jv8n2a2.html

[157] Arquilla, John, David Ronfeldt, and Michele Zanini, "Networks, Netwar, and Information-Age Terrorism," pgs. 86-108, reprinted in Howard, Russell D. (Colonel, U.S. Army), Reid L. Sawyer (Major, U.S. Army), Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Understanding the New Security Environment, Guilford, Connecticut: McGraw-Hill Company, 2002 (Hereafter referred to as Networks Paper)

Army (PIRA)[158] and it ultimately became the preferred method for Sunni and Wahhabi groups.[159]

HAMAS

The PIJ and the PFLP do not enjoy the same level of hierarchical sophistication. In large part, this is a reflection of their size. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) did display a similar level of complexity, albeit in an often inefficient manner.[160] HAMAS, however, has embraced a hybrid version of the Shiite militant structure. HAMAS employs a system that incorporates a confederated military structure, similar to the Hub and Spoke model. Concurrently, HAMAS employs a more structured political wing dedicated to cultivating popular support. Therefore, unlike the Shiite militant NSAG organizational profile, which houses both units under one umbrella, HAMAS utilizes two stovepipes – one militant, one political. Furthermore, the operatives that exist within this flow chart employ a hub and spoke model that enables them to better avoid infiltration.

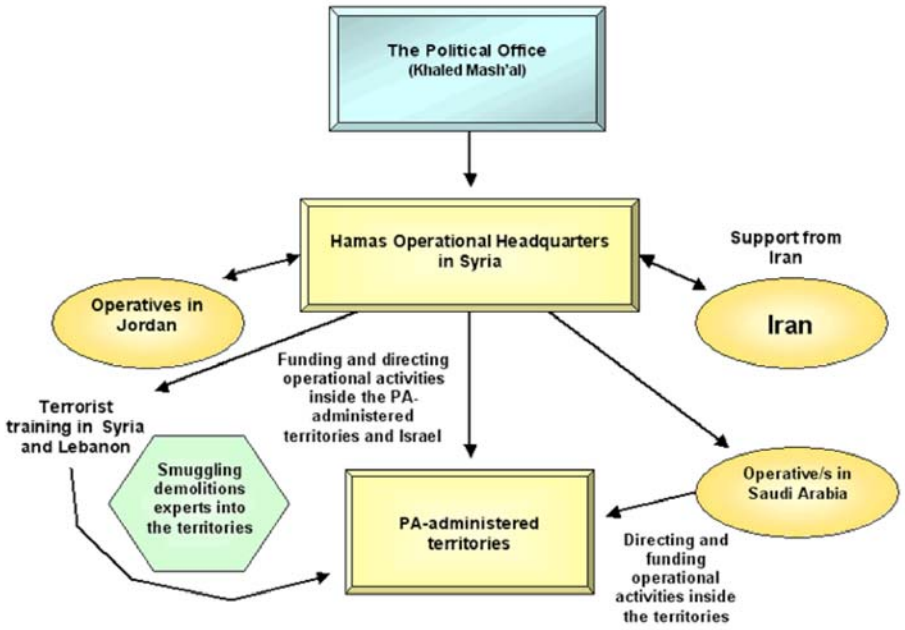
[NEXT PAGE]

[158] Bell, J. Bowyer, IRA Tactics and Targets, Dublin: Poolberg Press, Ltd., 1993

[159] Arquilla, Ronfeldt, and Zanini argue that this is morphing into an even looser constructed cell dynamic which they call "Segmented Polycentric Integrated Networks" (SPIN) – SEE Networks Paper. In this situation, groups that are wholly divorced from the leader operate independently, driven by their shared ideological sympathy with a given group. They do not enjoy logistical support or direct moral encouragement. Source cited above. The 7/7 bombings of London (7 July 2005) may be an example of this dynamic playing out.

[160] The PLO/Fatah was plagued with corruption, embezzling billions of dollars that were intended for development projects to assist the Palestinian people. SEE CBS News, *60 Minutes*, "Arafat's Billions," 9 November 2003, http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/11/07/60minutes/main582487.shtml

Figure 3.4: HAMAS Operational Flow Chart - Military[161]



As for its political wing, this element has only recently been developed.[162] There is little information regarding its particulars.[163] However, when HAMAS won 76 of 132 Parliamentary seats in the 26 January 2006 Palestinian election, it did so through political maturity. HAMAS employed a robust community development strategy, similar to the type run by Hezbollah and SCIRI. As a result, HAMAS was able to secure the trust of

[161] Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, Center for Special Studies, 1 September 2004, http://www.intelligence.org.il/eng/sib/9_04/hamas.htm

[162] Speculation on HAMAS' political goals began to increase in 2003-2004 as regional analysts began to notice a more aggressive socioeconomic development strategy

[163] The difficulties HAMAS had in forming a government made this point evident. Many political commentators speculated that HAMAS was just as surprised as everyone else when it won parliament. Still, other groups, such as Hezbollah or Al-Dawa, maintain a shadow government component that makes it easier for them to slip into the leadership role, should that day ever come. SEE Bernard Gwertzman's interview of (former) U.S. Ambassador to Israel, Daniel Kurtzer, Council on Foreign Relations, "Kurtzer: U.S., Israel and West Should Be Ready to Deal With New Palestinian Government If Headed by Non-Hamas 'Independent,'" 10 February 2006, http://cfr.org/publication/9817/kurtzer.html

the Palestinian people. This was achieved by undergoing structural changes to exploit a social vacuum in Palestinian territory as far back as 2002.[164]

3. Rank and File Membership

For Shiite militant groups, recruitment is relatively easy. Oppressed Shi'a had few options in the late-1970s and early-1980s when Shiite NSAGs were emerging. Today, precedent has been set. Thus, groups are able to leverage the experiences of the Shiites in Iraq and Lebanon to find a ready cadre of recruits today. However, despite the relative ease of recruitment, the vetting process is highly selective.

In Palestine, the PFLP, HAMAS, and PIJ each operated within an environment that required competitive marketing. This is because the PLO enjoyed the bulk of Palestinian support. HAMAS, in contrast, enjoyed support that ranged between 15 and 20 percent.[165] The PFLP and PIJ enjoyed even lower levels of overall support. However, like their Shiite counterparts, HAMAS engaged in an effective public diplomacy campaign that yielded political benefits realized through recruitment and political victory.

Similarities

All of these groups share some key similarities. Full membership is relatively small. Hezbollah, for example, has about 3,000 full members with an additional 15,000 reserves.[166] Thus, very few make the inner leadership circles.

Most often the leadership comes from a combination of those who enjoy advanced religious training and those who have university educations. Operatives at the

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[164] USA Today, AP, "HAMAS may be ready to take over from Arafat," 7 February 2003, http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2003-02-07-hamas-arafat_x.htm

[165] *Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre*, Islamic Militant Groups, "HAMAS," http://www4.janes.com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/subscribe/jtic/doc_view_groups.jsp?K2DocKey=/content1/janesdata/binder/jwit/jwit0132.htm@current&Prod_Name=JTIC&QueryText=&group=Hamas

[166] *Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre*, Islamic Militant Groups, "Hizbullah," http://www4.janes.com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/subscribe/jtic/doc_view_groups.jsp?K2DocKey=/content1/janesdata/binder/jwit/jwit0296.htm@current&Prod_Name=JTIC&QueryText=&group=Hizbullah

lower levels often derive from the less educated masses. Economic class is relative to the conditions of the society. Rarely do the poor attain a college education. Hence, the poor comprise the bulk of the lower rank and file.[167]

Geography plays a role as well. These groups are defined by preexisting relationships. They epitomize "six degrees of separation." Therefore, membership, especially inner core access, is based on verifiable character recommendations. In all cases, joining requires sponsorship, regardless of rank. The intelligence mechanisms are severe. Infiltration is the key fear. Yet, despite these similarities, the locations, conditions, and histories of these groups have led to different membership dynamics – albeit small differences.

SCIRI and Al-Dawa

The membership of these two groups is derived from two sources: defectors and sedentary Iraqi Shiites. During the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War, multiple Iraqi Shiite military personnel defected to Iran. Recognizing the benefits of a growing population of defectors, Tehran helped create the Badr Corps with SCIRI co-founder, Ayatollah Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim. As the war waged on, the ranks of the Badr Corps grew.

Shortly after the United States encouraged an internal Iraqi revolt post-1991 Desert Storm, Badr Corps members attempted to overthrow the Baathist regime. The result was a disaster. Not only did Badr Corps lose militarily, its actions led to a series of reprisals that culminated in the repression of Iraq's Shiite majority. Consequently, more Shiite defectors entered Iran where Badr Corps, SCIRI, and Al-Dawa awaited their

[167] Hamzeh, Chapter 4, "Clerical Leadership and Hierarchical Structure," pages 44-79

arrival. It is the combination of these two movements of émigrés that comprised the bulk of the leadership for both SCIRI and Al-Dawa.[168]

As Saddam's grasp weakened due to sanctions, SCIRI and Al-Dawa reentered Iraq. By the late-1990s their organizational strength coupled with relative Baathist weakness in the South, enabled the two Shiite groups to begin building their internal Iraqi numbers. By the time of the U.S.-led invasion in 2003, both groups enjoyed well-developed recruitment mechanisms.

Hezbollah

Hezbollah has a relatively easy pool from which it can draw recruits. However, this was not always the case. Initially, Hezbollah had to compete for membership with the Islamic Amal movement (Amal) and the PLO. Amal was established by another Shiite cleric from within the same Khomeini-clerical community, Imam Musa al-Sadr. It was initially created to counter the PLO's growing strength in South Lebanon. Amal was an organization founded to provide for the indigenous Lebanese Shiites who were being squeezed by Syrian forces from the North, Christian militiamen from Beirut, Israeli troops from the South, and an expanding Palestinian Diaspora that was settling upon traditional Shiite territory.

Al-Sadr, an Iranian Shiite cleric of Lebanese ancestry, initially enjoyed the confidence of regional Shiite leaders. However, despite establishing the Amal militia, he attempted to avoid violent confrontation. Ultimately, frustrated with Amal's seeming lack of engagement, Lebanese Shiites became disillusioned and embraced the PLO. Musa al-Sadr left for a trip to Libya in 1978 from which he never returned. Still, Amal remained a force in the region, and in fact, after al-Sadr's death, it became more militant.

[168] SEE Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq Website, www.sciri.org

First, Hezbollah capitalized on Lebanese perceptions of Amal's weakness. As Amal hardened, Hezbollah was able to leverage its direct Iranian support to solidify its militant position as the primary vehicle for Lebanese sovereignty. Eventually, support would also come from Syria. Adding to this foreign legitimacy was domestic authority. The careful political planning of Hezbollah's senior leadership established a positive image of Hezbollah in the minds of many Lebanese – Shi'a and non-Shi'a alike. Finally, the bombings of the U.S. Embassy (18 April 1983) and the simultaneous bombings of the U.S. Marine Corps and French Paratrooper Barracks (23 October 1983) gained Hezbollah instant global prominence amongst Islamists.

Over the years, the continued resistance against Israeli and perceived Western encroachment, coupled with socioeconomic programs, have acted as a gravitational pull for would-be heroes. Hezbollah became the undisputed champion of the Lebanese people. Their stature grew even more as a result of Hezbollah's humane treatment of Christian South Lebanese Army (SLA) militia members after Israel's withdrawal. Thus, recruitment and membership into Hezbollah is often desired by young Shiite men. Its growing political power in the Lebanese Parliament has further heightened the appeal of the group among the masses.[169]

Once joined, however, a recruit must undergo a rigorous vetting process. Hamzeh states that the first step after being inducted into Hezbollah is undergoing "the Greater Jihad."[170] This is the spiritual transformation that is required before a Hezbollah fighter can undertake the smaller jihad (armed struggle). "By overcoming one's self and earthly

[169] SEE Harik, Judith Palmer, Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism, Chapters 3 through 8, New York: I.B. Tauris & Co., 2004
[170] Hamzeh, page 87

desires, through the acceptance of the virtue of martyrdom, Hezbollah's fighters have been able to evoke alarm and fear among their enemies."[171]

HAMAS

Recruitment for HAMAS has been a very different experience. It has occurred under the oversight of Israeli intelligence mechanisms within occupied territory. However, the founding membership of the group came from the early years of Yassin's expulsion to Lebanon and the launching of the First Intifada in 1987. With Iranian and Hezbollah assistance, Yassin's HAMAS began a highly selective recruitment process that insulated the group from Israeli intelligence penetration. Thus, while the PLO was grabbing as many members from the Palestinian community that it could utilize, HAMAS chose a core group of dedicated militants from which it would expand.

As HAMAS' capabilities and reputation grew, its membership expanded into Yassin's native Gaza. The 1993 Oslo Accords enabled HAMAS to draw upon disaffected members of the PLO's lower ranks despite the fact that HAMAS supported the Oslo Accords – which it viewed as a temporary respite.[172] Thus, recruitment grew from hard-line elements of Palestinian society unhappy with what it perceived to be the PLO's ceasefire.

Still, the general popularity of the PLO and its charismatic leader, Yasser Arafat, always dampened HAMAS' broader appeal. Unlike Hezbollah or the Iraqi Shiite militant groups, HAMAS has generally remained an alternative for a disaffected population. It has not been the primary militancy vehicle. In other words, whereas Hezbollah, SCIRI,

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[171] IBID, page 87

[172] Ori Slonim, The Jaffe Center for Strategic Studies, Strategic Assessment, "The Hamas and Terror: An Alternative Explanation for the Use of Violence," Volume 2, No. 3, December 1999, http://www.tau.ac.il/jcss/sa/v2n3p4.html

and Al-Dawa have played prominent roles for their respective communities, HAMAS has played a subordinate role to the PLO. Membership, therefore, has been drawn for segments of society that would not join the more popular and conciliatory PLO. HAMAS recruits have subsequently been drawn from the more radical elements of Palestine. With Arafat deceased and HAMAS in Parliament, this dynamic may change.

The Role of Subsidies on Recruitment

Subsidies play a role in the retention of a few militants, but not necessarily the recruitment process. Iranian backed NSAGs tend to be comprised of ideologically driven members. Often, volunteers arrive with the goal of serving a cause, not gaining a financial benefit. Due to the aforementioned competitive recruiting environment of Palestine, HAMAS recruits share the same type of ideological zeal that their Shiite counterparts display. Palestinians motivated to militancy for financial gain would have been drawn to the PLO or one of its many subunits. Still, subsidies do play some role.

The United Nations Human Development Index,[173] Human Poverty Rates for Lebanon and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, place them at 81st and 102nd, respectively. Data on real wage growth does not date back to the 1970s or 1980s. This indicates that the level of development was too low or too dangerous to ascertain information. Thus, these areas in the 1970s and 1980s were economically on par with states such as Gabon, post-war Vietnam, and Suriname.[174] Therefore, operative subsidies do make an impact.

An example of the kind of impact that subsidies can have is relayed in a February 2002 *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin* written by Gary C. Gambill and Ziad K.

[173] United Nations Human Development Report (UNHDR) 2005, pages 227 - 228, http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2005/pdf/HDR05_complete.pdf
[174] UNHDR, page 224

Abdelnour. In this bulletin, entitled "Hezbollah: Between Tehran and Damascus," the authors note that pay played a role in Hezbollah's dominance over Amal, quoting:

> Hezbollah's Iranian financing allowed it to pay its fighters much more than the going "militia wages" and offer much-needed social services to the local population. Amal, on the other hand, had no significant source of external financing and therefore had to raise taxes from the population in areas it controlled. As rank and file Shi'ites gravitated toward what Amal leaders dubbed the "Petro party," a growing number of the group's military commanders did the same.[175]

H. John Poole makes a similar observation with respect to Hezbollah:

> Hezbollah recruits and trains local fighters. It pays them well (and their families if they are martyred). It also pays for information and hostages. All the while, it creates infrastructure within the communities of its otherwise oppressed recruiting base.[176]

Wages range from the hundreds to the thousands per month. Affiliation with an organization, especially at the senior level, is a steady job. One may envision that "employment" into a militant group is similar to the same type of stability offered by a U.S. government agency. However, again, it should be noted that the bulk of the recruits join because they are motivated by ideology. In fact, ideological constructs that lie at the foundation of these NSAGs' require an adherence to a "higher calling" then money or economic stability.

4. Ideology/Political Code of Beliefs and Objectives

An ideological profile is shared among nearly all of the Shiite militant groups: the "Oppressor – Oppressed" political justice dynamic. This ideological concept dictates their strategic construction and guides their operational methods. In his in-depth study on

[175] Gary C. Gambill and Ziad K. Abdelnour, Middle East Intelligence Bulletin, "Hezbollah: Between Tehran and Damascus," Volume 4, No. 2, February 2002, http://www.meib.org/articles/0202_l1.htm
[176] Poole, Tactics, page 191

Hezbollah, Professor Amal Saad-Ghorayeb notes that militant Shiites do not share the same type of goal to establish a global Caliphate that is shared among Sunni extremists.

Although Shiite militants would like to realize a global Islamic Caliphate, their immediate priority is to "liberate" the locale within which they operate. Thus, Ghorayeb explains, it is more important to see Lebanon or Iraq become Islamic states then the world as a whole. This is because Shiites of all variations, but especially the Twelvers, believe that the return of the occulted Imam[177] will initiate the beginning of a new world Caliphate – a messianic return to paradise on Earth. As common men, Shiite militants do not believe they can dictate the timing of what God desires.

Furthermore, even the goal of establishing an Islamic government is not necessary. The state need not be an Islamic Republic in the model of Iran in order for a Shiite militant group to feel successful. Rather, morality and justice plays the greater role. Ghorayeb explains this fundamental difference between Shiites and Sunni militant groups:

> With the exception of the brief period of rule of Imam 'Ali and the even briefer duration of Imam Hassan's caliphate, Hizbu'llah does not consider any other Shi'ite government, whether dynasty or empire, as worthy of emulation. What is more, the party does not regard any period in Shi'ite history as a 'Golden Age' to which it aspires to return. This is the principle difference between the Sunni and Shi'ite exemplary Islamic state. While the Sunnis seek to recreate the Golden Age comprising of the three Caliphs, the Shi'ites do not strive to return to 'the historical period in which the Prophet lived or the periods that followed.'[178]

Oppressor-Oppressed

Ghorayeb goes on to explain how the ideological foundations of Shi'a militancy, through the teachings of Ayatollah Khomeini, moved Shiite militancy in a different

[177] Shites believe that an occulted Imam will return to fulfill a messianic role. However, different sects believe that different Imam's will return. These groups are: 5th (Zaydi Shi'a), 7th (Ismaili Shi'a), and 12th (Ja'fari Shi'a) Imam's return.
[178] Ghorayeb, page 34

direction then its Sunni counterparts. The result was a Shiite militant vision of a struggle between "Oppressors" and the "Oppressed." The oppressors are those who exert power over a group in a manipulative manner. The United States and Israel are seen as oppressors. So are some political dictators, although not all.[179]

Furthermore, the oppressed need not be Muslims. For instance, after the self-imposed death of IRA prisoner, Bobby Sands, due to hunger-strike, Khomeini was so moved by his resolve that he named a street in Tehran after the Irish-Catholic IRA operative.[180] Similar support went out to Nelson Mandela during his struggle against apartheid. The term "oppressed," therefore, is universal. It is granted to those who are subjected to suppression and manipulation by forces more powerful then them. This goes back to the social justice/martyr paradigm within which Shiites see themselves operating.[181]

Additionally, the aforementioned relationship of Khomeini with Shiite political leaders is a critical reason for the proliferation of this social justice motive. A unity of vision exists among Shiite militant groups that is not enjoyed by their fractious Wahhabi counterparts. This is due to Khomeini's influence in the cultivation of regional Shiite NSAGs.

In contrast, Wahhabi groups appear to differ from one another in ways that keep them from cooperating. Some, for instance, do not like the tactics employed by elements of Al Qai'da. In fact, Al Qai'da appears to suffer from its own internal divisions over the methods employed by some of its members. Witness the July 2005 letter written by

[179] Ghorayeb explains that dictators are vindicated if they provide services and order to a people. This is because it is considered more oppressive to live in chaos and want then it is to live in a society that suppresses free speech or free press. SEE Ghorayeb pages 29-31, 35, and 41
[180] Ghorayeb, page 21
[181] SEE Chapter 2 of this report.

Ayman al-Zawahiri to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.[182] Consequently, the Khomeini constructed inter-Shiite group relationship enables greater levels of cooperation, information sharing, and regional planning.

Palestinian Groups

For the Palestinian militants supported by Iran, their ideological goals are similar to those of their Shiite counterparts. Islam ranks highest. Alleviation of the plight of the Palestinian people comes immediately thereafter. Consider the words expressed in the original "Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement" which outlined the ideology of HAMAS:

> …Praise be to Allah. We seek help from Him, we ask forgiveness from Him, we ask Him for guidance, and we rely on Him. Prayer and peace be upon Allah's messenger and upon his family and companions, and those who are loyal to him and spread his message and follow his *sunna* [the Prophet's custom]. Prayer and peace be forever upon them as long as heaven and earth exist.
>
> Oh people, from the midst of great troubles and in the depths of suffering, and from the beating of believing hearts and arms purified for worship, out of cognizance of duty and in response to Allah's command - thence came the call [of our movement] and the meeting and joining [of forces], and thence came education in accordance with Allah's way and a resolute will to carry out [the movement's] role in life, overcoming all of the obstacles and surmounting the difficulties of the journey. Thence came also continuous preparation, [along with] readiness to sacrifice one's life and all that is valuable for the sake of Allah.
>
> Then the seed took form and [the movement] began to move forward through this stormy sea of wishes and hopes, yearnings and aspirations, dangers and obstacles, pains and challenges, both locally [in Palestine] and abroad…[183]

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[182] Office of the Director of National Intelligence, "Letter from al-Zawahiri to al-Zarqawi," 11 October 2005, http://www.dni.gov/letter_in_english.pdf . NOTE: Some question the legitimacy of this letter. NOTE: The acceptance of al-Zarqawi into Al Qai'da is questionable. It appears he may have self-designated himself "Al Qai'da in Iraq." It is unclear how much Osama Bin Laden knew of al-Zarqawi before he began his Iraqi campaign.

[183] Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "The Covenant of the Islamic Resistance Movement," originally released 18 August 1988, http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/1980_1989/THE%20CHARTER%20OF%20ALLAH-%20THE%20PLATFORM%20OF%20THE%20ISLAMIC

The ideological priorities of HAMAS are set in this covenant. First, Allah is emphasized, clearly expressing the Islamist motivations of the organization. Immediately thereafter is an appeal to the faithful of Palestine, specifically those that feel oppressed. Third, HAMAS likens itself to a "seed" planted by the Palestinian people. This seed is ready to blossom into the answer the Palestinians have sought – namely, how to rid itself of Israeli occupation. This combination of both religious and political motives articulates a desire to serve the Palestinian people whom HAMAS sees to be crucial to God's plan. The similarities therefore, between HAMAS and its Shiite NSAG counterparts are evidenced in their combined service to Allah (first) and the people (second).

5. Strategy and Tactics

The end result is that the political dynamics of Iranian backed NSAGs are far more complex then the looser Sunni variations. First, they often do not see themselves as "Shiite" or "Palestinian" militant groups, per se. Rather, they perceive themselves as "freedom fighters" that represent all of those who fall under their area of command. Second, their strategies reflect a comprehensive political component. They see popular political support as crucial to their ultimate goal. To engender popular support they often provide medical care, housing assistance, education, and food to those in need. They also, generally, take great pains to avoid killing members of their own community.[184]

For example, after the southern portions of Iraq were secured (post-U.S. invasion), the Badr Corps[185]changed its name to the "Badr Organization for Reconstruction and Development" (BORD). However, after the bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samara, elements of the Badr Corps began killing suspected Sunni militants. They seem to have

[184] This means that they try not to kill those whom they consider to be their citizenry. This does not mean that they will avoid killing civilians of a perceived enemy.
[185] Military wing of SCIRI.

done this in a systematic and targeted manner, as opposed to the more destructive methods employed by Sunni and Wahhabi extremists. Furthermore, while meting out "justice," they have continued to provide "reconstruction and development" assistance to the Shiites in the south.

Similar combined militant-development approaches toward securing the confidence of a given population have manifested in Lebanon, Afghanistan, and Palestine. In fact, although not an exclusively Iranian creation, HAMAS' recent political victory was the culmination of a multifaceted political platform. It betrayed the amount of interaction and advice it has enjoyed from both Hezbollah and Quds Force operatives in the last few years. Consequently, HAMAS won a clear majority in the Palestinian Parliament precisely because it employed a similar balance of continued military resistance and community development.[186]

Shiite NSAGs are also more likely to become involved in a political process. Democracy is seen as a very effective tool to achieve one's objectives. Thus, Shiite militant groups enjoy representation in almost every state within which they operate.[187] Unlike their Sunni and Wahhabi counterparts, they do not broadly dismiss democracy. Hezbollah, Al-Dawa, and SCIRI have been very effective as political parties. Again, witness HAMAS. After years of being relegated to a subordinate role in the Arafat dominated Palestinian Authority, HAMAS was able to exploit the political process after transforming itself.

Thus, the best way to describe the ideological composition of Iranian backed NSAGs is that Tehran employs an interconnected web of "insurgent" groups. Although

[186] Esther Pan, Council on Foreign Relations, "Implications of the Palestinian Elections, 26 January 2006, http://www.cfr.org/publication/9687/

[187] Provided representation is available.

not always the case, Iranian backed NSAGs enjoy a level of political sophistication and organization that is far more complex then Al Qai'da. I return to the definition provided in the armed groups report:

> Insurgency is a protracted political and military set of activities directed toward partially or completely gaining control over the territory of a country through the use of irregular military forces and illegal political organizations. The insurgents engage in actions ranging from guerrilla operations, terrorism, and sabotage to political mobilization, political action, intelligence/counterintelligence activities, and propaganda/psychological warfare. All of these instruments are designed to weaken and/or destroy the power and legitimacy of a ruling government, while at the same time increasing the power and legitimacy of the armed insurgent group.[188]

At the political level, they tend to be hierarchical in construction. As previously demonstrated, they display a clear, vertical chain of command. They are comprised of a disciplined cadre within their respective political structures. Oversight is strict. They are cognizant of public diplomacy. Thus, issues such as corruption and fraud are often dealt with quickly and internally.[189]

Tactical Ideology

Militarily, however, Iranian backed NSAGs tend to operate horizontally.[190] Cells function in ways that are designed to frustrate conventional Western militaries. The individual cell is not wholly disconnected from the parent organization, such as Al Qai'da. "Segmented Polycentric Integrated Networks" (SPIN) do not apply to the Iranian backed NSAG.[191] Thus, there is a lesser likelihood of an ideological sympathizer that might operate outside of the organization's control. This is important. Again, the political

[188] Shults, page 17. Full citation in Chapter 1, "Operational Definitions and Transliteration"
[189] Hamzer, Ahmad Nizar, In the Path of Hizbullah, Chapter 4, pages 44-79, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2004
[190] Tactical patterns extracted from Poole, H. John, "The Muslim Militant's Pattern," Tactics of the Crescent Moon, Chapter 10, pages 183-209
[191] SEE Networks Paper

component is critical to the Iranian baked NSAG. An uncontrolled rogue operator is a potential liability. This view stands in stark contrast to the Wahhabi extremist movement that encourages widespread chaos in order to disrupt Western functionalism.[192]

Because the political goal is defined, the strategic task is similarly defined. However, at the tactical level, the independent operative or cell is granted a significant degree of latitude when compared to its Western counterpart. Hezbollah units enjoy independence of movement, enabling the senior operative on the scene to determine what is necessary to achieve the mission. If a unit needs support it may or may not receive it depending on the circumstance. If suicide seems a logical alternative, it will be employed. If retreat seems like the better option, so be it. The political objective dictates the tasks and tactics. This objective is most often narrowly defined, not the method. It is designed to contribute toward the group's ultimate political goal.

Tactics and Operational Methods

Again, keeping an eye on the political prize of popular support at all times, Iranian backed NSAGs employ a systematic, discriminatory method of attack. It is best characterized as "death by a thousand cuts." This dynamic has played out in Lebanon, Israel, and now, Iraq. Opportunities to achieve the "big kill" will be grabbed, the patient, persistent methods of Iranian backed NSAGs is the norm.

HAMAS

Poole notes in his book, Tactics of the Crescent Moon: Militant Muslim Combat Methods, that HAMAS employs two primary types of attacks on military targets, ambushing convoys (including tank killing) and sniping.[193] The use of suicide bombers

[192] U.S. Department of Justice, Al Qaeda Training Manuals, http://www.usdoj.gov/ag/manualpart1_1.pdf
[193] Poole, Tactics, pages 60-61

on Israeli civilian targets is aimed at breaking the will of the Israeli populace, encouraging Palestinian sympathizers, and destroying Israel's tourism-dependent economy. The economic goal is considered a key to eroding Israel's capacity to sustain operations against the militants and further diminishing Israeli political support.[194]

Iraqi Shiite NSAGs

As for SCIRI and Al-Dawa, tactics employed in Iraq resemble the same type of systematic, discriminate methods shared by other Shiite NSAGs. In his study, Iraq's Evolving Insurgency: The Nature of Attacks and Patterns, and Cycles in the Conflict, Middle East expert, Anthony Cordesman underscores the differences in attack methods between Shiite and Sunni armed groups. Whereas Sunni groups sought to disrupt the government through the employment of large-scale attacks, Shiite groups were more selective:

> By May 2005, Shi'ites had begun to retaliate, in spite of efforts to avoid this by Shi'ite leaders, contributing further to the problems in establishing a legitimate government and national forces. Sunni bodies were discovered in unmarked graves, as well as Shi'ite ones, and killings struck at both Sunni and Shi'ite clergy.[195]

Cordesman goes on to list eleven such incidents before writing the following statement: "According to some reports, more than 60 Sunni imams have been killed since the start of the insurgency."[196] This is a significantly smaller number then the scores of Shiites who have been killed by Sunni Muslims.

However, most telling in Cordesman report was the decision by Shiite leaders not to commit genocide. Cordesman states the following:

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[194]Poole, Tactics, page 59-65

[195] Cordesman, Anthony, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Iraq's Evolving Insurgency: The Nature of Attacks and Patterns and Cycles in the Conflict, page 6, 3 February 2006, http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/060203_iraqicombattrends.pdf

[196] IBID, page 7

> …a step up in Sunni attacks on Shi'ite targets after the January 30, 2005 election, led some Shi'ites to talk about "Sunni ethnic cleansing. This effect was compounded by bloody suicide bombings, many of which had some form of government target, but killed large numbers of Shi'ite civilians.[197]

The decision not to engage in "Sunni ethnic cleansing" is a reflection of the aforementioned political dynamic of Shiite groups. The desire to incorporate Sunnis into a Shiite led government is consistent with both Iranian revolutionary principles and Shiite NSAG practices. Thus, the selective targeting of Sunni insurgents betrays a calculated attempt by Shiite militants to avoid the same blood bath type attacks that are being committed against the Shi'a.

Hezbollah

With regard to Hezbollah, H. John Poole writes the following:

> Hezbollah is the region's most accomplished guerilla organization. While it has yet to perfect its ground assault technique, its ambushing skills are on par with the Viet Cong, and its early warning apparatus is better.[198]

Professor Hamzeh notes that Hezbollah employs a wide range of asymmetric attacks. Specifically, Hamzeh states that Hezbollah engages in "martyrdom operations, guerilla warfare, hostage taking, and [politically] forceful seizure of power."[199] Although the "forceful seizure of power" describes Hezbollah's aggressive political practices, the other methods of attack are geared to achieve different military impacts. All contribute to the same strategic goal.

Martyr operations are aimed at "producing quick and favorable results."[200] Thus, attacks yield kill ratios of one Hezbollah operative to 25 enemy dead and wounded on

[197] IBID, page 6
[198] Poole, Tactics, page 189
[199] Hamzeh, page 81
[200] IBID, page 84

average.[201] This figure does not include the suicide truck attacks of the U.S. Marine Corps and French Paratrooper Barracks in October 1983 that yielded 241 and 58 dead, respectively. A pattern of Hezbollah martyrdom employment does seem apparent. In almost every case, the target was a military command post, military column, or military motorcade.

Whereas martyrdom's aim is to kill, the aim of hostage taking is psychological. The moral uncertainty of deciding the fate of the victim instills distress upon the decision making body of a state. Hamzeh states that [hostage taking] "is a form of terror that ultimately attacks men's minds by convincing the people that the revolutionary or militant movement is powerful and the state is weak."[202] The killing of hostages intensifies this feeling of helplessness.

Finally, in terms of its guerilla warfare techniques, Hezbollah is highly adept. After nearly twenty years of Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon, Hezbollah was finally able to force Israel out through the use of guerilla tactics. They did this by skillfully manipulating the local population. Poole notes that Hezbollah operatives would fire on Israeli patrols from densely populated areas. When Israel retaliated, the effect would be to alienate the Israelis from the local community.[203]

Ambushing Israeli foot patrols was another highly effective tactic for Hezbollah operatives. Often, Hezbollah operatives would attack foot patrols on their return to base. Through the use of long-range observation, Hezbollah would employ claymore mines,

[201] IBID, page 84
[202] IBID, page 85
[203] Poole, Tactics, page 39

small arms, and rocket propelled grenade launchers.[204] The ultimate result was eroding Israeli domestic support for the occupation.

However, the most effective method was Hezbollah's employment of East Asian "haichi-shiki" convoy ambushes. Poole describes these ambushes in the following series of steps:

> (1) Luring a quarry into an inverted U-shaped ambush, (2) close the backdoor, and then (3) attacking him from all sides with a combination of ruses, long-range fire, and assaults.[205]

Poole goes on to explain how Hezbollah employed shaped, roadside bombs to corral Israeli convoys. This tactic is used against U.S. forces in Iraq today.

Hezbollah's aggressive use of fourth generation warfare techniques has earned it a powerful reputation. Hamzeh notes that "Hizbullah has done more to combat Israel than any other force…in the Arab world."[206] Consequently, Hezbollah enjoys a level of stature that is unrivaled. It is clearly Iran's most profitable military enterprise.

6. Linkages with other NSAGs and State Actors

To cultivate these groups into effective strategic vehicles for the state, Iran provided assistance in three ways: 1. Training, 2. Financing (including logistics and weapons procurement), and 3. Diplomatic/Political. In fact, the state security mechanisms were geared to facilitate the needs of these groups.

Training

As noted by Middle East security expert Anthony Cordesman of the Center for International and Strategic Studies (CSIS), NSAGs play a critical role to Tehran's security strategy. In his report, Iran's Evolving Military Forces, Cordesman notes that

[204] IBID, page 40
[205] IBID, page 40
[206] Hamzeh, page 90

Iran dedicates a military unit specifically for the purpose of cultivating and exploiting NSAGs inside foreign states (The Quds). Cordesman further explains the reason for their existence: [they provide] "Iran the ability to conduct unconventional warfare overseas using various foreign movements as proxies."[207]

Professor Byman suggests that, without IRGC training, Hezbollah would never have evolved into the fighting force that it ultimately became.[208] Former CIA operative Robert Baer further indicts IRGC for complicity in the cultivation of Hezbollah.[209] As for direct training of other organizations, Badr Corp's primary training facility was at the Vahdati Air Base in Iran.[210] With regard to Palestinian militant groups, combined efforts of Hezbollah and IRGC forces have already been cited in this report.

Financing

The only way these groups could remain both active and effective is through the support of Iran. Some reports indicate that Hezbollah enjoys a certain level of autonomy through the use of drug sales or criminal activity.[211] Similarly, HAMAS' support from Saudi Arabia offers that organization a degree of freedom from Iran's financial support as well. In fact, all of these groups benefit from alternative sources of funding. In some cases, this includes criminal activities. In other cases, alternative state assistance is available. Yet, regardless from where funding may come, large scale weapons procurement is still a state facilitated endeavor.

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[207] Cordesman, Anthony, Iran's Evolving Military Forces, page 15, Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 2004, http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/0407_iransmilforces.pdf
[208] Byman, page 87
[209] Baer, pages 65-169
[210] Mahan Abedin, Jamestown Foundation, "SCIRI: An American Ally in Iraq?," 7 November 2003, http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=391&issue_id=2872&article_id=23399
[211] U.S. Senate, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Testimony of Matthew A. Levitt, Senior Fellow and Director of Terrorism Studies, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, "Hezbollah: Financing Terror through Criminal Enterprise," http://hsgac.senate.gov/_files/LevittTestimony.pdf

In testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives, Middle East Security expert Matthew Levitt describes the logistical support of Iran to Islamist groups in the region. Specifically, he cites Tehran's use of cash bonuses for successful attacks,[212] international cases of money laundering,[213] and mass weapons trafficking. The most significant case of a recent weapons shipment to the region was that of the Karine-A. This Iranian flagship was intercepted in the Red Sea by the Israeli Navy in January 2002. Describing the significance of this incident, Levitt states the following:

> Iranian involvement in the *Karine-A* weapons smuggling ship – intercepted by the Israeli Navy in the Red Sea in January 2002 – is well documented. The White House described evidence of Iran's role in the *Karine-A* incident as "compelling," a conclusion echoed in the statements of Director of Central Intelligence Tenet, senior State Department officials, and even European officials. Speaking before the European Parliament in Strasbourg in February 2002, European Union head of foreign affairs Javier Solana described the *Karine-A* as "the link between Iran and the PA," adding that "such a connection had not existed for many years."42 Hezbollah's role in the affair is also well known. Not only did Iran arrange for Hezbollah external operations commander Imad Mughniyeh to purchase the *Karine-A*, but Mughniyeh's deputy, Haj Bassem, personally commanded the ship that met the *Karine-A* at the island of Kish (south of Iran) and oversaw the ship-to-ship transfer of the Iranian weapons.43 But the link extends to Hamas as well.[214]

Diplomatic/Political

In terms of diplomatic and political support, Iran is able to use its sovereignty to hide suspected terrorists and to issue passports. Its network of embassies further enables the state to provide diplomatic and political coverage to operatives internationally. Consequently, Hezbollah operatives have been able to exploit this network to achieve global capabilities.

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[212] U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, Testimony of Matthew A. Levitt, Senior Fellow and Director of Terrorism Studies, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, "Iranian State Sponsorship of Terror: Threatening U.S. Security, Global Stability, and Regional Peace," page 5, 16 February 2005, http://wwwa.house.gov/international_relations/109/Lev021605.pdf

[213] IBID, page 12, Tehran's use of student profiles to move and launder cash.

[214] IBID, page 7

One other political method that Iran uses to support its NSAG network is the use of state alliances – specifically the use of Syria. In nearly every NSAG profile report analyzed for the purpose of this paper, Syria was listed as an additional state supplier to an Iranian backed group. This remained constant regardless of whether the source was a book, a government document, or an organization dedicated to the study of security, such as Jane's Publication or the Jamestown Foundation. By leveraging its political relations with Syria, Iran is capable of providing logistical support to regional actors that it is otherwise removed from geographically.

Iran's relations with Sunni Extremists

The other way that Iran supports its NSAG network is through the use of competing NSAGs. Despite having provided the ideological foundations for why Iranian backed NSAGs operate in a set manner, Iran also provides partial support to groups that operate in a way that is opposite to its ideological disposition. Groups that seemingly have no relationship to Iran or its ideology still play an important role in Iran's asymmetric approach.

An example is Iran's purported support for Sunni extremists in Iraq.[215] A superficial examination might lead an analyst to believe that Iran is not involved with Sunni extremist groups. This is based on an assumption that a Shiite theocracy like Iran would not support Sunnis that are seeking to undermine Shiite power in another state.

[215] This position is not universally held. Some experts in the region, such as Kenneth Katzman of the Congressional Research Service, believe Iranian support for Sunni extremists does not "fit Iran's strategic profile."[SEE Kenneth Katzman, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, Iran's Influence in Iraq, 30 November 2005, http://lugar.senate.gov/iraq/pdf/CRS_IraqRS22323.pdf] However, Katzman also points out that some individuals in the U.S. government do believe that Iran is supporting Sunni elements. They point to evidence of Sunni extremist use of Iranian shaped charges and sophisticated weaponry. Based on the information that Iran has assisted Al Qai'da in the past, and that Iran has enjoyed alliances with groups that have not fit its strategic profile in the past, I believe that an alliance with Sunni extremists is likely.

However, based on the strategic profile as laid out in the previous pages of this report, only one constant strategic principle applies with Iran's use of NSAGs: Does this benefit Iran?

After providing the operational details and political principles of Shiite NSAGs, it would seem that support for the methods of Sunni extremists would contradict Khomeini's guidance. However, Sunni methods achieve a few key objectives for Iran – namely a preoccupied United States and enhanced public perception of Shiite militant groups. While Sunni groups make war on the population, Shiite groups are seen providing welfare assistance to the people of Iraq. Thus, regional public opinion of Shiites, specifically Iraqi Shiites, is shifting more favorably among Sunnis inside and outside of Iraq.[216]

Furthermore, the recent nuclear crisis with Iran has brought that state to the forefront of nearly every major power's foreign policy apparatus. Recently, the International Atomic Energy Agency referred Iran to the U.N. Security Council (UNSC).[217] Recognizing that the United States is the only country, other then Israel, that is likely to opt for military strikes against its alleged nuclear facilities, Iran has stepped up its rhetoric. It has simultaneously threatened the United States[218]while offering the U.S. cooperation on stability in Iraq.[219] However, Iran may also be involved in fomenting instability for the purpose of keeping United States policy options unbalanced.

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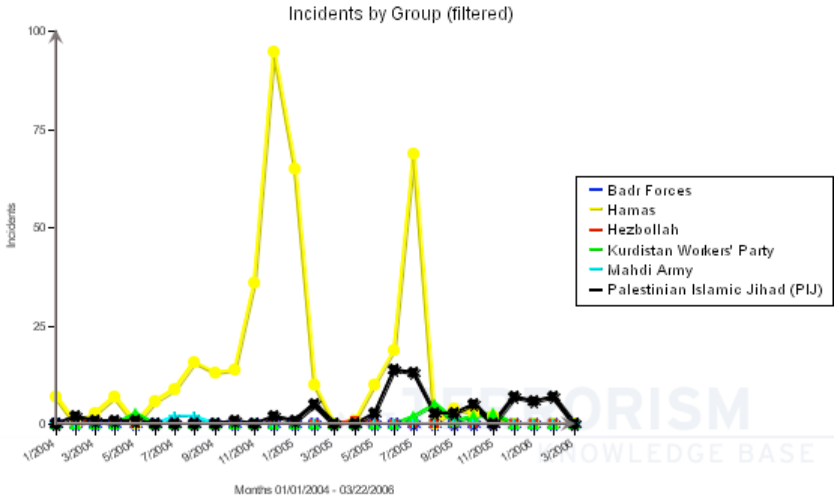
[216] Interview of Fawaz Gerges, Iraq Insurgency Expert, by Bernard Gwertzman, Council on Foreign Relations, 5 December 2005, http://www.cfr.org/publication/9345/insurgency_expert_gerges.html
[217] IAEA, Board of Governors, Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 27 February 2006, http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Board/2006/gov2006-15.pdf
[218] Mike Shuster, National Public Radio, "Iran Threatens 'Harm and Pain' to the United States," 8 March 2006, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5252301
[219] CBS News/Associated Press, "Iran: We're Ready for Talks on Iraq," 16 March 2006, http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/03/15/world/main1409069.shtml

Although no declassified proof exists, consider the following charts provided by the National Counter Terrorism Center (NCTC). Those groups that enjoy tight relations with Iran (Badr Corps, Hezbollah, HAMAS, Mahdi Army, PIJ, PKK) have nearly ceased all operations in the region as Iran approaches its scheduled meetings at the UNSC:[220]

Figure 3.5: Attacks by Groups known to enjoy significant Iranian Support in the Region

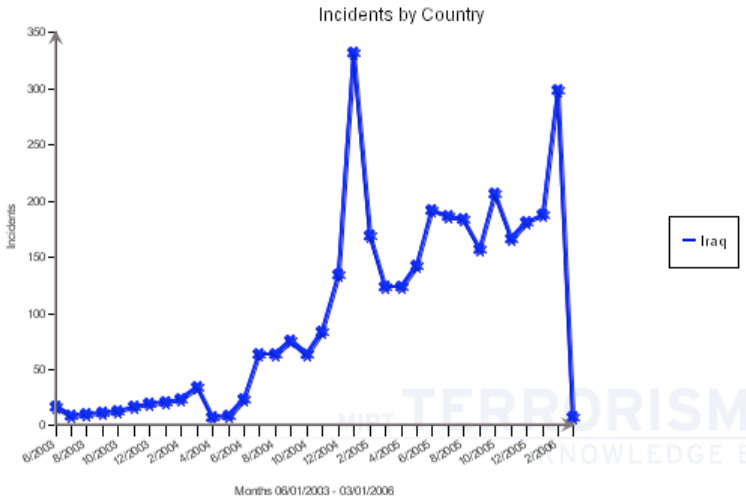


Conversely, while these groups have grown silent, Iraq's Sunni groups had been increasing their number of attacks, preoccupying U.S. military units in areas outside of Shiite dominated districts. This fell off sharply after the bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samara. After that incident, a number of targeted assassinations of Sunni insurgents were reported, ostensibly by Shiite militants. But prior to this incident, attacks were clearly on the rise:[221]

[220] U.S. National Counter Terrorism Center (NCTC), Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism (MIPT), Data sets manipulated to reflect domestic and international attacks by the groups listed above from 01 January 2004 to 15 March 2006, (HAMAS and PIJ violence reflects Intifada, and recent silence may be indicative of HAMAS' recent electoral victory), http://www.tkb.org/ChartModule.jsp?&step=4&drillSeries=3101&year=2004&month=1

[221] NCTC, Sunni extremists groups, Country Analysis: Iraq, 01 June 2003 to 01 March 2006, http://www.tkb.org/ChartModule.jsp

Figure 3.6: Attacks by Sunni Groups in Iraq



It is impossible to know whether or not Iran has encouraged Sunni militancy, either directly or indirectly, as part of a regional destabilization strategy. However, American military options have been limited by the continued necessity of U.S. troops in Iraq. Furthermore, violence in Iraq has translated to suspect U.S. domestic support for further military action in the region.[222] Thus, options for dealing with Iran may be dictated, in part, by the ongoing violence in Iraq.

Summary

Iran uses several different types of NSAGs to facilitate the needs of the state. Although many groups enjoy Iranian support, only a few groups enjoy invested assistance. Two distinct categories solicit full Iranian support: Shiite militant NSAGs and Palestinian separatist NSAGs. These groups share structural and ideological similarities that provide a template for an Iranian backed NSAG archetype.

[222] Although support for military action against Iran is high (64%), unilateral action is under half (47%). Zogby International, 1 February 2006, http://www.zogby.com/news/ReadNews.dbm?ID=1067 . Contrast this with public support for unilateral action in 2003, prior to the U.S. invasion of Iraq which illustrated 67% support http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/0130/p01s01-woiq.html .

They have intricate political goals. Each group employs a social development strategy that can rival most states. They enjoy hierarchical command structures led by educated elites or clerical authorities. Furthermore, all of these groups are grounded in Islam. Finally, most of these groups share a commitment for the destruction of Israel. So far, those groups that are operating in Iraq have not stated this objective. However, given the shared dynamics of their sister organizations, SCIRI and Al-Dawa will ultimately have to embrace an aggressive anti-Israel platform as a prerequisite for future assistance from Tehran.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

Analysis of Gains and Conclusion

Summary of Gains

As a whole, success rates for the employment of such groups vary. As stated in the Iraq example, NSAGs may have served as part of a political attempt to relieve international pressure off Tehran. In other cases, the employment of NSAGs appears to offer no tangible political benefit. Take, for example, Iranian support for Zaydi Shiite rebels in Yemen.[223] In 2004, Zaydi militants increased the number of their attacks while achieving no discernable results. Thus, support may be a reflection of the unique Shiite social justice paradigm reviewed in the second chapter of this report.

In other cases, Shiite NSAGs served to marginally frustrate ideological rivals. Iranian support for Hazari militants in Afghanistan during the Taliban's reign fits this description. Not only did backing the Hazaris fail to yield tangible strategic results, it appears to have led to retaliatory strikes by Taliban forces resulting in the death of eight Iranian diplomats and one Iranian journalist in 1999.[224] Similarly, Iranian support for Ismail Khan appeared to be an attempt to counter growing Pakistani influence in post-Soviet Afghanistan.[225] Other examples in this category include groups that operated in Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Yet, some groups have yielded Iran tactical and strategic victories.

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[223] Andrew McGregor, Ph.D., "Shi'ite Insurgency in Yemen: Iranian Intervention or Mountain Revolt?" *The Jamestown Foundation*, 12 August 2004, http://www.jamestown.org/news_details.php?news_id=61

[224] Tony Karon, Time Magazine, "The Taliban and Afghanistan: Understanding Bin Laden's hosts, the dilemma he poses for them, and the politics of the neighborhood," 18 September 2001, http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,175372,00.html

[225] Thomas H. Johnson, US.. Naval Postgraduate School, Center for Contemporary Conflict, Strategic Insights, "Ismail Khan, Heart, and Iranian Influence," Volume III, Issue 7, July 2004, http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2004/jul/johnsonJul04.asp

The Badr Corps played a positive strategic role throughout the 1990s inside and outside of Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Although it was beaten by Iraqi forces in the immediate aftermath of the 1991 U.S. led Operation Desert Storm, the Badr Corps became a capable intelligence apparatus for Iran. SCIRI reconstituted itself during the mid-1990s. By the late 1990s Badr Corps achieved a substantial level of operational capabilities in Southern Iraq. This may be the result of the Badr Corps's improved fighting ability, but it is more likely the result of a closely monitored "No-Fly Zone" and a significantly weaker Iraqi Army – the result of sanctions.

Still, when U.S.-led Coalition forces arrived in 2003, SCIRI was in a position to fill the regional power vacuum left by retreating Baathists. Consequently, SCIRI ascended into power under the new democratic regime. Thus, Iran now enjoys a large Shiite ally to its east for the first time in its modern history. Whether this would have occurred without a U.S. invasion is difficult to tell. Saddam Hussein was weak in 2003 vis-à-vis 1991. What is known is that SCIRI would not have achieved its current status as quickly without a U.S.-led military assault on Iraq.

The case of Hezbollah is different. There is little question as to its success. Its strategic victories make it the most profitable NSAG for Iran. In some cases, these victories have occurred over more powerful conventional adversaries. In 1984 it forced the United States out of Beirut after a series of successful attacks in 1983. Furthermore, it defeated Israel in 2000 after almost twenty years of fighting in Lebanon.

Subsequently, Hezbollah has become a fully functional surrogate for the Iranian military. Its global presence is unmatched. Hezbollah enjoys units in areas as widespread as South America, Western Europe, and East Asia (Philippines). It enjoys a

presence in Canada, [226]Venezuela, [227]and the United States.[228] Operationally, Hezbollah is prolific. It can facilitate a broad number of strategic tasks. Among these operational tasks include training future NSAGs – including those in Iraq[229] and Palestine.[230]

As for Iran's support of Palestinian organizations, specifically HAMAS, PIJ, and PFLP-GC, such support has created a window of opportunity for Iran to make inroads into the Sunni political community. Not only is Tehran able to further frustrate the stability of its regional nemesis, Israel, it is also able to expand its stature. Regionally, no other state has openly done more for the Jihadi cause. Thus, Iranian support of Palestinian organizations provides a level of status that no other state can claim. The question for Western strategists is the following: How much of this support can be drawn upon in the even of an engagement with Western forces? This remains to be seen.

Analysis

The research question this paper posed was the following: How does Iran use NSAGs to further its political objectives? The answer to this question is that two political objectives are clearly supported by NSAGs. The first objective is the expansion of a political variant of Shiism. The theological orientation of the state makes elevates

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[226]MP Stocwell Day, 37th Parliament of Canada, Statements of Members, 1st Session, 10 April 2002, No. 165, http://www.parl.gc.ca/37/1/parlbus/chambus/house/debates/165_2002-04-10/han165_1420-E.htm

[227] U.S. Senate, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, Testimony of Matthew A. Levitt, Senior Fellow and Director of Terrorism Studies, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, "Hezbollah: Financing Terror through Criminal Enterprise," http://hsgac.senate.gov/_files/LevittTestimony.pdf

[228] U.S. House of Representatives, Hearings before the Subcommittee on International Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Human Rights of the Committee on International Relations, Preventing the Entry of Terrorists in the United States, Serial No. 108-90, 13 February 2004, http://wwwc.house.gov/international_relations/108/91797.pdf

[229] U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, Iranian Proliferation: Implications for Terrorists, Their State Sponsors, and U.S. Counter-Proliferation Policy, 24 June 2004, http://wwwc.house.gov/international_relations/108/94511.pdf

[230] Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center, Center for Special Studies (Israel), Special Information Paper, Hezbollah: Profile of the Lebanese Shiite Terrorist Organization of Global Reach Sponsored by Iran and Supported by Syria, http://www.intelligence.org.il/eng/bu/hizbullah/hezbollah.htm

this objective to a requirement of the senior leadership. Thus, Iran is leading a regional, and perhaps global insurgency as defined in the armed groups report. It has a clear political goal (Shiite expansion of influence). To achieve this goal it seeks to cultivate popular support while undermining the power and legitimacy of the state's within which these populations reside.

The second objective is partially tied to the first. Iran sees the use of NSAGs as an efficient method of achieving its international political and security goals. The defense of the Shiite *Ummah*, of which Iran houses the largest concentration, is important to achieving other goals.

Iran sees itself in the role of a liberator and defender of oppressed Muslims; first and foremost, Shiite Muslims. In order to thrive, Shiite Iran must survive and prosper, otherwise the revolution is dead. With the death of the revolution, so the logic of Iran's senior leadership goes, the death of Islam will follow. The West will have won the global struggle. Thus, Iran, as leader of this revolutionary movement, must survive.

However, Iran cannot survive in by employing conventional assets. When compared with most advanced Western states, Iran is weak. Therefore, the defense of the state must be achieved by utilizing alternative methods. The answer was Tehran's skillful use of strategic asymmetry to achieve its immediate security goals and its long-term political goals.

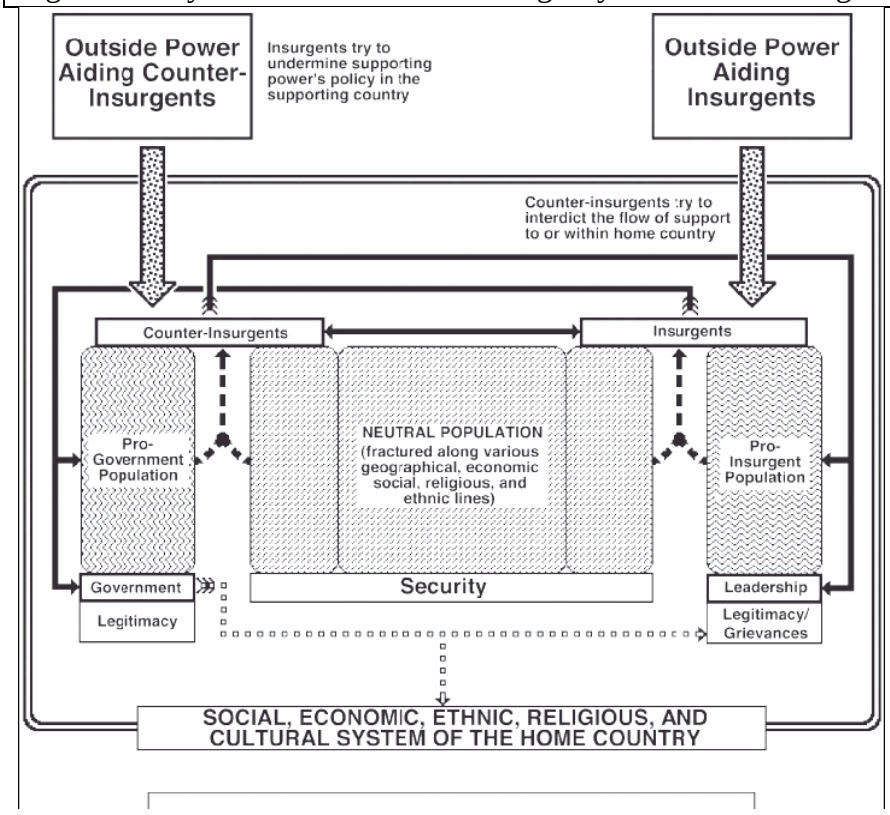
A Global Insurgency?

The strategies employed by Iran point toward an externally instigated insurgency. It appears that Iran has first chosen to open a manageable regional insurgency to broaden the political map. By exporting its revolutionary ideals, Tehran has opened the

battlespace. It creates an international strategic environment in which adversarial states find themselves putting out local fires. Thus, Iran is able to strengthen the revolutionary movement while various state security apparatuses remain preoccupied with internal threats. The Iranian backed NSAG profile, as laid out by this paper, illustrates a careful combination of cultivating popular political support while frustrating traditional militaries – much like a model insurgency.

University of Illinois Professor John A. Lynn wrote a piece entitled "Patterns of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency" for the U.S. Army Combined Arms Center's Military Review magazine. In that article Professor Lynn laid out the following model for the study of an insurgency:

Figure 4.1: Lynn's basic Pattern of insurgency and counterinsurgency[231]



[231] John A. Lynn, Ph.D., U.S. Army, Combined Arms Center, Military Review, "Patterns of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency," July-August 2005, http://www.smallwars.quantico.usmc.mil/search/articles/lynn.pdf

By examining Iran's use of NSAGs through Dr. Lynn's template patterns emerge. Iran is the "Outside Power Aiding Insurgents." The "Outside Power Aiding Counter-Insurgents" has been played by multiple regional roles including: the United States, Great Britain, Israel, Australia, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Turkey, Yemen, Afghanistan's various governments, and Pakistan. These are a few of the states that Iran has supported insurgent-like NSAG activities within their respective borders.

Furthermore, the linear relationship between Lynn's "Neutral Population," "Pro-Government Population," and "Pro-Insurgent Population," describes the way in which Iran sees the fight for popular support. Specifically, Iranian backed NSAGs are generally drawn from Lynn's "Legitimacy/Grievances" contributing factors for the Pro-Insurgent Population. By exploiting these grievances, Iranian backed NSAGs begin a systematic attempt to undermine the two elements that bind the neutral population to the government: (1) Legitimacy – often in the form of institutions and social services; (2) Security – military engagement shakes the confidence of the populace in the current regime. The "Return" flows on Lynn's part highlight this struggle that is so characteristic of Iranian backed NSAG movements.

Unfortunately, this paper suffers from a lack of internal Iranian documentation. Therefore, considerations on the strategic logic guiding the current Tehran regime are highly speculative. However, the apparent insurgency pattern, coupled with data on the operational particulars of Iranian backed NSAGs points towards a well-coordinated strategic movement. The words of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini may shed some insight into the strategic and political logic of Tehran:

> Islam does not constitute just praying and making pilgrimage, the laws of Islam are not concerned merely with performing the mandatory ritual prayer {namaz}, supplicatory prayer and pilgrimage; these form just one section of the laws of Islam. Praying and making pilgrimage are just one concern among a number covered by Islam. Islam deals with politics, with administering a country. Islamic laws can administer large countries. It is the responsibility of the presidents of Islamic countries, the kings of Islamic countries, the governments of Islamic countries to introduce Islam to the world.[232]

Conclusion

Quoting a 2001 RAND Corp study that examined Iranian security:

> Iran still supports Shi'a radicals and other Islamists throughout the world—and champions the anti-Israel front—but its motives and its priorities are increasingly dictated by cold national interest concerns. Thus, it directs the Iraqi Shi'as against the MKO, tries to use the Palestinians to increase its leverage over the peace process, and otherwise uses proxies as means rather than ends.[233]

Iran's use of NSAGs is tied to its political goal of exporting Islamic Revolution, which in turn, is seen as being closely tied to the security of the state. Although Iranian security is sometimes described as being "complex," it appears guided by a realist notion on survival. Tehran's definition of that survival is predicated upon cultural survival. Shiism can only survive with the extension of the Iranian revolution. Thus, the state must survive to insure that the revolution survives. Ideology and traditional interstate politics, therefore, converge to form the unique security dynamic of the Iranian backed NSAG.

This thesis examined Iran's use of NSAGs as part of a comprehensive strategic platform. It realized an Iranian pattern that is highly invested in the use of strategic asymmetry. The proliferation of NSAGs, and the communities that support them, enables Iran to draw from a wide pool of actors that are invested in the survival of the current regime. It is important for Western strategists to consider the implications of this strategy as policy-makers move forward with plans to stop Iran from acquiring a nuclear

[232] Imam Khmoeini, 17th speech in exile, Najaf, Iraq, http://www.irib.ir/worldservice/imam/speech/17.htm
[233] RAND Corps, Iran's Security Policy in the Post-Revolutionary Era

weapon. Saddam Hussein was a secular, socialist leader that did not invest heavily in the cultivation of regional Jihadi movements. Iran, on the other hand, has not only invested in their cultivation, but it has also nurtured the popular support required to maintain their existence. Such cultivation has been on-going for more then twenty-five years.

END

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