



**Directorate of
Intelligence**

~~—Secret—~~

25X1

Lebanon: Prospects for the Shia Community

25X1

An Intelligence Assessment

~~—Secret—~~

*NESA 84-10279
October 1984*

Copy

334

Page Denied



**Directorate of
Intelligence**

Secret

25X1

Lebanon: Prospects for the Shia Community

25X1

An Intelligence Assessment

This paper was prepared by [] Office of
Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis, with a
contribution from [] Office of
Central Reference. It was coordinated with the
Directorate of Operations. []

25X1

25X1

25X1

Comments and queries are welcome and may be
directed to the Chief, Arab-Israeli Division, NESA,

25X1

Secret

*NESA 84-10279
October 1984*

Secret

25X1

**Lebanon:
Prospects for the
Shia Community**

25X1

Key Judgments

*Information available
as of 1 October 1984
was used in this report.*

We believe stability is unlikely in Lebanon unless the government addresses the economic stagnation in Shia Muslim areas and the Shia demand for political power commensurate with their numbers. Failure to do so will drive embittered Shias to challenge the central government by instigating sporadic violence with rival groups. This would prevent political reconciliation or economic recovery.

In a worst case scenario, mainstream Shias, bereft of hope in the status quo, would risk starting another full-scale civil war. They could not win because Syria would oppose them, but the disruption they caused would strengthen Christian sentiments for partition, postpone Syrian and Israeli troop withdrawals, add to regional tension, and distract attention from US policy initiatives.

We believe that the moderate leaders of Lebanon's Shias are more likely to adopt militant policies than risk ouster by a constituency disgruntled over their failure to compel the government to address Shia grievances. The main factors affecting Shia frustration are a stagnating economy, Christian-Sunni intransigence, Syrian reluctance to support Shia demands, and failed attempts to gain reforms within the constitutional system.

Amal leader Nabih Barri and other moderates are competing among themselves and with pro-Iranian radicals for the allegiance of their coreligionists. His position will be undermined unless he obtains tangible benefits for his community. Radicals are making progress in infiltrating Barri's Amal organization, and they will continue their efforts to win broad Shia support for establishment of an Islamic republic.

Radical fundamentalist Shias—though a minority in the community—will continue to seek every chance to attack US and other Western personnel and facilities in Lebanon. They probably will rely on the terrorist tactics—including kidnappings, assassinations, and vehicle bombs—that have proved effective in the past two years and were recently used against the US Embassy Annex in East Beirut.

Secret

*NESA 84-10279
October 1984*

Secret

25X1

In our judgment, Israel's continued presence and policies in southern Lebanon will stiffen the Shias' resolve to fight Israeli soldiers using guerrilla tactics and thwart Israel's efforts to pacify southern Lebanon. Israel's disruption of the southern Lebanese economy and punishment of whole Shia neighborhoods for the attacks of a few will, in our view, harden Shia and government leaders against direct talks with Tel Aviv. If Israel moved to crush a growing Shia resistance movement, initial successes probably would give way to an even more sophisticated resistance movement. Shia radicals would gain supporters, while the United States would face renewed accusations in the Arab world of abetting Israeli militarism.

An Israeli withdrawal from much of southern Lebanon would address one of the key issues driving Shias toward extremism and would temporarily ease the Shias' anger. Shia radicals, however, would continue to attack Israeli advisers and their surrogate Army of South Lebanon. Both moderate and radical leaders would claim responsibility for improving the Shias' condition. The lull in Shia activity, however, would soon give way to renewed Shia demands for redress of their economic and political grievances.

25X1

Secret

Secret

25X1

Lebanon: Prospects for the Shia Community

25X1

The Shia community of Lebanon is the poorest, least educated, and traditionally the most politically under-represented of Lebanon's major religious communities. It also is the largest and fastest growing confessional group. The Shias comprise about 40 percent of the population and may become the majority within a decade, according to a CIA estimate.¹ A large Shia militia, concentrated in the Beirut area but with forces throughout southern and eastern Lebanon, guarantees that the Shias will be able to instigate recurring violence if they choose. It is probable that they will do so unless they are given a stake in and derive benefits from a new program of political and economic reforms for all Lebanese.

Rivalries among current Shia leaders and regional differences have created competing power centers in the Shia community. Shia solidarity collapsed with the disappearance and probable murder in Libya in 1978 of the charismatic Shia leader Imam Musa al-Sadr. Al-Sadr founded the Higher Shia Islamic Council, the community's highest religious authority, and Amal, which is both a Shia militia and a political movement (see appendix A). Shaykh Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-Din now is the most influential religious moderate. Amal Secretary General Nabih Barri and most of his high-level Amal colleagues represent the moderate secular leadership.

A critical struggle pits religious and secular moderates who seek redress of Shia grievances through political change and constitutional reform against those who advocate the overthrow of the Lebanese political system. Key radical clerics espousing this view include Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, whose prominence is growing, and Shaykh Subhi al-Tufayli. The terrorists Husayn al-Musawi and other members of the Musawi clan from the Bekaa Valley are secular leaders of the radical movement.

Underlying Grievances

Once seemingly content with their lot, we believe the Shias increasingly resent their role as the underclass of Lebanese society. The prevalent attitude toward the Shias among the Lebanese "haves"—Christians, particularly the Maronites, and wealthy Sunni Muslims—is one of contempt.

Government domestic policies, in our view, have neglected basic Shia needs, while Christian-Sunni collusion makes it hard for Shias to get an education and enter the professions.

Since independence, Lebanese governments have withheld money for agricultural development in southern Lebanon, where poor Shia tobacco and citrus farmers form the majority of the population. Government neglect of the Shias also extends to Beirut, where US Embassy officials observe that the approximately 250,000 Shias packed in the slums of the southern suburbs live under the worst health and sanitation conditions of any confessional group in the capital.

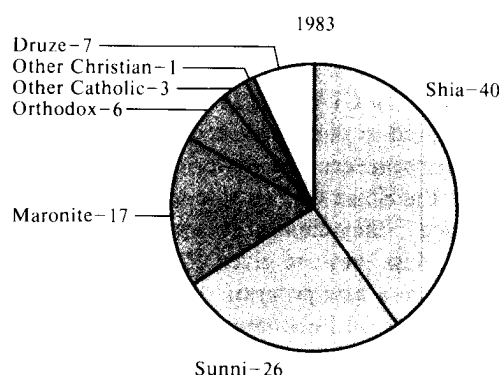
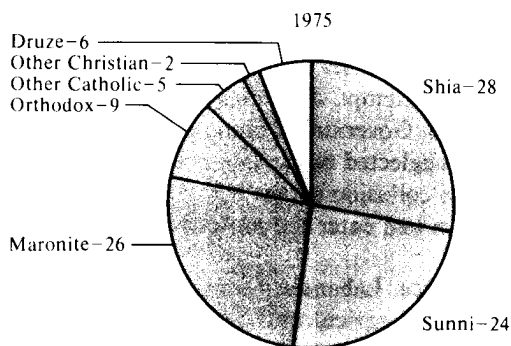
Christian and Sunni resistance to political reform deepens Shia feelings of oppression. The Shias, who passively endured Christian-Sunni primacy for more than two decades, no longer accept the Lebanese formula for power sharing that was based on the numerical distribution of confessional groups in 1932. Shias believe that their numbers entitle them to a greater voice, and they resent Christian-Sunni maneuvers to preserve the status quo.

In our view, the Shia community is undergoing a process of political radicalization that started during the Lebanese civil war of 1975-76, gathered momentum in 1979-82, and continued to build in 1983-84. An indicator of this is the number and increased

Figure 1
Lebanon: Estimated Distribution of
Confessional Groups, 1975 and 1983^a

Percent

Confessional Group Population
Muslim sects
Christian sects
Druze



^a The key factors that account for the dramatic shift in confessional ratios between 1975 and 1983 are the emigration from Lebanon of many Christians—over 60,000 per year—and the high birthrate among Muslims, particularly Shias.

303027 (C00463) 10 84

frequency of violent acts—both terrorist-guerrilla attacks and urban fighting—committed by Shias against their perceived enemies in Lebanon. For example, there were two spectacular acts of Shia terrorism in 1979 and again in 1980, five in 1981, six in 1982, and at least six in 1983. ² Shia attacks against Israeli forces in southern Lebanon that started in late 1983 continue almost daily.

Another indicator of the radicalization process has been the gradual hardening of Amal chief Barri's public position toward the Lebanese Government, rival Christian leaders, and the Israelis over the past two years. Barri's mild appeals for reconciliation and "justice" for all Lebanese in 1982 have given way to more pointed demands for Shia "rights." Barri, moreover, has shown an increasing willingness to order his militia to fight. He publicly urged Shia youths to attack the Israelis in southern Lebanon in September

² The terrorist acts included aircraft hijackings, assassinations and kidnappings, and truck and car bombings.

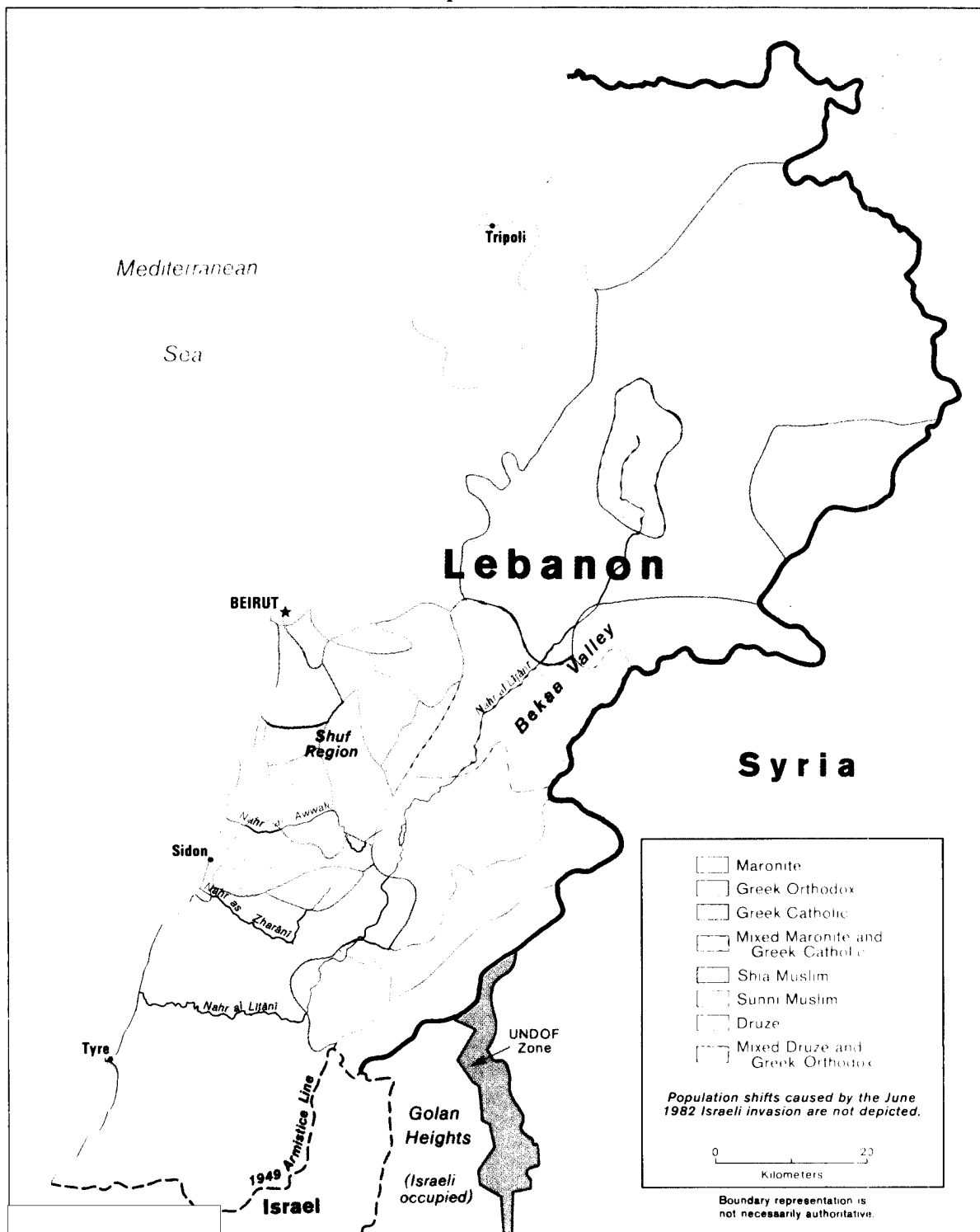
1984. We believe that Barri has adopted a harder line because he fears losing his leadership position to more radical elements within or outside the mainstream Amal organization. he came close to losing control of the militia in July 1983 and in February 1984 because of his reluctance to fight the Lebanese Army.

What the Shias Want

In our view, Amal leaders such as Nabih Barri express the sentiments of most Shias in calling for a strong central government that will end the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon, improve the Shias' living standards, grant key government posts to Shias, and take steps to revise the confessional system. Barri's moderate approach relies on an older generation outlook that dialogue and compromise can foster change in the status quo. His position in the government and eventually in Amal will be endangered unless he demonstrates that he can obtain results.

Secret

Figure 2
Distribution of Lebanese Confessional Groups



702506 10-84

25X1

Secret

Confessionalism. Amal leaders blame political sectarianism, rooted in the confessional system, for Shia troubles. They believe that this system, which allocates government-controlled positions on the basis of sect, must be changed. [redacted]

[redacted] Even Amal moderates have proposed restricting appointments along confessional lines to senior positions. Paradoxically, however, they want to reallocate posts in the government and civil service to reflect the current strengths of Lebanese religious groups, according to diplomatic officials. [redacted]

Foreign Relations. The complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon dominates the Shias' foreign concerns. Shias who were pleased by Israel's expulsion of Palestinian guerrillas from southern Lebanon two years ago now view the Israelis as an oppressive occupation force. [redacted]

[redacted] Although a few Shias cooperate with Israeli officials and belong to the Israeli-sponsored Army of South Lebanon, most probably will continue to oppose the Israeli occupation. [redacted]

Economic Development. Amal officials want the Beirut government to divert funds from military spending to rebuild Shia areas ravaged by the fighting in Beirut last February, according to public interviews. Decent housing, health care, and public utilities head the list of immediate Shia demands. Amal also insists on reforms in the management of industry, agriculture, and tourism, as well as the establishment of a progressive tax system that could create long-term economic opportunities for the Shias. [redacted]

Political Posts. The Shias, in our view, have yet to reach a consensus on what political positions will satisfy them. Although they could lay claim to the prime ministry—and eventually the presidency—because of their numbers, so far they have not done so. We believe that the appointment of Amal chief Barri as Minister of Justice and Minister of State for the South and Reconstruction will not placate the Shia masses. [redacted]

Radical Objectives and Strategy

The Lebanese Shia groups that killed or kidnaped over 400 US, French, Israeli, and Saudi citizens in the past two years want to expel Western influence, mount a Shia revolt, and establish a Khomeini-style

Islamic republic in Lebanon. [redacted]
[redacted] Pro-Iranian groups—all part of the Hizb Allah (Party of God) movement—believe the Shias can end their troubles only by adhering to fundamental Islamic principles and eventually by dominating the Lebanese political system. [redacted]

Pro-Iranian radicals recognize they will need time to recruit sufficient numbers of Shias to support their objectives. As a result, Hizb Allah clerics have launched a propaganda campaign aimed at the youth and urbanized elements in the Shia community. The clerics use their weekly sermons to emphasize the “injustices” inflicted on the Shias. [redacted]
[redacted] In addition, the clerics and their followers use Iranian funds to supply food, clothing, and money to poor Shia families, as well as to sponsor poor Shia students. [redacted]

[redacted] The donors stress to the recipients that Ayatollah Khomeini is their benefactor. [redacted]

The radicals rely heavily on the mosques as propaganda and recruitment platforms. The mosques—a central institution in the community—add moral authority to the radical message and help portray radical objectives as the proper course for “good” Shia Muslims to follow. They ensure wide dissemination of the radical message among underprivileged Shias. Moreover, the use of mosques, in our judgment, helps draw a sharp distinction between themselves and the conventional and corrupt Lebanese political parties. [redacted]

Hizb Allah leaders are combining their propaganda campaign with a covert effort to take over the mainstream Amal organization. [redacted]

[redacted] radical Shias have infiltrated the Amal militia and a few have gained positions of influence. The radicals are spreading the word among Shias that Amal leaders such as Nabih Barri lack religious convictions and are not committed to the Shias' welfare [redacted]

25X1
25X1

25X1
25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1
25X1

25X1
25X1
25X1

25X1

25X1
25X1

25X1

25X1
25X1

25X1

25X1
25X1

The—radicals like their Amal rivals—want to force Israel to withdraw from southern Lebanon. Hizb Allah—beyond opposing Israel on an ideological level—sees Israel's presence as a barrier to its revolutionary objective. As a result, the radicals reinforce southern Lebanese Shia anger and fear of permanent Israeli occupation and encourage attacks against Israeli soldiers and officials. Israeli counterattacks and searches and seizures help push uncommitted Shias to accept radical leaders. []

In our view, hatred of the United States for its support of Israel, its backing of an "unjust" status quo, and its image as the enemy of a resurgent Islam fuel Hizb Allah's desire to punish US officials. Available evidence indicates that radicals associated with Hizb Allah planned and carried out the suicide bombings at the barracks of the Multinational Force in Beirut. The subsequent withdrawal of the MNF in early 1984 probably strengthened the radicals' belief that terrorism can achieve their objectives. The bombing of the US Embassy Annex in September 1984 and the warnings of future attacks on US facilities underscore, in our view, Hizb Allah's determination to continue the "struggle" against the US presence in Lebanon. []

Opposition to Power Sharing With Shias

Maronite Christian resistance to major reforms continues to frustrate Shia aspirations for a new distribution of economic and political power. The Christians, in our view, are determined to retain control of key institutions, in part because, as a dwindling minority, they fear that they ultimately will be swamped by a Muslim majority. Uncertainty about what will satisfy moderate Shias and certainty about the intentions of radical fundamentalist Shias heighten Christian fears. As a result, we believe many Christians prefer to oppose concessions and withdraw into a Christian enclave than face the risks of ceding real power to the Shias. []

We expect Sunni Muslims to oppose reforms that give Shias influence proportionate to their numbers. Sunnis have held power and privilege with the Maronites since 1943, and we believe they recognize that new arrangements could enable the Shias eventually to replace them. []

Sunnis, nonetheless, may be more willing than the Maronites to make limited concessions to Shia moderates. The Sunnis lack a strong militia and a strong foreign ally from whom they might expect military support. Moreover, the geographic dispersion of the Sunnis gives them a common interest with the Shias in opposing the breakdown of Lebanon into confessional enclaves. []

The Druze, whose power is out of proportion to their small numbers, want to preserve the status quo. As a result of the fighting over the past year, the Druze have consolidated their territory and increased their influence in the government. In our view, they fear change would diminish their role. []

Syria—by supporting only minor changes in Lebanon's political system—also frustrates Shia aspirations. Syrian concern for Shia grievances is guided, in our view, by its interest in keeping the Christians, Muslims, and Druze weak and in preserving its key role in the interconfessional struggles. Syria's support for the Bikfayya security plan announced last July reaffirmed its intention to oppose any militia that attempts to perpetuate instability, as long as the Lebanese Government coordinates its policies closely with Damascus. []

Shia Options

In our judgment, Shia leaders have three options—work with the government, apply a combination of bargaining and military pressure, or resort to large-scale violence. None, in our opinion, will quickly achieve major gains for the Shias. []

Cooperation With Gemayel. Amal chief Barri has stated publicly that he wants full control of reconstruction funds and more political posts for the Shias from the government. To gain government support, Barri can argue that his constituents are Lebanese nationalists who wish to avoid renewed sectarian violence and meddling by Syria or Iran. []

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

Outside of formal channels, Barri and his colleagues can try to strike private deals with Druze and Sunni leaders. Amal could pledge to support traditional Druze control in the Ash Shuf region and guarantee Druze commercial interests in Beirut in exchange for Druze support of Shia demands. To gain Sunni backing, Amal can promise not to push them out of their neighborhoods and businesses in West Beirut.

At the same time, Amal can solicit Syrian pressure on the Christians and Sunnis in the Shias' behalf. Barri could argue that Syria's interests in stabilizing a friendly Lebanese government and in avoiding a confrontation with Israel would be served by sponsoring domestic gains for the restive Shias.

Amal, in our view, can try a political approach to gain Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon. Continuing appeals for UN mediation and for US pressure on Israel, combined with encouragement of harassing attacks against Israeli soldiers in the south, allow Amal leaders to show their commitment to their followers. Barri may also quietly encourage the Lebanese Government to talk with Israel.

Amal's choice of this option might produce some economic and political gains sufficient to satisfy older Shias who may be weary of civil strife. Without Syrian support, however, Amal's political option probably would not yield concessions that satisfied younger Shias or permanently changed the Shias' underprivileged position.

The chances are slim that Christian and Sunni "haves" would voluntarily respond to Amal's initiatives. Indeed, Christian leaders, in our view, are inclined to see Amal's attempts to negotiate a political settlement as a sign of weakness and an incentive to oppose further reforms. Damascus, if faced with having to act alone on behalf of the Shias, probably would try to mediate and avoid taking sides.

Amal's political efforts by themselves to gain an Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon would fail. In our view, Tel Aviv would withdraw its forces from Lebanon only if it believed an expanded UNIFIL force and the Army of South Lebanon could keep hostile guerrillas away from Israel's northern border. Shia radicals would continue to attack Israeli advisers

and their surrogate Army of South Lebanon. The Israelis apparently believe the Lebanese Government and the Army will be unable to assume primary responsibility for security in southern Lebanon for at least the next six months.

Failure to resolve the major issues embittering the Shias would further expose Amal officials to radical criticism and undermine their leadership positions. Pro-Iranian and other radical Shias, in our view, would seize the opportunity to recruit a wider following in the community. Amal leaders probably would try to silence their rivals by taking a harder line in demanding concessions and Israel's withdrawal.

Bargaining Combined With Military Pressure. Amal leaders have the option of taking military initiatives intended to weaken Christian-Sunni resistance to reforms and strengthen the Shias' political bargaining position. Increasingly bold initiatives, in our view, would show heightened Amal frustration with the political stalemate and willingness to risk casualties and hardships. Amal officials, at this stage, probably would be reluctant to abandon completely the Lebanese political system and would link their military moves with appeals for Arab—particularly Syrian—understanding and support.

In our view, Amal can resume intermittent shelling of Christian and Sunni neighborhoods in Beirut without provoking direct Syrian intervention. Amal officials, in a bolder move, could order their 5,000-man, full-time militia to seize all key government and commercial facilities in West Beirut. We believe the militia, whose numbers might swell to over 10,000 in a crisis, could hold West Beirut unless confronted by Syrian forces.

Given Christian fears of Muslim hegemony, Maronites—backed by their 3,000- to 4,000-strong Lebanese Forces militia—probably would resist Amal's bargaining and pressure tactics. We expect they would push for a separate confessional enclave, try to forge an alliance with Sunni and Druze forces by portraying a common Shia "threat," and seek Israeli military support.

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

Secret

Syria's reaction to the Shia initiatives would heavily influence Sunni and Druze responses. Strong Syrian support probably would elicit guarded Druze and possibly Sunni cooperation. If Syrian officials opposed Shia actions, Sunnis in Beirut, looking to Damascus, would resist major concessions to the Shias, despite the weakness of their 500-man Murabitun militia. The Druze, with little to gain by helping the Shias under these circumstances, in our view, would put distance between themselves and the Shias and possibly oppose their actions. []

Military Takeover. Amal leaders could mobilize Shia fighters in a drive to establish by force a Muslim-dominated government, centered on the Shias. This would amount to a desperation move by a totally frustrated Amal or the radicals to shock the Lebanese political system. A radical Shia push would prompt most Christians to resist fiercely while they fortified an enclave in Jabal Lubnan (Mount Lebanon), explored a tactical alliance with the Druze, and sought Israeli military intervention. Some Christians might flee the country. Initially, the Sunnis in Beirut would resist, but they later would lapse into sullen acquiescence. []

In our judgment, a Shia drive against the government would fail. Syria would be willing to use many of its 45,000 troops in Lebanon to prevent the Shias from gaining the upper hand. The secular government in Damascus fears that the Shias might support its domestic Islamic opponents and help to spread an Islamic revolution in the area. Tel Aviv might conduct limited airstrikes to support Christians in Beirut, but it would concentrate on keeping a firm grip over the Shias in southern Lebanon. []

A defeat of the Shias by Syria probably would leave Damascus facing a hostile Shia population. Attempts to mediate a meaningful political accommodation among the confessional groups would cease. Christians would see an opportunity to try to reassert their prominence, thereby ensuring further turmoil. The defeat also would pave the way for radical Shias to take over the political and military wings of Amal and attempt to reorient and rebuild them over time. []

Outlook

We believe Amal officials, currently the most widely recognized spokesmen for the Shias, will face growing

pressures to obtain tangible gains for their community. Disadvantaged Shias have not benefited from Amal's military takeover of West Beirut last February and Nabih Barri's appointment to the Lebanese Cabinet. Young Shias—radicalized by Musa al-Sadr's drive for Shia rights in the early 1970s, by later Shia revolutionary successes in Iran, and by nine years of civil turmoil—want more than token representation in the government. Poor economic conditions, the longstanding grievance in the community, are worsening and are likely to fuel Shia bitterness. []

Even with increased economic reconstruction in Lebanon, investors would be strongly inclined to bolster the capital-intensive service sector before helping the labor-intensive industries in Beirut and the agricultural sector in southern Lebanon that give most Shias their livelihood. Moreover, as long as Israeli forces remain in southern Lebanon, radical Shias will have an explosive issue to discredit Amal moderates, erode Barri's leadership, and possibly topple him. []

The leadership positions of moderates such as Nabih Barri will become increasingly untenable, in our view, if they remain reluctant to order military action to alter the Shias' situation. Public interviews indicate, however, that in the near term they believe that continued fighting will further weaken the Lebanese economy and diminish the chances for government and outside financial aid to the Shias. Fear of a confrontation with Syrian troops will also make them cautious. []

In the near term, Amal chief Barri probably will use the political option in the hope of gradually gaining concessions for the Shias. Judging from his actions over the past two years, Barri is conciliatory in temperament and inclined to avoid risky decisions. Although Barri senses the Shias' frustration, he seems to believe that his Cabinet position and the lowered public activity of his radical rivals since Syria's reassertion of influence in Lebanon give him time and freedom to maneuver politically. []

25X1
25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

Secret

We believe, however, that growing Shia discontent eventually will push Barri to take military initiatives or risk replacement. Radicalization of the Shia community now under way will become widespread unless an outside power forces Christians and Sunnis to meet Shia demands for a greater political voice and economic benefits. [REDACTED]

Radicals will continue their efforts to win broad Shia support for the establishment of an Islamic republic. The longer moderate leaders fail to gain tangible benefits for the community, the more weight the radical argument will have with Lebanon's Shias. [REDACTED]

Implications for the United States

In our judgment, unless the government addresses the economic stagnation in Shia areas and the demand for more political power in line with their numbers, embittered Shias will spark recurring crises in Lebanon that add to regional tensions and hinder US policy initiatives. [REDACTED]

Fundamentalist Shias will continue to seek opportunities to attack US and allied personnel and facilities in Lebanon. They probably will rely on the terrorist tactics—including kidnappings, assassinations, and vehicle bombs—that have proved effective in the past two years. The severity and scope of the radical threat to US interests in the area will depend on the willingness of many Shias to join the radical side. [REDACTED]

We believe that Israel's presence and policies in southern Lebanon, if continued, will deepen the Shias' hatred and stiffen their resolve to fight Israeli soldiers with guerrilla tactics. Israel's disruption of the southern Lebanese economy and punishment of whole Shia neighborhoods for the attacks of a few are also likely to harden Shia and government leaders against direct talks with Tel Aviv. In our view, if Israel moved to crush a growing Shia resistance movement, initial successes probably would later give way to an even more sophisticated resistance movement. Radical Shias would gain supporters in the community, while the United States would face renewed accusations in the Arab world of abetting Israeli "aggression." [REDACTED]

In our view, addressing the key issues driving Lebanon's Shias toward extremism—economic stagnation, political underrepresentation, and Israeli occupation—would facilitate retaining moderates in positions of leadership in that community. Regarding economic stagnation, we believe any real stabilization of Lebanon would require Christian and Sunni leaders to come to grips with the long-term dangers to their security and business interests of an increasingly hostile, armed Shia population. Immediate action by the Lebanese Government to reconstruct Shia homes and improve social services in the Shia slums of Beirut, in our view, would serve Christian-Sunni interests and increase the chances for stability in the capital. Lebanese officials would be inclined to address the Shia's economic grievances only in response to outside leverage. [REDACTED]

Even minor improvements in the Shias' economic and political status would bolster the position of moderate Shias and deflate the radicals' appeal in the Shia community. At a minimum, however, Christian leaders probably would complain about favoritism toward the Shias and try to circumvent the aid programs. In an act of extremism, they could oppose the aid programs and seek Druze and Sunni military support in shelling Shia neighborhoods. [REDACTED]

Saudi initiatives also could help the Shias. An easing of the Saudi boycott of Lebanese produce would relieve some of the burden on Shia farmers. In our view, Riyadh would link ending its economic boycott to the withdrawal of Israel from Lebanon, even though its primary concern is to keep Israeli products out of Saudi Arabia. [REDACTED]

Saudi pressure on Sunni leaders might lead to greater Sunni support for reconstruction of Shia areas in the Beirut suburbs. We believe Saudi pressure on the Sunnis to cooperate would be minimal, however, while there is a chance the Shias might permanently take over Sunni areas in West Beirut. [REDACTED]

Appendix A

Emergence of the Shia Community

The term Shia or Shiite derives from "Shiat Ali," or the partisans of Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the prophet Muhammad. Following Muhammad's death in the early 7th century, Shia Muslims split from orthodox Sunnis over the issue of succession to religious and political leadership of the Muslim community, insisting that only Ali and his direct descendants possess qualities to rule. In response to persecution by the Sunni majority, a group of Shias migrated to Lebanon late in the 7th century. []

The Shias settled in the Mount Lebanon area and prospered during the 10th and 11th centuries under the protection of the Shia Fatimid Caliphate in Cairo. The decline of Fatimid power, the Crusader invasion, and the rise of the Ottoman Turks resulted in the Shias' expulsion to the northern Bekaa Valley and southern Lebanon, where they were largely ignored until recent times. []

In the south, where about half of the Shia population resides, they constitute a majority in the districts of Tyre, Sidon, and Marj'Uyun. In the Bekaa, they are a majority in the Ba'labakk and Al Hirmil districts. As a result of Israeli-Palestinian fighting in the 1970s, Shia families began moving to Beirut's suburban slums, particularly Ash Shiyah. []

Wealth in the Shia community is unevenly distributed. Hashish farmers in the Bekaa Valley and citrus growers on the southern coast are relatively well off. Menial laborers in Beirut and tobacco farmers in the south, however, who must lease land from absentee landlords, barely subsist. The French, who controlled Lebanon from 1920 to the 1940s, concentrated their development efforts on Mount Lebanon and Beirut. Successive Lebanese governments also have neglected the south. []

Either from a sense of powerlessness or from a lack of desire to disturb the status quo, influential Shia families such as the Assads, the Usayrans, and the Hamadas have done little to improve the sect's economic situation. Until the emergence in Lebanese politics of Imam Musa al-Sadr in 1969—related by marriage to Ayatollah Khomeini—Shia grievances were ignored. []

From 1969 until his disappearance and probable murder in mid-1978, al-Sadr succeeded in galvanizing Lebanon's Shia population into a political force. As a man of religion, he capitalized on the Shia respect for religious leadership. His formation of the Higher Shia Islamic Council, separate from the Sunni-dominated General Muslim Higher Council, fostered solidarity on the basis of religious belief. At the same time, his theme—the unjust deprivation of the community—awakened the Shias to political action. []

The Shia Awakening

Domestic and regional developments from 1975 through early 1984 transformed lower-class Shias from a traditionally passive group into an embittered and angry mass awaiting the emergence of a charismatic leader. []

The civil war of 1975-76 and frequent Israeli raids on Shia villages in southern Lebanon in the 1970s instilled fear among lower-class Shias about their physical security. The violence also demonstrated to the Shias the inability of the Lebanese Government and their traditional leaders to protect them. Traditional chiefs, who had no militias, were discredited, and the feudal system of patronage in the Shia community became irrelevant. []

Former President of the National Assembly Kamal al-Assad is an example of the traditional Shia bosses whose influence has waned since the outbreak of the civil war. Assad's family connections have guaranteed his membership in government for over 30 years. Many young Shias, who increasingly consider him ineffective, ignore or oppose him, []

[] poor Shias, particularly the youth, started responding to any figures or organized groups that promised to improve their lot. Meanwhile, according to academic studies, rural Shias who migrated from the south to the capital to escape the fighting were embittered by having to live in the overcrowded Shia slums. []

Secret

Three events—Israel's first major invasion of Lebanon in March 1978, the disappearance of Amal founder Musa al-Sadr in August 1978, and the Islamic revolution in Iran that toppled the Shah in January 1979—accelerated the mobilization of Lebanon's Shia community and helped to focus Shia demands for greater political influence. The Israeli Operation Litani, which, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] claimed almost 1,000 Shia lives, prompted many Shias to join Amal for protection. Although the presumed "martyrdom" of Imam al-Sadr gave the Shias a unifying symbol of discontent with their situation, Ayatollah Khomeini's success in overthrowing a seemingly strong military/security establishment demonstrated what a well-organized and mobilized Shia community could accomplish. [REDACTED]

25X1
25X1

25X1
25X1

Secret

Page Denied

Next 2 Page(s) In Document Denied

Secret

Secret