

**Conceptualisation of Power
in the Thought of Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh**

Submitted by Bianka Agnes Speidl to the University of Exeter
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Abstract

The topic of my research is the Shī'ī jurist Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh's (1935-2010) conception of power, its uses and its functions. Faḍlallāh was a prominent figure of the Lebanese Shī'ī movement and of the Islamic revival as a whole. Specifically, I examine his book *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa* (Islam and the Logic of Power, 1976),¹ in which he presents power as a coherent and sophisticated system, and defines the principles that legitimise the aspirations to power and the use of force.

Faḍlallāh defined power as essential in constituting and maintaining the social and political structure through which the message of Islam can be put into practice and the continuity of the call to it guaranteed. The various elements and dimensions of power – spiritual, social, political – are interrelated as they secure the reproduction of *quwwa*, which in turn sustains the social-political order and the spiritual strength of the community. My contention is that, through his concept of power, Faḍlallāh reconsidered the political role of modern Shī'ism.

The dissertation is divided into nine chapters. In the first chapter, I describe the historical and intellectual context in which Faḍlallāh expounded his theory of power. The second chapter provides an intellectual biography of the author. The third chapter presents *quwwa* as a system and its different components. The fourth chapter describes his reinterpretation of the Shī'ī creed as a creed of force. The fifth chapter analyses his reinterpretation of the spiritual components of power. In the sixth chapter, I examine the social aspects of empowerment, followed by the seventh chapter dedicated to his conception of political power. The eighth chapter studies Faḍlallāh's ethics of power. The final chapter analyses his rhetorical tools and strategies.

I have paid special attention to the ways and means by which Faḍlallāh reinterprets the Shī'ī tradition and through them the Islamic principles regarding force and power. For a better understanding of Shī'ī revivalist thought, I suggest to read it through a transformative paradigm which allows us to perceive the radical change in Shī'ism from quietism to activism as a multi-faceted and complex process.

¹ Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-Jāmi'iyya li'l-Dirāsāt wa'l-Nashr, 3rd ed., 1985).

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System of Transliteration

In the dissertation, I apply the system used in the *Encyclopædia of Islam* 3rd edition. All the dates are set according to the Common Era. As for words ending in *tā' marbūṭa* I do not use “t” or “h” in the end.

Note on Terminology

In the following I differentiate between the notions of Shī'a, Shī'ī and Shī'ism. I use the word Shī'a as a collective noun to denote the followers of Twelver Shī'ism. Shī'ī is used as an adjective for persons, groups – when mentioned non-collectively –, ideas, institutions, and establishments. Shī'ism stands for the belief system, practices, and intellectual tradition of the followers of the Twelver Shī'ī creed.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past thirty years, there has been a remarkable development in Shī'a studies. Our knowledge of Shī'i thought has considerably improved thanks to groundbreaking research on the sources, Shī'i history and modern movements. This scholarly interest is increasingly stimulated by the Shī'i revival in its various centres inside and outside Iran. Since the middle of the 20th century, the Shī'a has risen to prominence in several Arab countries, including Lebanon, Iraq, Bahrain, Kuwait and Syria. Thus, it might be argued that Shī'i communities have become a real focus of attention both as a subject of history and as an object of study. Particularly, in political thought and activism, one can claim that an "impulse of power" moves the Shī'a towards empowerment both in religious thought as well as in body politic.

Western scholars have not yet reached a consensus regarding a variable or set of variables which could provide a holistic explanation for this "impulse of power" in modern Shī'ism. Western scholarship predominantly considers the Iranian revolution and its leader Āyatullāh Khumaynī's personal charisma as the main initiators of activist Shī'ism. More generally, revolutionary Shī'ism is considered as an outcome of the Iranian revolution. For example, Michael Cook in his seminal book *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* states that after the Safavid period, Khumaynī was the first who asserted the right of qualified jurists to undertake the duty of forbidding wrong even if this implies violence.² Thus, for Cook, Khumaynī changed the Shī'i mindset from quietism to political activism. This perspective could be labelled as the revolutionary paradigm and it is endorsed by most scholars working on modern Shī'ism.³

Additional paradigms do not contest Khumaynī's major role in the Iranian revolution and in the Shī'a revival after 1979, but suggest that the shift in Shī'i political thought transcends Khumaynī. The apocalyptic paradigm states that the primary urge of Shī'i activism lies in the hastening of the return of the Mahdī and the restoration of the

² Michael Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 286.

³ See for example: Hamid Dabashi, *Shi'ism: A Religion of Protest* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011).

just world-order.⁴ The sectarian paradigm, another perspective that has flourished in the last decade, perceives the roots of the Shī'ī pursuit of power mainly in the historical grievances of the Shī'a and their current political marginalisation in countries with Sunnī majority.⁵

The juristic paradigm that focuses on the role of *ijtihād* and the question of authority is well exemplified by H. Mavani's work *Religious Authority and Political Thought in Twelver Shi'ism*. Mavani argues that the evaluation of Khumaynī's *wilāyat al-faqīh* among Shī'ī jurists showed great diversity due to the various interpretations of the notions of imamate, *wilāya*, and the meaning of juristic authority in Shī'ism. Those jurists who opposed *wilāyat al-faqīh* claim that there is room for the renewal of Shī'ism in a non-theocratic order.⁶ Another example of the juristic paradigm is Ahmad Vaezi's *Shi'a Political Thought*. Vaezi studies the concept of *wilāyat al-faqīh* as a competitive response of modern Shī'ī thinkers to the challenges posed by the Western concepts of democracy and liberalism.⁷

In his book on *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, H. Enayat dedicates a chapter to Shī'ī modernism in the context of Sunnī theories and various ideologies such as nationalism, democracy, and socialism. In particular, he examines three elements of Shī'ī revivalism: constitutionalism, *taqiyya*, and martyrdom as joint notions deeply embedded in Shī'ī culture. This work fits into the modernist paradigm since it examines the contemporary social, political, and economic matrix in which the formulation of the new ideas took place. Enayat believes that it was the inherently democratic content of the reinterpretations that turned Shī'ism "from an elitist, esoteric and passive sect into a mass movement."⁸

⁴ See for example: Abbas Amanat, *Apocalyptic Islam and Iranian Shi'ism* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009). R. Scott Appleby ed., *Spokesmen for the Despised: Fundamentalist Leaders of the Middle East* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Hamid Dabashi, and Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, eds., *Expectation of the Millennium: Shi'ism in History* (New York: SUNY Press, 1989).

⁵ See for example: Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2007).

⁶ Hamid Mavani, *Religious Authority and Political Thought in Twelver Shi'ism* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

⁷ Ahmad Vaezi, *Shi'a Political Thought* (London: Islamic Centre of England, 2004). Another example of the juristic paradigm is: Mohsen Kadivar, *Nazrieh-hā-ye da'olat dar feqeh'e shī'ah* [Theories of state in the Shi'ite jurisprudence] (Tehran: Nashr-e Ney, 1998).

⁸ Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought* (London: Macmillan, 1982), 164.

Yet, none of the aforementioned paradigms can cover the breadth and the depth of the “impulse of power” in the modern Shī‘ī worlds. Because of their focus on single factors, whether theological, political or juristic, they failed to fathom the complexity of the Shī‘ī momentum of revivalism. Moreover, in many Shī‘ī movements, the apocalyptic and the sectarian paradigms play barely any role, and a few cases cannot provide proof for generally valid explanations. On the contrary, outside of Iran, the Shī‘a do not promote the apocalyptic rhetoric as one can clearly see in the Lebanese case. As for the revolutionary paradigm, it fails to identify the causes of changes and focuses instead on their outcome. Besides, it cannot explain the great sense of pragmatism that characterises the Shī‘ī movements all over the Middle East. The revolutionary paradigm in itself cannot explain why revolution occurred in Iran and not elsewhere. Since 1979, the idea of a Shī‘ī revolution has lost its uncompromising radicalism. A recent example of Shī‘ī political pragmatism is when the Shī‘a became the allies of the United States in 2003 in Iraq, accepting the American roadmap, including democratisation and power-sharing with the Kurds.

My contention is that only a holistic, transformative paradigm can explain the Shī‘ī “momentum of power”. I argue that the changes occurred, to a great extent, in the Shī‘ī narrative of power. This new narrative displays characteristics of comprehensiveness, compositeness, and coherence of thought and action. A transformative paradigm is the only perspective that explains the evolution of Shī‘ism in the modern period from quietism to revolution in Iran and their empowerment in other places. Transformation – which includes the layer of *ijtihād* as a vehicle of change – also gives a well-founded answer to the phenomena of pragmatism and hesitation that generally mark today’s Shī‘ism. Furthermore, it takes into account the intellectual and political challenges as well as quietism as a long Shī‘ī tradition and manner of action deeply rooted in political history and its narratives, and which cannot be changed abruptly.

The transformation of Shī‘ism has taken place gradually in Iran since the advent of modernity – bringing the impact of various Western intellectual notions to Muslim countries. It was intensified by external and internal factors such as civil wars, authoritarian ideologies, social inequalities, political and economic crises, but more importantly by appropriating a new narrative of power. Shī‘ī authorities such as Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr (Iraq), Khumaynī (Iran), Mūsā al-Ṣadr, and later Muḥammad

Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh (Lebanon) became emblematic leaders of this transformation. A new narrative of power could only be justified if it responds to challenging and powerful competitive ideologies, such as communism, Arab nationalism and Sunnī fundamentalism. Against this background, Shīʿī jurist-thinkers suggested intellectual solutions to strengthen the identity of their communities and to establish their self-confidence to acquire power. By reinterpreting Shīʿī traditions, they changed the nature and the essence of Shīʿism and transformed them into a narrative of revolution and resistance. Shīʿī authorities allowed an inter-crossing of traditional references with modern ideologies. They integrated these elements into a new Shīʿī narrative of resistance, composed of leftist western notions and the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood in its Qutbist tendency.

At the heart of this transformation, it is possible to identify three mechanisms: comprehensiveness, compositeness (or hybridity), and strategies of empowerment. Its comprehensiveness meant that it went beyond its traditional framework of law and theology to address social and political issues already dealt with by Marxists and Sunnī Islamist thinkers. Shīʿī jurists-thinkers became organic intellectuals, to use a Gramscian concept, while entertaining the aura of Shīʿī traditional authority.⁹ This shift requires them to lead their communities in all sectors of life. As a result of comprehensiveness, which entails borrowing in some or most areas from other sources of knowledge, Shīʿī authorities inevitably adopted and integrated foreign elements into Shīʿī thought. Thus, compositeness was also instrumental in making Shīʿī thought a source of empowerment. Finally, the quest for power, driven by subjective as well as objective considerations, necessitated the religious justification of its political projects, and the empowerment of their communities. Thus, Shīʿism became a movement of power more than a religious denomination.

⁹ In my understanding, a Shīʿī organic intellectual counteracts political and religious competitors by articulating a theory and a program of action in order to produce and organise a social power for his community and achieve radical change in the prevailing order. He speaks primarily for the interests of his denomination and is actively involved in the mobilisation and indoctrination.

1. Aim and significance of the study

In this dissertation, I argue that Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh's theory illustrates that the Shī'ī revival could be best explained through a transformative paradigm. My aim is to reveal the various aspects of the multi-faceted transformation of Shī'ism through an in-depth analysis of Faḍlallāh's *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*. In particular, I consider how Faḍlallāh reinterprets Shī'ism as a comprehensive and composite project of power. I will also refer to Faḍlallāh's insights on power in his other writings.

Faḍlallāh's thought consists of promoting new modes of thinking and action to initiate and sustain an "impulse of power". In this context, Faḍlallāh's theory of power is an important contribution to Shī'ī political thought due to its comprehensive criticism of passivity and quietism, its reinterpretation of Islam as a religion of power as well as for its emphatic and elaborate call to action.

Faḍlallāh's later books on the Islamic resistance are practical elaborations and adaptations of his theory of power in *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*. His oeuvre deals with all aspects of modern life as a potential source of personal and communal empowerment. Faḍlallāh's published works exceed 150 printed volumes. They consist of his legal rulings on various matters, a 22-volume Qur'ān-commentary, writings on Islamic resistance and social issues, essays and treaties on various – particular social, historical, political – subjects. In addition, collected and edited interviews, his lectures given in Damascus in eighteen volumes, and various collections of his Friday sermons are available in print. His recurrent topics embrace Islamic practice with special attention to rituals and gender issues, resistance, Shī'ī beliefs and historical events as well as the most burning contemporary social and political matters.

Faḍlallāh's thought and action form a coherent unity, a phenomenon of viable and competitive Shī'ism in a multi-cultural context. As for his social institution-building activities, he established secondary and vocational schools, Islamic educational centres, cultural centres, orphanages, clinics, in various regions of Lebanon and a medical centre (Bahmān Hospital) in South Beirut. He founded an Islamic Higher Institute, a public library attached to his mosque (*al-Imāmayn al-Hasanayn*), a TV and radio station (*al-Īmān*), and a printing house (*Dār al-Malāk*). He was also a practising actor of power, in its spiritual and political sense, while he left the armed resistance to Ḥizbullāh.

Faḍlallāh is unequivocally considered to be the spiritual guide of the Lebanese resistance. However, his influence on and relationship with Ḥizbullāh went through a series of changes over time. He was the target of several assassination attempts, the most devastating of which was in Bi'r al-ʿAbd in 1984, allegedly plotted by the CIA through its local agents.¹⁰

In 2013, during my visit to Lebanon I had informal conversations about Faḍlallāh, three years after his death, with people of various denominational and professional backgrounds. My goal was to detect Faḍlallāh's present day reception in his home country. His followers emphasised Faḍlallāh's unique ability to reinterpret the religious principles in view of the reality on the ground but without distorting the essence of the Islamic message, his openness to engage in dialogue, the absolute primacy that he gave to the Qur'ān above all other sources, and his commitment to promote intra-Islamic reconciliation.

Lebanese Shīʿī intellectuals consider his book *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa* as a pioneering work that aimed to provide a theoretical ground to the urgent need for mobilisation and organised activism. They stress Faḍlallāh's conviction that coexistence with various communities affects the interpretation of rules, dogmas and their implementation. During his lifetime, he enjoyed the biggest influence and popularity in the Shīʿī community due to his pro-activism in Lebanon, his charity network, and his role in the formation of the Shīʿī resistance. It is a good indication of his importance that even three years after his death people regarded his legal opinions as relevant and his institute continued to answer legal enquiries based on his earlier statements.¹¹

In *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, Faḍlallāh systematically explored the causes of weakness in the community and challenged the quietist mentality with sharp and open criticism, and also offered solutions for the prevailing problems. He put forward an all-encompassing philosophy of action. He did not propose detailed plans; instead, he set the guiding principles for elaborating such plans. His theory offered an explanatory framework for the necessity of power. He interpreted historical events, political

¹⁰ David Kenner, "The Sheikh Who Got Away," *Foreign Policy*, July 6, 2010. <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/07/06/>

¹¹ See Morgan Clarke's article on this phenomenon: "Neo-Calligraphy: Religious Authority and Media Technology in Contemporary Shiite Islam," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 52 (2010): 351–383.

phenomena, and the scriptures in such a way as to prove his narrative of power as inevitable in realising the tenets of Islam.

In Faḍlallāh's fundamentalist thought, the comprehensiveness of Islam necessitated its realisation in all domains of life. He asserted that in this process, believers must make use of power to respond to the various challenges. Faḍlallāh believed that without power Islam becomes paralysed. For him, aspects of *quwwa* as manifested in the spiritual, social/structural, and political spheres are interrelated. No aspect of human existence is feasible without power to sustain it, and in turn each aspect of life is a potential source of power that is essential for the implementation of Islam. Thus, *quwwa* is a set of tools but also the essence of the Islamic message, embracing theology, spirituality, social order, and political system. In Faḍlallāh's pragmatic philosophy of power, the theological aspects prepare the community for acquiring material power.

Faḍlallāh's philosophy of power builds on various – Sunnī, Christian, and Marxist – sources. Then, it blended and harmonised them in a coherent narrative of power. He appropriated these elements in order to realise the actual political goals of the day, skilfully and cautiously. He maintained this compositeness in his use of diverse rhetorical devices and a wide range of references. His resort to quietist Shī'ī, Orientalist and other Western sources further reflects the composite nature of modern Shī'ism and its ability to adopt and integrate various ideologies. This heterogeneity contributes to the pragmatism of his system of power as it allows an adaptation to various situations and strengthens its responsiveness to challenges.

2. Literature review

Despite the importance of Faḍlallāh in the modern history of Shī'ism, few scholars have studied his biography and thought. In particular, to date, no comprehensive study of his thought has been undertaken. Publications on Faḍlallāh could be divided into three areas: political thought, law, and his influence on Ḥizbullāh.

2.1 Faḍlallāh's political thought

One of the earliest reflections on Faḍlallāh was written by Fouad Ajami in his book on Mūsā al-Ṣadr.¹² Ajami, without engaging in a detailed analysis, remarks that *al-Islām wa- manṭiq al-quwwa* “foreshadowed the militant thought of radicalised Shi‘ism (...) [and reflects] the intellectual and psychological change (...) [that turned Shī‘ī quietism] into a doctrine of rebellion and confrontation.”¹³

Olivier Carré, an expert on Sayyid Quṭb dedicated an important article to the study of Faḍlallāh.¹⁴ In it, Carré examines some key concepts of *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa* such as “the pride of the oppressors”, “the use of force”, “the necessity of the Islamic state”, and “the plight of the oppressed”, and analyses them as rhetorical patterns. Carré assumes that combining the conditions of necessity and tyrannicide excludes the call to terrorism, but sanctions the use of force in a revolutionary process. Carré does not relate the rhetorical elements he singled out to their frame of reference such as concepts of ethics, society and *jihād*, but makes them appear mostly as political slogans. Also, he criticises Faḍlallāh's lack of originality without attempting to detect how he reinterpreted some key concepts of Shī‘ism and Sūfism in order to present them as instrumental to a strategy of empowerment.

The shortcomings of Carré's study are evident in his criticism of Faḍlallāh's “anti-imperialist” and “anti-Orientalist” reasoning, blaming him for falling short of source criticism and for showing a tendency towards the use of “anti-Semitic” clichés. Faḍlallāh's use of Orientalist sources is at least twofold and purposeful: he rejects their biases but quotes those who favoured Islam. Carré's study thus stays descriptive and partial and fails to identify the systemic nature of Faḍlallāh's thought.

In another article, Carré equates the approaches of Shī‘ī and Sunnī “extremism” as represented by Faḍlallāh and Sayyid Quṭb.¹⁵ Carré claims that the ideas of both thinkers are rooted in “prophetic fundamentalism”, providing action programmes for an Islamic revolution against “contemporary paganism”. It is noteworthy, however, that in most of

¹² Fouad Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa al-Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

¹³ Ajami, *The Vanished Imam*, 215.

¹⁴ Olivier Carré, “Quelques mots-clefs de Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah,” *Revue française de science politique* 37 (1987): 478-501.

¹⁵ Olivier Carré, “Khomeinisme libanais: Qutb, Fadlallah, même combat,” *Social Compass* 38 (1991): 187-200.

his writings and speeches Faḍlallāh avoided the “prophetic” tone or any reference to apocalyptic Messianism. Furthermore, Faḍlallāh did not consider the contemporary reality as paganism; he was prepared to accept the complex realities of Lebanon and the Muslim world in general.

For Carré, the “dynamic fiqh” of Neo-Hanbalism and *uṣūlism* as represented by Quṭb and Faḍlallāh challenge the mainstream Shī‘ī and Sunnī tradition. He claims that their objective was to establish an Islamic state as soon as possible, which is why “the revolutionary Islamic militantism” in Lebanon – both Sunnī and Shī‘ī – can be referred to as a “Lebanese Khomeinism,” which is an equivalent to “Syro-Lebanese Quṭbism”. Therefore, the divide for Carré is not between Sunnism and Shī‘ism, but between Islamic political extremism and traditional quietism. This idea is partially sound; besides the fact that Faḍlallāh in practice never hastened the establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon, Carré pays no attention to the significant differences in the goals and means of Shī‘ī and Sunnī activism. The sectarian flavour of activism has proved to be as significant as the divide between quietism and activism. Carré seems to equate activism with extremism, while he does not elaborate on the difference in the tactics suggested by the two thinkers, nor on the differing argumentation applied by them.

In her comparative analysis of Ḥassan al-Turābī and Faḍlallāh, Judith Miller considers the two figures as representatives of “Islamic literarism” that inspired militant Islamism in its modern form.¹⁶ Miller claims that both Faḍlallāh and al-Turābī adopted Western techniques and arguments in their criticisms of the West, distanced themselves from Saudi Arabia as well as from Iran, from communism as well as from capitalism, and held the view that the best way to grasp power is through democratic means rather than revolution. Besides omitting precise definitions Miller makes no attempt to reconcile the contradiction between “literarism,” militancy and democratic means.

In his book on the *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World*, Ibrahim Abu-Rabi‘ devotes a chapter to Faḍlallāh, entitled “Toward an Islamic Liberation Theology: Muhammad Husayn Faḍlallāh and the Principles of Shi‘i Resurgence”.¹⁷ He focuses on Faḍlallāh’s ideas on resistance and revolution as rooted in the situation of the Lebanese Shī‘a. Abu-Rabi‘ provides a detailed description of *al-*

¹⁶ Judith Miller, “Faces of Fundamentalism: Hassan al-Turabi and Muhammed Fadlallah,” *Foreign Affairs* 73 (1994): 123–142.

¹⁷ Ibrahim M. Abu-Rabi‘, *Intellectual Origins of Islamic Resurgence in the Modern Arab World* (New York: SUNY Press, 1996).

Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa, and considers Faḍlallāh as the foremost “liberation theologian” in contemporary Arab Islam. Abu-Rabi‘ pays no attention to the fact that liberation theology is a Christian term for a political theology which combines religious teachings with a Marxist revolutionary action plan. For Faḍlallāh, the “theology of liberation” is not revolutionary Messianism; it is rather a process of social transformation that aims at acquiring power as a political project.

Martin Kramer’s essay “The Oracle of Hizbullah: Sayyid Muḥammad Husayn Fadlallah” (1997) is the first significant study on Faḍlallāh in a Western language.¹⁸ As the title suggests, Kramer’s perspective is political as he focuses on the interplay between Faḍlallāh’s words and Ḥizbullah’s deeds. Following an insightful description of Faḍlallāh’s formative years, Kramer analyses a list of controversial issues, such as Faḍlallāh’s possible involvement in the hostage crisis,¹⁹ suicide bombings and hijackings in the 1980s, his links to Syria, and to the Iranian clergy. Kramer evaluates Faḍlallāh’s approach as a mixture of pragmatism and skilful rhetoric that he deems more characteristic of a realistic politician than of a moral guardian. He finds an inherent contradiction between Faḍlallāh’s radicalism and his quest to find balanced solutions to sensitive issues. However, in a rather self-contradictory manner, he acknowledges that Faḍlallāh did not always have direct influence on the organisation. Furthermore, in his evaluation, Kramer does not take into consideration that the role of Faḍlallāh as *marja’* is fundamentally of political importance.

Kramer’s essay is informative; however it is embellished with rhetorical questions and comments the aim of which is to raise doubts about the credibility of Faḍlallāh’s statements and the consistency of his ethics. Kramer devotes a chapter to Faḍlallāh’s *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, and to the context of its publication. He evaluates the book as Faḍlallāh’s “most systematic polemic in favour of the empowerment of Islam”²⁰ to which the empowerment of the Shī‘a is instrumental.²¹ This remark downplays the idea of empowering Shī‘a for its own sake, which for Faḍlallāh, was a theological as well as a political project.

¹⁸ Martin Kramer, “The Oracle of Hizbullah: Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah,” in *Spokesmen for the Despised*, ed. R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 83-181.

¹⁹ It was a series of kidnappings between 1982 and 1992 by Islamist groups, the victims of which were mostly American and Western European citizens working in Lebanon.

²⁰ Kramer, “The Oracle of Hizbullah,” 97.

²¹ Kramer, “The Oracle of Hizbullah,” 98.

Jamal Sankari's book *Fadlallah: The making of a radical Shi'ite leader* (2005) is a detailed biography of Faḍlallāh. Sankari provides a thorough insight into the Iraqi and Lebanese intellectual-political context that formed and influenced Faḍlallāh's views.²² The book vividly describes Faḍlallāh's quest to develop a strategy that allows for the gradual Islamisation of Lebanon and the empowerment of the Shī'a but with respect to the ideological and sectarian diversity of the Lebanese society. Sankari's standpoint is based on Faḍlallāh's writings as primary sources and interviews, several of which were conducted by the author. It also makes use of a broad selection of Arabic secondary literature published prior to 2005. Since then, Sankari's work has remained the only book on Faḍlallāh in English. He aims to describe Faḍlallāh's life and work in continuous interaction with the social-political circumstances of the day.

Sankari interprets the evolvment of Faḍlallāh's public discourse and actions as responses to the changes and challenges in the national and international arena presupposing – in a somewhat apologetical way – firm moral confines never transgressed by Faḍlallāh. He dedicates a short paragraph to *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, and considers it a work on Islamic theory and praxis of “power” from a judicial and ethical perspective. Sankari notes that the book provides “a scheme for the empowerment of the Shī'i community;” and explains that power for Faḍlallāh was indispensable “as a legitimate, and at times necessary, recourse in order to combat aggression and oppression.”²³ Sankari's statements are correct. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that Faḍlallāh attempted to justify purposeful and righteous violence not for the world public, but rather for his own Shī'i quietist co-religionists.

In *The Shi'a of Lebanon: Clans, Parties and Clerics*, Rodger Shanahan places Faḍlallāh in the Lebanese Shī'i context together with Muḥammad Jawād Mughniyya, and Muḥammad Mahdī Shams al-Dīn.²⁴ The author asserts that these thinkers developed the theoretical and material grounds for a distinctly Shī'i form of political activity, based on the specific demands of the Lebanese community. Shanahan, without differentiating between the various Najafī trends, claims that Faḍlallāh's activism was triggered by the civil war and not by the Najafī tradition.

²² Jamal Sankari, *Fadlallah: The Making of a Radical Shi'ite Leader* (London: SAQI, 2005).

²³ Sankari, *Fadlallah*, 157.

²⁴ Rodger Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon: Clans, Parties and Clerics* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2005).

Stephan Rosiny in his article “As-Sayyid Muhammad Husain Fadlallah: Im Zweifel für Mensch und Vernunft” deals with the link between Faḍlallāh’s jurisprudential method and his concept of religion.²⁵ In another article, Rosiny describes the Fāṭima al-Zahrā’ controversy between Faḍlallāh and Ja‘far Murtaḍā al-‘Āmilī.²⁶ He describes it as a clash of two tendencies within Shī‘ī historiography, with far-reaching implications for the political power struggle over the *marja‘iyya* and over the control of the Lebanese Shī‘ite community.

Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr in her *Shī‘ite Lebanon: Transnational Religion and the Making of National Identities*²⁷ claims that Faḍlallāh promoted an alternative, Shī‘ī - Arab understanding of tradition and modernity in order to define himself and establish a reputation as a specifically Arab *marja‘*, and to separate himself from the overtly emotional and thus backward Iranian Shī‘ism. For Shaery-Eisenlohr, Faḍlallāh’s official statements of solidarity and appreciation were mere “lip service (...) to the legacy of Khomeini”,²⁸ while his reservations regarding processions and the ‘Ashūrā’ rituals distanced him from Ḥizbullāh. The author’s argument is exclusively based on a distinction between the Arab and Persian “character” that affects the various manifestations of religiosity and, therefore, provided the sole ground for Faḍlallāh’s grand-scale project. Her argument underestimates the differing geo-political contexts, the contrasting ambitions, and the identical goals and elements of Shī‘ī revivalism for which expression is only of secondary importance. Similarly, attributing the tensions between Faḍlallāh and Ḥizbullāh to the organisation’s Persian Shī‘ism is at least arguable.

Sedighe Ghadiri-Orangi’s analysis *Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh – Schiitischer Gelehrter oder politischer Führer?* is written from a political-science perspective.²⁹ The author is interested in Faḍlallāh only insofar as his ideas influenced Ḥizbullāh in terms of legitimising the use of armed force for political ends, setting the party’s pragmatic

²⁵ Stephan Rosiny, “Muhammad Husain Fadlallah: Im Zweifel für Mensch und Vernunft,” *Der Islam am Wendepunkt: Liberale und Konservative Reformer einer Weltreligion*, ed. Katajun Amirpur and Ludwig Ammann (Freiburg: Herder, 2006), 100-108.

²⁶ Stephan Rosiny, “The Tragedy of Fatima al-Zahra in the Debate of two Shiite Theologians in Lebanon,” in *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture & Political Culture*, ed. Rainer Brunner and Werner Ende (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 207-219.

²⁷ Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shī‘ite Lebanon: Transnational Religion and the Making of National Identities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

²⁸ Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shī‘ite Lebanon*, 76.

²⁹ Sedighe Ghadiri-Orangi, *Muḥammad Ḥusayn Fadlallah - Schiitischer Gelehrter oder politischer Führer?* (Hamburg-Schenefeld: EB-Verlag, 2009).

approach to the idea of Islamic state and the impact of Faḍlallāh's positioning as *marja' al-taqlīd*. Ghadiri-Orangi considers Faḍlallāh as the theologian of resistance, who in fact imported the key ideas of the Iranian revolution to Lebanon. Similarly to M. B. al-Ṣadr and Muḥammad Mahdī Shams al-Dīn, Faḍlallāh invested Sunnī political fundamentalism with a Shī'ī character. However, in Najaf, he endorsed al-Khū'ī's ideas on the apolitical religious leadership. For Ghadiri-Orangi, Faḍlallāh became a representative of anti-imperialist Pan-Islamism inspired by the Iranian revolution and the Lebanese situation of the time. The author's chronological approach in considering Āyatullāh Khumaynī as the founding father of activist Shī'ism while neglecting Faḍlallāh's early writings with a clearly activist undertone underestimates Faḍlallāh's intellectual efforts and reduces him to a Lebanese representative of Khumaynism.

Hilal Khashan's article "The Religious and Political Impact of Sayyid M. H. Faḍlallāh on Arab Shī'ism" focuses on four aspects of Faḍlallāh's approach: his emphasis on the use of rationality and critical thinking, his call for interfaith dialogue, his advocacy of Islamic solidarity and unity, and his position on political change and revolution.³⁰ Khashan's approach highlights some crucial points of Faḍlallāh's thought but identifies them more as parts of a political strategy rather than as a coherent theory. Thus, the essay lists a collection of interrelated characteristics but without critically examining them – for example Faḍlallāh's commitment to interfaith dialogue or the nature of his "rationalism".

S. E. Baroudi dedicated an article to Faḍlallāh's views on international relations and in particular to his concept of *jihād*.³¹ He rightly pointed out that for Faḍlallāh, power is the currency of social political life, the acquisition of which is a religious duty.³² Baroudi points out that for Faḍlallāh, the Islamic use of power is controlled by ethical rules and should not serve corruption or exploitation. Baroudi claims that Faḍlallāh's primary concern was the formation of a united Muslim position against Western (and Soviet) hegemony in the region, and his counter-hegemonic language shares major similarities with secular Arab nationalist authors.³³

³⁰ Hilal Khashan, "The Religious and Political Impact of Sayyid M. H. Fadlallah on Arab Shi'ism," *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies* 3 (2010): 427–441.

³¹ Sami Emile Baroudi, "Islamist Perspectives on International Relations: The Discourse of Sayyid Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah (1935–2010)," *Middle Eastern Studies* 49 (2013): 107-33.

³² Baroudi, "Islamist Perspectives on International Relations," 110-111.

³³ Baroudi, "Islamist Perspectives on International Relations," 125.

The fact that Baroudi evaluates Faḍlallāh's concept of *jihād* as different from *qitāl*, and labels his thought as utopian in some cases while considering him as "a religious realist,"³⁴ shows that Baroudi fails to make a clear distinction between Faḍlallāh's rhetorical tools and his actual message. The author's supposition that Faḍlallāh consciously reduced Shī'ī elements and that some of his goals corresponded to those of the secular nationalists is well proven. However, playing down the use of Shī'ī concepts even in reduced quantity to mere stylistic tools is questionable.

In a recent article "Two modern Shi'ite scholars on relations between Muslims and Non-Muslims," Rainer Brunner analyses what Faḍlallāh meant by interreligious dialogue.³⁵ Based on Faḍlallāh's commentary on 2:256, Brunner discerns *da'wa* and *nizām* as key notions in Faḍlallāh's argument. Brunner asserts that for Faḍlallāh, Islam was a religion of permanent, offensive *da'wa*. As for *nizām*, Faḍlallāh's commentary on 9:29 proves his assertion of the unity of government, "since Islam does not allow society to be outside of its dominion, and sovereignty, non-Muslims have no other choice but to submit to the political supremacy of Islam."³⁶ By exploring the link between *jihād* and *da'wa*, Brunner concluded that for Faḍlallāh such as for Quṭb, religious freedom meant the freedom to propagate Islam. Therefore the guiding principles behind Faḍlallāh's "modern" terminology were anything but novel.³⁷

2.2 Faḍlallāh's *fiqh*

Numerous book chapters and articles focus on Faḍlallāh's importance as a jurist. Some authors like Lara Deeb,³⁸ Sophie Chamas,³⁹ and Talib Aziz⁴⁰ emphasise

³⁴ Baroudi, "Islamist Perspectives on International Relations," 115.

³⁵ Rainer Brunner, "Two modern Shi'ite scholars on relations between Muslims and Non-Muslims," in *Islam and globalisation: historical and contemporary perspectives; proceedings of the 25th Congress of L'Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants*, ed. Agostino Cilardo (Leuven: Peeters, 2013): 143-153.

³⁶ Brunner, "Two modern Shi'ite scholars," 150.

³⁷ Brunner, "Two modern Shi'ite scholars," 152-153

³⁸ Lara Deeb, "Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah and Lebanese Shi'i Youth," *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies* 3 (2010): 405-426.

³⁹ Sophie Chamas, "Sayyid Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah: Muslim Cleric and Islamic Feminist," *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences* 1 (2009): 246-257.

⁴⁰ Talib M. Aziz, "Fadlallah and the Remaking of the Marja'iyya," in *The Most Learned of the Shi'a*, ed. Linda S. Walbridge (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 205-215.

Faḍlallāh's dynamic *fiqh* as responsive to present-day challenges and granting scope for individual choice. Faḍlallāh's critics such as Rola el-Husseini, in her comparison of the new gender discourse in Lebanon and Iran, stressed that his opinions were phrased in the traditional Shī'ī manner, declared from the position of a male clerical authority, thus fossilising the established power structures within the society.⁴¹

Morgan Clarke's articles analyse the application of Faḍlallāh's rulings on gender and bio-ethical issues such as kinship, sexual morality, and reproduction, including artificial insemination and cloning.⁴²

Scholars differ in their assessment of his jurisprudential method as well. Some scholars emphasise that Faḍlallāh evaluated *aḥādīth* on the basis of their accordance with the Qur'ānic statements: thus, in his *ijtihād* he gave precedence to the Qur'ān over the tradition.⁴³ Others, like Miqdaad Versi claim that in Faḍlallāh's argumentation the general Qur'ānic principles were superseded by specific authenticated traditions, and thus his method represents mainstream Shī'ī jurisprudence even if he arrives at unusual conclusions.⁴⁴ Joseph Alagha emphasises Faḍlallāh's "novel reading of the sources" and specifically his use of the notion of *maṣlaḥa* (public interest) in allowing for female artistic dancing for mixed audience, and his impact on the perception of "resistance art" by Hizbullah.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Rola el-Husseini, "Women, Work, and Political Participation in Lebanese Shi'a Contemporary Thought: The Writings of Ayatollahs M. H. Fadlallah and Shams al-Din," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* Volume 28 (2008): 273-282.

⁴² Morgan Clarke, "Kinship, Propriety and Assisted Reproduction in the Middle East," *Anthropology of the Middle East* 2 (2007): 70-88. "Closeness in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: Debating Kinship and Biomedicine in Lebanon and the Middle East," *Anthropological Quarterly* 80 (2007): 379-402. "New Kinship, Islam, and the Liberal Tradition: Sexual Morality and New Reproductive Technology in Lebanon," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 14 (2008): 153-169.

⁴³ For example: al-Sayyid 'Abdallāh al-Ghurayfī, and al-Sayyid Ḥasan al-Nūrī, "al-Manhaj al-istinbāfī 'inda al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh," [The method of deduction according to Sayyid M. Ḥ. Faḍlallāh] *al-Ma'ārij* 8 (1997): 46-48. Ja'far al-Shākhūrī al-Bahrānī, "Naẓra fī'l-manhaj al fiqhī li'l-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh" [A look at the jurisprudential method of Sayyid M. Ḥ. Faḍlallāh], *al-Ma'ārij* 8 (1997): 49-53. Al-Ma'ārij's editorial team, "al-Manhaj al-istidlālī li-fiqh al-Qur'ān 'inda Āyatullāh al-'Uẓmā Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh" [The deductive method for the Qur'ānic jurisprudence according to M. Ḥ. Faḍlallāh], *al-Ma'ārij* 4 (1996): 453-462.

⁴⁴ Miqdaad Versi, "Fadlallah: A Mainstream Radical," *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies* 3 (2010): 443-464.

⁴⁵ Joseph Alagha, "G. Banna's and A. Fadlallah's Views on Dancing," *Sociology of Islam* 2 (2014): 60-86.

2.3 Faḍlallāh's influence on Ḥizbullāh

Books on Ḥizbullāh usually dedicate some paragraphs to Faḍlallāh's presumed impact and role in the movement. Some scholars emphasise Faḍlallāh's impact on Ḥizbullāh's use of political violence as the *murshid rūḥī* (spiritual guide) of the organisation. For example, Martin Kramer,⁴⁶ Magnus Ranstorp,⁴⁷ Judith Miller,⁴⁸ Fouad Ajami,⁴⁹ James Piscatori,⁵⁰ Ann Byers,⁵¹ Emmanuel Sivan,⁵² Scott Appleby,⁵³ Graham Fuller⁵⁴ claim that Faḍlallāh was instrumental in the formation of Ḥizbullāh and his influence remained decisive later on. While others, such as Hala Jaber,⁵⁵ Chibli Mallat,⁵⁶ Augustus Richard Norton,⁵⁷ Judith Palmer Harik,⁵⁸ Daniel Sobelman,⁵⁹ As'ad Abu Khalil,⁶⁰ A. Nizar Hamzeh,⁶¹ and Joseph Elie Alagha⁶² find this claim simplistic and their relationship too complex to label it either as interdependency or as rivalry. One of the most recent studies is by Michaelle Browsers⁶³ who attributes the conceptual divergence between Faḍlallāh and the cadres of Ḥizbullāh to a generational difference.

⁴⁶ Kramer, "The Oracle of Hizbullah," 83-181.

⁴⁷ Magnus Ranstorp, "The Strategy and Tactics of Hizbullah's Current 'Lebanonization Process,'" *Mediterranean Politics* 3 (1998): 103-134. M. Ranstorp, *Hizb'allah in Lebanon: The Politics of the Western Hostage Crises* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1997).

⁴⁸ Miller, *Faces of Fundamentalism*, 127.

⁴⁹ Ajami, *The Vanished Imam*, 213-218.

⁵⁰ James Piscatori, *Islam, Islamists, and the Electoral Principle in the Middle East* (Leiden: ISIM, 2000), 27.

⁵¹ Ann Byers, *Lebanon's Hezbollah: Inside the World's Most Infamous Terrorist Organizations* (London: Rosen Publishing Group, 2003), 16.

⁵² Emmanuel Sivan and Menachem Friedman, eds. *Religious Radicalism Politics in the Middle East* (New York: SUNY Press, 1990).

⁵³ R. Scott Appleby, "The Unholy Uses of the Apocalyptic Imagination: Twentieth Century Patterns," in *Apocalypse and Violence*, eds., Abbas Amanat and John J. Collins (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 2004), 69-87.

⁵⁴ Graham E. Fuller and Rend R. Francke, *The Arab Shi'a: The Forgotten Muslims* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 28.

⁵⁵ Hala Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

⁵⁶ Chibli Mallat, "Aspects of Shi'i Thought from the South of Lebanon," *Papers on Lebanon* 7. (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1988), 35-37.

⁵⁷ Augustus R. Norton, "Hizballah of Lebanon: Extremist Ideas vs. Mundane Politics," *Council on Foreign Relations* (February 2000), 26.

⁵⁸ Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 61.

⁵⁹ Daniel Sobelman, "Rules of the Game: Israel and Hizbullah after the Withdrawal from Lebanon," *Memorandum* (Tel Aviv: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, January, 2004), 49.

⁶⁰ As'ad AbuKhalil, "Ideology and Practice of Hizbullah in Lebanon: Islamization of Leninist Organizational Principles," *Middle Eastern Studies* 27 (1991): 390-403.

⁶¹ A. Nizar Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 35.

⁶² Joseph Elie Alagha, *The Shifts in Hizbullah's Ideology: Religious Ideology, Political Ideology and Political Program* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006).

⁶³ Michaelle Browsers, "Fadlallah and the Passing of Lebanon's Last Najafi Generation," *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies* 5 (2012): 25-46.

She claims that the former's primary concern was the formulation of a Shī'i Islamist worldview against the rival and secular ideologies while the latter showed more affinity to acting according to pragmatic political interests.⁶⁴

In Hamid Algar's view, Faḍlallāh's focus switched from the concept of *wilāyat al-faqīh* to a new interpretation of *marja'iyya*.⁶⁵ He defined the post of the *marja' al-taqlīd* as an exclusive, supranational, non-ethnic and merit-based authority. His claim of *marja'iyya* in 1995 and his consideration of it as a primary means to make his voice heard in the remotest Shī'i communities and to contest the authorities based in Najaf or Qum resulted from this new concept.

Adham Saouli's article "Intellectuals and Political Power in Social Movements: The Parallel Paths of Fadlallah and Hizbullah" is the most recent analysis on the topic.⁶⁶ His aim was to detect Faḍlallāh's impact on the political strategies and actions of the organisation, but he evaluates Faḍlallāh's thought through the actions of the party even though he repeatedly admits that as time evolved, they pursued separate routes.

One of the most objective assessments of Faḍlallāh's thought and action is to be found in Chapter 16 of *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought*, an essay followed by two illustrative interviews, one on Islamic unity and political change (1995), and the other on the events of 9/11 (2001).⁶⁷

The secondary literature on Faḍlallāh in Arabic can be grouped into interviews and analyses by his disciples and former colleagues, and critiques of his ideas on coexistence. The interviews are informative but repetitive; they present him as a constructive thinker, open to dialogue.⁶⁸ The analytical studies are apologetic, meant to

⁶⁴ Browsers, *Fadlallah*, 31.

⁶⁵ Hamid Algar, "Response to Browsers," *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies* 5 (2012): 47-48.

⁶⁶ Adham Saouli, "Intellectuals and Political Power in Social Movements: The Parallel Paths of Fadlallah and Hizbullah," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 41 (2014): 97-116.

⁶⁷ "Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah 1935-," in *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought: Texts and Contexts from al-Banna to Bin Laden*, ed. Roxanne Leslie Euben and Muhammad Qasim Zaman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 387-408.

⁶⁸ Munā Sukkariyya, *An sanawāt wa-mawāqif wa-shakhṣiyyāt. Hākadhā taḥaddatha hākadhā qāla* [About years, standpoints, and personalities. Thus he spoke, thus he said] (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Islāmī al-Thaqāfī, 2012). Ghassān Tuwaynī, *al-Ustādh Ghassān Tuwaynī yuḥāwir Samāḥat al-'allāma al-Sayyid Muḥammad Husayn Faḍlallāh* (Beirut: Dār al-Mujtabā li'l-Ṭibā'a wa'l-Nashr wa'l-Tawzī', 1993). Waḍḍāḥ Yūsuf al-Ḥulw and Ismā'īl al-Faqīh, *As'ila wa-rudūd min al-qalb ma'a al-Sayyid Muḥammad Husayn Faḍlallāh* [Questions and responses from the heart with Sayyid M. Ḥ. Faḍlallāh] (Beirut: Dār al-Malāk, 2004).

prove the uniqueness, originality, and rationality of his reasoning.⁶⁹ There is only one volume of overt criticism that questions his commitment to religious dialogue,⁷⁰ and a few essays written by rival Shī'ī scholars who viewed him as a radical whose religious ideas reflect compromise with the West and accused him of bargaining away some of the essential aspects of Shī'ī identity and thus destroying Shī'ism from within.⁷¹

The available literature on Faḍlallāh fails to study his thought comprehensively and critically. My aim is to provide such an examination by an in-depth analysis of his theory of power. In particular, my contention is that a study of this kind can identify his significance in the history of Shī'ism as well as help us understand better the recent history of Shī'ī political thought and movements.

⁶⁹ Muḥammad Maḥfūz, *al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh - Faqīh al-mufakkirīn wa-mufakkir al-fuqahā'* [Sayyid M. Ḥ. Faḍlallāh: The jurist of the thinkers and the thinker of the jurists] (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Islāmī al-Thaqāfī, 2011).

Ja'far al-Shākhūrī al-Baḥrānī, *Āyatullāh al-Uzmā Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh wa-ḥarakiyyat al-ʿaql* [Āyatullāh M. Ḥ. Faḍlallāh and the dynamic of reason] (Beirut: Dār al-Malāk, 1998).

al-Shaykh Ḥasan Ghallūm, *Afkār wa-ru'ā al-faqīh al-mujaddid al-Sayyid Faḍlallāh* [Thoughts and visions of the jurist, and renewer M. Ḥ. Faḍlallāh] (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Islāmī al-Thaqāfī, 2011).

al-Shaykh ʿAlī Ḥasan Ghallūm, *Iḍāʿāt ʿalā fikr al-faqīh al-mujaddid al-marjaʿ al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh* [Shedding light upon the thought of the the jurist, renewer and *marjaʿ* Sayyid M. Ḥ. Faḍlallāh] (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Islāmī al-Thaqāfī, 2011).

al-Shaykh Ḥusayn al-Muṣṭafā, *Itlāla ʿalā al-ru'ā al-fikriyya li'l-faqīh al-mujaddid al-ʿallāma al-marjaʿ al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh* [A view into the ideas of the jurist, renewer and great scholar Sayyid M. Ḥ. Faḍlallāh] (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Islāmī al-Thaqāfī, 2011).

Ja'far al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh, *Nazra fī al-manhaj al-ijtihādī li'l-faqīh al-mujaddid al-ʿallāma al-marjaʿ al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh* [A glance at the discretionary method of the jurist, renewer and great scholar Sayyid M. Ḥ. Faḍlallāh] (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Islāmī al-Thaqāfī, 2011).

al-Shaykh Ḥusayn Manṣūr, *Ḥarakiyyat al-tārīkh al-risālī fī-fikr al-Sayyid Faḍlallāh* [The dynamic of message-oriented history in the thought of Sayyid Faḍlallāh] (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Islāmī al-Thaqāfī, 2011).

Nizār Muḥammad al-Mayyālī, *al-Fikr al-siyāsī ʿinda al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh* [Political thought according to M. Ḥ. Faḍlallāh] (Beirut: al-Markaz Ibn Idrīs al-Ḥillī, 2011).

⁷⁰ ʿImād Shamʿūn, *al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh dāʿiyat ḥiwār am dhimmiyya?* [Sayyid M. Ḥ. Faḍlallāh: a preacher of dialogue or dhimmiyya?] (Beirut: Bīsān li'l-Nashr wa'l-Tawzīʿ wa'l-ʿIlām, 1995).

⁷¹ See the writings of Āyatullāh Tabrīzī, Āyatullāh Khurāsānī, and Āyatullāh Sīstānī on this subject, who were students of Khūʿī like Faḍlallāh. See: Aziz, "Faḍlallāh and the Remaking of the Marjaʿiyya," 212.

3. Theory and method

For Faḍlallāh, *quwwa* is a system of power in which the theological, the spiritual, the social and the political components are interrelated.⁷² Each of these elements plays a specific function, creating an organic unity that links the part to the whole. To prevent *quwwa* from becoming unrestrained violence, Faḍlallāh stresses the importance of ethics. The ethics of power set the conditions that necessitate and the rules that regulate the use of force. Therefore, any study that aims to grasp Faḍlallāh's system of power should consider his systemic, functionalist and ethical theoretical frameworks of power.

To address the three aspects of Faḍlallāh's theory of power: power as system, its organic unity and its ethics, I use three theories of power to be found in social sciences and political philosophy: Functionalism, Stuart Clegg's Circuits of power and Just War Theory. On the one hand, Functionalism and Stuart Clegg's Circuits of power provide useful concepts to understand Faḍlallāh's views on the systemic functions of power that regulate the community and guarantee the effectiveness of its parts. On the other hand, Just War Theory explains better Faḍlallāh's ideas on ethics of power, *jihād*, resistance, and revolution. This latter aspect particularly provides accurate answers to the question of the legitimacy of violence in contemporary Islamic thought.

3.1 Theory

3.1.1 Functionalism

Functionalism, and in particular the social paradigm of Emile Durkheim⁷³ considered society as an organic unity and examined the factors of social coherence and social integrity. From among Durkheim's core theses, three assumptions are applicable in the analysis of Faḍlallāh's ideas.

First, his model corresponds to the notion of society as a unity based on organic solidarity applied by the Functionalist approach.⁷⁴ Faḍlallāh compares Muslim society

⁷² Faḍlallāh asserts "that the social and collective life of Muslims is an organic unity (...) just like the human body (...). This suggests to man that he does not represent an independent entity, but rather a part of a whole." *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 136.

⁷³ Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society* (Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1984).

⁷⁴ Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, 297.

to the human body in which the individual does not represent an independent entity; rather it is a part of a whole.⁷⁵ This model corresponds to Durkheim's concept that compared the advanced social structure to a living organism made up of various parts with distinct functions.⁷⁶

Second, social solidarity is the basis for social equilibrium, which is essential for the proper functioning of the society.⁷⁷ Durkheim differentiates between "mechanical" and "organic" solidarity. The former was "typical of early, segmentary, relatively homogeneous society when sentiments and beliefs are shared in common, where individuation is minimal, and collective thinking is maximal."⁷⁸ In contrast, "organic solidarity could develop from spontaneously arising consensus between individual actors who, just because they were engaged in different roles and tasks, were dependent on one another."⁷⁹

Third, in Durkheim's analysis, social change is a gradual process by which conflicts and dysfunctions can be adjusted.⁸⁰ Since the system is "homeostatic" or self-regulating, it tends to adjust towards equilibrium.⁸¹ Faḍlallāh considered the transformation of the individual, and the reform of the society as interdependent, and as prerequisites of the fight against injustice. This process presupposes individual (spiritual) preparation as well as social organisation, therefore, it must be gradual. In Faḍlallāh's view, the core message of the divine plan is justice and solidarity that create equilibrium in the society and thus transform the old pre-Islamic ties – the Durkheimian mechanical solidarity – into an organic one.⁸² As such, balance is essential in the empowerment of the community.

⁷⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 136.

⁷⁶ Jeffrey C. Alexander and Philip Smith, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Durkheim* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 112.

⁷⁷ Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, 330.

⁷⁸ Alexander and Smith, *The Cambridge Companion to Durkheim*, 306.

⁷⁹ Lewis A. Coser, introduction to *The Division of Labor in Society*, by Emile Durkheim (Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1984), xvi.

⁸⁰ Earl Conteh-Morgan, *Collective Political Violence* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 52.

⁸¹ Conteh-Morgan, *Collective Political Violence*, 51.

⁸² Regarding the function of social solidarity in Islam, Faḍlallāh asserts that "Islam has constructed the basis of the social power, on the social solidarity through adhering to the general and private responsibilities as manifestations of emotional and intellectual commitment." Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 143.

3.1.2 Circuits of power by Stuart Clegg

A theory particularly useful for understanding Faḍlallāh's vision of power as a complex system in motion is Stewart R. Clegg's model called the "circuits of power".⁸³ The phrase expresses Clegg's idea that the production and organising of power are manifested in three interrelated circuits like that of an electric circuit board. Clegg call these "circuits" the episodic, the dispositional, and the facilitative. His theory provides a dynamic view of power "as a phenomenon which can be grasped only relationally".⁸⁴ Clegg considers organisation as agency of power⁸⁵ in which negotiation, contestation and struggle between organisationally divided and linked agencies is a routine occurrence.⁸⁶

Episodic power is manifested in concrete but momentary situations where different social agents interact and power is exercised by a certain group or organisation. Its practical accomplishment is based on alliances, and strategies.⁸⁷ Episodic power is sustained by "translat[ing] a phenomenon into resources, and resources into organization networks of control, of alliance, of coalition, of antagonism, of interest and of structure."⁸⁸ "Translation" consists of four instances: identifying a problem, presenting the agent as the provider of the only valid solution, constructing alliances, and mobilisation to ensure that the partners act in accordance with the interests of their representatives.⁸⁹ For Clegg, power is not about obtaining resources, but rather "depends entirely on how they are positioned and fixed by the players, the rules, and the game."⁹⁰

For Faḍlallāh, the status quo is no more than an expression of episodic power. He strives to demystify the impact of the outward manifestations of power on the marginalised minority. He questions the basis of the prevailing order – episodic power – and points out its vulnerability. At the same time, Faḍlallāh is engaged in constructing his own episodic power by translating the problems on the ground into a political

⁸³ Stuart R. Clegg, *Frameworks of Power* (London: Sage, 1989). On page 214, Clegg provides a graphical presentation of the model.

⁸⁴ Clegg, *Frameworks of Power*, 207.

⁸⁵ Clegg, *Frameworks of Power*, 188.

⁸⁶ Clegg, *Frameworks of Power*, 198.

⁸⁷ Clegg, *Frameworks of Power*, 202.

⁸⁸ Clegg, *Frameworks of Power*, 204.

⁸⁹ Clegg, *Frameworks of Power*, 204-5.

⁹⁰ Clegg, *Frameworks of Power*, 209.

program. In this, he gives a comprehensive analysis of the problems, presents viable solutions, urges the forging of new alliances, and calls to action.

Clegg's dispositional power denotes rules of practice that fix membership, relations and meanings. It is about the authority to set the rules of the game and to have the privilege of (re)interpreting them.⁹¹ For him, power is "accomplished by some agency as a constitutive sense-making process whereby meaning is fixed."⁹² Dispositional power governs social integration⁹³ in which "rules of practice are at the centre of any stabilization or change. Through them, all traffic must pass."⁹⁴ This means that any change in the episodic power presupposes changing the "rules of the game" that govern the organisation.

Faḍlallāh based his project of political empowerment on his conviction that in order to gain power, the "rules of the game" that operate and maintain the unjust *status quo* must be challenged and altered. He claimed that power comes from inside, the rules of the status quo are prone to change, therefore "dispositional power," the rules that govern such systems are not absolute.

Facilitative power in Clegg's model is the innovative potential that is capable of changing the power structure by empowering or disempowering certain agencies. It assures that "domination is never eternal, never utterly set in time and space: it will invariably be subject to processes of innovation."⁹⁵ Facilitative power affects the system integration by providing "a source of new opportunities for undermining established configurations of episodic circuits of power, as it generates competitive pressure through new forms of technique, new forms of disciplinary power, new forms of empowerment and disempowerment."⁹⁶ Thus, facilitative power is accessible for those who are currently deprived of episodic or dispositional power. It prompts change in the system by empowering a so far marginalised agent.

Faḍlallāh, therefore, used this "facilitative power" to introduce "inventions" that prompt "empowerment from inside" in a bottom-up process. Facilitative power is the locus of force that directly affects the system and consequently the society, and finally prepares the ground for a change in the episodic, visible power. Therefore, he started the

⁹¹ Clegg, *Frameworks of Power*, 210.

⁹² Clegg, *Frameworks of Power*, 201.

⁹³ Clegg, *Frameworks of Power*, 224.

⁹⁴ Clegg, *Frameworks of Power*, 215.

⁹⁵ Clegg, *Frameworks of Power*, 215-216.

⁹⁶ Clegg, *Frameworks of Power*, 236.

process by reinterpreting Shī'ī tradition and transformed the doctrines of quietism and Messianism into a creed of activism.

Clegg identifies nodes in the system of circuit as “obligatory passage points” through which episodic expressions of power are channelled.⁹⁷ They assist social integration by securing context-dependent interpretations of meanings and rules. For him solidification of power presupposes “a stable organization field of extensive, coherent and solidaristic alliances and nodal points.”⁹⁸ In Faḍlallāh’s system of thought I consider religious doctrines as “nodes” or “obligatory passage points” that must be passed in order to convey his message of empowerment and solidarity to the Shī'ī public. The overall impact of reinterpreting dogmas as taking control of an obligatory passage point was that it allowed and prompted the Shī'ā to exercise their interests through activism, mobilisation and use of force.

Clegg’s “circuits of power”, therefore, helps to understand the complexity of power in Faḍlallāh’s thought, and helps to grasp Faḍlallāh’s strategy of reinterpretation. At the facilitative level he spiritually empowered the marginalised community and opened up previously hidden resources of activism. It also meant taking control of an “obligatory passage point” by linking Shī'ism to power, and, therefore, altered the charge of all three circuits of power. The knock-on effect at the dispositional circuit was that it questioned the validity of the prevailing order and changed what it meant to be a Shī'ī. At the episodic circuit, it opened the way towards getting their share of authority and resources by legitimising the use of force.

3.1.3 Just War Theory

Faḍlallāh’s *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa* was written in 1976 at the first phase of the Lebanese civil war, in the midst of heavy bombardments targeting Faḍlallāh’s immediate neighbourhood. The situation in Lebanon determined his goal: to validate Shī'ī participation in the Lebanese war, to argue for the use of force according to the Islamic system of norms, and to activate the activist understanding of the Shī'ī political tradition. For Faḍlallāh, the use of force must be purposeful and controlled. However,

⁹⁷ Clegg, *Frameworks of Power*, 211-212.

⁹⁸ Clegg, *Frameworks of Power*, 223.

when social justice is endangered or its realisation is hindered or made impossible by foreign or domestic powers, resort to violence is not only permitted but it is an obligation. In understanding the rules that govern Faḍlallāh's ideas on the use of force I applied Just War theory. It provides a set of principles applicable to Faḍlallāh's taxonomy on the various forms of power and to his insistence on the moral purposes of resorting to violence.

Just War Theory in its original Christian understanding served to legitimate: experts of religious law designed sets of rules that were meant to guide the considerations that precede the declaration of war. These norms – at least in theory and discourse – had to be respected, because the legitimacy of politics depended on its correspondence to the respective religious ideals. Nevertheless, these theories did not exclude intra-religious wars resulting from mutual accusations of apostasy, thus turning warfare into a religious obligation. This could take place because in monotheistic religions “Faith” and “Truth” have always been higher values than peace. In depth, religious cultures cannot differentiate between offensive and defensive wars.⁹⁹

Classical Just War Theory is rooted in scholastic philosophy and canon-law. Augustine linked just war to the love for others. He stated that war is a consequence of sin and remedy for it. It becomes an act of love when its aim is to prevent evil doers from doing further wrong. Hostile act is a criterion of warfare, also, ecclesiastical authority had the right to coerce heretics. Augustine limited the sorts of persons and restricted the conditions of declaring war to proper motivation, legitimate – especially divine – authority, and the just cause of avenging injuries.¹⁰⁰ These considerations are meant to control both *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*.

In Augustine's system, the justification of the fight depended upon the parties' relation to the divine truth. St. Thomas of Aquinas went a step further in his *Summa Theologica* by defining the criteria to measure one's closeness to divine truth such as just reason, right intention, and the legitimacy of the authority. Other medieval sources add to them that the goal of the war must be peace, it can be declared only if other

⁹⁹ E. B. F. Midgley, *The Natural Law Tradition and the Theory of International Relations* (Barnes & Noble, 1975), 43.

¹⁰⁰ F. H. Russell, “Love and Hate in Medieval Warfare: The Contribution of Saint Augustine,” *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 31 (1987): 108–24.

solutions proved to be useless, and it should be proportionate with the aim of the fight. Thus appeared the principles of *jus in bello*: proportionality and differentiation.¹⁰¹ However, the content of the principles listed above was diverse. Just cause could mean intervention to defend the innocent (Augustine), the tool of divine punishment (Thomas of Aquinas), self-defense (this was refused by Augustine as a sign of sinful selfishness),¹⁰² or free warfare against enemies outside Christendom (such as the Crusades). Right intention meant belief in the supreme goals of the fight, a criteria that was difficult to prove. Legitimate authority meant the ruler and later the sovereign state. It was Calvin who first vindicate the right of sub-state actors to rebel against a despot.¹⁰³ Proportionality aimed to control the use of violence.

As Hugo Grotius pointed out, “when it is evident that the belligerent waging a just war is acting with rightful force, it follows that the enemy against whom the just war is waged must necessarily be disposed in the opposite fashion.”¹⁰⁴ This remark makes it clear that Just War Theory is exclusive, it justifies the claims of only one of the parties. In Western history the era of Just War ended with the immense destruction of the Thirty Years’ War in which both sides accused each other of heresy. The consequent destruction resulted the acknowledgment that “that a certain degree of right might exist on both sides [and] and with positivism and the definitive establishment of the European balance of power system after the Peace of Westphalia, 1648, the concept of the just war disappeared from international law as such.”¹⁰⁵

My choice for applying Just War Theory in my analysis of Faḍlallāh’s concept of *jihād* is in line with John Kelsay’s argument that “[t]he judgments pertaining to jihad and the just-war tradition have much in common, in the hands of a conscientious interpreter.”¹⁰⁶ Just war theory seeks to answer the question of what makes armed struggle a justifiable method of attaining communal goals, or of achieving the implementation of regulations and ideals based on creeds and ideologies. It also defines the rules that must be consciously observed and systematically accepted in the course of

¹⁰¹ Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity* (New York: HarperOne, 2010), vol. 1, 248.

¹⁰² Brien Hallett, “Just-War Criteria,” in *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace and Conflict* (Academic Press, 1999), vol. 2, 292.

¹⁰³ Brien Hallett, “Just-War Criteria,” 284.

¹⁰⁴ Hugo Grotius, *Commentary on The Law of Prize and Booty* (Liberty Fund, INC. Indianapolis, 2006), 107.

¹⁰⁵ Malcolm N. Shaw, *International Law* (Cambridge University Press 2003), 1015.

¹⁰⁶ John Kelsay, *Arguing the Just War in Islam* (Harvard University Press 2007), 223.

the combat. Finally, it provides aspects to judge when the use of violence – as means – ceases to justify the ends declared at the outset as legitimate. According to Emile Nakhleh, the just war tradition as “a more or less conceptual parameter (...) [serves to avoid] the trap of circular repression, which initially was to be broken by the employment of violence (...) [and] to guarantee a minimum level of objective vision during the violent process”.¹⁰⁷

Just War Theory relies on a set of norms accepted within a given society. Therefore, armed struggle or the resort to violence can only be justified from distinct and recognizable moral perspectives. These perceptions are rooted in secular or religious systems of thought. I agree with Steve Bruce who claims that religion is related to political violence in as much as it sets a “cultural background from which political actors, in considering the possibilities of political violence, construct vocabularies of motives”.¹⁰⁸ Religion, thus, is not the primary cause of violence but nor is it independent from its manifestations.

That Just War Theory is a suitable framework for a study of Islamic political thought was confirmed recently by a number of scholars. For instance, Adam L. Silverman contends that “In both the West’s conception of just war and Islam’s conception of *jihad* and *shahada*, one can find concepts of proportionality, redress, limitations on combat, defence, and the need to exhaust other methods before resorting to violence.”¹⁰⁹ Another scholar, Khalid Yahya Blankinship attempts to prove that the set of criteria that serves to define what is legitimate and illegitimate in the Western tradition provides useful and applicable aspects for analysing a theory on just war that belongs to the Islamic tradition.¹¹⁰

The principles of Western just war tradition are traced back to the Middle Ages when two different but interconnected sets of criteria were laid down: rules that govern the justice of war (*jus ad bellum*) and those that govern just and fair conduct in war (*jus in bello*). As a later development, a third category of criteria was established focusing on the responsibility and accountability of the opposing parties after the war (*jus post*

¹⁰⁷ Emile A. Nakhleh, “The Anatomy of Violence: Theoretical Reflections on Palestinian Resistance,” *Middle East Journal* 25 (1971): 180.

¹⁰⁸ Steve Bruce, “Religion and Violence: What Can Sociology Offer?,” *Numen* 52 (2005): 20.

¹⁰⁹ Adam L. Silverman, “Just War, Jihad, and Terrorism: A Comparison of Western and Islamic Norms for the Use of Political Violence,” *Journal of Church and State* 44 (2002): 85.

¹¹⁰ Khalid Yahya Blankinship, “Parity of Muslim and Western Concepts of Just War,” *The Muslim World* 101 (2011): 412–426.

bellum).¹¹¹ However, in the history of wars, one set of criteria gained and lost importance with respect to the others according to the religious, philosophical or political requirements qualified as governing principles.¹¹²

The *jus ad bellum* principle requires a just cause, a proper authority to decide on the launch of armed struggle, and specification of the right intention.¹¹³ In relation to the *jus ad bellum* criteria my inquiry is aimed at answering how Faḍlallāh defines “just cause,” eligible authority, and “right intention”. How does he prioritise among these principles? How does he re-define political concepts and support political claims in the light of religious precepts? How much attention does he pay to practicalities and consequences?

The *jus in bello* principle requires discrimination between legitimate and illegitimate targets in war and proportionality to minimise overall suffering. In relation to the *jus in bello* criteria, I am going to answer the following questions: How much attention does Faḍlallāh pay to “proportionality” and “discrimination”? How does Faḍlallāh define responsibility?

As far as the *jus post bellum* criteria are concerned, my analysis focuses on the question of proportionate punishment and the link between the “re-education of the aggressor” and the call to Islam (*da‘wa*). Finally, I aim to identify the governing principle of Faḍlallāh’s system of thought with respect to warfare, and to clarify how this governing principle influenced his elaboration of the rules of *jus ad bellum*, *jus in bello*, and *jus post bellum*.

3.2 Method

In my analysis, I apply a qualitative content analysis combined with a study of rhetorical argumentation. My aim is to provide an integrated view of the text by identifying the specific interrelated themes in their specific – social, historical – contexts. This method requires inductive reasoning – in detecting themes and categories

¹¹¹ James Turner Johnson, “The Just War Idea: The State of the Question,” *Social Philosophy and Policy* 23 (2006): 168-9.

¹¹² Johnson, “The Just War Idea,” 170-171.

¹¹³ Alex Moseley, “Just War Theory,” *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2009), chap. 2. Accessed April 8, 2011, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/justwar/>

– as well as deductive reasoning that tests my hypothesis concerning the functional and ethical characteristics of Faḍlallāh’s theory.

The process of the analysis contains three steps. The identification of individual themes as units of the study is based on the message they carry: doctrinal, spiritual, social, political, and ethical. This is followed by a comparative analysis of Faḍlallāh’s reinterpretation of the relevant traditions and terms with respect to that of other prominent thinkers and trends. The third step is a summative content analysis regarding the references quoted by Faḍlallāh and the terms used, extended by an attempt to point to latent meanings and messages to the readers. In the concluding sections, I aim to detect the role of the particular thematic unit in Faḍlallāh’s system of force, and the consequences of his interpretation in the given social-political context.

In the final chapter, I analyse Faḍlallāh’s rhetoric by which he justifies and legitimises power and constructs a new narrative of violence. Faḍlallāh’s aim is to prove that under certain conditions a violation of a moral rule is not immoral but morally justified and even required by the religious law. Accordingly, Faḍlallāh’s *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa* endorses a specific rhetoric of violence. Through a set of arguments, he justifies an internal logic of power in the Shī‘ī Islamist political perspective. The chapter explores the various forms and tools of his reasoning and attempts to answer the following question: What is peculiar in his reasoning in terms of its premises, conclusions, and implications?

The method that is relevant to classify the tools and strategies of Faḍlallāh’s argumentation should emphasise Faḍlallāh’s functionalism and ethics. For this reason, I found an article by Elizabeth Frazer and Kimberley Hutchings entitled “*Argument and Rhetoric in the Justification of Political Violence*” to be particularly useful.¹¹⁴ The authors define key aspects for argument analysis and offer a useful typology for the various tools of reasoning. Also, they emphasise that the message can be conveyed only “to the extent that the reader both shares the values being put forward in the text, and agrees with the author’s association of certain values with certain political positions.”¹¹⁵ Thus, the text becomes “part of a universe of meaning that is (or at least may be) shared

¹¹⁴ Elizabeth Frazer, and Kimberly Hutchings, “Argument and Rhetoric in the Justification of Political Violence,” *European Journal of Political Theory* 6 (2007): 180–199.

¹¹⁵ Frazer and Hutchings, “Argument and Rhetoric,” 193.

by the reader.”¹¹⁶ All through the dissertation, I examined Faḍlallāh’s rhetoric and its meaning for his audience. My analysis and critical study is meant also to discover the internal contradictions of his reasoning.

The aim of the analytical methods described above is to help the understanding of Faḍlallāh’s reasoning as a political theory that considers violence not as a violation but as an ethical act within the system of *quwwa*. The theories I rely on serve as a framework to understand Faḍlallāh’s justification, while the method of my analysis provides a complex multi-layered approach to his text.

¹¹⁶ Frazer and Hutchings, “Argument and Rhetoric,” 196.

Chapter I: Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh: An Intellectual Biography

Introduction

Understanding ideas requires familiarity with the personality of the instigator who articulated them, and with the context in which they were formulated. In Faḍlallāh's biography, we can detect the roots of the three major features characteristic of his thought: compositeness, comprehensiveness and the concern with empowerment. Faḍlallāh's life could be divided into four stages: formative years in Iraq, mobilisation and institution-building in Lebanon, the rise to prominence during the civil war, and intense – juristic – involvement in social affairs and inter-denominational dialogue. In the last phase of his life, he increasingly addressed contemporary challenges and social transformation parallel to his fading influence on politics and emerging divergences with Ḥizbullāh.

1. 1935-1966: Formative years in Iraq

Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh was born in 1935 in Najaf, in a religious and scholarly family of Lebanese origin.¹¹⁷ After finishing his elementary education he enrolled in a newly established modern religious school maintained by the *Jam'iyat Muntadā al-Nashr*, an association that set up schools in various Iraqi cities with the aim of providing Islamic education “in a more systematic way than was characteristic of the *ḥawza*, and of integrating the study of Islam with the modern sciences.”¹¹⁸ Although Faḍlallāh had to leave this modern school due to his family's financial difficulties, the novel method and the curriculum of the institute had a formative impact on his thought.¹¹⁹ It gave him an early impetus to break down the barriers that separate

¹¹⁷ See: http://arabic.bayynat.org.lb/sira/shakhseya_29102010.htm. Accessed March 28, 2011.

¹¹⁸ Robert W. Hefner, Muhammad Qasim Zaman, eds., *Schooling Islam: The Culture and Politics of Modern Muslim Education* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 244.

¹¹⁹ al-Ḥulw and al-Faqīh, *As'ila wa-rudūd min al-qalb*, 12-13.

tradition from modernity, to critically consider diverse trends and approaches, and to use them in support of his own idea.

Faḍlallāh continued his higher education in the *Hawza* of Najaf from 1946, and as a young man he regularly participated in the cultural and literary activities organised by the *Jam'īyya*. He was familiar with all the major Arab literary and cultural magazines and trends of the 1940s and 1950s, and as a talented young poet he contributed to the religious and social events of Najaf.¹²⁰ Among his readings at that time we find the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Frantz Fanon and Paolo Freire.¹²¹ His interest and talent in literature contributed to the sensitivity and versatility of his approach in perceiving the human condition.

In the *Hawza*, he attended the *baḥth al-khārij* courses of Āyatullāh Abu'l-Qāsim al-Khū'ī (d. 1992) a formative scholar and head of the *Hawza* at that time, praised, for his detailed, clear, and logical argument, his tactic of debate in which he turned the argument of his opponents to his own advantage.¹²² Among others from the high-ranking '*ulamā'*', we have to mention Āyatullāh Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm (d.1970), a fervent anti-Marxist who paid special attention to the Shī'ī communities living far away from the religious centres,¹²³ Āyatullāh Maḥmūd Shāhrūdī (d.1974) and Shaykh Ḥusayn al-Ḥillī (d.1974),¹²⁴ disciples of the great constitutionalist Mirza Muḥammad Ḥusayn Nā'inī (d.1936), and Mullā Ṣadrā al-Bādkūbī (d.1972),¹²⁵ a prominent philosopher of his time.¹²⁶ Faḍlallāh emphasised the interactive style, the emphasis put on sound, and multi-layered reasoning as characteristics of the *Hawza* of Najaf, where students worked in study groups and were encouraged to enter into discussions and arguments with their teachers, thus providing ground for developing the skills of argument and discussion.¹²⁷

It can be, therefore, assumed that Faḍlallāh's education, and the lively intellectual atmosphere in Najaf largely contributed to the compositeness of his thought, to his readiness to reinterpret and redefine traditional concepts, and engage in debates. In

¹²⁰ al-Ḥulw and al-Faqīh, *As'ila wa-rudūd min al-qalb*, 15-18.

¹²¹ Sankari, *Fadlallah*, 52.

¹²² See: <http://arabic.bayynat.org.lb/alam/abo%20alkassem.htm>. Accessed March 29, 2011.

¹²³ See: <http://arabic.bayynat.org.lb/alam/mohsen%20alhakeim.htm>. Accessed March 29, 2011

¹²⁴ Shaykh Ḥusayn al-Ḥillī passed away in 1974. He was an outstanding *uṣūlī*, poet, and famously known as one of the main teachers of Āyatullāh al-Sistānī.

¹²⁵ Mullā Ṣadrā al-Bādkūbī was a renowned scholar in Najaf. He taught Faḍlallāh, Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr, and Ḥusayn Waḥīd al-Khurāsānī.

¹²⁶ See: http://english.bayynat.org.lb/Biography/Biography_stages_life.htm#Teacher. Accessed March 27, 2011.

¹²⁷ al-Ḥulw and al-Faqīh, *As'ila wa-rudūd min al-qalb*, 19-20.

1965, Faḍlallāh received a certificate of *ijtihād* issued by his primary mentor, Āyatullāh al-Khū'ī.¹²⁸

The animated political environment from the late 1940s onwards also deeply influenced Faḍlallāh, from his teenage years. He was shaken by the fall of Palestine,¹²⁹ and aware of the rise of the communist movement in Iraq. Besides, he was profoundly influenced by the stimulating journeys he made with his father to Lebanon from the age of 16, and his meetings with prominent Shī'ī intellectuals there.¹³⁰ As some of Faḍlallāh's early writings prove, by his late teens he had formed some convictions that he kept throughout his life. At his first visit in 1952, he wrote a poem in memory of the deceased Shaykh Muḥsin al-Amīn (d. 1952) in which he dealt with the dangers of colonial ambitions, the question of Islamic unity and the identity crisis of young Muslims.¹³¹

From the late 1950s the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) and radical secular ideologies were spreading quickly and won over a large number of Shī'ī due to socio-economic factors and to the fact that in the crucial decades between the 1930s and 1950s the majority of the Shī'ī '*ulamā'*' had abstained from involvement in political affairs. Another major factor accounting for the decline in Islamic consciousness was the spread of modern public schools from the 1930s, while the Islamic educational institutions remained unreformed. Furthermore, as Jamālī noted, in the 1950s there was no control of attendance and consequently no fixed criteria to define "whether a religious man is worthy of his claim or not."¹³² As a result, Islam as a comprehensive social-political system lost its appeal for the young, educated generation, a process also mirrored by the decline in the influence of the Shī'ī '*ulamā'*'.¹³³

As his articles written in Najaf illustrate, Faḍlallāh was aware that there was a need for a comprehensive and responsive Islamist ideology that was capable of competing with Marxism and at the same time unifying and mobilising Muslims for their common interests. Along with like-minded fellows such as Muḥammad Bāqir al-

¹²⁸ Sankari, *Fadlallah*, 49.

¹²⁹ al-Ḥulw and al-Faqīh, *As'īla wa-rudūd min al-qalb*, 14.

¹³⁰ al-Ḥulw and al-Faqīh, *As'īla wa-rudūd min al-qalb*, 21. Faḍlallāh narrates a conversation in which he was told that the expressions "*La samah Allāhī*" and "*Inshā' Allāhī*" are not to be understood literally.

¹³¹ 'Alī Ḥusayn Surūr, *al-'Allāma M. Ḥ. Faḍlallāh wa-taḥaddī al-mamnū'* [The learned M. Ḥ. Faḍlallāh and defying the forbidden] (Beirut: Dār al-Malāk, 2004), 53.

¹³² Fadil Jamali, "The Theological Colleges of Najaf," *The Muslim World* 50 (1960): 15-22.

¹³³ Sankari, *Fadlallah*, 61.

Şadr he started to work on transforming the traditional Najafī environment into one that is responsive to the new social-political challenges. In an interview, Faḍlallāh identified the spread of communism, Western colonialism, and the fate of Palestine as issues for which he and his peers strove to present Islam as a valid solution, by emphasising universal responsibility supported with activism in which Arab nationalism and Islamism complement each other.¹³⁴

Before the formation of Ḥizb al-Da‘wa and prior to the ground-breaking work of Muḥammad Bāqir al-Şadr, Shī‘ī Islamists studied and interpreted only the works of Sunnī intellectuals and ideologues such as Ḥasan al-Bannā, Abū’l-A‘lā al-Mawḍūdī, Ṭaqī al-Dīn al-Nabhānī, and Sayyid Quṭb.¹³⁵ However, the theory and programme of transnational Sunnī Islamist movements in Iraq were hesitant; their actions uncoordinated and ineffective and the responses of Islamist intellectuals to the communist ideology were inadequate.¹³⁶ Since Shī‘ī activism was sporadic, lacked cohesion both in structure and in ideas, and did not pay attention to build up significant mass support, the primary concern of Faḍlallāh and al-Şadr was the spiritual and political empowerment of the Shī‘a. They – and like-minded reformists such as members of the *Jamā‘at al-‘ulamā’* – realised the need for a new, dynamic Islamist discourse and organised political activity, in order to enable Shī‘ism to provide adequate solutions to the contemporary social and political problems.¹³⁷

This enterprise required intellectual as well as organisational efforts. Faḍlallāh and al-Şadr regularly contributed to the journal *al-Aḍwā’ al-Islāmiyya* [*Islamic lights*] by writing its first and second editorials.¹³⁸ In light of his theory of power articulated in the 1970s in Lebanon, these writings already show two important characteristics prevalent in his *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*. First, Faḍlallāh’s themes and terminology address an Islamist audience. Second, in terms of ideas, Faḍlallāh’s articles show his overwhelming concern with power and activism. It is reflected in statements such as

¹³⁴ Maḥmūd Suwayd (ed.), *al-Islām wa-Falaṣṭīn, Ḥiwār Shāmil ma‘a al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh* [Islam and Palestine: A comprehensive interview with Sayyid M. Ḥ. Faḍlallāh] (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Dirāsāt al-Falaṣṭīniyya, 1995), 8.

¹³⁵ Sankari, *Fadlallah*, 69.

¹³⁶ Sankari, *Fadlallah*, 54.

¹³⁷ Suwayd, *al-Islām wa-Falaṣṭīn*, 7-9.

¹³⁸ Their articles were later compiled into a booklet, entitled *Risālatunā* which was prefaced by Faḍlallāh and published in Beirut in 1981. Faḍlallāh’s editorials were subsequently collected to comprise part of a book entitled *Qaḍāyānā ‘alā ḍaw’ al-Islām*. The editorials of the third and fifth years were compiled in a separate volume, entitled *Āfāq Islāmiyya wa-mawāḍi‘ ukhrā*. See: Sankari, *Fadlallah*, 104, Mallat, *The Renewal of Islamic Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 16.

that complying with the precept of “commanding right and forbidding wrong” obligates Muslim individuals to oppose un-Islamic laws and governments that separate religious values from political affairs.¹³⁹

In his article, “*al-‘Amal awwalan*” [“Action comes first”] he stated that Islamists in Iraq before all have to focus on individual transformation, then on organising themselves, and finally on the construction of an Islamic entity.¹⁴⁰ Here, Faḍlallāh argues that the formation of conscious Muslim individuals who are committed to social justice, equality and solidarity is indispensable in creating the Islamic society that embodies and guarantees these values. He urged the transformation of Islam into a dynamic force and a comprehensive theory valid in all fields of contemporary life.

In another article published in *Aḍwā’* in August 1964, entitled “Min mashākil al-‘amal li’l-Islām” [“Some problems of action in the service of Islam”] Faḍlallāh emphasised the need for co-operation between the various Islamist movements in order to halt the exploiting ambitions of Western imperialism, to diminish the appeal to communism, and to create a unified action plan for the Palestinian problem.¹⁴¹

In 1960, Faḍlallāh published his first treatises entitled *Uslūb al-da‘wa fī’l-Qur’ān* [The manner of calling to Islam in the *Qur’ān*], in which he opposed linking *da‘wa* to *jihād*¹⁴² as well as to “commanding right and forbidding wrong”.¹⁴³ For Faḍlallāh, *da‘wa* exercised by an Islamic movement serves the peaceful mission of Islamisation. In this work, he set out the ethical and moral principles of *da‘wa*, “and demonstrated the immediate relevance of the Qur’ānic and Prophetic paradigms to the needs and aspirations of Muslim activists.”¹⁴⁴

The series of political events that took place in the 1950s and 1960s and the struggle between the various political and ideological trends influenced Faḍlallāh’s perception of the challenges that Islam had to face and the need to develop viable tools to confront them. In Najaf, Faḍlallāh was exposed to various influences and trends that shaped his consciousness and argumentation. He became acquainted with foreign and

¹³⁹ M. Ḥ. Faḍlallāh, *Qaḍāyānā ‘alā ḍaw’ al-Islām* [Our Issues in the Light of Islam] (Beirut: Dār al-Malāk, 1996), 99-103.

¹⁴⁰ Faḍlallāh, *Qaḍāyānā*, 7-16.

¹⁴¹ M. Ḥ. Faḍlallāh, *Āfāq Islāmīyya* [Islamic horizons] (Beirut: Dār al-Zahrā’, 1980), 89-96.

¹⁴² M. Ḥ. Faḍlallāh, *Uslūb al-da‘wa fī’l-Qur’ān* [The manner of calling to Islam in the *Qur’ān*] (Beirut: Dār al-Malāk, 1997), 91-92, 96.

¹⁴³ Faḍlallāh, *Uslūb al-da‘wa fī’l-Qur’ān*, 33-34.

¹⁴⁴ Sankari, *Fadlallah*, 102.

secular currents and saw their influence on young Muslims. He learnt how to stay loyal to the tradition and – at the same time – use the tool of reinterpretation in order to transform it into a theory of activism and empowerment, and enable it to respond to the rival trends and ideologies. In the field of activism Faḍlallāh – together with Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr – is considered as one of the fourteen founding members or pioneer activists of Ḥizb al-Da‘wa in 1957 or 1958.¹⁴⁵ However, officially he never became a member of the party.¹⁴⁶

We can identify three characteristics in Faḍlallāh’s Islamist discourse and activities formulated in Najaf and preserved all through his life. These are: compositeness of ideas put at the service of his Islamist thought, comprehensiveness coupled with pragmatism, and the concern with power and empowerment as inevitable even for the mere survival of the Shī‘ī communities.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, his commitment to Sunnī-Shī‘ī rapprochement, his sensitivity to social problems, and his emphasis on the importance of education were all shaped by his Iraqi experience.

2. 1966-1976: Years in Lebanon prior to the publication of *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*

Faḍlallāh arrived in Lebanon in 1966 and settled in Nab‘a, which was part of the so-called “Belt of Misery”. As reasons for his settlement in Lebanon, he mentioned the invitation of Lebanese Shī‘a affiliated to a cultural society named *Jam‘iyyat usrat al-ta’ākhi* [Society of the Family of Fraternity] and the complex circumstances in Iraq – the hostile conditions under Colonel ‘Abd al-Salām ‘Ārif (1958-66).¹⁴⁸ In addition, Faḍlallāh could count on the support of his maternal relatives, the influential Bazzī family of Bint Jbayl.¹⁴⁹ I find Aziz’s assumption that Faḍlallāh was able to gain more

¹⁴⁵ Amatzia Baram, “Two Roads to Revolutionary Shi‘ite Fundamentalism in Iraq,” in *Accounting for Fundamentalism: The Dynamic Character of Movements*, ed. Martin E. Marty and Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1994), 532-533.

¹⁴⁶ ‘Alī al-Mu‘min, *Sanawāt al-jamr: Masīrat al-ḥaraka al-Islāmiyya fī l-‘Irāq* [The years of burning coal: the march of the Islamist movement in Iraq] (London: Dār al-Masīra, 1993), 32, referred to in Sankari *Fadlallah*, 68.

¹⁴⁷ Sankari, *Fadlallah*, 122.

¹⁴⁸ Surūr, *al-‘Allāma M. Ḥ. Faḍlallāh*, 54.

¹⁴⁹ Kramer, “The Oracle of Hizbullah,” 90-91.

influence from the periphery than he would have had from one of the traditional Shīʿī centres of learning,¹⁵⁰ to be perceptive.

Nabʿa was the most populous slum quarter of east Beirut, shared by Lebanese Shīʿī migrants from the South, Armenians, Palestinian refugees, Kurds, and Syrian foreign workers.¹⁵¹ With the financial backing of the *Jamʿiyya*, Faḍlallāh started his work with the systematic construction of institutions – such as mosques, schools, orphanages, clinics, and hospitals – that answered to the spiritual, educational and health needs of the community. He focused his attention on the local, overwhelmingly poor youth who – alienated from religion and abandoned by their religious leaders – had become affiliated to secular or leftist organisations.¹⁵² Some of these establishments, for instance a *muṣallā* (prayer hall), a *ḥusayniyya* (a community place for commemorating the martyrdom of Imām al-Ḥusayn), a library, and a women’s club provided forums for various cultural activities as well as for religious education.¹⁵³

In Faḍlallāh’s view, the *ʿulamāʾ*’s detachment from the daily affairs, and the abstract interpretation of the dogmas resulted in the alienation of the common people from religion and in the conviction that religion did not offer relevant answers to contemporary problems. In his lectures he attempted to introduce the image of the *ʿālim*, who is aware of the contemporary challenges and engaged in finding relevant answers to them.¹⁵⁴ Faḍlallāh did not become involved in overtly political activism; rather he devoted himself to the formulation and dissemination of a modern, updated Islamist ideology. As part of this strategy, Faḍlallāh established The Islamic Legal Institute (*al-Maʿhad al-sharʿī al-Islāmī*) modelled on Najaf’s religious seminaries, in order to offer advanced juristic education. The best students were sent to Najaf or Qum to finish their specialisation, and later returned to teach in the *Maʿhad*.¹⁵⁵

Besides providing sermons, legal guidance, and managing the construction projects, he gave lectures and initiated intellectual debates on the prevailing cultural, religious, social and political issues. Faḍlallāh later started to pay regular visits to the

¹⁵⁰ Azīz, “*Fadlallah and the Remaking of the Marjaʿiyya*,” 214.

¹⁵¹ Theodor Hanf, *Co-Existence in Wartime Lebanon* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1994), 201.

¹⁵² Waḍḍāḥ Sharāra, *Dawlat Hizb al-Allāh. Lubnān mujtamaʿan Islāmiyyan* (Beirut: Dār al-Nahār, 1996), 71-73.

¹⁵³ Shanahan, *The Shiʿa of Lebanon*, 153.

¹⁵⁴ M. Ḥ. Faḍlallāh, *Mafāhīm islāmiyya ʿamma* [General Islamic Concepts] (Beirut: Dār al-Malāk, 2001), 11, 13, 42-47, 76.

¹⁵⁵ Sharāra, *Dawlat Hizb al-Allāh*, 86-90.

villages and small towns of Bint Jbayl and al-Nabaṭiyya. These events were open to the public and were followed by question-and-answer sessions.¹⁵⁶ He frequently organised debates with activists of various leftist political organisations as well, particularly the Lebanese Communist Party for whom Bint Jbayl was a stronghold.

Faḍlallāh's aim was to prepare the intellectual ground for a new generation of activist 'ulamā', whose role in the social and political life was essential for the desired social transformation.¹⁵⁷ In the *Ma'had* besides classical readings, the curriculum comprised Bāqir al-Ṣadr's *Iqtisādunā* and *Falsafatunā* as well as Faḍlallāh's own writings.¹⁵⁸ The institute provided the first qualified activists for the Shī'ī Islamist movement in Lebanon.¹⁵⁹ Faḍlallāh's vision of the all-inclusive Islamisation of the society is also manifest in his encouragement of a group of Islamist students from the Arab University of Beirut to form the Lebanese Federation of Muslim Students (*al-Ittiḥād al-Lubnānī li'l-Ṭalaba al-Muslimīn*). The Federation's bimonthly journal *al-Munṭalaq* became an important mouthpiece for Faḍlallāh's ideas from the mid 1970s.¹⁶⁰

It becomes clear from a reading of the collections of his lectures and answers to the public that the recurring themes and reasoning characteristic of Faḍlallāh's view all through his life had been crystallised by the start of his Lebanese mission. The topics that he covers in *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa* appear in his talks collected in a volume entitled *Mafāhīm islāmiyya 'amma*. The recurring questions raised by the audience and collected in separate sections at the end of each chapter seem to have determined Faḍlallāh's nodes of interest in *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*.

In the lectures a recurrent theme is detecting the reasons for the present decay of Muslim societies. At his first public lecture "al-Taḥdhīb al-ijtimā'ī fī'l-islām" [The social education in Islam], he stressed the importance of congruence between the professed faith and the daily practices.¹⁶¹ Faḍlallāh claimed that the oppressed bear responsibility for submitting to the oppressors. Islam by essence of its divinely ordered and comprehensive legal system offers a perfect social paradigm but political leaders

¹⁵⁶ Sankari, *Fadlallah*, 132.

¹⁵⁷ Among its graduates there was Shaykh Rāghib Ḥarb, the first leader of militant resistance against the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon. He was assassinated in 1984. See: Surūr, *al-'Allāma M. Ḥ. Faḍlallāh*, 55.

¹⁵⁸ Sankari, *Fadlallah*, 133.

¹⁵⁹ Shimon Shapira, "The Origins of Hizbullah," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 46 (1988): 117, 128-9.

¹⁶⁰ Shapira, "The Origins of Hizbullah," 116, 126-7.

¹⁶¹ Faḍlallāh, *Mafāhīm*, 9-37.

distorted religious values.¹⁶² He stressed the destructive effects of the rigidity and passivity of the ‘*ulamā*’, the Muslim rulers’ abuse of human freedoms, and the impact of Western materialism and individualism.¹⁶³ In another lecture entitled “Qaḍīyyat al-‘izz wa’l-dhull fī’l-islām” [“The issue of glory and degradation in Islam”], Faḍlallāh pointed to the collaboration with alien powers, and the lack of personal and social strength as major reasons of the problem.¹⁶⁴

In another talk “al-Amal wa’l-ya’s fī’l-islām” [Hope and Despair in Islam]¹⁶⁵ Faḍlallāh claimed that the political, military, economic and cultural dominance of the Great Powers was the result of many factors, among them the prevailing misperception of dependence on foreign patronage in the Third World.¹⁶⁶ In his radical assessment Faḍlallāh concluded that those who support in any form or for any reason the unjust *status quo* cannot be considered as believers.¹⁶⁷ He saw the mission of Islamists in reinforcing the sense of a common Muslim identity – that transcends state borders and the Sunnī-Shī‘ī divide – and in creating a realistic evaluation of the moral, intellectual and economic resources available to Muslims. On the grounds of this *realpolitik* they can become qualified actors on the international stage and take their share in the social and scientific-technological progress. Only after having acquired the needed inner strength and confidence can Muslims enter in any form of cooperation with a non-Muslim power on a footing of equality.¹⁶⁸

Among other topics that re-appear in *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa* we find Faḍlallāh’s emphasis on Islam as a comprehensive system¹⁶⁹ and his refutation of the Marxist perception of religion as a paralysing force.¹⁷⁰ He stressed that Man, as God’s vicegerent on earth, is bestowed with responsibility and power and thus a human being is the agent of transformation and melioration.¹⁷¹ Another recurring theme in Faḍlallāh’s thought is that change in the *status quo* presupposes human effort.¹⁷² He argued for

¹⁶² Faḍlallāh, *Mafāhīm*, 20-25.

¹⁶³ Faḍlallāh, *Mafāhīm*, 42-47.

¹⁶⁴ Faḍlallāh, *Mafāhīm*, 97-115.

¹⁶⁵ Faḍlallāh, *Mafāhīm*, 133-156.

¹⁶⁶ Faḍlallāh, *Mafāhīm*, 140.

¹⁶⁷ Faḍlallāh, *Mafāhīm*, 142-147.

¹⁶⁸ Faḍlallāh, *Mafāhīm*, 146-156.

¹⁶⁹ Faḍlallāh, *Mafāhīm*, 430-31.

¹⁷⁰ Faḍlallāh, *Mafāhīm*, 228-233.

¹⁷¹ Faḍlallāh, *Mafāhīm*, 424, 364.

¹⁷² Faḍlallāh, *Mafāhīm*, 151.

human freedom in decision-making and for Man's responsibility of action.¹⁷³ Faḍlallāh claimed that the human being is empowered through faith, self-discipline, and observance of the *sharī'a*.¹⁷⁴ He dealt with the problem of change in relation to the use of force¹⁷⁵ and analysed its social aspects.¹⁷⁶

Kramer claims that in his discourse Faḍlallāh did nothing but combine “the traditional Islamic themes and the fashionable rhetoric of anti-imperialist nationalism”, by substituting “Muslims” for “Arabs” and “Islam” for Arabism”.¹⁷⁷ However, before the outbreak of the civil war he did not outline specific political goals and strategies for Islamist activists.¹⁷⁸ The next step in his intellectual activism came with the publication of three remarkable volumes, the first being *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*. The book on the importance of power and the legitimate use of force was finished in May 1976, based on the crystallised and edited version of his lectures delivered in the previous decade. As Fuad Ajami remarks, there is no record of the reception of *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa* when it was first published. The ideas that the book set out seemed more wishful thinking than a realistic assessment of the Shī'ī Islamist potential. Ajami adds that “Faḍlallāh's book acquired a new kind of authority several years later.”¹⁷⁹

The publication of *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa* was followed by *al-Ḥiwār fī'l-Qur'ān* [Dialogue in the Qur'an] written with the aim of demonstrating that the Qur'ān is a resource for conducting dialogue as a means to convey the divine message to humanity.¹⁸⁰ In the third book from the same period, entitled *Khaṭawāt 'alā ṭarīq al-Islām* [Steps on the Path of Islam], Faḍlallāh provided principles and methods for Islamists engaging in religious-political activism.¹⁸¹ Among others he dealt with the social (ethical), political (mostly economic), and *jihādi* (in the sense of activist) aspects of *da'wa*.¹⁸² He stressed that the Islamist transformation is a gradual process,¹⁸³ and

¹⁷³ Faḍlallāh, *Mafāhīm*, 163-4.

¹⁷⁴ Faḍlallāh, *Mafāhīm*, 342-347.

¹⁷⁵ Faḍlallāh, *Mafāhīm*, 428-9.

¹⁷⁶ Faḍlallāh, *Mafāhīm*, 429.

¹⁷⁷ Kramer, “The Oracle of Hizbullah,” 93.

¹⁷⁸ Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon*, 146.

¹⁷⁹ Ajami, *The Vanished Imam*, 216-7.

¹⁸⁰ M. Ḥ. Faḍlallāh, *al-Ḥiwār fī'l-Qur'ān* [Dialogue in the Quran] (Beirut, Dār al-Malāk, 2001), 5-11.

¹⁸¹ M. Ḥ. Faḍlallāh, *Khaṭawāt 'alā ṭarīq al-Islām* [Steps along the path of Islam] (Beirut: Dār al-Malāk, 2004)

¹⁸² Faḍlallāh, *Khaṭawāt*, 49-55.

¹⁸³ Faḍlallāh, *Khaṭawāt*, 40.

underlined the importance of realistic assessment,¹⁸⁴ for which cohesion between theory and practice, organisational skills, and mindful planning are essential.¹⁸⁵ As for the means, he admitted that they must be varied and based on realistic assessment of the circumstances.¹⁸⁶ He dedicated an extended sub-chapter to the problematic of *taqiyya*.¹⁸⁷

In early July 1976 Faḍlallāh was compelled to leave his constituency when the Phalangists overran and destroyed Nabʿa.¹⁸⁸ As Kramer remarks, “These Shiites, including Faḍlallāh, had become some of the first refugees of Lebanon’s civil war.”¹⁸⁹ The fall of the district and the displacement of its inhabitants had a devastating impact on a decade’s intellectual and material efforts.¹⁹⁰ He spent the rest of the year 1976 in Bint Jbayl. The situation, however, was no less dangerous in the South.¹⁹¹ Faḍlallāh thus returned to the capital and settled in the neighbourhood of Biʿr al-ʿAbd in the Southern Suburbs (*al-ḍaḥīya al-janūbiyya*).¹⁹²

Due to his appointment in the same year as the official representative of Abūʾl-Qāsim al-Khūʾi, and his widespread activity in lecturing and institution-building, Faḍlallāh’s reputation and influence considerably increased. At the same time, a group of talented students returned to Lebanon from Najaf because the Baʿathist regime expelled many of the foreign students following a series of rebellions in 1977.¹⁹³ Faḍlallāh’s organisational and theoretical contributions to the Lebanese Shīʿī social and political scene prior to, and at the outset of the civil war had a formative impact on the perception of the radicalised youth and thus – in the following decades – influenced the entire Lebanese political milieu. His ideas set out in *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa* ensured his place among the leading Islamist theoreticians of the 20th century.

¹⁸⁴ Faḍlallāh, *Khaṭawāt*, 25.

¹⁸⁵ Faḍlallāh, *Khaṭawāt*, 27.

¹⁸⁶ Faḍlallāh, *Khaṭawāt*, 138, 169, 201.

¹⁸⁷ Faḍlallāh, *Khaṭawāt*, 219-256.

¹⁸⁸ Surūr, *al-ʿAllāma M. Ḥ. Faḍlallāh*, 71.

¹⁸⁹ Kramer, “The Oracle of Hizbullah,” 97.

¹⁹⁰ Shanahan, “The Oracle of Hizbullah,” 153.

¹⁹¹ Kramer, “The Oracle of Hizbullah,” 97.

¹⁹² Kramer, “The Oracle of Hizbullah,” 99 and Sankari, *Faḍlallah*, 160-161.

¹⁹³ Kramer, “The Oracle of Hizbullah,” 100.

3. Some aspects of Faḍlallāh's importance as the foremost Lebanese Shī'ī jurist-theologian (1976-2010)

In describing the years between the publication of *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa* in 1976 and his death in 2010, I focus on four issues that were decisive in assessing Faḍlallāh's importance.

3.1 Faḍlallāh and the concept of *wilāyat al-faqīh*

In order to understand Faḍlallāh's claim to the title of *marja' al-taqlīd*, first we need to consider the repercussions of Khumaynī's definition of *wilāyat al-faqīh* (guardianship of the Islamic jurists) for the Shī'ī community worldwide. The principle with regards to Lebanon implied that Khumaynī and his successor are to be vested with extra-territorial authority over the Shī'a, and also the quest for the immediate establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon.

From among the abundant number of hypotheses on Faḍlallāh's stance, I find three ideas worth consideration. Clarke pointed out that "Faḍlallāh moved to allowing the possibility of multiple 'guardian jurisprudents' for distinct regions with distinct concerns", and later "abandoned the notion altogether in favour of the rule of law (*wilāyat al-fīqh*) over that of the jurist (*wilāyat al-faqīh*)".¹⁹⁴ Aziz and Shaery-Eisenlohr emphasised the link between Faḍlallāh's claim of *marja' iyya* and his rejection of the institution of *wilāyat al-faqīh*.¹⁹⁵ Hamid Algar elaborated the problem of this connection by drawing attention to the fact that the constitution of the Islamic Republic was amended in 1989, and the requirement that the *walī al-faqīh* has to be a *marja' al-taqlīd* (the primary source of emulation) was removed, thus, the institution of *wilāyat al-faqīh* – coinciding with Faḍlallāh's interpretation became more confined to the political system of the Islamic Republic. Accordingly – in Algar's view – Faḍlallāh's focus switched from the concept of *wilāyat al-faqīh* to a new interpretation of *marja' iyya*.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ Clarke, "Neo-Calligraphy," 365.

¹⁹⁵ Aziz, "Fadlallah and the Remaking of the Marja' iyya," 214 and Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shi'ite Lebanon*, 144.

¹⁹⁶ Algar, "Response to Browers," 47-48.

3.2 Faḍlallāh's understanding of Shī'ism and his claim to *marja' al-taqlīd*

Faḍlallāh assumed the title of *marja' al-taqlīd* in 1995. This claim was related to two core ideas. First, to his attempt to find a new basis for the self-definition of the Shī'a, one that is not reactionary or based merely on historical grievances against the Sunnites, but rather provides theological support to the fight against "imperialism" and oppression. Second, it was related to his conviction that living on the margins of the Shī'i world in a multi-denominational, cosmopolitan, culturally "composite" region he had the means and the freedom to work out a modern Shī'ism that provides comprehensive answers to the challenges of the day. His own empowerment as a religious scholar was inevitable in this process. However, Faḍlallāh, for practical reasons strongly opposed the excessive veneration of charismatic leaders, and urged focus on the message without yielding to the appeal of the leader-hero.¹⁹⁷

Faḍlallāh's reinterpretation of Shī'i tenets in view of Muslim ecumenism triggered both support and condemnation in his own community. Stephan Rosiny describes the Fāṭima al-Zahrā' controversy as a clash of two tendencies within Shī'i historiography represented by Ja'far Murtaḍā al-Āmilī and Faḍlallāh.¹⁹⁸ In Rosiny's view, the debate had strong social and political implications because it coincided with a religious and political power struggle over the *marja'iyya* and over the control of the Lebanese Shī'ite community.

With respect to Faḍlallāh's efforts to reinterpret some Shī'i tenets and his claim to be a source of emulation, there are three dominant and interrelated hypotheses. Shaery-Eisenlohr claims that Faḍlallāh's emphasis on "Arab Islamism", and considering himself a representative of "the rationalist school" (*al-madrasa al-aqliyya*) of religion served to define himself and establish a reputation as a specifically Arab *marja'*. In Hamid Algar's view, Faḍlallāh defined the post of the *marja' al-taqlīd* as an exclusive, supranational, non-ethnic, merit-based authority. His claim of *marja'iyya* in 1995 resulted from this new concept and his consideration of it as a primary means to make his voice heard in the remotest Shī'i communities and to contest the authorities speaking

¹⁹⁷ Aziz, "Fadlallah and the Remaking of the Marja' iyya," 206.

¹⁹⁸ See his article: "The Tragedy of Fāṭima al-Zahrā'".

from the religious centres such as Najaf or Qum.¹⁹⁹ Roy Mottahedeh pointed out that Faḍlallāh added another important criterion besides that of the excellence in Islamic sciences, namely that the *marjaʿ* is required to be capable and willing to visit the various Shīʿī communities worldwide. This condition obviously suited Faḍlallāh’s character and capacities at that time.²⁰⁰

In his lifetime Faḍlallāh was considered the foremost and most influential Shīʿī jurist in Lebanon. However, his status as a *marjaʿ* was widely contested for reasons which can be attributed to his commitment to the Sunnī-Shīʿī rapprochement, his “Levantine” cosmopolitan Shīʿism, as well as to the *ʿulamāʾ*’s reluctance to accept universal leadership from an *ʿālim* living outside the traditional religious centres.²⁰¹ Faḍlallāh, however, argued that “it is not possible to transpose scholarly opinions (*fatāwā*) wholesale from Tehran to Lebanon”.²⁰²

3.3 Faḍlallāh’s relation to Ḥizbullāh

The relationship between Faḍlallāh and the organisation was probably the most widely discussed topic in the media as well as in the Western secondary literature. In the jungle of arguments and counter-arguments based on the reconstruction of oblique historical events, Joseph Elie Alagha, in his book *The Shifts in Hizbullah’s Ideology*, provides useful aspects for an objective evaluation of Faḍlallāh’s impact on Hizbullah. He claims that at a theoretical level Faḍlallāh’s views – especially those set out in his books *al-Ḥaraka al-Islāmiyya: humūm wa-qaḍāya* [The Islamic movement: concerns and issues] and *Irādat al-quwwa* [The will to power] – were inspiring for the formation and justification of Ḥizbullāh’s strategies and militant actions – for instance his sanctioning of “martyrdom operations” as “self-sacrificial defensive *jihādi* acts”²⁰³ – as well as the movement’s decision to integrate in the parliamentary system of Lebanon after the Tāʿif Agreement (1989).

¹⁹⁹ Algar, “Response to Browers,” 47-48.

²⁰⁰ Roy Mottahedi, “The *Risāla ʿAmaliyya*, the Hawza and Clerical Authority in the Shiite Islam” (paper presented at the Hawza conference, Oxford, 28-30 March, 2012).

²⁰¹ Sankari, *Fadlallah*, 256–57.

²⁰² Shanahan, *The Shiʿa of Lebanon*, 156.

²⁰³ Alagha, *The Shifts in Hizbullah’s Ideology*, 139.

However, Alagha asserts, their views diverged on many practical issues. He recalls that, “during the 1980s, Faḍlallāh has openly called for the rationalisation and routinisation of (...) Ḥizbullāh’s enthusiastic-unbalanced discourse” and spoke out against the hijackings and kidnappings attributed to the organisation.²⁰⁴ Faḍlallāh later differed from Ḥizbullāh on issues such as the adherence to the principle of *wilāyat al-faqīh*, the timing of the implementation of the Islamic state in Lebanon, as well as certain electoral policies, for instance declaring the vote in favour of Ḥizbullāh at the 2005 elections as *al-taklīf al-sharī* (*legitimate* and religious responsibility).²⁰⁵ Faḍlallāh did not endorse Ḥizbullāh’s use of religious rituals and public processions as tools of mobilisation, while the movement did not back his statements in which he reinterpreted some core tenets of Shī‘ism. Therefore, we cannot regard Faḍlallāh’s reluctance to relate himself officially to the organisation as a merely tactical step,²⁰⁶ or as motivated by fear.²⁰⁷

With respect to the differences of views between Faḍlallāh and Ḥizbullāh, I assume that Faḍlallāh’s guidance for Ḥizbullāh represented a set of general principles that could be set aside according to the requirements of the day. It is a fact that Faḍlallāh’s theoretical and institution-building activities were decisive in the education and politicisation of a generation of young Shī‘ī, who joined the emerging Ḥizbullāh during the civil war. However, while the generation to which Ḥizbullāh’s current leaders belong was primarily tuned to militant activism financed by Iran, Faḍlallāh’s vision of resistance was much broader and aimed at the comprehensive reform of religious perception and mentality. As Clarke reminds us, his “avowed ‘open-mindedness’ (*infītāh*) has challenged and alienated some within the upper echelons of

²⁰⁴ Alagha, *The Shifts in Hizbullah’s Ideology*, 96.

²⁰⁵ Alagha, *The Shifts in Hizbullah’s Ideology*, 62.

²⁰⁶ R. Scott Appleby’s conviction is that fundamentalist movements are always affiliated to a charismatic leader who “provides the vision and religious-moral legitimation for action, while his subordinates develop a specific program of action.” Consequently, there is a tactical distance between the guidance of the charismatic leader and the violent actions perpetrated by the organization. See: R. Scott Appleby, “History in the Fundamentalist Imagination,” *Journal of American History* 89 (2002): 498-511.

²⁰⁷ Shanahan attributes Faḍlallāh’s reluctance to be associated with Ḥizbullāh to two reasons. The first is the fate of Bāqir al-Ṣadr because of his close link to the Da‘wa party, and the assassination attempt against Faḍlallāh in 1985. The second reason for Shanahan is that any formal association with the movement risked “to draw him into open competition with Āyatullāh Khameneī for the spiritual allegiance of the party’s members.” Shanahan, *The Shi‘a of Lebanon*, 155.

Ḥizbullāh.”²⁰⁸ After the death of Khumaynī, Ḥizbullāh named Āyatullāh Khameneī as their new *marjaʿ*, and this implies their adherence to the direction envisaged in Tehran.

3.4 Faḍlallāh and the Islamic State

The establishment of an Islamic state was an issue on which Faḍlallāh’s views proved to be the most varying and versatile in the course of his life. Most scholars agree that with regards to the necessity and method of implementing the Islamic state, there are well distinguishable stages in the evolvement of Faḍlallāh’s thought.

In *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, Faḍlallāh suggested that religious minorities were to be governed by the “*dhimmī* contract”,²⁰⁹ but he did not specify the Lebanese case. Khashan claims that after the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon Faḍlallāh set the creation of an Islamic republic as a long-term goal.²¹⁰ Browsers defines Faḍlallāh’s theory of *al-ḥāla al-Islāmiyya* that he developed in the late 1980s as a project with the aim of unifying the Shīʿī community and activists in order to establish an Islamic state under the banner of an overarching Islamic ideology.²¹¹ Sankari remarks that already in 1985 during a visit to Iran, Faḍlallāh opposed the immediate establishment of an Islamic state in Lebanon.

His position changed again in the post-Ṭāʿif era, and became more cautious and tactical due to “the multi-confessional composition [of the Lebanese state], the distaste of non-Islamists, and the hostility of regional powers”.²¹² His ideas became more realistic and less definitive towards the end of his life. This phase is well illustrated by an interview that Joseph Alagha conducted with him in 2005. By that time Faḍlallāh had developed a framework called *al-sāḥa al-insāniyya*, an “humanistic milieu” that transcended the sectarian lines of Lebanese politics. He designed it as a pluralistic

²⁰⁸ Clarke, “Neo-Calligraphy,” 358. See also: Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shiʿite Lebanon*, 154–55.

²⁰⁹ See: Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, Chapter 7.7 “Force and the supremacy of Islam”, especially p. 244.

²¹⁰ Khashan, *The Religious and Political Impact*, 432.

²¹¹ Browsers, *Fadlallah*, 33.

²¹² Sankari, *Fadlallah*, 221.

Islamic cultural sphere built on the concept of citizenship (*muwāṭana*) in which notions such as the Islamic state and *ahl al-dhimma* become bygone constructs.²¹³

In the evolution of his views we can notice a tendency in which the question of Islamic state in Lebanon became more that of an “exercise” in *da‘wa* through intellectual debate and finding new ways to spread Islam in the West. Faḍlallāh’s approach of gradual and almost inconspicuous Islamisation of a multi-confessional society could serve as an experiment for the same process in the similarly multi-confessional region and, over the long term – through the diasporas – could provide a “road map” for the Islamisation of the entire world.

Concluding remarks

Faḍlallāh’s intellectual biography reveals his concern to transform Islam into a religion of empowerment. His ideas and social-political activities were focused on turning Islam into a viable and comprehensive answer to the issues of the day, and at the same time on empowering his community. Due to his upbringing and education in Iraq and his rise to prominence in Lebanon, his system of thought was formed by a sufficient knowledge of Sunnism, Marxism, and Christianity as well as first-hand experience in the pitfalls and opportunities of political activism. Witnessing the same problems and challenges in Iraq and in Lebanon urged him to find comprehensive answers. Faḍlallāh realised the importance of empowerment while facing the persecution of the Iraqi Shī‘a and later on the vulnerability of the Shī‘ī community in pre-war Lebanon. His personal fate that brought him unique opportunities as well as extreme calamities goes a long way towards explaining his resourcefulness.

²¹³ Joseph Alagha, *Hizbullah’s Documents: From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 246.

Chapter II: Historical and Intellectual Background: Transformation of Shī'ism in Modern Times

Introduction

In the shifting, challenging and complex Lebanese political environment, the Shī'ī community needed a project of power. This would provide a road map to attain its goals: a comprehensive theory of empowerment composed of all instruments available for the Lebanese Shī'ī community. This chapter is dedicated to the socio-political and intellectual context of Faḍlallāh's theory of power. In particular, I examine the factors that determined the social posture of the Shī'ī community prior to and in the course of the civil war, the major intellectual trends and reformist ideas concerning political representation and the Lebanese state.

1. Lebanon in the 1960s and 1970s and the transformation of the Shī'a

The redefinition and reinterpretation of Shī'ī tenets and their adaptation to contemporary issues gained momentum in three countries with significant or majority Shī'ī population, namely in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon. In Iraq, the Ba'athist regime eliminated the Shī'ī movement between 1977 and 1980, hamstringing the political implementation of a reformed ideology.²¹⁴ Conversely, in Iran and Lebanon, the loosening grip of the central authority encouraged Shī'ī activism. The failure of political reforms, the enforced westernisation and imposed prominence of secular values in everyday life, the increasing social disparities in spite of the radical growth in state revenues considerably weakened the ruling regimes. The *'ulamā'* took the opportunity and claimed an increased interference in politics. The Iranian and Lebanese clerics re-interpreted the Shī'ī religious heritage with a clear social agenda.

In Iran and in Lebanon, the political system lacked any ground for legitimacy. In Lebanon the framework set by the 1943 National Pact – based on the ratios laid down by the 1932 census – was no longer suitable for the socially, economically,

²¹⁴ Mallat, *The Renewal of Islamic Law*, 189.

demographically transformed country. In Iran, there was a profound resentment over the old-fashioned autocratic rule, disrespectful of human rights and freedoms.²¹⁵

Second, in both countries the failure of the economic reforms was aggravated by the widespread dissatisfaction with the economic inequalities, and the glaring stratification was made obvious by the rapid urbanisation.²¹⁶

The third factor was the misappropriation of western values and ideals in Lebanon just as in Iran. It meant the westernisation of administrative management and the economy, and widespread concessions given to foreign investors. In Lebanese as well as in Iranian intellectual circles this caused a fear of losing identity under the pressure of Westernisation and colonial ambitions.²¹⁷ Marxist ideas were gaining ground, but in these countries communists did not form a well-organised, influential opposition. However, Marxist ideology steadily permeated the ideas of the secular and some of the religious reformers.

The Shī'a in Lebanon had no meaningful political representation while in Iran religious principles were not put into practice in public life nor in political practices. Against such a background there was need for a new discourse that emphasised the importance of social justice but distanced itself from Marxist ideology and world-view, condemned foreign imperialist ambitions, substituted the discredited nationalism with potent Islamism, urged the political participation of the '*ulamā*', and before all, reinterpreted the tenets of Shī'ism thus preparing the way for organised political and social activism.

In Iran this project was carried out by Khumaynī, while in Lebanon the initiative was taken by Mūsā al-Ṣadr. Both adopted a discourse based on Shī'ī history, and abundant in Shī'ī symbolism, such as transforming the events and actors of Karbalā' into a paradigm through which contemporary politics was interpreted. Thus, Shī'ī religious discourse became closely intertwined with national identity, as well as becoming a means of mobilisation against social and economic deprivation.²¹⁸

²¹⁵ Shaul Bakhash, *The Reign of the Ayatollahs: Iran and the Islamic Revolution* (San Bernardino: Millefleurs, 1991), 9, 11.

²¹⁶ Jahangir Amuzegar, *The Dynamics of the Iranian Revolution, The Pahlavis' Triumph and Tragedy*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 5. Halawi, *A Lebanon Defied* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 143, 163.

²¹⁷ Amuzegar, *The Dynamics of the Iranian Revolution*, 41. Mallat, "Aspects of Shi'i Thought," 25.

²¹⁸ Hamid Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent. The Ideological Foundation of the Islamic Revolution in Iran* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 195.

Shaery-Eisenlohr describes al-Ṣadr's rising influence as based on "the dialectic intersection between class and religious national identity".²¹⁹ In this, the three-fold and simultaneous experience of economic impoverishment, religious oppression and political marginalisation "help[ed] to constitute an identity primarily couched in religious terms",²²⁰ as well as to construct the politics of the "deprived" (*maḥrūmīn*).²²¹ Al-Ṣadr – who was a man of action rather than a theoretician – thus provided the Shī'a with a sense of community and made their voice heard on the Lebanese political scene. As Ajami points out, he supported the engagement of the '*ulamā*' in everyday and political affairs beyond the scope of their scholarly commitments.²²² Faḍlallāh's enterprise was closely connected to al-Ṣadr's achievements. However, he went further and interpreted Islam as the source of empowerment embedded in a comprehensive theory of power.

2. The Plight of the Lebanese Shī'a

By the end of the 1980s the Shī'a formed the largest denomination in Lebanon amounting to approximately 30%.²²³ However, in the Parliament they held only 19 seats out of 99, and among the high-ranking officials of the army, the internal security, and the diplomatic corps they were heavily underrepresented due to the gerrymandered consociationalism asserted by the National Pact.²²⁴ The traditional leaders (*zu'amā'*) and their clientele monopolised positions of authority in local and national politics, and were more concerned with the preservation of their own social and economic standing than with the grievances of their community.²²⁵

²¹⁹ Roschanack Shaery-Eisenlohr, "Constructing Lebanese Shi'ite Nationalism: Transnationalism, Shi'ism, and the Lebanese State" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2005), 49.

²²⁰ Shaery-Eisenlohr, "Constructing Lebanese Shi'ite Nationalism," 47.

²²¹ Shaery-Eisenlohr, "Constructing Lebanese Shi'ite Nationalism," 48.

²²² Ajami, *The Vanished Imam*, 123.

²²³ Halawi, *A Lebanon Defied*, 50.

²²⁴ Halawi, *A Lebanon Defied*, 98. "[T]he period between 1946 and 1962 was marked by staggering Shi'a underrepresentation in the upper echelons of government. Other figures reveal a similar picture for the lower class II and class III administrative posts. In the late sixties, and despite many promotions, Shi'a functionaries still occupied thirty four class II and 115 class III posts (out of a total of 1218) (...)." Halawi, *A Lebanon Defied*, 98-9.

²²⁵ "These *zu'amā'* (...) regarded Sadr's mobilization of the masses on a "religious" level ... as a threat to their own benefits and imagination of the Lebanese nation." Shaery-Eisenlohr, "Constructing Lebanese

In the South, the Shī'ī population had a hierarchical structure consisting of landlords and tenant farmers, sharecroppers, and agricultural labourers. After the proclamation of the state of Israel in 1948, commercial ties with Palestine were cut. In addition, while in 1974 20 percent of the country's population lived in the South, it received less than 0.7 percent of the budget for investment and development.²²⁶ From the early 1970s, due to the escalating clashes between the PLO and the Israeli army, the security environment deteriorated so severely in the South as to put the residents' life at risk on a daily basis.²²⁷ In the Biqā' Valley the Shī'a dealt with livestock farming and lived in a more egalitarian social system.²²⁸ The crisis of the agrarian sector and the aggravating security situation gave impetus for internal as well as external migration. Both regions belonged to the neglected zones of the country, outside the scope of infrastructural developments and governmental or private investments.

Due to the continuous exodus, by 1975 about 40 percent of the population of the predominantly Shī'ī south Lebanon and about 25 percent of the population of the Biqā' had settled in the slum suburbs of the capital, called the "Belt of Misery" in the vicinity of the Palestinian refugee camps where they lacked the basics of sanitation and public infrastructure.²²⁹ Thus urbanisation among the Shī'a became a source of new tensions and frustrations because in Beirut they had to deal with the institutionalised form of discrimination and neglect, while being exposed to the prosperity of the privileged segments of the society.²³⁰ The sobriquet applied to the Shī'a by other communities was *mutawallī*, a word used to refer to "everything that was considered low-class, tasteless, and vulgar".²³¹

However, it was in the capital that the Shī'a coming from the southern and northern parts of the country first lived in the same environment and shared the same difficulties. As opposed to the Sunnites of Lebanon who had strong urban traditions,

Shi'ite Nationalism," 58. See also: A. R. Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 27-28, 33.

²²⁶ Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a*, 17-18.

²²⁷ Elizabeth Picard, *The Lebanese Shia and Political Violence* (Discussion Paper, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1993), 7.

²²⁸ Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered* (Berkeley: I. B. Tauris, 1988), 145.

²²⁹ Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a*, 23. Halawi, *A Lebanon Defied*, 68.

²³⁰ Halawi, *A Lebanon Defied*, 73-74.

²³¹ Shaery-Eisenlohr, "Constructing Lebanese Shi'ite Nationalism," 53.

and beyond family ties developed firm professional and ideological bonds,²³² in the case of the Maronite and Shīʿī communities, the rapid urbanisation radically changed the traditional socio-political structure of the two communities. Among the marginalised urban Shīʿa two major trends emerged. For some, family ties were replaced by stressing religious-sectarian connections.²³³ The annual ‘Āshūrā’ festivals provided an opportunity to express their religious identity and to form bonds with other members of the community. While others – especially the youth – joined left-wing parties and radical Palestinian organisations that proclaimed equality, social justice and Arab unity. The most attractive of these was the Lebanese National Movement (1969) led by Kamāl Junblāt, with a membership of socialists, communists, Arab nationalists and other left-wing secular activists.²³⁴

By the 1970s, the Shīʿī religious-political discourse and activism of Mūsā al-Ṣadr had provided an authentic framework to express the grievances and aspirations of the community and thus gradually replaced “class consciousness among the Shīʿa workers”.²³⁵ The policies pursued by Fuʿād Shihāb (1958-1964) aimed at national unity to be reached through social justice, political and administrative reform and as such provided good grounds for cooperation between Mūsā al-Ṣadr and the president.²³⁶ However, as the security situation worsened, al-Ṣadr’s tone became harsher and armed struggle became a significant theme of his mobilising discourse.²³⁷ His aim was to pressure the government to implement a comprehensive reform programme and to set up “a new social contract”.²³⁸ The breakthrough occurred with the outbreak of the civil war in 1975, and with the consequent collapse of the Lebanese political system. This provided the Shīʿa with an unprecedented opportunity to assert their interests through forceful means.²³⁹ The weakening of the LNM and the strengthening Shīʿī identity prepared the way for the formation of the Amal in January 1975.

²³² Helena Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 25.

²³³ Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon*, 116.

²³⁴ Norton, *Amal and the Shiʿa*, 38.

²³⁵ Halawi, *A Lebanon Defied*, 73.

²³⁶ Shaery-Eisenlohr, “Constructing Lebanese Shiʿite Nationalism,” 66.

²³⁷ Norton, *Amal and the Shiʿa*, 46.

²³⁸ Halawi, *A Lebanon Defied*, 100-101.

²³⁹ Shaery-Eisenlohr, “Constructing Lebanese Shiʿite Nationalism,” 67.

3. Intellectual trends amongst the Lebanese Shī'a in the 1970s

Before the arrival of Mūsā al-Ṣadr to Lebanon in 1959, the Shī'a had two main venues for asserting their interests: through their traditional *zu'amā'*, or affiliation to left-wing secularist movements and parties that pooled into the Lebanese National Movement. The internal division of the community was also due to the geographical conditions of the country that separated the regions in which the majority of the Shī'a lived, namely Jabal 'Āmil, the Biqā' and the slums of Beirut. The circumstances, lifestyles and daily concerns of the various segments of the community differed, and so did the strategy they opted for to improve their conditions. Thus the Shī'a were "caught in the political space" between the reformist Mūsā al-Ṣadr, the old elites – led by Kamāl al-As'ad – and the secular radicals mainly affiliated to the Lebanese National Movement.²⁴⁰ The wealthy Shī'i expatriates were eager to acquire positions in the political hierarchy and mostly shared Mūsā al-Ṣadr's vision of reform.²⁴¹

Due to the activism of Mūsā al-Ṣadr and Faḍlallāh, the religious opposition gained strength. However, there were further discords among the leading clerics regarding the three red-hot issues of the day: the nature and extent of support provided to the Palestinians, the political representation of the Shī'i population, and the status of the community in the Lebanese society.

3.1 The Reformist '*ulamā'* and the question of political representation

In Lebanon, it was Muḥammad Jawād Mughniyya (1904-1979) who first raised his voice against the government's discriminative policies and the resulting miserable condition of the Shī'a living in the South. He dealt with this problem in his first book entitled *The Present Situation of Jabal 'Āmil*, published in Beirut in 1947. Mughniyya's discourse was openly revolutionary, and he equally criticised the local population for accepting the discriminatory policy without any meaningful objection. His criticism was accompanied by "a concomitant program of social and economic change" as well.²⁴²

²⁴⁰ Halawi, *A Lebanon Defied*, 147-149.

²⁴¹ Sankari, *Fadlallah*, 125.

²⁴² Mallat, "Aspects of Shi'i Thought from the South of Lebanon," 30.

Chibli Mallat in his seminal study “Aspects of Shī‘ī Thought from the South of Lebanon” drew attention to the fact that Shī‘ī thinkers and leaders in Lebanon after Mughniyya offered no specific economic programmes, and the demand for change became simply the common denominator of the competing groups. “The talk on poverty and on the deprived (*maḥrūmīn*, *muṣṭaḍ‘afīn*) has turned into a ritualistic element of speech among the new Shī‘ī forces.”²⁴³

Right after his arrival to Lebanon in 1959, Mūsā al-Ṣadr engaged in institution-building and political activism. In his discourse he aimed to “position Shiites within the Lebanese national narrative” asserting “that the labels of underclass and rural are in fact the two components that make the Shī‘a the most authentic Lebanese citizens”.²⁴⁴ Al-Ṣadr in his rhetoric successfully applied the traditional Shī‘ī self-image of rebels against oppression to the contemporary Lebanese Shī‘a as a downtrodden and disadvantaged community in an unjust political system.²⁴⁵ Also, he stressed that their struggle, similarly to that of the first followers of Imām ‘Alī, serves the interests of the larger community to which they belong, that is in general the entire Lebanese nation, and in particular all the deprived regardless of their denominational background.²⁴⁶ Al-Ṣadr did not provide a coherent ideological plan, but rather focused on forging inter-sectarian alliances – through actions – thus improving the image of the Lebanese Shī‘a in the eyes of the other communities, as well as their self-perception by using an activist rhetoric.

The formation of an autonomous administrative institution, the Supreme Islamic Shī‘ī Council was al-Ṣadr’s initiative.²⁴⁷ The Council – like the similar institutions set up earlier by the Sunnites and Druze – was supposed to organise the religious, legal, and social affairs of the community.²⁴⁸ The agenda for the Council was made public in May 1969 stating among its aims the improvement of the socio- economic conditions of the community, cooperation with all Lebanese denominations, protection of the integrity of Lebanon, and support to the Palestinian resistance. The principles did not have specific references to Shī‘ī history and tenets, rather – as universal religious values – they

²⁴³ Mallat, “Aspects of Shi‘i Thought,” 30-31.

²⁴⁴ Shaery-Eisenlohr, “Constructing Lebanese Shi‘ite Nationalism,” 57-60.

²⁴⁵ Shaery-Eisenlohr, “Constructing Lebanese Shi‘ite Nationalism,” 61.

²⁴⁶ *al-Hawādith*, 24 December 1976 referred to by Shaery-Eisenlohr in “Constructing Lebanese Shi‘ite Nationalism,” 64-5.

²⁴⁷ Sankari, *Fadlallah*, 143-4.

²⁴⁸ Sankari, *Fadlallah*, 144.

referred to combating social injustice and improving morals in the society.²⁴⁹ The fact that it was headed by both clerics and lay intellectuals challenged the authority of the *zu'amā'*, who, therefore, firmly opposed it. It created controversy within the Shī'i *'ulamā'* as well, its strongest opponent was Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh. He opted for the reinforcement of the already existing Higher Islamic Council as a unifying body for all Muslims in the country.²⁵⁰

In late 1973, the Council prepared and presented a list of twenty *Demands*. In the document great emphasis was put on the protection of South Lebanon with simultaneous support to the Palestinian resistance, on the investigation of government abuses, on the proportionate representation at every level of the state administration, and on the demand for social and economic policies based on equality.²⁵¹ Both the *Demands* and the *Charter* of the Movement promoted gradual transformation, commitment to the Palestinian issue and national unity.²⁵² According to Shaery-Eisenlohr the apparent lack of Shī'a specific discourse served to "position themselves at the center of the nation and as 'true patriots'".²⁵³ For A. AbuKhalil, the vagueness of the ideology presented in the documents made it more flexible for the growing radical mood of the Shī'a.²⁵⁴

However, neither of these documents suggested concrete solutions or provided an action-plan for the implementation of the desired changes. The next step was the formation of the *Ḥarakāt al-Maḥrūmīn* (Movement of the Deprived) in March, 1974. There are no available records on Faḍlallāh's public comment concerning the *Charter* and the *Demands*. His strategy was that of "cadre indoctrination in Islamist ideology" rather than mobilisation or the exercise of political pressures – a tactic pursued by al-Ṣadr.²⁵⁵

²⁴⁹ Halawi, *A Lebanon Defied*, 143.

²⁵⁰ Sankari, *Fadlallah*, 145.

²⁵¹ Thomas Sicking and Shereen Khairallah, "The Shi'a Awakening in Lebanon: A Search for Radical Change in a Traditional Way," *CEMAM Reports* 2 (Beirut: Dar El-Mashreq, 1974): 103-106.

²⁵² See: Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a*, 144-166.

²⁵³ Shaery-Eisenlohr, "Constructing Lebanese Shi'ite Nationalism," 48.

²⁵⁴ As'ad AbuKhalil, "Druze, Sunni and Shiite Political Leadership in Present-Day Lebanon," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 7 (1985): 48.

²⁵⁵ Sankari, *Fadlallah*, 147.

3.2 Ideas on the nature of the Lebanese state

Ideas concerning the political system of the country varied a great deal among the religious Shī'ī leaders. Mallat quotes one of Mughniyya's last articles entitled "Our Weapon is the Qur'ān" in which he argues that "The salvation of Arabs and Muslims lies in the return to an Islam valid for all times and places."²⁵⁶ However, for Mughniyya, until the return of the *Mahdī* no one could claim supremacy over the body politic. Therefore, the foundation of an Islamic state was out of question.²⁵⁷ For him, the South was "an integral part of Lebanon with its rights and its duties".²⁵⁸

Mūsā al-Ṣadr argued that religion is the basis of morality for a society. He opposed the secular Pan-Arab inclination of the *zu'ama'* as well as the idea of a totally secular state propagated by the Left.²⁵⁹ Also, he strongly opposed the confessionalist system of parliamentary representation.²⁶⁰ For him, sectarianism was not bad in itself because it mirrored the composition of the society and it was transformable into a valid mode of coexistence. In the *Charter* of the *Ḥarakat al-Maḥrūmīn*, the metaphor of "cultural window" appears as a basis for a united Lebanese cultural identity.²⁶¹

Those, who supported overtly Islamist tendencies, such as Shams al-Dīn and Faḍlallāh first welcomed Khumaynī's doctrine on the *wilāyat al-faqīh*. However, the fact that the political role of the supreme guide was to oversee the Islamic Republic and in Lebanon there was no chance for establishing it prompted Faḍlallāh to make use of the emerging distinction between the offices and functions of *marja'* and *walī al-faqīh* after the demise of the Imam.²⁶² Faḍlallāh and Shams al-Dīn started to emphasise that the model of the *wilāyat al-faqīh* is not adaptable without meaningful alterations in the multiconfessional Lebanon where the Shī'a is a minority.²⁶³ As Mallat remarks, "For Fadlallah and Shamseddin, too much Shī'ī popular feeling in Lebanon [was] identified with Imam Khumaini ... their alignment with the Islamic Republic of Iran [was]

²⁵⁶ See: Mallat's reference to Mughniyya's memoirs, entitled *Tajārib* ('Trials') (Beirut: Dār al-Jawād, 1980), 429-430 in "Aspects of Shi'ī Thought from the South of Lebanon," 20.

²⁵⁷ Mallat, "Aspects of Shi'ī Thought," 22.

²⁵⁸ Mallat, "Aspects of Shi'ī Thought," 19-20.

²⁵⁹ Shaery-Eisenlohr, "Constructing Lebanese Shi'ite nationalism," 62.

²⁶⁰ Shaery-Eisenlohr, "Constructing Lebanese Shi'ite nationalism," 63.

²⁶¹ Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a*, 161.

²⁶² Algar, "Response to Browers," 47.

²⁶³ Mallat, "Aspects of Shi'ī Thought," 25.

inevitable, although a careful reading of their advocacy shows that they rarely miss[ed] an occasion to praise Syria along with Iran.”²⁶⁴

As a young scholar, Shams al-Dīn dedicated his first book *Nizām al-ḥukm* to the system of governance in Islam, arguing for the Shī‘ī model as the only way to establish a divine-human state (*dawla ilāhiyya bashariyya*). However, on his return to Lebanon from Najaf, his arguments shifted towards a unified ‘Christian-Muslim’ stance against communism and secularism.²⁶⁵ He did not oppose the confessionalist political system, rather urged a “return to the souls of both Christianity and Islam” and promulgated a proportionate representation (*al-‘adadiyya*), based on the ‘principle of consultation’ – an idea supported by the ‘secular’ opposition as well.²⁶⁶ Although he took part in the conference in 1986 in Tehran that drafted an Islamic constitution for Lebanon, later he overtly opposed the implementation of the Iranian model in Lebanon.²⁶⁷

Faḍlallāh at that time upheld a more radical position than that of his colleagues. It was partly due to his close relationship with those members of the *al-Da‘wa* who were forced to leave Iraq and found refuge in Lebanon. Chibli Mallat calls his position “a universalist Islamic appeal, in which Shī‘ism is portrayed as one further school of Islam, neither superior nor inferior to the other Sunni schools”.²⁶⁸ According to most assessments, Faḍlallāh became the most important intellectual guide for *al-Da‘wa* affiliates in Lebanon.²⁶⁹ The Party espoused a long-term revolutionary agenda, and with Faḍlallāh’s consent infiltrated the Movement of the Deprived (and subsequently the Amal) to promote radicalisation and Islamist orientation.²⁷⁰ Faḍlallāh suggested the gradual implementation of an Islamic State – but did not make any specific remarks on the Lebanese case.²⁷¹

²⁶⁴ Mallat, “Aspects of Shi‘i Thought,” 41.

²⁶⁵ Mallat, “Aspects of Shi‘i Thought,” 40.

²⁶⁶ Mallat, “Aspects of Shi‘i Thought,” 40.

²⁶⁷ Shaery-Eisenlohr, “Constructing Lebanese Shi‘ite Nationalism,” 68-70.

²⁶⁸ Mallat, “Aspects of Shi‘i Thought,” 38.

²⁶⁹ Sankari, *Fadlallah*, 172. See also: Shanahan, *The Shi‘a of Lebanon*, 167.

²⁷⁰ Sankari, *Fadlallah*, 172.

²⁷¹ Sankari, *Fadlallah*, 179.

3.3 The Palestinian problem

There was a unanimous consensus among the Lebanese Muslims that support must be provided to the Palestinians. However, concerning its modes and extent there were differences of opinion even inside the ranks of the Shī'ī *ulamā'*. For Mughniyya, Israel was the primary enemy and he emphasised the need for unity and strength among Arab countries. However, he shared the residents' anxiety about the Palestinian attacks against Israel launched from South Lebanon, and deemed the attitude of the Palestinians inconsiderate and selfish.²⁷²

By the mid-1970s, the situation worsened considerably, many Shī'a, who at first supported the Palestinian resistance, became hesitant. For al-Ṣadr, the aspects to be taken into consideration were manifold. The most important were the security of the South, the Iranian policy towards the Lebanese Shī'a, and – closely related to this – the cooperation between the Iranian dissent movements and the different Palestinian fractions operating in Lebanon. The Shah – who maintained strong political and economic ties with the United States and Israel – provided financial support to the Lebanese Shī'a.²⁷³ Mūsā al-Ṣadr's declared position was “to support the Palestinian cause but simultaneously not to endanger the interests of Shiites in Lebanon – whose fate he considered his first priority.”²⁷⁴

Shams al-Dīn called for a common Arab strategy worked out by a group of specialists in education, communication, psychology, sociology, military experts and *ulamā'* in order to offer “a comprehensive plan that secures the protection of the Arab individual and the *umma*”.²⁷⁵ However, as the situation in the South deteriorated, “his tone became increasingly ‘Islamic’ (sic)” and more focused on the need to protect the inhabitants of Jabal ʿĀmil.²⁷⁶

For Faḍlallāh, the Palestinian issue kept its central importance for political action in both an Arab as well as in an Islamic framework. For him, the plight of the Lebanese South was inseparable from the Palestine question and consequently he claimed that any

²⁷² Mallat, “Aspects of Shi‘i Thought,” 21.

²⁷³ Shaery-Eisenlohr, “Constructing Lebanese Shi‘ite Nationalism,” 90.

²⁷⁴ Shaery-Eisenlohr, “Constructing Lebanese Shi‘ite Nationalism,” 101.

²⁷⁵ M. M. Shams al-Din, “al-Dalālāt al-nafsiyya li-ḥarb Ramaḍān wa-akḥṭār al-salām ma‘a al-Yahūd” [The psychological consequences of the Ramadan War and the dangers of peace with the Jews], *al-Munṭalaq* (1986): 27, quoted by Mallat in “Aspects of Shi‘i Thought,” 34.

²⁷⁶ Mallat, “Aspects of Shi‘i Thought,” 34.

meaningful solution must be reached on the ground by exercising pressure on the international powers. Thus the struggle for the liberation of Palestine had precedence over the security of the South that – in Faḍlallāh’s assessment – would remain unstable due to the strategic territorial ambitions of Israel that covered south Lebanon as well.²⁷⁷

4. The Impact of the civil war (1975-1977) on the Lebanese Shī‘a

In March 1975 the civil war broke out in Lebanon. In the following I am going to refer to a few episodes that immediately preceded – and, therefore, partly inspired – the writing and publishing of Faḍlallāh’s *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*.

Palestinian armed groups – deployed in Lebanon following their expulsion from Jordan in 1971 – attacked Israel from their military bases in the South. Furthermore the PLO commandos controlled and harassed the locals at roadblocks and even detained or kidnapped Lebanese as well as foreigners, assuming that they constituted a danger to the Palestinian resistance.²⁷⁸ Thus the attempt of the Shī‘a to stay neutral in the fighting, failed. In April 1975, they entered the conflict formally on the side of the Lebanese National Movement.

In June 1975, following a bomb explosion in a training camp in the Biqā‘ al-Ṣadr announced the formation of the “Amal” militia as the military wing of the Movement of the Deprived.²⁷⁹ Amal received weapons and training from the Palestinians,²⁸⁰ and the majority of Shī‘ī fighters at that time were still affiliated with the secular leftist parties and the PLO, thus Amal played only a marginal role in the first phase of the civil war.²⁸¹ However, Mūsā al-Ṣadr did not support the endeavour of the Lebanese Left and the

²⁷⁷ Faḍlallāh, *Mafāhīm*, 126-7.

²⁷⁸ Hanf, *Co-Existence in Wartime Lebanon*, 167.

²⁷⁹ AMAL is an acronym of *Afwāj al-Muqāwama al-Lubnāniyya*, or ‘Lebanese Resistance Detachments’. The usage of the form *Ḥarakat Amal* denotes ‘The Movement of Hope’. During the war, the *Ḥarakat al-Maḥrūmīn* (Movement of the Deprived) and Amal became synonymous with each other, practically merged with Amal in effect superseding its parent movement. Hanf, *Co-Existence in Wartime Lebanon*, 128.

²⁸⁰ Kamal Salibi, *Crossroads to the Civil War* (Delmar: Caravan Books, 1976), 119. Based on a secret pact, signed in June 1975. Among its signatories some sources mention Mūsā al-Ṣadr and M. Ḥ. Faḍlallāh as well. See: A. Laurent and A. Basbous, *Guerres secrètes au Liban* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), 45.

²⁸¹ Norton, *Struggle*, 48-49.

Palestinian factions to overthrow the entire political system and turn Lebanon into a secular republic.²⁸²

In Beirut, the areas with majority or significant Shīʿī population were torn between the Palestinian refugees and the inimical Christian districts.²⁸³ The vulnerability of the Shīʿa is well exemplified by the transformation of the strategically situated portside slum districts of Karantīnā and Maslakh – with a population of approximately 30,000 mostly Shīʿī – into PLO bases for sniper attacks against Christian lines of communication and military convoys.²⁸⁴ The Phalangists launched retaliatory assaults on these localities in December 1975 and January 1976, wiping out the population of the predominantly Shīʿī inhabited districts of Ḥārat al-Ghwārīna, Maslakh, and Karantīnā. The death toll of the Shīʿī victims of the first two years of the civil war in 1975-76 amounted to more than 30,000 lives.²⁸⁵

By 1976 Nabʿa – situated on the vital supply-line that connected east Beirut to the predominantly Christian suburbs²⁸⁶ – and Tall al-Zaʿtar were the two remaining bastions for the Palestinian fighters. Both of them had been under blockade since the previous autumn but it was eased somewhat during a break in the fighting in February 1976. The units stationed there participated in the successful mountain offensive of the PLO-leftist Muslim alliance in March 1976.²⁸⁷ The impending full-scale Syrian military invasion in early June that aimed to help the Maronite militias and to prevent the partition of the country, and the emergence of a Muslim-Palestinian-dominated *de facto* state,²⁸⁸ opened the way for the Maronite militias to impose a total blockade on Nabʿa and Tall al-Zaʿtar in June 1976.²⁸⁹ Of the two districts, Nabʿa, Faḍlallāh’s constituency was the more vulnerable to a prolonged siege and it suffered from an almost incessant and indiscriminate shelling. In the area there was only one hospital for almost 100,000 people, shortages of food, water and medicine were common.²⁹⁰

²⁸² Ajami, *The Vanished Imam*, 172.

²⁸³ Salibi, *Crossroads to the Civil War*, 149-150.

²⁸⁴ Jonathan Randall, *The Tragedy of Lebanon* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1983), 88-9.

²⁸⁵ Sankari, *Fadlallah*, 152.

²⁸⁶ Helena Cobban, “The Growth of Shiʿi Power in Lebanon and Its Implications for the Future,” in *Shiism and Social Protest*, ed. J. R. I. Cole and N. R. Keddie (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 142.

²⁸⁷ Sankari, *Fadlallah*, 155.

²⁸⁸ Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation: The Abduction of Lebanon* (New York: Nation Books, 2002), 81.

²⁸⁹ Fisk, *Pity the Nation*, 85.

²⁹⁰ Sankari, *Fadlallah*, 156.

By mid-1976 relations between the Shī'a and the Palestinians became more strained.²⁹¹ In the midst of the devastating Christian offensive in July, Mūsā al-Ṣadr entered into secret negotiations with Amīn Jumayyil, the leader of the Christian Phalange (*Katā'ib*) resulting in an agreement on the withdrawal of the Shī'i population in Nab'a without a fight.²⁹² However, Jemayel broke his promise and made no distinction between the Shī'i and Palestinian residents. Following the deportation of the surviving inhabitants to west Beirut, their properties were subjected to looting and destruction.²⁹³ With the fall of Nab'a and the subsequent subjugation of Tall al-Za'tar, with its 30,000 Palestinian and Shī'i inhabitants, the last areas in Beirut's eastern suburbs with heterogeneous confessional communities were destroyed.²⁹⁴

Concluding remarks

The social and political predicament of the Shī'a community became a major concern for the Shī'i clerics and intellectuals in the 1960s and 1970s. Transformations in the region and especially in the nature of the Lebanese political system intensified the Shī'i quest for power. Moreover, Israeli and Palestinian pressures on Lebanon led the Shī'i religious authorities to realise the necessity of an effective and comprehensive project of power. In 1975, as the civil war began, it was a matter of time before such a project came into existence.

Faḍlallāh participated in all the debates among Shī'i authorities with regard to the best response to these internal and external challenges, and he was particularly sensitive to quietism among Shī'a. He formulated his answer in *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa* which became, and still is, the most comprehensive account by a Shī'i scholar on power. As his stance towards the Supreme Islamic Shī'i Council showed, he preferred to treat the problems not as a Shī'i but as a universal Islamic issue. Thus, his project of power had several challenges to meet; it should counter Western adversaries, maintain an

²⁹¹ Hanf, *Co-Existence in Wartime Lebanon*, 244.

²⁹² Hanf, *Co-Existence in Wartime Lebanon*, 244.

²⁹³ Hanf, *Co-Existence in Wartime Lebanon*, 223. Cobban, "The Growth of Shi'i Power in Lebanon," 142. Sankari, *Fadlallah*, 160.

²⁹⁴ Sankari, *Fadlallah*, 159.

Islamic character and persuade the quietist Shī'a to join the Shī'ī military and political movement.

Chapter III: Power as a System

Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to power as a system, its components and its relation to Islam in Faḍlallāh's thought. I argue that in *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, the notion of power is constructed and presented as a system that represents an inherent and interdependent component of Islam. That is to say, Islam is the power which permeates all domains of life with a new system of values and – through organisation – transforms them into a complex and coherent force that puts these supreme values into practice. According to this perception Islam is the controlled enactment of power. This claim is supported by considering the entirety and complexity of Faḍlallāh's argument even if he does not endorse explicitly this proposition. This systemic perception of power is the lens through which faith, ethics, spirituality, and social order as elements of power are understood. In Faḍlallāh's concept, power provides the frame to human action, a sphere in which, and a tool through which Islam is realised. Both power and Islam are comprehensive and they are inseparable and inherently related. However, Faḍlallāh would only subscribe to the proposition "Islam is power" under certain conditions. In particular, only just power stands for Islam.

In what follows, I will explain this characteristic complexity and systemic acuity of power in Faḍlallāh's thought. S. Clegg's theory on the "circuits of power" helps shaping the contours of *quwwa* and examining how it is manifested in its various aspects. Subsequently, I will discuss the intellectual-historical contexts of his conception. In this, I highlight his indebtedness to the ideas of Sayyid Quṭb, Marxist philosophy, and that of modern Shī'ism. On the one hand, Quṭb's ideas are particularly relevant due to his perception of Islam as a system, the centrality of *tawḥīd*, and his interest in power, features shared by Faḍlallāh. On the other hand, Marxism as a rival and popular ideology of power and Shī'ī revivalism provided the immediate intellectual context in which Faḍlallāh formulated his ideas.

1. Faḍlallāh's activist interpretation of power

As has been explained by Michael Cook, the quietist attitude prevailed in the Shī'ī tradition for a long time.²⁹⁵ However, the rising Shī'ī contestation in Iran, Iraq and Lebanon in the sixties and seventies transformed the overall attitude of modern Shī'ism into a revolutionary one through figures such as Āyatullāh Khumaynī, Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr and Faḍlallāh with their attention to fostering Shī'ī thought in order to protect the community and to triumph over the prevailing secular ideologies and regimes.²⁹⁶

In *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh constructs and displays an all-encompassing view of power. He addresses force as a general and universal issue,²⁹⁷ which includes all aspects that guarantee the stability of Islam and its capacity to survive and expand. With this concept in mind, Faḍlallāh rejects partial conceptions of power and propagates a holistic one. This perspective has two major elements. First, he claims the complementarity of material and spiritual power. It is only their simultaneous presence that can secure the victory of the Muslim community in the battlefield of arms as well as that of the ideas.²⁹⁸ For Faḍlallāh, victory must be definitive in the long term. However, the process might contain failures in the short term. The second element is the link between fragmentation and weakness in a given society.²⁹⁹ Comprehensiveness in this sense means that justice and solidarity is the basis of social balance which, in turn, is essential to the empowerment of the community.

Faḍlallāh's systematic conception of power is rooted in and embodies the principles of Islam. His aim is to discredit the quietists' conviction which states that change by the use of force is non-Islamic. Rather he adopts another perspective, the one known commonly today as "fundamentalist". It claims that Islam as the last divine revelation is the most complete way of life. In accordance with its comprehensiveness, one has to seek the tools to implement it in all domains of human existence. In this, today's Muslims are encouraged to seek inspiration in the first Islamic experience which used both peaceful persuasion and violence according to the given situation.

²⁹⁵ Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*, 530-548.

²⁹⁶ T. M. Aziz, "The Role of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr in Shi'i Political Activism in Iraq from 1958 to 1980," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25 (1993): 207-222.

²⁹⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 14, 324.

²⁹⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 14.

²⁹⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 7.

Faḍlallāh holds that without the simultaneous presence of the varied and multi-layered aspects of power, the message of Islam is deprived of its essence. In his view, the absence of power and its realisation in the individual, social and political spheres, results necessarily in a corrupted or deviant order. Thus, power has a double function. First, as a set of tools it guarantees the realistic and adequate response of the Islamic movement to the challenges of the day. Second, power is the core of the Islamic message, a comprehensive system that effectuates the divine will in the course of life.

2. Definitions of *quwwa* in Faḍlallāh's theory

In Faḍlallāh's terminology, *quwwa* is a multi-layered concept. In his book, one can distinguish between three frequent uses. First, *quwwa* conveys the sense of 'strength' when Faḍlallāh discusses spiritual qualities at the individual or social level. Second, in a political context, for Faḍlallāh *quwwa* means 'power' that enables the authority to exercise monopoly on the use of force in a given territory. Third, Faḍlallāh uses *quwwa* as 'force' when the emphasis is put on its outward – most often material – manifestations. As a rule, the context helps the understanding of the intended meaning. Since Faḍlallāh's focus is on the empowerment of the Muslim community, in the majority of cases I translate *quwwa* as power.

In the definition of *quwwa*, Faḍlallāh emphasises the general meaning of power as a great value and an objective, but also as an instrument which is essential to the acquisition of other Islamic values, and their realisation.³⁰⁰ In another passage, Faḍlallāh defines *quwwa* as an indispensable life-energy that permeates all aspects of the individual, social, and political life. It is potential – as part of natural human disposition – and becomes actual – as a form of *rizq* – through one's faith in God.³⁰¹

For Faḍlallāh, the individual and the collective quest for power complement each other in creating a strong society. He argues that the problem of power is present in every aspect of human interaction, in one's self-perception and relationship with other human beings.

³⁰⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 16.

³⁰¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 38-39.

Not only has God given Man force but He continually nourishes, renews and protects it. Thus man gets to the point where he feels that life is open to him with all the abilities he possesses, the abilities upon which he can depend to acquire his means of sustenance, to defend himself, to build his future, to develop new talents and make new discoveries each day that provide him with new means of subsistence, new strength and life.³⁰²

Faḍlallāh encourages the individual's aspiration to power because it gives the human being self-contentment and the competence necessary to shape one's personality and the surrounding reality.³⁰³ However, he perceives power "not only as a virtue (*faḍīla*) but also as an expression of the integrated entity of human existence".³⁰⁴ In other words, power as a potential is not simply a positive quality but the characteristic of humanity as such. Thus, Faḍlallāh is rather close to the collective conception of power which implies more affinity with Marxist and religious interpretations than with the liberal individualistic understanding.

The rationale behind Faḍlallāh's emphasis on power as a collective quality for human beings is that it is a gift from God. This gift has a purpose and bestows responsibility on the human being. It is a set of "capacities (*qudrāt*)" that provides Man with an "outlet to make use of his energies (*tāqāt*)",³⁰⁵ and "abilities upon which he can depend to acquire his means of sustenance."³⁰⁶ Power is also an attitude that provides life with a new charge, internally and externally, in order to push it forward towards a new phase in realising the Islamic ideal.³⁰⁷

Power is not an absolute gift. God nourishes and protects human strength as long as Man assumes the responsibility of being God's vice-regent on Earth. The strength available to human beings is in this sense the emanation of the divine power insofar as it is used in harmony with divine goals. That said, power as a potential becomes actual only in a person who is dedicated to act and fight in order to implement Islam in its fullest sense.

³⁰² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 80.

³⁰³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 89.

³⁰⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 313.

³⁰⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 32.

³⁰⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 80.

³⁰⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 315.

3. Power as the message of Islam

A central feature in Faḍlallāh's understanding of power is its perception as the core of the message of Islam itself. For him, the Islamic message is "the deep meaning of life with all its conditions and necessities that maintain its continuity".³⁰⁸ Power is both a great value in itself and a means to acquire other values.³⁰⁹ Moreover, it is a tool to defend the Message and life.³¹⁰ Therefore, the Islamic message (*risāla*), life (*ḥayāt*), and power (*quwwa*) form an inseparable unity. They cover roughly what a secular thinker would call existence, nature or energy. Faḍlallāh insists that there is an explicit correspondence between the divinely set laws of nature (*al-sunan al-kawniyya*)³¹¹ and the Islamic law as the latter provides normative meaning to the vitality of natural force.

In other words, Faḍlallāh recognises the natural status of power, but wants to subordinate it to the rules and goals set by the Islamic message. Since the Message requires from the believer to implement the principles of Islam in its entirety, the faithful must be empowered for the task of securing the power of Islam. The Message is about actualising the absolute power of the divine law in each segment of human existence. In this manner, Faḍlallāh equates *quwwa* with the *risāla*, the message of Islam: there is no Islam without power. The Islamic message must be the governing principle of all human choices, in order to construct and maintain the Islamic "order". In this process, power is also an instrument, a means by which order is effectuated. As such, power must be studied on two levels: as the Message itself, and as a tool in the realisation of the Islamic order. To discover the systemic characteristics of power, first we have to identify the components of Islam as a system.

3.1 Islam as a system

In his article "Islam as a System in Sayyid Qutb's Writings", William Shepard asserts that for Qutb "Islam can be independent only because it is comprehensive, and can be comprehensive – capable of application in all times and places – because it is

³⁰⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 204.

³⁰⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 16.

³¹⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 182.

³¹¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 43.

systematic and thus capable of ‘systematic extension to meet new situations.’³¹² Furthermore, Shepard states that describing Islam as a system stresses its ability to combine and reconcile elements that stand in tension with each other and, at the same time – through controlling the overall structure – it channels them into an Islamic form.³¹³

In this respect, as already shown by Olivier Carré, Faḍlallāh and Quṭb display several similarities in terminology and conception.³¹⁴ Thus, it is convenient to compare Quṭb’s concept of Islamic message with that of Faḍlallāh. For this reason, I apply Shepard’s criteria by which he defines the essential characteristics of a concept as system. In the above-mentioned article, system is defined as comprehensive, independent – distinct from various Western ideologies – able to combine and reconcile opposing elements, flexible – it responds to the challenges of the day by offering a solid framework within which humanity can develop new answers – and organic – its function and dysfunction result from the operation of its components.³¹⁵ This definition also corroborates my theoretical framework in which functionalism helps us understand Faḍlallāh’s view of the ideal strong Muslim society as based on solidarity.

Faḍlallāh uses mainly three terms to denote the notion of system: *manhaj* (method), *khatt* (guiding line),³¹⁶ and *nizām* as order in the sense of control and system in the sense of an integrating framework. Faḍlallāh asserts that Islam sets:

a pattern (*manhaj*) for educational and change. Through its major concepts (*al-mafāhīm al-kabīra*) and the encompassing *sharī’a* which deals with all practical areas of life, this pattern teaches us how to approach and confront the universe correctly and sensitively, how to face God with awareness and knowledge, and, finally, how to undertake the general responsibility for life and other human beings. According to the new model (*siyāgha Islāmīyya*) that Islam has given the human being, intellectual change, therefore, reflects practical change, which makes Man righteous.³¹⁷

³¹² William E. Shepard, “Islam as a ‘System’ in the Later Writings of Sayyid Quṭb,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 25 (1989): 38.

³¹³ Shepard, “Islam as a ‘System,’” 45.

³¹⁴ See Carré’s article: “Quelques mots-clefs de Muhammad Husayn Fadlallāh.”

³¹⁵ Shepard, “Islam as a ‘System,’” 38.

³¹⁶ The full phrase is *Khatt al-risāla* which means the guiding line of the message (Islam). *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 64.

³¹⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 256.

Here, Faḍlallāh’s argument resembles that of Fascism: the need for “a ruling system (*nizām ḥākīm*) is a natural one to stave off chaos”.³¹⁸ He explicitly mentions the “Islamic system / order” (*al-nizām al-Islāmī*) as “righteous”,³¹⁹ as opposed to the “order of disbelief” (*al-nizām al-kāfir*),³²⁰ and as the “ultimate goal” of Islamic revolutions.³²¹ Considering Shepard’s criteria, it is obvious that for Faḍlallāh the Islamic message is by nature comprehensive (*shāmi*).³²² It offers a method of self-perception, an understanding of the universe, and regulates daily practice and attitudes. In this framework, “the legal, moral, theoretical bases cannot be separated or reduced”.³²³ They construct an organic unity of thought and action. Faḍlallāh’s perception of the various elements of power as complementary is rooted in his functionalist point of view. Fundamentalism is a natural consequence of his systematic perception of Islam: what is non-Islamic is by essence corrupt and unjust. It is only the Islamic model that guarantees the righteousness of believers and provides the sole gauge of any action. As such, it can combine and reconcile opposing elements such as leniency and violence.³²⁴ For Faḍlallāh, this model is flexible and assures adequate responses to the challenges that humanity faces.

3.2 The Islamic order as a generator and as a product of power

As stated above, for Faḍlallāh, Islam is the most complete realisation of human potentials under the guidance of God. Faḍlallāh believes that the unity of God (*tawḥīd*) guarantees the purity of the Islamic order which generates and also constrains power. He clearly indicates that the unity of the community is an extension of the unity of God. Non-monotheistic and materialistic orders are perceived as deviations not only in terms of religion but also in the use of power. This is the case with the use of force by a

³¹⁸ “(...) the need for an order (*nizām*) and a state (...) [is] about the need in life for a ruling system (*nizām ḥākīm*) to avoid perdition and chaos.” *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 263.

³¹⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 272.

³²⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 257.

³²¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 268.

³²² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 241.

³²³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 205.

³²⁴ For example, he states that “Islam is the last law of God ; therefore, it must be put into practice at all levels and for this all the appropriate tools – lenient or violent – must be employed as it happened during the first Islamic experience.” *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 8.

polytheist (*mushrik*) or a non-believer (*kāfir*). Faḍlallāh is emphatic about the divine role in generating power as the following passage proves:

The Qur'ān mentions *quwwa* in several verses, as an attribute of the Almighty God. It also talks about those who had some aspects of it but [for them] it was no protection against God's strength. It also emphasizes Man's weakness due to his being created, but calls on him to overcome the constituents of weakness by acquiring the constituents of strength.³²⁵ (...) [God] is the creator of this power and its constituents (*asbāb*) that help its continuity and extension.³²⁶

Faḍlallāh argues that faith in the Islamic message produces human power, which in turn defends and implements the Islamic order. This means that the empowerment of the individual and the community guarantees the credibility of the Islamic message. It is then legitimate to conclude that power is the locus of Islam. Faḍlallāh adopts a gradual-spiritual approach to the generation of power. Faith produces power and the resulting spiritual or personal strength is the basis of social strength that enables the community to correct deviation and stand up against oppression. On the one hand, *quwwa* provides a vertical axis that connects the empowered human being to the source of power: God. On the other hand, it is a horizontal axis that connects the individuals, and integrates them into the organic social unity. For Faḍlallāh, there is an organic complementarity between the two axes of force.

At this level, Faḍlallāh's functionalism is clearly detectable in the text: power is functional in the implementation of Islam while Islam provides the only environment in which power can be justly applied. Furthermore, both the individual and the society must fulfil divinely prescribed functions – the implementation of Islam as world order, and the realisation of the strong Islamic society based on justice. The continuity of power-flux outwards (spiritual strength into material force) and downwards (from divine omnipotence to human power) guarantees that the Islamic individual and the Islamic collective are constantly and mutually empowered.

Stuart Clegg's "circuits of power" - as described above in the section on theory - helps to further understand Faḍlallāh's elaboration on the various types and functions of power. The idea that faith generates power and power maintains the religious order reveals that for Faḍlallāh power was a relational concept manifested in the interaction

³²⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 18-9.

³²⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 46.

between God and Man and among human beings. Islam as a system provided the organisation and the primary agency of power. In this frame, the episodic, momentary power is guaranteed by the continuity of the vertical and horizontal power-flux.

However, the Islamic message and consequently the religious law is the sole valid source of the rules that operate this system and define its membership. Therefore, dispositional power is the privilege of the *sharī'a*. Facilitative power that has the capacity to empower and weaken belongs exclusively to God. This is the spiritual venue through which Islamic faith can empower the believer and the community of the faithful. While inaccessible for outsiders, it provides Muslims with the indispensable energy to change the reality in accordance with the tenets of Islam. The simultaneous presence of the episodic, dispositional, and facilitative aspects of power guarantees its flexibility. Furthermore, their contribution to the implementation of Islam secures the comprehensiveness of Islam as a spiritual, legal and political system.

3.3 Power as a tool

Faḍlallāh maintains that Islam is implemented and protected by power in the individual, social and political spheres. These three levels are to be divided into different interrelating constituents (*asbāb / 'awāmil*) of the system of power. At the personal level it implies conviction, faith as articulated in the *'aqīda*, and greater *jihād* (*jihād al-nafs*). In the social sphere it requires responsibility, solidarity, justice, and balance. Finally in the political realm defensive *jihād* (*al-jihād al-difā'i*), and preventive *jihād* (*al-jihād al-wiqā'i*) can be applied in the proper circumstances. Each of these constituents is indispensable and instrumental in establishing and implementing the Islamic system of law and order.

In this construction, power is an instrument that serves the end system, the Islamic order. It is only Islamic values “that make power a means to protect both mankind and the message from its enemies”.³²⁷ The constituents or aspects are embodiments of major Islamic values – such as justice, self-perfection and spreading the Message – each of which carries and represents the essence of Islam: subjugation to God. Consequently, all

³²⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 182.

manifestation of power including *jihād*, and the obligation of “commanding right and forbidding wrong” – are nothing but tools to the achievement of this end.

Conscious faith in the divine mission [turns] that (the mission) into a driving force in the human heart and physical existence. It is also a preventative force in accordance with its responsibilities and the life of all human beings (...) [R]eligious duty is transformed into human power (...) when it comes to confronting injustice and oppression, which are the most conspicuous forms of evil in the reality of human life.³²⁸

Since power is interpreted and evaluated only in the framework of the Message, it is not an independent conceptual entity. The flexibility of its means – peaceful or violent – is controlled by the principles of Islam. This indicates the normative philosophy of power in Faḍlallāh’s thought. He does not believe in the use of force for mere political and social purposes neither does he display a self-serving cult of power. His concept is a classic example of religious thought in which the ultimate meaning of power is to serve the divine order, as represented by Islam.

To characterise power as organic is closely related to its being comprehensive, but it goes a step forward, implying that the system functions well only if its components fulfil their task in harmony with the basic principles. When both the individual and the society operate corresponding to the Islamic principles, a symbolic ray – starting from the *origo* of the two axes (faith and human interaction) – shows a straight, steady average growth towards the ultimate goal, the implementation of justice on Earth. This indicates that it is a system of balance between the various elements of force. Any deviation or hindrance on one axis upsets the equilibrium. In Faḍlallāh’s words:

[I]f the spiritual strength becomes separated from the physical force, the latter is transformed into evil acts (*‘amal shirrī*) that oppose the Islamic values and preferences.³²⁹ (...) This is the case because in life the various phenomena are linked in the way the stem is an extension of the branch. If it is separated it will turn into an atom that is lost in a vacuum.³³⁰

The various aspects of power can be accomplished only if the spiritual / individual, and the social / political spheres operate in harmony with the principles of

³²⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 64-65.

³²⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 104.

³³⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 196.

Islam. The process of one's decision-making with regards to the proper means of action involves a three-fold investigation. First, one needs to identify the place of the current situation with respect to the desired long-term goal. In pursuing this end, the present situation represents only one stage. Second, the applied means must fit in the current stage of action and be in harmony with the goal. Third, the action must not be detached from the moral principles prescribed by Islam. The notion of power, therefore, embraces a wide range of actions that are implemented with flexibility and awareness. Consequently, we can assume that a truly Muslim individual and community are by essence powerful, and in turn, only the rightly and fully actualised Islam can guarantee the real power of a person or a society.

As we can see, Faḍlallāh emphasises the constantly changing nature of reality, because the human being as its principal actor (essential force) is a dynamic entity. Considered in terms of Clegg's "circuits of power," *quwwa* as a tool has an episodic aspect which lies in its capacity to translate the principles of Islam into a political programme. Power as a tool in the dispositional sense serves to change the rules of the actual status quo since they are – in contrast with the *sharī'a* – not absolute. Therefore, it is only *sharī'a* that supersedes power. Empowerment is actualised in the realm of politics by putting the Islamic principles into practice.

4. The objectives of power

Faḍlallāh considers power as essential for the three major aspects of human life: for the empowerment of the individual who thus becomes capable to rule life as God's vice-regent on Earth;³³¹ to defend the right of Islam to spread, and to protect one's own life and possessions.

We, therefore, need strength (*quwwa*) to build personalities capable of controlling things in life and who are in full control of themselves. There is a need to transform the rules and principles we believe in into a reality that governs our lives, overcomes difficulties and, at the same time, provides us with the opportunity to build, plan and act.³³²

³³¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 41.

³³² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 18.

On the one hand, the “strong Islamic personality”³³³ is the key actor in the implementation of the Islamic Message. It is power that vests human action with the capacity to transform principles into reality, a quality that determines thought, attitude and practice.³³⁴ Therefore, power is inherently linked to change and transformation: it is the guarantee of self-perfection, of ruling the world based on principles, of facing challenges and of carrying out one’s duty in life. On the other hand, Faḍlallāh insists on the protective capacity of power in spreading Islam. As we can observe below, he is explicit about the functional relation between power and Islam:

(...) it is the right (of Islam) to act on the basis of producing power that challenges obstacles and faces challenges by considering power as the only condition for its capacity to maintain its existence. For power is protection (*ḥimāya*) against its enemies (...)³³⁵

Acquiring power is an existential necessity that secures the continuous presence of the Message and secures its implementation in the face of its enemies. Power serves to deter the enemy and to protect the realm of Islam. In other passages, Faḍlallāh talks about the defensive and preventive use of force. For instance, he argues that: “detering (*radʿ*) enemies and protecting the future is not a question of the Call or conviction, but that of response to aggression”.³³⁶

In the context of the theoretical and practical aspects of the moral dimensions of power, Faḍlallāh differentiates between preventive (*al-ḥarb al-wiqāʿiyya*) and defensive war (*al-ḥarb al-difāʿiyya*).³³⁷ By preventive war, Faḍlallāh means a Muslim attack that aims to weaken the force of the unbelievers in order to hold them back from endangering the Muslim community and its beliefs. While preventive force is directed against the power of the unbelieving oppressors – “who have always been waiting for the best opportunity to destroy this religion”³³⁸ – defensive use of force is a response to actual attacks.

Faḍlallāh’s claim that power is an essential means of protection could be explained by the Shīʿī experience in Lebanon (and elsewhere) as a minority surrounded

³³³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 73.

³³⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 98.

³³⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 230.

³³⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 117.

³³⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 206.

³³⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 196.

by Sunnī (and Maronite) political dominance and injustice. In his introduction, Faḍlallāh clearly states his will to convince the quietists who reject the use of force and hesitate to aspire to power as a legitimate way of change. Faḍlallāh asserts that the use of force in the Islamic sense is legitimate only in these two forms and as such they can be considered as part of smaller *jihād*. The notion of preventive force implies that the use of force is justified even if the threat represents only a potential impediment to the Islamic order. In this sense, violence is legitimate due to the general validity of using force to secure the implementation of Islamic values.

5. Shīʿī elements in Faḍlallāh's concept of power as a system

Although it appeals to a general Islamic audience, Faḍlallāh's reasoning follows a specific Shīʿī pattern by emphasising the inevitable clash between the opposing forces of corruption and righteousness, and the inherent moral aspect of this combat. In the following, I describe his interpretation of these tenets and how he related them to the comprehensiveness of power.

5.1 Universal combat as a religious obligation

Faḍlallāh has a dichotomist view of history, perceiving it as a battleground in space and time between the followers of righteousness (*ḥaqq*) and those of falsehood (*bāṭil*). He believes that after the Prophet it was the members of *ahl al-bayt* who set examples for this legitimate combat. This universal struggle emerges in all fields of life from the individual to the communal spheres, and from the theoretical domain to the actual battlefield.

Even history, is the history of war and peace, in knowledge and wealth and in other domains. It is the history of the strong and their adversaries from among the followers of truth and the followers of falsehood. However, the weak and oppressed were not able to win battles in support of their principles, thoughts and interests until they eventually had the means or were in a position of power.³³⁹

³³⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 17-18.

Faḍlallāh asserts that only the strong can influence the events of history. He implicitly identifies the weak and the oppressed with the followers of righteousness and calls them to utilise the tools that facilitate their empowerment. This implies awareness and action, and also readiness to use force in order to realise their legitimate rights. Moreover, empowerment and the use of force is not only an option or a suggestion, rather an existential necessity and an explicit religious duty. Faḍlallāh quotes Imām ‘Alī saying that “commanding right and forbidding wrong”, (*al-amr bi-’l-ma’rūf wa’l-nahy ‘an al-munkar*) takes precedence over all other duties,³⁴⁰ and asserts that the Imāms in their battles fulfilled this responsibility.

We notice (...) the close link between the mission of commanding right and forbidding wrong and the all-encompassing Islamic plan that aims at achieving the change (...) including revolt against the corrupt entities and oppressive rule in the context of carrying out God’s law and order in everything. Similarly, the three traditions of the Imām ‘Alī and al-Ḥusayn stress the practical aspect of that principle illustrated in their revolutionary or reformist movement. In fact, Imām ‘Alī regarded his battle at Ṣiffīn against Mu‘āwiyā, who was a corrupt governor, as a practical implementation of the principle of commanding right and forbidding wrong. In the same way, Imām al-Ḥusayn regarded his revolt against the deviated Umayyad dynasty as a transformation leading towards the just Islamic rule.³⁴¹

Faḍlallāh refers to the combats of Imām ‘Alī and Imām al-Ḥusayn as a movement of revolution and a reform (*ḥaraka thawriyya wa-iṣlāḥiyya*) and as part of the Islamic plan that aims to change the corrupt reality and implement God’s law in every sphere of human existence. He describes ‘Alī and al-Ḥusayn primarily not as victims of injustice but as the warriors of justice. The change in the emphasis is significant in view of the fact that Faḍlallāh’s primary concern was to urge the quietist Shī‘a to act.

5. 2 The morality of combat and the consistency of power

The concept of power remains coherent and the use of force is justified only if it is rooted in the principles of Islam. Faḍlallāh reinterprets the attitude of ‘Alī and al-Ḥusayn as examples of the righteous perception of the use of force in order to achieve

³⁴⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 67.

³⁴¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 268.

the Islamic goals. He dedicated a chapter to the issue of the Imāms' rejection of some revolutionary movements that deviated from the Islamic principles.³⁴² He asserted that "any kind of encouragement to fighting that does not spring from the spiritual means of Islam would be considered as support to the means of aggression and deviation".³⁴³ The means of resistance are determined by the principles of Islam that demand rational answers to perceived deviations. The Imāms' decision-making considered the circumstances, situations, available means, and capacities at the disposal of their followers.

The Imāms of *ahl al-bayt* (...) focused their instructions, directions and teachings on fighting oppression and oppressors by passive and peaceful means, such as non-cooperation with them or by active opposition, or by establishing righteousness and annihilating evil, even by the sword (...).³⁴⁴

Without merging principle and realism any claim to legitimacy would be a fallacy. Faḍlallāh transformed his concept of power as a system into a framework of carefully planned political action and a means of mobilisation through his explication of the practice of the Prophet and the Imāms. The idea of power as a totality served a specific purpose for Faḍlallāh; it compels the quietist to accept the legitimacy of power in both its violent and non-violent forms. Since both forms are related in the notion of *quwwa* and that *quwwa* is equivalent to Islam, accepting the totality of Islam leads necessarily to accepting the totality of power.

6. The intellectual-historical contexts of Faḍlallāh's concept of power as a system

Faḍlallāh wrote his book *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa* in 1976. At that time, a major challenge to which every Islamist thinker, whether Sunnī or Shī'ī, had to respond was Arab Marxism. Its followers endorsed Marxism for its claim to be a science, a movement for the oppressed and a comprehensive philosophy. This set the standards high. Islamist thinkers had to craft Islamic answers to the Marxist challenge with equal

³⁴² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 272.

³⁴³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 234.

³⁴⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 274.

intellectual sophistication in order to sound credible and reasonable, and thus convince the youth. As'ad AbuKhalil drew attention to this Marxist environment in which the identity of the new generation of Lebanese Shī'a developed in the seventies.³⁴⁵ Although his argument that Lebanese Shī'ism organised itself based on the model of Marxist-Leninist parties is exaggerated, it is still the case that the Lebanese Shī'a had to compete with this model. Some of this Marxist influence can be discerned in Faḍlallāh's insistence on the collective nature of power in Islam, on the idea of power as a comprehensive system, on the necessity of a revolutionary transformation, and on the formation of a new Islamic character.

As has been seen throughout the description of Faḍlallāh's ideas, there are echoes of Sayyid Quṭb in many answers given by Faḍlallāh. It is evident from the perspective applied by William Shepard in "Islam as a System in Sayyed Qutb's writings" that Faḍlallāh employs some of Quṭb's devices to address the issue of Islam and power. For example, the emphasis put on equilibrium, *tawāzun*, realism, *wāqi'iyya*, the relationship between the individual and God, and the role of *tawḥīd* in the regulation of *quwwa* display a Quṭbian horizon on which Faḍlallāh formed his concept of power. Some aspects of the similarity between Quṭb and Faḍlallāh were explored by Olivier Carré.³⁴⁶

In *Khaṣā'is al-taṣawwur al-Islāmī wa-muqawwimātuh*, Quṭb maintains that *tawḥīd* is a space that includes the unity of God in the realm of belief as well as in all spheres of life whether moral or practical. According to Quṭb, *tawḥīd* is not only a matter of belief. Instead, it covers a larger area, extending to many aspects such as feelings, morality, behaviour, organisation of life, law, general and particular issues, latent and patent ones, individual and collective action, the herein and the hereafter. In sum, the main characteristic of *tawḥīd* is comprehensiveness, *shumūl*. In fact, *tawḥīd* encompasses the totality of the Muslim conception of the universe and existence. It also extends to the understanding of power inherent in Man and nature that are but reflections and aspects of the omnipotence and absolute unity of God.³⁴⁷

As for the impact of modern Shī'i thought on Faḍlallāh, he definitely fits in the trend represented – among others – by Āyatullāh Khumaynī, Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr and Mūsā al-Ṣadr. Faḍlallāh reinterpreted the tenets and symbols of Shī'ism – in

³⁴⁵ As'ad AbuKhalil, "Ideology and Practice of Hizballah in Lebanon: Islamization of Leninist Organizational Principles" *Middle Eastern Studies* 27 (1991): 390-403.

³⁴⁶ See Carré's article: "Khomeinisme libanais: Qutb, Fadlallah, même combat"

³⁴⁷ Sayyid Quṭb, *Khaṣā'is al-taṣawwur al-Islāmī wa-muqawwimātuh* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1988), 190.

Clegg's term – the “nodes” or “obligatory passage points” through which expressions of power are channelled.³⁴⁸ He made a formative contribution to this modernist movement by setting out a systematic theory of power in his *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*. In this he provided a comprehensive, activist, non-mystical understanding of Shī'ī Islam, put forward in a universalist manner. The differences between him and other formative thinkers are detailed in the thematic chapters of the present dissertation.

Regarding the nature and importance of power, Faḍlallāh seems to embrace Sayyid Quṭb's approach. In *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa* he does not use Quṭb's terms neither quotes him, still their vision share a considerable amount of similarities that make it highly probable that Faḍlallāh was inspired by Quṭb and integrated his ideas into his own system.

To support this argument with an example, I refer to Quṭb's commentaries on *Surat al-Anfāl*. In this Quṭb lists some of the key notions that appear in Faḍlallāh's work as well. These are the following: Islam has the power to confront corrupt systems, and the source of this power is God's omnipotence.³⁴⁹ Therefore Quṭb differentiates between two kinds of powers. The one which is to be confronted is the attribute of oppressors (*tāghūt*).³⁵⁰ This oppressive power cannot be stopped only by Muslims' taking power.³⁵¹ Islam must aspire to attain global reach based on its own power resources.³⁵² Islam has no option but to fight tyrannical power.³⁵³ Muslims must be confident because God empowers those who implement the *sharī'a*.³⁵⁴ God wanted the Muslim community powerful that has authority forms a nation and a state.³⁵⁵ Both real power and the reputation of having power are important.³⁵⁶

Regarding Verse 60 in specific, Quṭb reminds Muslims to get ready with all elements of power and turn it into jihad with a twofold aim in mind: liberation from oppression, and securing God's exclusive sovereignty.³⁵⁷ Quṭb asserts that knowing that

³⁴⁸ Clegg, *Frameworks of Power*, 211-212.

³⁴⁹ Sayyid Quṭb, “Al-Anfāl” in *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān* [In the shade of the Qur'ān], translated and edited by M.A. Salahi & A. A. Shamis (2003), vol. 7, pp. 5, 9, 11.

³⁵⁰ Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 25.

³⁵¹ Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 29.

³⁵² Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 31.

³⁵³ Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 32, 100.

³⁵⁴ Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 51.

³⁵⁵ Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 73, 91, 112.

³⁵⁶ Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 153.

³⁵⁷ Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 155-156.

the source of their power is God, multiplies their strength.³⁵⁸ He emphasises the importance of forming an organised movement, viable community, close ties between the individuals, social organization, and powerful strategy.³⁵⁹ Muslims must dedicate all their efforts and resources to establishing an Islamic society.³⁶⁰

Notwithstanding the conceptual similarities, it was Faḍlallāh who combined these elements – among many other – into a coherent system of power. Quṭb’s aim was to create an ideology that competes with nationalism and socialism and serves as an intellectual, theological basis for the political framework designed by Ḥasan al-Bannā and embodied by the Muslim Brotherhood. Faḍlallāh in contrast had to invent a theory that gave impetus for the revolutionary movement in a fragmented community that lacked Islamic perspectives all through the 20th century.

Concluding remarks

In the above, I explained how Islam as the final and most complete divine message generates power in Faḍlallāh’s thought. In *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, he highlights the interference of power with the Islamic message. Both are comprehensive because Islam as he perceives it has to respond to different challenges imposed by the logic of power that prevails in the universe. Furthermore, I studied the role of power as a tool in combining the spiritual and material realms of the created world. Here, Faḍlallāh seems particularly attentive to reality, *wāqi‘* indicating his obvious interest in the dynamics of power. In this regard, it has been shown how the implementation of Islam as an actualised social order necessitates power. This could be achieved only if both the individual and the community are empowered.

The community Faḍlallāh is concerned about was the Shī‘a of Lebanon. He echoes Āyatullāh Khumaynī and Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr in their endeavours to revolutionise Shī‘ism. In addition, I demonstrated that Quṭb’s radical conception of Islam, *tawḥīd* and power, and Arab Marxist ideology had a noticeable influence on Faḍlallāh’s thought.

³⁵⁸ Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur’ān*, 165.

³⁵⁹ Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur’ān*, 174.

³⁶⁰ Quṭb, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur’ān*, 175.

In reference to Faḍlallāh's comprehensive power and its equivalence to Islam, two caveats must be noted. First, it replaces the modern and multi-confessional state – the legitimate holder of power over individuals and society – with an imagined Islamic normative authority. Second, it sets the foundations for a totalitarian order in which every aspect of life gets subjugated to the sacred power.

Chapter IV: Faḍlallāh's Theology of Power

Introduction

Since the first modern revivalist movements in the Muslim world, theology has been a key foundation of reform. The reform projects led by M. b. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, M. ʿAbduh, S. Quṭb, or Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, to name only few of them, laid emphasis on *tawḥīd* and justice as theological principles the content of which should guide the rising community. Both are believed to lead to empowerment. As a mechanism for community unity, *tawḥīd* consists in dedicating worship and sacralisation to one divinity. Political division in the *umma* is thought of as a sign of lack of *tawḥīd*. Related to the centrality of *tawḥīd* is the rejection of deterministic views of Islamic belief and the assertion of divine justice and human responsibility.

The prominence of theology in Faḍlallāh's thought can be observed in his several writings dedicated to this subject. Suffice here to mention his book *Masā'il ʿaqā'idīyya* in which Faḍlallāh provides answers for almost all questions of belief including imamate, eschatology and apostasy.³⁶¹ In *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, Faḍlallāh dedicates two chapters to elucidating the role of the system of Islamic belief – *ʿaqīda* – and faith – *īmān* – in empowering the Muslim community.³⁶²

These theological distinctions need to be analysed in order to grasp Faḍlallāh's conception of *tawḥīd* and justice as elements of power. For this reason, I will examine, first, Faḍlallāh's terminology and his distinction between belief (*ʿaqīda*) and faith (*īmān*) in relation to power. Second, I will highlight Faḍlallāh's concept of human power in relation to God's omnipotence, and his argument for free will. Third, I will analyse Faḍlallāh's refutation of the Marxist view of religion, his response to the accusation of Islam as engendering weakness, the interconnectedness of faith and power, the significance of causality, and the revolutionary aspects of Faḍlallāh's theology of power.

³⁶¹ Faḍlallāh, *Masā'il ʿaqā'idīyya* [Doctrinal matters] (Beirut: Dār al-Malāk, 2001).

³⁶² *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, Chapter 1 on "Power and its Place Based on the Islamic Creed" and Chapter 9 on "The Relationship between Power and Faith."

1. *Īmān and ‘aqīda* in Faḍlallāh’s theological vocabulary

Faḍlallāh uses mainly the terms *‘aqīda* and *īmān* to convey his theology of force. Faḍlallāh draws on the polysemy of the Arabic language, using different meanings of one specific term. Often, he distinguishes *‘aqīda* – in the meaning of creed and firm belief – from faith (*īmān*) and treats them as two different aspects of *quwwa*. Belief is frequently synonymous with thought, conviction, truth and religion.³⁶³ In various contexts, Faḍlallāh uses the term with the meaning which can be best translated as the embodiment of the transformative ‘power of faith’.³⁶⁴

As for *īmān* (faith), it is used most often in the form of a transitive verb (*āmana bi*), suggesting that it is a concrete action with practical consequences rather than an abstract feeling. It denotes above all a state of mind, the source of spiritual strength that is able to create tangible, concrete reality. As such, it is essential for the completion of human potentials. However, sometimes it also refers to creed, thought, conviction, opinion.³⁶⁵ To level out this inconsistency my observations consider the contexts in which Faḍlallāh uses these notions.

First, he elaborated on belief and force. He is explicit about the power of belief to shape the mind of the believer. After 250 pages, he further developed this question stressing the importance of faith on practical attitudes. Faḍlallāh’s motivation for separating *‘aqīda* (1st chapter) from *īmān* (9th chapter) is not clear. Probably, he felt the need to write an additional chapter (Chapter 9) to illustrate Chapter 1 with practical and historical examples, pointing at the function of faith. This strategy gives the book a certain frame and highlights the special importance of theology; however it leads to structural randomness and repetitions.

2. Man’s power

In refuting the deterministic interpretations, the empowerment of the human being is to be explained by answering two counterarguments, that of the inherent weakness

³⁶³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 96, 104, 132, 139, 250.

³⁶⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 50.

³⁶⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 114, 116, 134, 150, 201, 280.

and vulnerability of human beings, and the negation of human free will. Accordingly, Faḍlallāh first defines the sources of human power in Islam, and the Islamic perception of Man as a formative agent of life. Second, he affirms the reality and clarifies the role of Man's free will in terms of its scope and limits.

2.1 The sources of human power

In the first chapter of *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa* Faḍlallāh defines his aim to clarify the Islamic concept of human power in relation to God's power. For Faḍlallāh, power is not a mere attribute; rather it is an essential human quality. Consequently, he claims that the Islamic creed does not argue for human weakness as a necessary consequence of God's omnipotence. On the contrary, the Islamic doctrine establishes divine power as an originator and sustainer of human potentials. At the outset of his exposition, he lists views that promote the perception of human being as weak and vulnerable. In this, he delineates two major trends: the religious – that attributes human weakness to creation – and the materialist that emphasises human weakness in the face of the power of nature. In the following, I present his criticism of both.

Defining the goal of his analysis, Faḍlallāh stresses that thought (*fīkr*) and emotions (*awāṭif*) determine self-perception and, therefore, they are decisive in the process that leads to success or failure.³⁶⁶ Faḍlallāh details the social consequences of human self-esteem in various chapters that deal with confronting oppression, realising change and the definition of social strength. In order to avoid the pitfalls of religious determinism, he stresses the importance of objectivity in assessing human potentials. Faḍlallāh refutes any religious thought that interprets Man's creation as a cause of vulnerability. Contesting this understanding, he discusses two aspects of deterministic thought: Man's incapacity to act and plan, and the full dependence on God's will with respect to the results of human action.

Faḍlallāh argues that human strength is inevitable for the “major role that God has set out for man as His vice-regent on Earth”.³⁶⁷ This concept of Man's role is based on the Revelation. All things on Earth are subjugated to Man who is superior to the rest of

³⁶⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 255-256.

³⁶⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 40-41.

the Creation. Thus, Man's mission as vice-regent implies an ongoing interaction between the Creator and the human being. This interaction would not be possible without Man's empowerment. In view of this prominent role of Man, Faḍlallāh challenges the soundness and credibility of the interpretational tradition that proclaims human weakness based on religious texts. He claims that

Man's consciousness of God's absolute power should not lead him to believe that he is powerless. On the contrary, awareness of God's strength should reinforce Man's own inner strength. Man should feel confident and secure, as long as this source of power is still there. The more he is aware of God's power, the more sure he will be of his own strength.³⁶⁸ Indeed, Divine power provides man with all elements of strength.³⁶⁹

Faḍlallāh's argument contains two premises: God is powerful, and He is the source of human strength. Therefore, Man is empowered, but this is not a static character of the human being. Faḍlallāh explicates that a human being can use his / her strength only with the awareness that it is a gift from God and the degree of this awareness determines one's strength. Through their belief in God, human beings are granted their share from the divine absolute power that is needed to exercise self-control and to minimise fear of the strength of other humans.³⁷⁰ Thus, submission to God – acknowledging divine force as the ultimate source of human force – is the guarantee of the fullest possible empowerment of Man.

Awareness and knowledge of the revealed guiding principles secures one's relationship with God. In turn it provides an infinite source of human power. Faḍlallāh relates Man's unique status to his / her unique mental capacities, saying that "God provided him with the capacity to become aware (...) of the universe as a whole".³⁷¹ Therefore, faith-based knowledge and understanding enable human beings to realise their ambitions without committing transgression. As such it is only knowledge that can enable Man to control life in harmony with the laws of nature set by God.³⁷² On this basis God demands responsible answers from Man all through his life.

³⁶⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 45.

³⁶⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 48.

³⁷⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 192.

³⁷¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 40-41.

³⁷² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 41.

In the Shīʿī sphere, Murtaḍā Muṭahharī an Iranian religious authority (d. 1979) is the author of some of the most influential writings in this field. As for Faḍlallāh, power and knowledge is a central notion in Murtaḍā Muṭahharī’s concept of “Man and Universe.” He claims that knowledge and faith illuminate human beings from inside, and thus empower them to shape their personality as well as to change the reality. As Muṭahharī says “knowledge and faith are the two basic parts of the humanity of man”.³⁷³ The two processes are intertwined and take place simultaneously.

Faḍlallāh admits that there are certain verses in the Qur’ān that inspire determinism and the notion of human weakness. He examines the relation between the religious concept of strength and social weakness.

There are many verses that talk about the various stages in Man’s life, describing him as helpless and unable to do any good. Such views can influence Man’s thinking to an extent that he loses self-confidence and becomes almost paralyzed.³⁷⁴ This can be interpreted as meaning that it is useless to plan since Man can neither accomplish nor do anything unless it coincides with God’s will.³⁷⁵

For Faḍlallāh, the everyday tangible human experience of oppression and helplessness is the starting point of every observation, however it is not constant. Thus, he immediately shifts the emphasis to the dangers of de-contextualised interpretation of the relevant Qur’ānic verses since it leads to considering human efforts futile, and the exemption of Man from any responsibility. Further on he states that the idea of human weakness is rather a political invention to generate and maintain submissiveness to worldly powers.³⁷⁶ He asserts that such perception feeds “the logic of those philosophers who tried to attribute to religion the idea of Man’s weakness and helplessness in the face of oppression”.³⁷⁷ Faḍlallāh considers deterministic interpretation as tendentious and manipulative, and that it serves the interests of oppressive rulers. In this framework, Man’s actions cannot be initiated or carried out by human potentials, only by God.³⁷⁸ As a result, such thinking reduces the value of the

³⁷³ Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, “Man and Universe,” chap. 2. Accessed January 28, 2012, <http://www.al-islam.org/universe/>

³⁷⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 23.

³⁷⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 26.

³⁷⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 48.

³⁷⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 28.

³⁷⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 24-25.

human being to a mere slave not only in front of God but in face of mortal, oppressive powers as well.

Faḍlallāh proposes a “holistic, realistic picture of humankind” (*ṣūra kāmila wāqīʿiyya*)³⁷⁹ that eliminates any contradiction between God’s omnipotence and human power: human beings are empowered even though their capacities are limited and cannot challenge God’s power. His analytical approach is well exemplified by the following passage:

There is a big difference between surrendering to death as a real unchangeable phenomenon, and surrendering to the causes of death, which could be eliminated, or fought against or controlled by a superior power. You must not give up in such cases, since you have the ability and the duty to control and face the challenge with all the knowledge God has given you. However, you must submit to death since it is one of the inevitable facts of our material existence.³⁸⁰

Faḍlallāh makes a distinction between changeable phenomena – illness – and the “inalterable existential phenomena” (*ka zāhira kawniyya la taqbal al-taghyīr*) like death.³⁸¹ He claims that the human being possesses the means and the abilities to deal with the elements of nature, to recognise, understand and apply the universal laws, but he / she cannot challenge them. It is essential for success to learn how to distinguish between the unalterable basic principles set by God and the amendable phenomena that result from human action. For this, Faḍlallāh claims it is essential that believers develop a sense for reality (*wāqīʿiyya*) and realistic perception.

Faḍlallāh resorted to a twofold concept of reality. He interpreted the actual political events and human experience – the relative and changeable reality – in light of the absolute, intangible, transcendental reality. This ultimate reality is that the world is governed by an omnipotent Divinity who has designed a plan for humankind which is redemptive in the sense that it liberates from injustice and oppression. The link between these two realities is human power that turns the intangible into tangible. The divinely ordered law of causality that governs and operates the universe is cognisable through revelation and experience. However, Faḍlallāh clearly differentiates between the law of causal relation as determined, and the actual events that are contingent. This perception

³⁷⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 32.

³⁸⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 47-8.

³⁸¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 47.

secures God's primacy but at the same time provides scope for human power and free will.

The expression "realistic" occurs approximately thirty times in the book. According to Faḍlallāh, it is a primary attribute of the Islamic view of life and the human being.³⁸² However, at the outset he makes a careful distinction:

Although we are using the terminology and language of philosophy, these are not philosophical theories that are subject to debate and discussion but are the living reality and the very nature of life itself.³⁸³

In other words, it is the understanding of human experience in light of the revealed truth that unfolds reality in the deepest sense. This reasoning is based on a combination of human experience and the contextual interpretation of revelation and tradition. Realism as a method for Faḍlallāh means that he does not base his conclusions merely on Qur'ānic verses deemed to be thematically relevant. Rather, in the first place, he takes human experience as a starting point for any analysis.

Second, he looks for a similar situation in the sacred texts of Islam and highlights the parallels between the two contexts. His focus at this stage is the divine intention as unfolded in the particular situation. Finally, he assesses the present experience in light of the divine message. Through this process he aims to uncover the deep meaning of the given situation in light of the divinely assigned human mission. He claims that this mode of reasoning eliminates contradictions by providing a horizon that harmonises divine and human power.

For Faḍlallāh realism

refers only to a realistic idea of how the universe functions with its changeable and unchangeable laws comparing them with what man can or cannot do.³⁸⁴

As such, being a realist is most importantly the ability to distinguish between the constant and the variable, as opposed to idealists who profess limitless human power.³⁸⁵ Only in light of this is Man able to assess the possibility, the scope, and the means of change. In this regard Faḍlallāh's line of thought echoes some of the salient features of

³⁸² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 286.

³⁸³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 34.

³⁸⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 46.

³⁸⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 32.

Sayyid Quṭb's (d. 1966) assertions. Quṭb and Faḍlallāh maintained the role of belief in strengthening the Muslim community. For Quṭb – as set out in his *Ma'ālim fi'l-ṭarīq* – as for Faḍlallāh, the oneness of God and the exclusive submission to the omnipotent divinity expressed in the *ʿaqīda* leads Muslims to transform themselves and the society they live in. Both Quṭb and Faḍlallāh claim that the Islamic approach towards the universe and Man is realistic and objective.³⁸⁶

In his *Khaṣā'is al-taṣawwur al-Islāmī*, Quṭb dedicates a chapter to realism.³⁸⁷ For him, the realism of the Islamic approach is based on two pillars. First, he takes the existence and the presence of God as the absolute reality. Second, the Islamic system based exclusively on the revelation is in perfect harmony with the nature of the universe and that of humankind.³⁸⁸ To realise it the use of force is permitted, without any demand to rationalise it.³⁸⁹

Compared to Quṭb's approach, Faḍlallāh offers a “down-to-earth” perspective. As a Shī'ī jurist, he had to convince his followers to resort to radical activism. Moreover, he had to give practical guidelines for it. His aim was to persuade his Shī'ī audience that – in spite of the physical limits they experience in their everyday life – they should not submit to the imposed circumstances without adequately studying the possibilities to change them. Faḍlallāh addresses the self-perception of the believers by encouraging them to explore their capacities and to act as co-creators of the situation in which they live. He took the spiritual route with the common believers from their experience and emotions to a new conviction based on tradition and reason. With this he provided encouragement and religious justification to Shī'ī activism.

Having this goal in mind, he used Twelver Shī'ī references to offer an alternative reading to statements that were considered not only as authoritative but also proverbial in the quietist tradition. At the outset, talking about the feeling of weakness and powerlessness, Faḍlallāh quotes Imām ʿAlī from *the Supplication of Kumayl*, and his grandson ʿAlī Ibn al-Ḥusayn's words from *al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādiyya*. Both express the fragility and impotence of human beings without being supported by God. Later on, the

³⁸⁶ Quṭb's understanding of realism was explored by Ronald A.T. Judy in:

“Sayyid Quṭb's *fiqh al-wāqīʿ*, or New Realist Science,” *Boundary* 31 (2004): 113-148.

³⁸⁷ Sayyid Quṭb, *Khaṣā'is al-taṣawwur al-Islāmī wa-muḥawwimātuh* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1988), 169-187.

³⁸⁸ Quṭb, *Khaṣā'is*, 169.

³⁸⁹ For Quṭb, it meant primarily fighting the manifestations of *jāhiliyya* in the contemporary society. See: *Ma'ālim fi'l-ṭarīq* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1979), 161-162.

central question of the chapter: “Does not this imply powerlessness and submission?” is answered by Imām ‘Alī’s words from *Nahj al-balāgha* “Do not be a slave to others as God has created you free”.³⁹⁰ It affirms that it is only God to whom a human being owes submission, which implies that Man is strong in face of any other natural or political force.

Faḍlallāh refers to *Nahj al-balāgha* three times. In the first two instances he uses Imām ‘Alī’s comments on two widely quoted sayings: “There is no strength or power if not from God” (based on Qur’ān 18:39)³⁹¹ and “To God we belong and to Him shall we return” (based on Qur’ān 2:156).³⁹² Both statements serve as titles that introduce sections (or sub-chapters). Also, they are widely used to support determinist opinions. In each instance, Faḍlallāh supports his voluntarist reading by referring to Imām ‘Alī. The first comment connects Man’s empowerment to his / her being commissioned by God. The second commentary states that human beings are possessed by God and our life in this world is temporal. These statements emphasise two notions that are crucial in Faḍlallāh’s line of thought: Man’s exclusive dependence on God; and his being invested with a special duty as well as with the means to accomplish it.

Although the Twelver Shī‘ī references thus give a frame to the whole chapter, the abundant Qur’ānic references give the impression that Faḍlallāh wanted to provide a novel Shī‘ī interpretation to this problem, which is acceptable to a non-Shī‘ī audience as well.

2.2 Free will

For Faḍlallāh, justice is not only demanded by the divine will, but it is also dependent on human will and action. He offered a radical answer to the shattered self-perception of the Shī‘ī community: Man is not only a servant of God; he is also a partner, a co-creator of the reality. As such, Man is a significant contributor in making the transcendental unity apparent in the created world. Divine intention – a world built on justice and truth – as revealed in the Qur’ān and elaborated in the *ḥadīth* ensures that

³⁹⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 50.

³⁹¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 46.

³⁹² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 47.

the will of the Divinity cannot be arbitrary and oppressive. Therefore, Faḍlallāh focuses on the negation of determinism.

Faḍlallāh emphasised freedom of will at the first mention in his book of the importance of the human role and knowledge. Besides the capacity to gain knowledge, human beings must be free to make decisions and to engage in action or refrain from it. He reiterates that

[M]an is strong, effective and free to make his own choices. He controls and dominates many forces and secrets of this world.³⁹³ (...) God is the Merciful Compassionate Creator Who has given man his will and mind, as well as his existence.³⁹⁴

Thus life, freedom of the will, and ability to gain knowledge are the channels through which human strength is realised. These three aspects are inseparable and are considered as part of *rizq*, the divine sustenance that provides Man with all the necessary means and guidelines for righteous action.

Freedom of will entails that human beings bear full responsibility for their choices.³⁹⁵ Faḍlallāh asserts that human freedom of consciousness (*ḍamīr*) and freedom of will (*irāda*) are essential Islamic principles. Therefore, Muslims must declare war on anything that endangers these freedoms.³⁹⁶ However, like human power, human freedom is not absolute because Man's physical and intellectual capacities are limited by the natural laws.³⁹⁷ God does not pressure human beings; His decrees aim to shape circumstances that guide Man's choice in the right direction.³⁹⁸

Faḍlallāh's position regarding human free will follows the Mu'tazilite tradition. The Mu'tazilites deduced that "man must have the ability to choose" from their concept of God's justice.³⁹⁹ Faḍlallāh's theology of power is rooted in his conviction that Man has freedom of will and, therefore, possesses the capacity to shape his / her environment and destiny. The question of human free will appears as inherently related to Man's role in the salvation history.

³⁹³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 31.

³⁹⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 40.

³⁹⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 47.

³⁹⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 50.

³⁹⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 33-34.

³⁹⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 37.

³⁹⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 162.

The idea of God's power does not want to pressure man's thinking, will and choices (...) As for having goals and searching for ways to achieve them, or the will to make the difficult choice on the basis of truth and falsehood, in all these Man enjoys vast freedom (...)⁴⁰⁰

For Faḍlallāh, Man enjoys freedom in terms of goals and means. In this framework, making choices and exercising will power appear as synonymous. The act of search implies creativity as a primary attribute. The special weight given to the notion of Man as free agent implies that the process of choice in itself is an occasion to make goodness win over falsehood. The demand of making decisions implies the existence of a clear predictable, precise system of criteria that distinguishes between what is good and what is evil. The logic that governs this set of criteria is not arbitrary: actions are valued in terms of their consequences: whether they serve the divine plan or not. Man, however, is free to obey or to infringe these laws, but he cannot ignore them since he is part of this system. This freedom is present in each instant of human life. It demands constant awareness and a perception that considers life as a continuous universal combat between goodness and evil.

For Faḍlallāh, the duty of *al-amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa'l-nahy 'an al-munkar* cannot be conceived and implemented in a deterministic framework. This obligation implies that human beings can make choices and they are able to use or abuse the power bestowed upon them. Commanding right and forbidding wrong is based on a transcendental system of values, and, therefore, the idea of human free will – without which this obligation cannot be fulfilled – asserts the perception of Man as a two-dimensional being. This logic separates his ideas from the majority of Sunnī activist thinkers, among them Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī one of the most influential representatives of Sunnī legal and political thought.

In his book *al-Īmān wa'l-ḥayāt*, al-Qaraḍāwī dedicates a chapter to the notion of *quwwa* in which some of the ideas remind us of those set forth by Faḍlallāh.⁴⁰¹ Both jurists regard the use of force as an inevitable necessity, and consider God as the source of human strength, a fact that obligates human beings to act. Faith, spiritual strength, fraternity of the believers, and social strength are clearly interrelated in their

⁴⁰⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 37.

⁴⁰¹ Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, *al-Īmān wa'l-ḥayāt* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1979), 269-286.

argumentation. The coherence of belief and action – especially with regards to resistance – and its implementation in the fulfilment of the duty of “commanding right and forbidding wrong” is another shared feature.⁴⁰²

However, there are differences in their approaches. Although al-Qaraḍāwī’s starting point, like Faḍlallāh’s, is human experience he does not emphasise the law of causality that involves human beings as formative actors in the chain of events. He stresses *qadar*, the divine ordinance that eventually determines the victory of Islam. For al-Qaraḍāwī, Islamic conquests would never have happened without the belief in divine decree and destiny: *al-qaḍā’ wa’l-qadar*. He explicitly states that human beings cannot alter what God allotted to them. This means that tribulations happen only with God’s permission and Man’s power can never replace God’s power.⁴⁰³ For this reason, when studying the elements of victory, al-Qaraḍāwī seems to put aside the material conditions, and stresses the role of faith and reliance on God’s omnipotence.

For Faḍlallāh, the laws of the universe (*al-qawānīn wa’l-sunan al-ṭabī‘iyya*)⁴⁰⁴ provide a frame and assure the contiguity of causes and effects within which human beings are expected to operate and entitled to use their power in order to fulfil their divine mission. Faḍlallāh’s idea in this respect shows many common elements with that of ‘Alī Sharī‘atī’ (1933-1977) and Bint al-Shāṭi’ (1913-1998).⁴⁰⁵ Yudian Wahyudi argues that for both thinkers, salvation history and Man’s role as God’s vice-regent on earth served as a starting point of their analysis.⁴⁰⁶ Similarly, they connected human free will to Man’s creative intellect,⁴⁰⁷ to his / her two-dimensional character,⁴⁰⁸ and to the fact that he / she is an active “maker of history”.⁴⁰⁹

However, there are disagreements with Faḍlallāh’s argument. Bint al-Shāṭi’ and Sharī‘atī held that in order to transcend history, human beings “should not only discover its deterministic laws, but also revolt against them using science”.⁴¹⁰ For Faḍlallāh, natural law is not deterministic; it is the eternal system of cause and effect as set by

⁴⁰² See: al-Qaraḍāwī, *al-Īmān wa’l-ḥayāt*, 268, 279, 281, 282.

⁴⁰³ al-Qaraḍāwī, *al-Īmān wa’l-ḥayāt*, 271.

⁴⁰⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 41.

⁴⁰⁵ Her real name is ‘Ā’isha ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (1913-1998), she was an Egyptian Sunni Muslim thinker and literary critic.

⁴⁰⁶ Yudian Wahyudi, “‘Ali Shariati and Bint al-Shati on Free Will: A Comparison,” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 9 (1998): 37.

⁴⁰⁷ Wahyudi, “‘Ali Shariati and Bint al-Shati,” 40.

⁴⁰⁸ Wahyudi, “‘Ali Shariati and Bint al-Shati,” 41.

⁴⁰⁹ Wahyudi, “‘Ali Shariati and Bint al-Shati,” 41.

⁴¹⁰ Wahyudi, “‘Ali Shariati and Bint al-Shati,” 41.

God. Human free will is part of this system. Another crucial difference is that for Sharī'atī “Man can make his own choices, even when they are contrary to his physiological and psychological drives and desires”.⁴¹¹ In Faḍlallāh's thought, Man's deepest desires are always in harmony with the divine will.

3. Refutation of the Marxist view of religion

In his refutation of the Marxist criticism of religion Faḍlallāh counters arguments that attribute the feeling of weakness to religiosity. He derives Man's empowerment from faith and argues for the resulting human responsibility as a consequence of this empowerment. Furthermore, Faḍlallāh extends this responsibility to revolutionary activism reinforcing the fact that in the framework of the divinely ordered causality both success and failure are dependent on human volition and action.

3.1 Religion and weakness

In his comment on the ideas of the Lebanese thinker Hishām Nashshāba, Faḍlallāh targets the materialistic view that associates religion with human weakness.⁴¹² Nashshāba published an article in the well-known Lebanese journal “*Mawāqif*”⁴¹³ in which he argues that the “bourgeois mentality” and religiosity lead to the same feeling of human weakness.⁴¹⁴ Such ideas strongly challenged Faḍlallāh's intellectual authority as a Shī'ī jurist in the Lebanese confessional environment. Faḍlallāh admits that the feeling of vulnerability is rooted in the everyday human experience of facing oppression, aggression, and the forces of nature. He also acknowledges that materialist (“bourgeois”) and religious thought agree in stating that Man can act only within the limits of his / her abilities.⁴¹⁵ However, he refutes that such perception implies Man's

⁴¹¹ Wahyudi, “Ali Shariati and Bint al-Shati,” 39.

⁴¹² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 28-29.

⁴¹³ The Journal *Mawāqif* was founded by the Syrian poet Adūnīs in 1969. Its contributors are mostly liberal or Marxist thinkers. It is known for its criticism of religious thought.

⁴¹⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 26.

⁴¹⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 46.

weakness or lack of capacity. To refute any relationship between limited power and incapacity he raises the following question:

Are those materialistic thinkers trying to suggest that Man's weakness against the needs of nature and his subjection to natural laws cause him to submit to all other forms of power in the world? We do not think there is a way to answer such a question affirmatively.⁴¹⁶

Faḍlallāh's aim here is to highlight the difference between the so-called "bourgeois" mentality – that generates corruption and opportunism – and religion. Further on he affirms that in contrast to materialism, religiosity is able to "show how Man can exercise his [/ her] strength naturally and realistically".⁴¹⁷ He claims that as far as religion is concerned, the Marxist analysis is simplistic and partial.⁴¹⁸ Faḍlallāh denies any link between religiosity and incapacity or between faith and the acceptance of subjugation. For him, nature is not an oppressive power; once its laws are respected, it provides human beings with the essentials of life. Therefore, Faḍlallāh rejects the idea that human beings are inevitably vulnerable in face of nature or of any worldly power.⁴¹⁹

Faḍlallāh's polemic against Marxism fits into a long tradition of antagonism between Marxism and Islamism in the Middle East. Since the thirties in Egypt, Communists and Islamists have competed in attracting young militants of the rising lower middle class. Sayyid Quṭb and his brother Muḥammad Quṭb wrote some of the classics of anti-Marxist Islamist literature.⁴²⁰ The rivalry continued in the sixties in Iraq, with Communists recruiting largely young Shī'īs.⁴²¹ The phenomenon was so significant that Āyatullāh Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm issued a *fatwā* in which communism was accused of atheism, *ilhād*, and strictly forbade Shī'īs to join the Communist party. In the same context, M. Bāqir al-Ṣadr published his *Falsafatunā* (Our Philosophy) and *Iqtiṣādunā* (Our Economy), which quickly became the references of Islamist criticism of Marxism.

⁴¹⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 45.

⁴¹⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 48.

⁴¹⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 29.

⁴¹⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 45.

⁴²⁰ For example, see: William Shepard, "The Myth of Progress in the Writings of Sayyid Quṭb," *Religion* 27 (1997): 255-266.

⁴²¹ Aziz, "The Role of Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr," 208

Similarly, in Iran some intense intellectual conflicts emerged between the leftists and Shī'ī thinkers on history and evolution.⁴²²

Faḍlallāh, similarly to Murtaḍā Muṭahhari⁴²³ put forward an extended criticism of the revolutionary concept of Marxism. Both thinkers claimed that righteous action requires a mental disposition, a commitment to immaterial values that liberate one from outside pressures and generates internal harmony in the individual. This logic urges to change first the immaterial, the attitudinal factor, then, in the second step the material reality. In this argumentation the renewal of the believer was a prerequisite to social change.

3.2 God the Almighty and human power

One of the strongest arguments in Communist criticism of Islam is the doctrine of God's omnipotence in the Qur'ān.⁴²⁴ In order to respond to this criticism, Faḍlallāh evolves his discourse by commenting on the following Qur'ānic verses that reveal various aspects of divine power. "I fear God; and God is terrible in retribution" (8:52);⁴²⁵ "Assuredly God will help him who helps Him" (22:40);⁴²⁶ "Surely God is the All-provider, the Possessor of Strength, the Ever-Sure." (51:58);⁴²⁷ "Say: I have no power to profit for myself; or hurt, but as God will." (7:188).⁴²⁸ In each case, Faḍlallāh draws attention to the context of the revelation, and concludes that divine power is protective and supports human power. The only instance at which God's power intervenes against humans is when God punishes them for disobeying divine obligations.

⁴²² See: Kamran Arjomand, "In Defense of the Sacred Doctrine: Mohammad Husayn al-Shahristani's Refutation of Materialism and Evolutionary Theories of History," *Hallesche Beiträge zur Orientwissenschaft* 25 (1998): 1-18.

⁴²³ The most comprehensive introduction to M. Muṭahhari is: Mahmood T. Davari, *The Political Thought of Ayatullah Murtaza Muṭahhari: an Iranian Theoretician of the Islamic State* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2005). However, the study offers detailed biographical-historical elements, but extremely limited analysis of his thought.

⁴²⁴ The quotations below are translated by A. J. Arberry, ed. *The Koran Interpreted: A Translation* (New York: Touchstone, 1996).

⁴²⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 35-56.

⁴²⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 37-38.

⁴²⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 38-39.

⁴²⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 39-40.

Faḍlallāh reiterates that Man is in need of God's power, which has two basic functions: deterrence and education.⁴²⁹ Both serve to hold back human beings from deviance and the abuse of power that would harm others as well as themselves. Also, one cannot find the source of one's strength in oneself only in God's power. These two factors shape a balanced view of human capacities. Islamic legislation, therefore, serves not to paralyze but to help Man fulfil his / her potentials. Faḍlallāh asserts that *sharī'a* mobilises the elements of strength in all aspects of human life⁴³⁰ which provide tools for human beings to accomplish their role as God's vice-regents on Earth. For Faḍlallāh, Islam is the natural and the most complex realisation of human potentials operating in harmony with the divinely set order of the universe.

God is the merciful compassionate Creator who has given Man his will and mind, as well as his existence. Besides, God has provided Man with all he [/ she] needs to follow the straight path and keep away from the evil one. God also shows man that He does not need any of Man's words or deeds, since He has power over everything. Accordingly, God's will could never (*lā yumkin*) oppose the interest (*maṣlaḥa*) of Man in this world because the contradiction between the strength of the strong and the interest of the weak is generated by the urge of the strong to exploit the weak and impose their will on them.⁴³¹

Faḍlallāh seeks to provide a rational explanation, which is rooted in everyday human experience rather than in theological speculation. Faḍlallāh makes an essential distinction between God's power and human force: since God is omnipotent and self-sufficient, He is not in need of any human contribution. His premise is that it is the conflict of interests that generates tensions between the wills of two entities. Since God assists human efforts to eliminate oppression and injustice in accordance with the Islamic message, there cannot be any conflict of interest between the Creator and the human being.⁴³² It is Man's interest to act in accordance with the divine decrees that thus provide a source for human empowerment. Thus, God's will cannot oppose Man's best interests.⁴³³

⁴²⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 36.

⁴³⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 79.

⁴³¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 40.

⁴³² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 37.

⁴³³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 40.

In this context, the first question that arises refers to God's purpose with the act of creation and with imposing moral obligations. In the view of the Mu'tazila, God is transcendent and just, therefore, His acts and decisions must serve Man.⁴³⁴ As for conclusions that imply imposing any obligation on God, the Mu'tazila held varying views. On the one hand, the Baṣrans argued that complying to His attribute as "just," God gives Man a chance "to earn a reward" by fulfilling the moral obligations.⁴³⁵ On the other hand, the Baghdad school emphasised God's "generosity and nobility",⁴³⁶ and claimed that God considers the best interest of the community as overruling that of the individual.⁴³⁷

Faḍlallāh's denial of God's will as contradicting the well-being of Man is not by any standards an obligation imposed on God. It is out of generosity that God provides Man with all the necessary means to "follow the straight path". Will and intellect are such tools that enable Man to earn his reward. However, for Faḍlallāh the motivation behind this divine gift is to be evaluated in light of the message of Islam as a divine project that aims at the well-being of humanity in this world and its salvation in the hereafter through an exclusive and strict monotheist order. Faḍlallāh's emphasis through his book is on the communitarian aspects of individual behaviour.

The term "*maṣlaḥa*" for Faḍlallāh as for the Baghdādī thinkers, implies that God's care covers both secular and religious affairs.⁴³⁸ Man is in a one-sided dependency with regards to God, but this does not make human beings vulnerable; rather it is a call to trust. As God revealed religious truth He also revealed how individual and social life must operate built on exclusive monotheism. Divine providence is universal and divine omnipotence is a guarantee against any arbitrariness in the divine will.

The rules regarding the relationship between the Creator and the creation are set by God in the system of natural laws (*al-sunan al-kawniyya*).⁴³⁹ The principles of this system of laws are not arbitrary; they are rational and comprehensible. Therefore, God's sovereignty is maintained, but the result of human actions is determined by the response of Man to the divine rules. This perception bears the characteristics of Mu'tazilī thought.

⁴³⁴ Martin J. McDermott, *The Theology of al-Shaykh al-Mufid* (Beirut: Librairie orientale, 1978), 71.

⁴³⁵ McDermott, *The Theology of al-Shaykh al-Mufid*, 72.

⁴³⁶ McDermott, *The Theology of al-Shaykh al-Mufid*, 74.

⁴³⁷ McDermott, *The Theology of al-Shaykh al-Mufid*, 73.

⁴³⁸ McDermott, *The Theology of al-Shaykh al-Mufid*, 75.

⁴³⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 43.

However, it is important to note that Faḍlallāh was not a Muʿtazilī or “free thinker” in its modern sense.⁴⁴⁰ From the five principles of classical Muʿtazilism, he echoes two: God’s justice and the “obligation of commanding right and forbidding wrong”. However, the guiding principles behind these notions are not based on the rationalist reading of the sources. Faḍlallāh was not a rationalist, rather he was an Islamic Fundamentalist thinker, whose peculiarity lied in his pragmatic approach that he called “realistic”. In specific, *ʿadāla* for Faḍlallāh was not an obligation imposed on God, rather it was the framework within which he could situate the obligation on human being to be a responsible actor. Regarding *al-amr wa’l-nahy*, it is not restricted to the Muʿtazila and as we will see in later sections of the present dissertation, Faḍlallāh’s approach shared much with the Khārijī understanding of this obligation.

3.3 Faith and Force

In the ninth chapter of *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa* devoted to the relationship between faith and force, Faḍlallāh studies the role of faith in successful social and political action. Based on Qur’ānic verses, Faḍlallāh reiterates that faith has a decisive role in the empowerment of the human being.⁴⁴¹ It multiplies moral strength and unifies the fighters’ goals based on their religious value, provides them with the feeling of protection and prevents them from submission to human powers. Such commitment puts the person in the winner’s position regardless of the actual outcome since it assures victory, if not in this world then in the hereafter.⁴⁴²

At this point Faḍlallāh resorts to widely a used fundamentalist argument that considers life in this world and in the hereafter as an unbroken unity. This is a common notion in monotheistic religions; however, it has been given special emphasis in the Islamist discourse as a means of mobilisation and reducing the fear of death. Such a perception not only asserts the continuity of existence after death, but also gives greater weight to human effort and commitment (by which Man earns salvation) than to

⁴⁴⁰ The impact of Muʿtazila on modern Islamic thought is well documented in Thomas Hildebrandt’s *Neo-Muʿtazilismus? Intention und Kontexts im modernen arabischen Umgang mit dem rationalistischen Erbe des Islam* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2007), especially pp.194-504.

⁴⁴¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 293.

⁴⁴² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 290-291.

tangible achievements. This tactic implies that a spiritual disposition, as potential energy is transformable into action that can bring about concrete accomplishments. For Faḍlallāh, patience and perseverance are essential elements of faith; they intensify the strength of Muslims even if they are numerically weaker than their enemy.⁴⁴³ Thus, faith unites the individual and communal dimensions and links ambitions to responsibilities.⁴⁴⁴ Non-believers lack this coherence.

Taking the example of the Battle of Badr, Faḍlallāh asserts that one fighter with high spirits and faith can face a large number of soldiers and make them psychologically defeated even before the actual fight starts.⁴⁴⁵ The Qur'ānic descriptions of the battle stress the importance of divine intervention, while secular sources emphasise Muḥammad's skilful tactical plan against the much bigger Meccan army. The encounter had been preceded by Muslim raids on Qurayshī caravans that Muḥammad's followers justified by their expulsion from Medina.⁴⁴⁶ Faḍlallāh merged the two above-mentioned interpretations and equally emphasises the importance of divine intervention and adept tactics.

According to Marshall Hodgson the victory at Badr turned Muslims into “challengers and potential inheritors to the prestige and the political role of the [Quraysh]”.⁴⁴⁷ Following Hodgson's logic we can assume that striving for dignity and power provides legitimate causes for combat. Combining this idea with the encouragement for “resistance until martyrdom” proved to be a call and a long-lasting action plan for radical Shī'ī activism that was taking shape from the late seventies.

For Faḍlallāh, faith turns into a formative life energy that puts human capacities into motion and provides man with new perspectives. In this framework, Faḍlallāh links *quwwa* to faith, and defines strength as an attribute of the faithful. Apart from declaring that “practical action is the only real proof of the sincerity of belief”;⁴⁴⁸ Faḍlallāh asserts in a straightforward statement that it is “faith [that] obligates (*min aḥkām hādha'l-īmān*) resistance in the battle till martyrdom”.⁴⁴⁹ In this line of thought the measure of faith is

⁴⁴³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 295.

⁴⁴⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 296.

⁴⁴⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 293-296.

⁴⁴⁶ See: W. Montgomery Watt, “Badr,” in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, edited by H. A. R. Gibb *et al.*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 867-868.

⁴⁴⁷ Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol.1: *The Classical Age of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 176.

⁴⁴⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 142.

⁴⁴⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 291.

action. The conscious use of the word “resistance” (*muqāwama*) specifies the notion of action: it is resistance to (in a sense of forbidding) what is wrong in general, such as oppression. It also means resort to armed resistance when “forbidding” injustice is not effective or not possible. Resistance implies that the initiator of the conflict is not those who resist; their action is mere reaction to defend values, life and properties.

By connecting resistance to martyrdom Faḍlallāh provided a potent catchphrase for the radical Shī‘ī movement in Lebanon. Recalling the victory of a minority over a majority conveys the essence of Faḍlallāh’s message and vision regarding the potentials of the Muslim world in general and the Lebanese Shī‘a in particular. Faith sets the objectives and forms the attitudes of Man, while the lack of faith makes the fight detached from its “roots”, that is, from its deep reasons and major goals.⁴⁵⁰ It is only through faith that *quwwa* remains purposeful and controlled and, therefore, justified even if it is violent (*‘unf*).

Faḍlallāh elaborates the difference between the virtuous and vicious use of force. Muslims had both “personal” and “general” reasons for their fight. He claims that the Muslims’ fight at Badr “on the one hand was linked to themselves and on the other hand to the [defence of the]⁴⁵¹ Divine message”.⁴⁵² The meeting of the personal and divine aspects invests the particular action with redemptive power. Besides having the just cause, their actions were governed by faith. “There was no gap (...) between their personal desires and religious responsibilities”.⁴⁵³ This harmony guaranteed the moral value of their fight. For Faḍlallāh, the central value of virtuous violence is its being in accordance with the realisation of the divine plan for humankind. Furthermore it must be guided by positive emotions not hatred. As he says:

The party of God (*ḥizb Allāh*) firmly follows His will (...) and is linked to it with the bonds of love, submission to God, and faith.⁴⁵⁴

Faḍlallāh in these passages extols the unity of personal motivations and divine goals, the unity of the movement, and the unity of the objectives of the movement with that of the divine plan. The name *ḥizb Allāh* is a Qur’ānic expression referring to those

⁴⁵⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 292.

⁴⁵¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 295-296.

⁴⁵² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 295.

⁴⁵³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 296.

⁴⁵⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 295.

who are with God. All through the book Faḍlallāh emphasises the significance of emotional commitment. Sentiments (*‘awāṭif*) are primary in constructing spiritual and rational convictions.⁴⁵⁵ Feelings bind the members of any community into one “body” that acts united.⁴⁵⁶

In interpreting the Qur’ānic verses Faḍlallāh does not miss the opportunity to stress the difference in material power between Muslims and their enemies, and that the confrontation was very risky by all human measures. He asserts that it is this faith that turned Muslims into instruments of change, and overruled the numerical superiority of their enemies. However, Faḍlallāh also emphasises the “objective causes” of victory in Badr. The latter, as he sees it, is the outcome of the “natural chain of causes and effects set by God”.⁴⁵⁷

In this framework, humans are the fully equipped agents of the divine plan. Faḍlallāh’s claim is that at Badr Muslims did not rely only on faith, but prepared objectively for the battle. The elements of force – faith and organisation – complement each other. By explicating the reasons of the Muslims to resort to arms, the battle of Badr is described as a necessary event of violence in correcting the disequilibrium resulting from the corruption and injustice of the Quraysh. From this angle, the Battle of Badr and the use of force by the Muslims was instrumental in the realisation of Islam.

3.4 Responsibility and causality

Faḍlallāh puts great emphasis on human responsibility, since his concept of force and empowerment requires a responsible actor who can deal with force and power with full awareness. This is the sphere where Man has the opportunity to co-operate with God. In Faḍlallāh’s system of thought, free will, knowledge, responsibility and causality form an inseparable quadrangle:

Man’s limited power is not governed by his limited experience, because this would lead only to partial results. It is governed by the natural laws of life and the universe that man usually discovers in the course of making great efforts. A human

⁴⁵⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 255-6.

⁴⁵⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 143.

⁴⁵⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 296.

being has to submit his life and decisions (*aḥkām*) to these laws, so that he can harmonize his life with them.⁴⁵⁸

Without a predictable and fixed law that operates the universe, there would be no scope for human responsibility. The tangible and the intangible aspects of human life operate on a strict causality in which causes and effects are linked by the natural laws set by God. For Man's freedom is not absolute, his / her primary responsibility is to acquire the necessary information – from the Revelation as well as from science – regarding the logic that governs this law. This awareness enables Man to predict the direct and the indirect consequences of any action. Submission to God is a life-long mental disposition through which Man is empowered in each instant to acquire the necessary knowledge and to act on its basis. The effort to gain this awareness and the decision to engage in an action is, therefore, is Man's responsibility.

Physical causality was a concern of the Mu'tazilī thinkers as well. Their interest in the matter was raised by the problem of responsibility, especially with regards to the unforeseen consequences of human acts.⁴⁵⁹ As McDermott says, "both the Baghdadis and the Baṣrans were defending the basis of man's responsibility for his acts and at least some of their consequences".⁴⁶⁰

Faḍlallāh repeatedly asserts that God provides help (as part of *rizq*) to the oppressed (even if they are non-believers),⁴⁶¹ to those in hardship and poverty⁴⁶² and to those who fight for His cause.⁴⁶³ Strength and guidance in this context are God's grace to mankind. God's help is actuated by Man's submission to him, which is thus part of the cause-effect chain. However, the outcome depends on the spiritual, tactical and material preparedness of the individual and the community.

The case of victory and defeat is influenced by many objective causes related to the nature of the battle.⁴⁶⁴ (...) [T]he relation of power to faith is represented in its role in providing the battle with a new and essential power added to the rest of the powers bringing about victory.⁴⁶⁵

⁴⁵⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 34.

⁴⁵⁹ McDermott, *The Theology of al-Shaykh al-Mufid*, 169.

⁴⁶⁰ McDermott, *The Theology of al-Shaykh al-Mufid*, 170.

⁴⁶¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 185.

⁴⁶² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 38.

⁴⁶³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 62.

⁴⁶⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 289.

⁴⁶⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 292-3.

God's help thus evolves in the framework of causality, that is, only if the human being fulfils its objective conditions. The battles referred to by Faḍlallāh, especially that of Ḥunayn,⁴⁶⁶ show a dynamic relationship between God and Man. In this sense human behaviour can change and affect the outcome in every situation, and the results of individual events are not determined beforehand. However, the final success of the divine project can never be doubted.

The idea of causality is also present in Muṭahharī's thought. He refers to the system of the creation that is shaped to make a natural distinction between good and bad.⁴⁶⁷ Furthermore, he asserts that "the system of the creation supports those who make efforts for the cause of truth, justice and integrity".⁴⁶⁸ This idea recalls Faḍlallāh's notion of causes and effects governed by the natural laws. Human effort in this sense is independent from the immediate welcoming or unwelcoming circumstances; rather it mobilises the positive energies that bring about success even if indirectly. The idea of causality is a recurrent theme in modernist Islamism and related to the obligation of activism. The main difference between the Sunnī and Shī'ī readings is the Sunnī emphasis on predestination that embraces causality. The resemblance between Muṭahharī's and Faḍlallāh's thought does not imply direct influence or borrowing, simply the emphasis they both put on human effort, that gained key importance in the Shī'ī activism.

For Faḍlallāh, sin, punishment and remittance fall under the scope of natural laws. Deviation from what is right or abstaining from the required action brings about its natural consequences. Thus, punishment and calamity come as results of human action. He asserts that:

Punishment is not far from the Earth to make it heavenly. Rather it is a natural consequence of the deviation that creates social disintegration as well as the

⁴⁶⁶ A battle fought between Muḥammad and his followers against the Bedouin tribe of Hawāzin and its subsection the Thaḳīf in 630. The battle ended in a decisive victory for the Muslims, although they were defeated in the beginning because they felt they were great in number and did not bother about the tactics of war. The Battle of Ḥunayn is one of only two battles mentioned in the Qur'an by name, in the chapter *al-Tawba*. According to Muslim historians, 'Alī was decisive in this battle. See: Henri Lammens, Abd al-Hafez Kamal, "Ḥunayn", in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, edited by H. A. R. Gibb *et al.*, vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 578.

⁴⁶⁷ Muṭahharī, "Man and Universe," chap. 2.

⁴⁶⁸ Muṭahharī, "Man and Universe," chap. 3.

weakening of the control and cohesion within a community... Thus, punishment is a threat in the beginning, it acts as a deterrent, but when it becomes reality, it is an act of rectifying.⁴⁶⁹

In this framework, punishment both in the forms of natural disasters, defeats or those imposed by *sharī'a* have a double function. First, they serve to deter Man from committing sin, and remind him / her to keep to what is right. Second, once the deviation has taken place, punishment serves to correct and re-establish justice and balance.⁴⁷⁰ God is not obliged to forgive, but remittance is inherent in the system of causality set by Him. The condition is that human beings exercise all their effort to realise, repent and correct the deviation. Their efforts bring divine forgiveness. It is a process that must be completed on all three levels: the intellectual, the emotional and the practical. In this interpretation – given that the system is designed by God – divine generosity invests human effort with rectifying power.⁴⁷¹

4. The revolutionary aspects of Faḍlallāh's theology of power

One final question that arises here is whether Faḍlallāh's theology of force has any revolutionary implication. To answer this question, we have to examine the following aspects of Faḍlallāh's concept: the status of religious knowledge in pushing for activism, the relevance of piety for politics, whether "revolutionary Islam is considered as a necessary doctrine of the true faith" and whether theology was used to mobilise the masses.⁴⁷² The relationship between faith and force in Faḍlallāh's thought is that of cause and effect. Faith as a spiritual disposition necessarily empowers the believer, but also guarantees that the use of force remains in harmony with Islamic morality.

The ideas expounded in the book are responses to political and theoretical challenges rooted in Western thought and practice. However, Faḍlallāh took care not to transform Islam into an ideology of mass mobilisation. The strategy he elaborated was

⁴⁶⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 112-3.

⁴⁷⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 35-37.

⁴⁷¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 307.

⁴⁷² In discussing these aspects, I was inspired by Hamid Dabashi's article "Ali Shari'ati's Islam: Revolutionary Uses of Faith in a Post-Traditional Society," *Islamic Quarterly* (1983): 203-224.

to be understood as part of the divine project for humankind. It aimed at the realisation of transcendental values that are in harmony with the ultimate interests of Man. Faḍlallāh did not interpret the Qur’ānic references from a revolutionary point of view without contextualising them in the salvation history. While urging resistance, he emphasised the unity of God as a foundational Islamic precept that excludes submission to oppressive worldly powers.

Faḍlallāh addressed a religious audience, aiming to explain that their salvation demands their contribution as individuals and as a community. He uses traditional registers to construct a narrative of empowerment based on the idea that the faith of believers brings them victory. Goals always point towards sacred values that must be realised as religious obligations. He raised awareness to what Islam wants from Man in a given situation and offered an aspect to consider the most appropriate modes of reaction. In this, faith, religious knowledge and devotion remained the primary sources of decision-making regarding the actual goals and tactics. His theology of force is intended to free individuals and the community from hesitation and impotence. At the same time he reminds that any worldly enterprise such as resistance or liberation is only one necessary step in the salvation history but not the final aim. For Faḍlallāh, the revolutionary objectives that are detached from the supreme values of Islam lead only to traps, and in the long run, to the same distorted systems that they oppose.

Faḍlallāh’s *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa* is one of those endeavours that aim to conceptualise how and on what grounds power and force can serve the implementation of the divine message. In the Shī’ī circles, Muṭahharī’s thought seems to be the closest to that of Faḍlallāh’s. For both thinkers, religious faith inspires and encourages Man to resist tyranny.⁴⁷³ Muṭahharī’s idea of Man’s responsibility applies the same argument as Faḍlallāh’s concept. One must put all his / her efforts to achieving the desired change. If one cannot accomplish the task with success or gain victory due to objective reasons, God will compensate him in the Hereafter. For all these reasons, the writings of Muṭahharī and Faḍlallāh share the notion of “call to action”.

To mention only one from among the most prominent Sunnī jurists, for al-Qaraḍāwī too, it is faith that by essence prompts the believer to resist and throw off

⁴⁷³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 46.

oppressors.⁴⁷⁴ Standing up for the truth constitutes the essence of the Islamic message, if this is not met, then Islam loses what makes it special. Being a Muslim is conditioned on fulfilling this duty.⁴⁷⁵ The scope of this obligation is universal; it refers to the whole world and to every aspect of life. This is what the obligation of “commanding right and forbidding wrong” refers to.⁴⁷⁶

Faḍlallāh’s perspective is remarkable because he links voluntarism with activism without transforming religion to a mere tool of a social-political programme. Faḍlallāh’s concept of power is a return to the original message of Islam as an inherently liberating theology. Faḍlallāh’s liberation theology refers to the kind of liberation which is rooted in, and stays in harmony with the core message of the Islamic revelation, the strict monotheism and the proclamation of a divine plan of justice for humankind. The function of theology in the system of force is to supervise and guide the continuous implementation of religious principles in the practice of force and power.

Concluding remarks

This chapter has shown that Faḍlallāh’s theology of force displays two components. First, it is a refutation of any connection between religion and weakness and the idea of determinism. Second, it is an affirmation of human free-will, and the reconciliation of divine and human powers. He constructs a hierarchy of powers where God, the Almighty, provides his creatures with power to sustain divine order and to counterbalance nature.

The investigation of Faḍlallāh’s sources has found a structuring function of Shīʿī *ḥadīth* and Muʿtazilī theology. From these traditions Faḍlallāh constructed a voluntarist theological attitude which is emphatic about human being as an active agent. His theology also promotes free will and responsibility. That is to say, Faḍlallāh mobilises all theological elements, which in other contexts such as Quṭb’s Egypt and Sharīʿatī’s Iran led to revolutionary movements. Although similarities do exist between Faḍlallāh

⁴⁷⁴ Qaraḍāwī, *al-Īmān wa'l-ḥayāt*, 279.

⁴⁷⁵ Qaraḍāwī, *al-Īmān wa'l-ḥayāt*, 281.

⁴⁷⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 282.

and other influential Islamist thinkers, he approaches the theology of power as part of the system of *quwwa*, which in his view, encompasses supreme Islamic values.

Faḍlallāh in his book developed a method by which he placed the particular situation and human needs – of the Lebanese Shi'a in the 1970s – in the context of the universal perspective of religious goals. Through this approach he managed to fill the gap that separates idealism and pragmatism. This makes his ideas adaptable to the various realities in which Muslims live in and outside the Middle East.

Chapter V: Spiritual Power

Introduction

Faḍlallāh interprets the Islamic concept of faith as faith-in-movement, and links it to the call to action. As we observed in his theology of power, Faḍlallāh claims that faith is manifested in the whole existence of the community, harmonious with the laws of nature, and embedded in the system of causality. In the third chapter of *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa* dedicated to spiritual power (*al-quwwa al-rūḥiyya*), Faḍlallāh elaborates on the specific role of spirituality in relation to faith and action. In this, he adopts a common motif among Muslim reformists and thinkers since the 19th century, that of criticising the negative role of Ṣūfism in weakening the *umma*, collaborating with despots and serving the enemies. However, Faḍlallāh could not discard mystic ideas and practices all together. As a Shī'ī authority, he had to deal with Twelver Imāmī spirituality whose vision of history, concept of leadership, and spiritual literature are imbued with mysticism. Faḍlallāh considered colonialism and what he perceives as its allies (Orientalism, Christian missions) as forces the aim of which is to weaken the spirit of the *umma*.

In the following, I will examine how Faḍlallāh responds to the internal spiritual challenge, in particular his reinterpretation of Ṣūfism and Shī'ī spirituality as spirituality-in-action. Subsequently, Faḍlallāh's response to external spiritual challenges, namely colonialism and Orientalism will be explored. In both sections, I contextualise his thought, compare it with some of the leading Shī'ī revivalist thinkers, inspect his sources and highlight the function of spiritual force within his system of *quwwa*.

1. Faḍlallāh's definition of spiritual power

In Faḍlallāh's system of thought, faith functions as a generator of spiritual strength that consequently guarantees material power. To put it differently, spirituality is the embodied faith, and as such, itself is a source of power. For Faḍlallāh, spiritual

force is “a solid foundation upon which the physical strength is built”.⁴⁷⁷ It is rooted in and inspired by faith in God as provider, as well as in Man as receiver of power. This link between the Creator and the creation generates the energy that Faḍlallāh calls spiritual power. Spirituality is the awareness of this process and the conscious use of it for spiritual empowerment. For that reason, spiritual power is considered as a characteristic of the Muslim individual who embodies confidence, will, and steadfastness.⁴⁷⁸ Second, Faḍlallāh maintains that spirituality is crucial for building a strong community capable of responding to challenges. In this context, spirituality is not an abstract or gnostic concept; it is spirituality-in-action.

In Faḍlallāh’s vocabulary, *al-quwwa al-rūḥiyya* is sometimes used as a quality of the self, *nafs*.⁴⁷⁹ This implies necessarily that spiritual power is an attribute of the individual. He uses *quwwa rūḥiyya* and *quwwa shakḥsiyya*, spiritual and personal force interchangeably.⁴⁸⁰ However, Faḍlallāh often speaks of *quwwa rūḥiyya* as the spirit of the community, thus the meaning of spiritual force often becomes a general concept in his treatise. For instance, when he discusses the role of colonialism in destroying nations, he describes the “spirit of resistance” (*rūḥ al-muqāwama*) as the equivalent of spiritual power.⁴⁸¹ They are interchangeable if the context concerns collective force. In several instances, Faḍlallāh considers the spirit (*rūḥ*) and the psyche (*nafs*) as the same.⁴⁸² This is the case when he emphasises the psychological war of colonial powers against Islam.

Faḍlallāh claims that spiritual strength is a transformative energy that turns religious conviction – faith – and theory – creed – into practice. In his words, it

⁴⁷⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 104.

⁴⁷⁸ Faḍlallāh develops this idea in several of his writings. For instance, in his *al-Ḥaraka al-Islāmiyya: mā lahā wa-mā ‘alayhā* [The Islamic movement: pros and cons] (Beirut: Dār al-Malāk, 2005), he laments the spiritual dryness of the *umma* and calls to use the Muslim rituals to generate inner spiritual force among believers. See: *al-Ḥaraka al-Islāmiyya*, 77.

His *Ma‘a rūḥāniyyat al-zaman* [With the spirituality of the time] (Beirut: Dār al-Malāk, 2005) explains the invocations of Imām Zayn al-‘Ābidīn. See: *Ma‘a rūḥāniyyat al-zaman*, 5. Moreover, he dedicates his *Āfāq al-rūḥ* [Horizons of the spirit] (Beirut: Dār al-Malāk, 2000) to comment on the *Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādiyya*.

⁴⁷⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 73.

⁴⁸⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 74, 79.

⁴⁸¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 74.

⁴⁸² I translate *nafs* as psyche here because in modern Arabic psychology is called *‘ilm nafsiyya*

influence[s] a human being's practical behaviour regarding the great or the small issues in life. In truth, the strength of one's personal incentives for work provides the body with double strength that enlivens him and increases his energy.⁴⁸³

Thus, spiritual power is an existential necessity, manifested in all fields of life. It invigorates the personality and provides the necessary energy to act according to one's convictions. Moreover, it is objective and measurable since it has a direct effect on Man's choices and enables his actions. It exerts both qualitative and quantitative influences. Spiritual strength is essential for mastering life and determines even success or failure.⁴⁸⁴

2. Internal spiritual challenges and the road to spiritual force

For Faḍlallāh, challenges generate opportunities for empowerment.⁴⁸⁵ As a Shī'ī jurist, he prepares a roadmap of spiritual empowerment and overcoming internal challenges. This process starts with transforming faith into reality. Islam, Faḍlallāh claims, guides people to put principles into practice. The necessity to realise ideas – that faith should be embodied in thought and practice – is a recurrent motif in his argument. A constant meeting with God in devoted prayer activates the strong divine presence in the heart of the human. In other words, emotion nourishes faith.

2.1 Reinterpreting spiritual traditions

Faḍlallāh opposes any understanding that considers spirituality as an aim in itself. As reflected both in the Sunnī and the Shī'ī traditions, spirituality is a praised way of life. However, Faḍlallāh rejects the historical interpretation of this spirituality as withdrawal from the herein, taking refuge in asceticism and passivity. For him this constitutes negative spirituality, according to which human beings should stay passive

⁴⁸³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 104.

⁴⁸⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 86.

⁴⁸⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 95.

amongst worldly tribulations. Neither does he see in the self *qua* self an enemy; he advocates moderation in spirituality.

Faḍlallāh quotes seven *ḥadīths*, reinterpreting them as incentives of spiritual power. First, he quotes two traditions attributed to the Prophet about self-control which he interprets as a criterion of strength. Thus, he understands the Prophetic statements as demands for awareness and command rather than for suppression. Subsequently, Faḍlallāh quotes a *ḥadīth* in which the Prophet admonishes Imām ‘Alī that the best *jihād* is to restrain the inclination towards injustice. For Faḍlallāh, inclination towards injustice is the greatest challenge for Man. At this point, he turns to Imāmī *ḥadīth* and quotes Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq saying that self-restraint is a guarantee for one’s salvation in the hereafter. Moreover, based on the same authority, Faḍlallāh asserts that a true believer once in the position of power by essence cannot let subjective emotions direct his / her actions or consider oneself as the ultimate source of truth. He quotes the famous tradition that “the strong believer is better than the weak one” to emphasise the individual’s capacity of self-empowerment. Here, he refers to *Majma‘ al-baḥrayn* by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Ṭurayḥī (d. 1674) to support his argument that strength “is regarded as another religious merit, in addition to faith”.⁴⁸⁶

Faḍlallāh reiterates that amidst the ongoing war between truth and falsehood, weakness results from fearing the forces of corruption. Believers, who represent the truth, have the religious responsibility “to establish justice and annihilate falsehood”;⁴⁸⁷ therefore, it is compulsory to become empowered. Consequently, Faḍlallāh perceives spiritual strength as essential for winning the battle of material forces. In the same vein, quoting a *ḥadīth* by Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq stating that “nothing is impossible for a body if intent is sufficiently strong to want it”, he asserts that spiritual strength has direct practical consequences on the result of an action. It functions as a tool in multiplying the physical strength of the individual as well as that of the community. Spiritual strength is not an abstract quality neither it is constant. There are means to stimulate it as part of the psychological preparation of a community before combat.

Finally, Faḍlallāh quotes from the *Supplication of Kumayl* attributed to Imām ‘Alī a passage in which God is invoked “to strengthen my body parts to serve you and my feelings to be resolute”. This implies complementarity between the physical and

⁴⁸⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 103.

⁴⁸⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 104.

spiritual aspects of strength. For Faḍlallāh, this confirms the aforementioned importance of developing spiritual strength as a way toward material force.

As we can see Faḍlallāh integrates various – Sunnī and Shī‘ī – traditions and reinterprets them in order to serve his idea on the necessity and the virtue of self-empowerment. He perceives spiritual strength as a response to the divine call to empowerment. For him, spiritual strength is inseparable from physical force. The former is a commitment to overcome human desires, intentions for injustice or resignation. Physical force takes this commitment further and implements it in the material reality. For Faḍlallāh, declaring the strong believer better than the weak originates from the every-day experience of power-struggle. It is to be understood in the context of obligation of “commanding right and forbidding wrong”. In Faḍlallāh’s system of thought, promptness to confront the challenges of the contemporary reality is the first step in fulfilling one’s Islamic mission.

2.2 Reinterpreting Ṣūfī concepts

Faḍlallāh’s attempt at reinterpreting spiritual traditions to argue for “spirituality-in-action” had to be accompanied by a similar re-reading of major Ṣūfī concepts, traditionally understood as quietist. He chooses four concepts among the most popular in Ṣūfī literature: reliance on God (*tawakkul*), contentment (*qanā‘a*), renunciation (*zuhd*) and struggling against the self (*jihād al-nafs*). In each of these concepts, Faḍlallāh refutes what he considers to be the false interpretation, the one that justifies resignation. His purpose is to lead his audience to believe that these very concepts should be understood as elements of mobilisation. Thus, Faḍlallāh responds to the internal challenge of a “Ṣūfism of weakness” with a “Ṣūfism of force”.

It would be necessary to begin with Faḍlallāh’s understanding of Ṣūfism as such. In *Khiṭāb al-islāmiyyīn wa’l-mustaqbal*, Faḍlallāh argues that *taṣawwuf* should stick to the simple spiritual method of the Qur’ān. He accepts the spiritual openness Ṣūfism offers towards God and its effect on spiritual practice. However, he rejects all philosophical elements and discards Ṣūfism as a doctrine of knowledge and as practice

all at once.⁴⁸⁸ He particularly insists on the spontaneous nature of Qur'ānic spirituality as opposed to the gnostic rites of Ṣūfī brotherhoods. Therefore, he sets out to reconsider the Ṣūfī legacy. He starts with the concept of *tawakkul* (reliance on God).

According to the Ṣūfī understanding, *tawakkul* means absolute dependence on God, and sometimes, it is described as the opposite of “earning a living” (*kasb*) or as a negation of human force and will. The majority of Ṣūfis would accept his reading of *tawakkul* “as abandonment of freewill and volition whilst beholding God as the supreme source of causality”.⁴⁸⁹ However, the issue of earning a living is debatable.⁴⁹⁰ Faḍlallāh's reinterpretation transforms reliance on God into a movement of liberating the self from fear. He emphasised *tawakkul* as a source of composure and strength, which is inherently linked to human effort: first of all Man has to be determined to act and strive for meeting all conditions of victory. Faḍlallāh cites the Qur'ān (3:159) to prove that *tawakkul* is the fruit of human decision. He also quotes a Prophetic *ḥadīth* to clarify the meaning of dependence in considering God as the sole object of veneration and the only source of sustenance.

Faḍlallāh does not deal with this concept at an individual mystic level. Rather, as he does in every aspect of *quwwa*, he relates reliance on God to the heart of struggle. There are human and natural forces that generate destructive anxiety that impedes human beings and weakens them. Here comes the role of *tawakkul*, which restores the feeling of confidence, stillness and safety. Inherent to Faḍlallāh's conception is that submission to God would lead to freedom from fear of others. However, this can work, Faḍlallāh reminds us, only if it is coupled with the will of movement and action.⁴⁹¹ Once more, Faḍlallāh insists on the social and political function of spirituality; *tawakkul* inspires strength while engaging in action and struggle. The primary function of *tawakkul* is the annihilation of any feeling that prompts Man's submission to another human being. For Faḍlallāh, dependence on others leads to weakness, while dependence on God is the only enduring source of strength that consequently leads to freedom and justice.

⁴⁸⁸ Ghassān Ibn Jaddū, *Khiṭāb al-Islāmiyyīn wa'l-mustaqbal* [Discourse of the Islamists and the future] (Beirut: Dār al-Malāk, 1995), 36-37.

⁴⁸⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 88.

⁴⁹⁰ L. Lewisohn, “Tawakkul,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. by P. Bearman *et al.*, vol. 10. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 376-78.

⁴⁹¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 88.

To eliminate the quietist meaning of reliance on God as resignation, he quotes two statements attributed to Ja‘far al-Şādiq. Both traditions are commonly used to support the Şūfi and quietist understanding of reliance on God (*tawakkul*). According to the first *ḥadīth*, wealth and dignity are worthless without *tawakkul*. It is not sure that Ja‘far al-Şādiq, to whom later authors ascribe an abundant mystic literature, would promote worldly wealth and dignity. The second tradition states that reliance on God is the proof of firm belief (*yaqīn*). Nevertheless, in both cases Faḍlallāh reinterprets this notion as a source of strength that enables the believer to promptly face challenges.

Subsequently, Faḍlallāh re-reads the concept of contentment, *qanā‘a*. The latter is widely understood among Şūfis as an acceptance of any condition God has bestowed on the human being. This presupposes patience, gratitude and trust on the part of the believer. Faḍlallāh, without modifying the essence of the concept, suggests a shift in the emphasis. Gratification for him does not refer to external facilities, rather to self-contentment, the conviction that one’s abilities are sufficient to carry out change in any imposed condition. Faḍlallāh’s premise is that the call to be strong is an obligation, and the believer cannot respond to this requirement without nurturing the feeling of contentment that results from detecting and activating one’s own sources of power regardless of the circumstances one has to face. Contentment and strength are linked in a causal relationship, and the “object” of contentment is to be found in the spiritual resources of the person. The readiness to explore this is the responsibility of the individual.

Faḍlallāh’s understanding of *qanā‘a* rejects acquiescence to injustice and deprivation but requires a sense of realism in directing one’s will and in setting one’s goals. Thus the primary function of contentment, similarly to *tawakkul*, is the elimination of dependence and fear of any external human power. Faḍlallāh argues that fear results from a feeling of inability to fulfil a desire. He quotes four statements by Imām ‘Alī that share a common perspective: possessing material goods or abilities does not make its owner potent, since there is always more to desire. Faḍlallāh goes even further when – referring to Imām ‘Alī, al-Bāqir and Ja‘far al-Şādiq – he declares that greed and unrealistic ambitions are “evil” because they undermine self-confidence and, therefore, weaken the person. In Faḍlallāh’s interpretation, the most important in “freedom from desire” is that it makes one strong.

The section on contentment is supported by references to Imāmī *ḥadīth*. The idea that those who are humiliated are responsible for their humiliation is found in the statements of all three Imāms quoted by Faḍlallāh. His aim, therefore, is to raise awareness of the fact that the oppressed do bear responsibility for their situation and they are to be called to account for their impotence. This is so because human conviction shapes the tangible reality.⁴⁹² For him, there is always a battlefield and one should not depend on others. For depending on others means being doomed to failure out of weakness. In this process, contentment based on patience, gratitude and trust provides the believers with freedom from servitude, and consciousness of human dignity.

Related to contentment is the notion of asceticism, *zuhd*.⁴⁹³ It is well known that in early Islam, asceticism was associated with Ṣūfīsm. Later, *zuhd* remained a central Ṣūfī practice and highly praised as a first step towards purification of the soul. However, here too Faḍlallāh rejects what he labels as the inauthentic meaning of *zuhd* that implies absolute renouncement. For him, the true meaning of *zuhd* is “not to be possessed by anything”, as a tradition attributed to ‘Alī confirms.⁴⁹⁴ This seems to be a key point in his argument. Lacking the inner sources of power is destructive because it would prevent the community from responding to the call to strength. In his *Khaṭawāt ‘alā ṭarīq al-Islām*, Faḍlallāh makes his argument more explicit and defines *zuhd* as a deviation if understood merely as renunciation of possessions. He vehemently criticises the Hindu-Buddhist philosophies and the Ṣūfī brotherhoods for disabling man (*shalal*).⁴⁹⁵

In addition, Faḍlallāh devotes a detailed sub-chapter to spiritual struggle (*jihād al-nafs*),⁴⁹⁶ which implies a fight against one’s self. He defines it as a process of empowerment that enables Man to discern his / her desires and to take the necessary steps. Self-struggle has three interrelated aims such as to prevent deviation, to establish and maintain the harmony of thought and action, and to provide strength based on this unity and cohesion (*waḥda wa-tamāsuk*). Self-control (*murāqabat al-nafs*) and holding oneself accountable (*muḥāsabat al-nafs*) are the main elements of this “straight plan”

⁴⁹² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 256.

⁴⁹³ For an account of this Ṣūfī concept, see: Leah Kinberg, “What is meant by *zuhd*?” *Studia Islamica* 61 (1985): 27-44.

⁴⁹⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 91.

⁴⁹⁵ Faḍlallāh, *Khaṭawāt ‘alā ṭarīq al-Islām*, 58-59.

⁴⁹⁶ For a detailed account of different interpretations of greater *jihād* see: John Renard, “*al-Jihād al-akbar*: Notes on a Theme in Islamic Spirituality,” *The Muslim World* 78 (1988): 225-242.

(*al-khuṭṭa al-qawīma*) through which “spiritual strength is transformed into an active constituent”.⁴⁹⁷

Faḍlallāh evokes the famous Prophetic *ḥadīth* of spiritual struggle as the greater *jihād*, explaining what makes it “greater”. He stresses that it takes place in one’s inner self against desires and ambitions that exercise pressure on the self, and thus cause the loss of internal balance and weaken one’s will.⁴⁹⁸ It is similar to a physical combat but fought against “the oppression of desires”⁴⁹⁹ with “unseen weapons [between] the two inharmonious opposing personalities”⁵⁰⁰ of the self. In this battle, the principles, the reason, and the will fight one’s instinctive side.⁵⁰¹ For Faḍlallāh, the strength gained through such victory is unbeatable because such struggle eliminates all elements of weakness.⁵⁰² The fruit of greater *jihād* is what Faḍlallāh calls “the spiritual immunity” (*al-manā‘a al-nafsiyya*) that alleviates the internal and external pressures on the psyche.⁵⁰³

As for the challenges that one faces on the path of spiritual *jihād*, they are manifold: over-concern and negligence (*ifrāt wa-tafrīt*),⁵⁰⁴ inclinations towards pleasure,⁵⁰⁵ or its opposite, considering greater *jihād* as an end in itself.⁵⁰⁶ On the one hand, excessive self-restriction and self-imposed asceticism do not count as acts of faith since they are rooted in fear and paralyse the believer. On the other hand, pleasure-seeking implies lack of control over one’s self, and, therefore, leads to weakness. Principles such as the right guidance (*hudā*) or the guide to victory (*dalīl al-naṣr*) remain mere abstractions without acting accordingly in the various battlefields of life. Exposing oneself to combat is an opportunity to gain strength from experience.⁵⁰⁷ In this framework, determination and action guarantee victory in the hereafter or in the long run, regardless of the momentary outcome.

Preoccupation with weakness haunts the reader of Faḍlallāh’s chapter on spirituality. In other writings, Faḍlallāh seems to display the same concern. For instance,

⁴⁹⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 94.

⁴⁹⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 98.

⁴⁹⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 98.

⁵⁰⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 99.

⁵⁰¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 99-100.

⁵⁰² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 100.

⁵⁰³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 100.

⁵⁰⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 94-96.

⁵⁰⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 96-97.

⁵⁰⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 101-103.

⁵⁰⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 95.

in his *al-Rasūl al-dā'iya fī'l-Qur'ān al-karīm* [The preaching messenger in the noble Qur'ān], an interpretation of Muḥammad's life, he dedicates two chapters to weakness. In one of them, he warns against covering the defects present in the community, because this makes correction and reform impossible. Weaknesses should be faced with elements of force.⁵⁰⁸ In the other chapter, he claims that natural shortcomings do not pose an obstacle to victory since divine support and the movement of believers transform these weaknesses into force.⁵⁰⁹ These examples confirm my assessment about Faḍlallāh's dialectical idea of the constant struggle of opposing concepts, inclinations, and movements.

Another pitfall is to consider spiritual exercise (*riyāḍa rūḥiyya*) as an end in itself or a means to acquire special privileges. Here, Faḍlallāh quotes Imām 'Alī from the *Nahj al-balāgha* to support his view that good things in life are blessings from God and Man's approach must be based on a natural balance (*tawāzun ṭabī'ī*) between renunciation and pleasure.⁵¹⁰ Stressing the value of self-restraint, he refers to *ḥadīths* attributed to the Prophet and Ja'far al-Ṣādiq. Faḍlallāh asserts that the prophetic and Imāmī traditions – in addition to considering “greater *jihād*” as a valid measure of strength – define the basis upon which “greater *jihād*” should be founded.⁵¹¹ The three prophetic and two Imāmī *ḥadīths* emphasise the importance of self-control with special regards to one's inclinations towards injustice and oppression.

Regarding the practical aspects of “greater *jihād*”, Faḍlallāh stresses the importance of spiritual exercises as a means to realising the balance Islam promotes between anxiety and negligence. Balance is achieved through a process in which natural impulses and moral principles are integrated. For him, the aim is “to acquire natural strength (...) that fills the soul, increases the will and governs the individual as well as society as a whole”.⁵¹² Faḍlallāh describes this as a twofold “training process” in which one first examines one's weaknesses and strengths then uses one's willpower to put the principles into practice.⁵¹³ The method he suggests is a classical discernment regarding one's motivations. In this regard, personal and natural needs are legitimate but are

⁵⁰⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Rasūl al-dā'iya fī'l-Qur'ān al-karīm* [The preaching prophet in the noble Qur'ān] (Beirut: Dār al-Malāk, 2007), 54-55.

⁵⁰⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Rasūl al-dā'iya*, 58.

⁵¹⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 101.

⁵¹¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 102.

⁵¹² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 97.

⁵¹³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 98.

brought under control by the power of will, and thus the individual reaches the “state of spiritual immunity”.⁵¹⁴

As for the criteria of discernment, Faḍlallāh involves complying with the *sharīʿa* as part of the spiritual exercise. Referring to a *ḥadīth* attributed to Imām ʿAlī, Faḍlallāh employs a legal discourse in explaining how one’s attitude towards regulations can promote spiritual stability.⁵¹⁵ Faḍlallāh argues that the rules serve moderation, preserve and consolidate spiritual strength, and prevent any harmful exaggeration in spirituality.⁵¹⁶ Religious law provides a practical guide to self-training and to strengthen the personality without futile self-imposed tribulations.

For Faḍlallāh, the centrality of personal desires and incentives results in the human being’s detachment from the universality of religious precepts and in the reign of what is subjective, relative and arbitrary. This inclination causes an imbalance in the individual’s psyche and in the functioning of the society. Consequently, such tendencies weaken the personality and destabilise the community. For Faḍlallāh, greater *jihād* serves to overcome internal weaknesses, a process in which the individual strives to control destructive sentiments such as desires, inclinations to oppress others or to take revenge. It also liberates the human being from excessive devotions that would otherwise generate passivity, fear, and weakness. The aim is the restoration and preservation of internal balance between natural needs and legal constraints. As such, it is essential for the empowerment of the individual and the community, and for any form of legitimate physical *jihād*.

Faḍlallāh does not refer to any Ṣūfī literature. Instead, he relies on Shīʿī collections of *ḥadīths* as his main source. His most often cited source is *Wasāʿil al-Shīʿa* (quoted five times) a compilation of earlier sources by al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī (d. 1624). The second most cited collection in this chapter is *Nahj al-balāgha*, a collection of prayers and meditations attributed to Imām ʿAlī. Faḍlallāh uses this source three times. *Al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādiyya*, a collection of prayers attributed to Imām Zayn al-ʿAbidīn is also quoted three times. Finally, he refers to *al-Kāfī* by al-Kulaynī (d. 941) three times. *Al-Kāfī* is the most authentic book of *ḥadīth* for the Twelver Shīʿīs. The four books quoted by Faḍlallāh are widely used texts in Shīʿī scholarly circles as well as among ordinary

⁵¹⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 100.

⁵¹⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 100.

⁵¹⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 103.

believers. Therefore, their influence is considerable. Faḍlallāh, whose purpose is to reinterpret spirituality as *élan vital* – to borrow H. Bergson’s notion – most probably selected these sources to make his impact on his hesitant audience more effective.

In his critical evaluation of Ṣūfī concepts, Faḍlallāh provides an activist interpretation of spirituality. He is not concerned with individual spirituality, rather criticises the traits that can generate passivity inside the community. The spirituality he aims for is a “call to strength”. He reinterprets the notions of reliance on God, contentment, renunciation, and struggle against the self by transforming them into elements of a spirit of action that liberates from fear. As he sees it, spirituality is not a “state of mind” or “an end in itself” but a tool of empowerment. Spirituality is an inner dynamics; it inspires the believer to be strong, to resist, and to fight in the ongoing combats.

3. External challenges to the spirit of the *umma*

According to Faḍlallāh, colonialism and Orientalism are the main external challenges that aim to weaken the spirit of the community. His premise is that the great powers, by which he meant the West and the Soviet Union, are waging a concealed and psychological war that serves to dominate and subjugate Muslims in every possible way.⁵¹⁷ However, he seems to be more critical of the West than of the Soviet Union. Faḍlallāh meticulously describes the different instruments that colonialism uses to destroy the spirit of resistance in small nations, such as propaganda, disinformation – in academic research – by providing insinuating and biased evaluations – and the ideological rewriting of Islamic history.

To illustrate the Western intellectual challenge, Faḍlallāh, similarly to most Islamic thinkers, takes the case of Orientalism. He argues that Orientalist representations of Islam “served an underlying political and religious purpose”.⁵¹⁸ He highlights two major tendencies present in Orientalism that pose dangers to the self-perception of Muslims. The first is partial and biased evaluation of the Islamic cultural heritage, by exaggerating the importance of certain marginal elements – such as Islamic

⁵¹⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 78.

⁵¹⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 76.

mysticism and *jāhili* literature – or by negating or belittling its civilisational achievements. Another strategy of this trend is to praise the “glorious past” and depict contemporary Islam as a system in decline that lacks vitality for revival. The second main tendency is to attack the fundamentals of Islam by raising doubts concerning the authenticity of sacred religious texts or by interpreting them out of the historical context. For Faḍlallāh, the aim of such tactics is “to detach the community (*umma*) from its intellectual and spiritual roots”⁵¹⁹ and to “devalue Islam in the spirit of its followers”.⁵²⁰ As for disinformation and propaganda, Faḍlallāh claims that its aim is to place the differences between the potentials of the West and the Muslim world in sharp contrast by belittling Muslims and venerating the West. As a result of such communication strategies, oppressed people lose self-confidence in their abilities to resist their oppressors.⁵²¹

Faḍlallāh insists that, the community must build spiritual strength that enables it to counter intellectual challenges strongly and authentically.⁵²² He argues that colonialism and Orientalism⁵²³ are threats with political, social and intellectual impacts.⁵²⁴ He does not distinguish, as do many Islamic thinkers, between equitable Orientalism (*istishrāq munṣif*) and anti-Islamic Orientalism usually called aggressive Orientalism (*istishrāq ‘adā’ī*). He does not mention the efforts made by Orientalists that revived the Shī‘ī legacy in theology, law, and mysticism in a quest for alternative narratives to the Sunnī orthodoxy.

4. Spirituality and revolution: Is Faḍlallāh’s project a duplicate of Khomeynī’s?

In the process of reading and analysing Faḍlallāh’s discourse on spirituality and power, the question that arises is the following: to what extent does Faḍlallāh owe his

⁵¹⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 75.

⁵²⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 76.

⁵²¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 74.

⁵²² Criticism of Orientalism as chief motif of Islamic literature predates both Faḍlallāh and E. Said. One of the major critical works in Arabic of Orientalism is Muḥammad Muḥammad Ḥusayn’s *al-Ittijāhāt al-waṭaniyya fī ‘l-adab al-mu‘āṣir* was published in 1954.

⁵²³ Faḍlallāh published his book in 1979 while Edward Said published his work *Orientalism* in 1978.

⁵²⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 78-79.

spirituality of force to Khumaynī? For the latter incarnated the figure of a revolutionary mystic at its apogee, and Faḍlallāh, has certainly reflected, in one way or another, on Khumaynī's gnostic revolution. To answer this question, I proceed to a comparison between Faḍlallāh and Khumaynī. This helps me to place Faḍlallāh in his literary-historic context; and to distinguish Faḍlallāh's system, showing, by the same token, his own angle within Shī'ī political thought.

Similarly to Faḍlallāh, Khumaynī's argumentation has both psychological and political dimensions. The two Shī'ī leaders believed that victory results from the spiritual transformation of the believers.⁵²⁵ Both jurists deemed that the transformative spirit of Islam was missing in the perception and practice of contemporary religiosity, and this resulted in the decline of the *umma* and in the continued subjugation of Muslims by colonial powers.⁵²⁶

Both Khumaynī and Faḍlallāh reinterpreted greater *jihād* as individual and communal spiritual revival that in turn leads to social and political empowerment. As Sylwia Surdykowska summarised it, for Khumaynī "one of the most important tasks in man's life is (...) to know one's own vices and pursuit to overcome them (...) The inner fight is (...) the fight for one's own manhood (...) This spiritual improvement is a kind of preparation for the protection of Islam."⁵²⁷

For Khumaynī, as for Faḍlallāh, greater *jihād* prepares the believers for the social and political *jihāds*. Khumaynī perceived greater *jihād* primarily as a spiritual perfection that enables religious scholars to fulfil their role as leaders of the community. Therefore, he reminds his audience of the importance of humility and simplicity. He emphasised the importance of knowing God through meditation and supplication. In Khumaynī's thought, spirituality – motivated by fear of God – is a constant awareness of the hereafter, a guarantee of individual salvation, and of just leadership for the community.

That said, there are significant differences between Faḍlallāh and Khumaynī. The latter was a proponent of gnostic mysticism (*irfān*),⁵²⁸ while Faḍlallāh rejected Ṣūfism

⁵²⁵ *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*, trans. by Hamid Algar. (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981), 336. Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 104-105.

⁵²⁶ Khumaynī, "The religious scholars led the revolt," in *Islam and Revolution*, 332.

⁵²⁷ Sylwia Surdykowska, "The Spiritual Aspect of Jihad and Khomeini's Doctrine," in *Shi'ism. Critical Concepts in Islamic Studies*, eds. Colin Turner and Paul Luft (London: Routledge, 2008), 297-298.

⁵²⁸ Vanessa Martin, *Creating an Islamic State: Khomeini and the Making of a New Iran* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000), 29-47. See also Khumaynī's writings "Jihad al-Akbar, The Greatest Jihad: Combat with the Self," accessed July 15, 2013. <http://www.al-islam.org/jihad-al-akbar-the-greatest-jihad-combat-with-the-self-imam-khomeini>. "The Wine of Love, Mystical Poetry of Imam Khomeini," accessed July 15,

as a doctrine. Khumaynī argued that spirituality eliminates or reduces temptations and illuminates the believer. For Faḍlallāh, spirituality was a means of discovering human capacities and putting them at the service of the Islamic struggle against oppression and injustice. Khumaynī addressed the Iranian people who were receptive to mysticism as a component of later Iranian Shī‘ism, while the Lebanese context, dominated by secular Western ideologies and reformist Salafism required a tone that is cautious and critical of traditional Ṣūfism.

Khumaynī considered worldly aspirations as dangerous and hostile to human dignity. In describing them he used the metaphor of darkness and veil that separates the soul from God,⁵²⁹ and repeatedly called for the “purification” of the self, the full control of instincts and desires.⁵³⁰ Faḍlallāh was less ascetic. He disapproved radicalism and excessive rigour. He sensed no sharp dichotomy between human desires and the realisation of Islamic values.

Khumaynī was convinced that the change in the legal framework of the society – the establishment of the Islamic state – will lead to the moral betterment of the individual. His language is rich in poetic imagery describing the illumination of the faithful and the condemnation or chastisement of the sinner. For him, the supplications of ‘Alī embody the peak of metaphysical knowledge and of spiritual insight. Khumaynī’s ideas are centred on sin and penitence, even human intellect serves none else than recognising the need for purification. In Faḍlallāh’s thought, establishing a state based on the *sharī‘a* is not a prerequisite to the moral betterment of the believers. Law serves to regulate and maintain balance in spiritual as well in practical matters.⁵³¹

Spirituality is the path from doctrine to practice. Therefore, any element of spirituality must be understood as a means that takes the believer along this path. Similarly to Khumaynī, Faḍlallāh refers to the Imāms as the embodiments of spiritual strength whose faith is transformed into uncompromised action. However, he never hints at any supernatural characteristic of the Imāms, rather depicts them as strong men *par excellence*. Their power is attainable for the common believers, without particular

2013. <http://www.al-islam.org/wine-love-mystical-poetry-imam-khomeini>. “Forty Hadith. An Exposition,” accessed July 15, 2013. <http://www.al-islam.org/forty-hadith-an-exposition-second-edition-imam-khomeini>.

⁵²⁹ Khumaynī, “The Fountainhead of Magnificence” in *Islam and Revolution*, 351.

⁵³⁰ Khumaynī, *Islamic Government: Governance of the Jurist*, chap. on “Program for the Establishment of an Islamic Government” in *Islam and Revolution*, 146.

⁵³¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 135.

practice or secret knowledge, merely based on a balanced approach towards pain and pleasure, both of which are to serve the physical and spiritual empowerment of the human being. It results in an attentive and agile perception of the opportunities that the “here and now” offers for action.

In Faḍlallāh’s activist spirituality, Ṣūfī concepts become means of eliminating weakness and passivity. The believer’s faith and love for God is best expressed in responsible deeds resulting from a deep concern with the improvement of the world. Unification with the divine will occur through such action. Law defines and guides the realisation of Ṣūfī ideals, and as such, for Faḍlallāh, there was no antagonism between legal thinking and Ṣūfī spirituality. However, as stated above, unlike Khumaynī, he showed no interest in mysticism, or transcendent philosophy, *al-ḥikma al-muta‘aliyya*. Therefore, we can assume that he opened a third way in the Shī‘ī *‘ulamā’*’s approach towards Ṣūfism, a path that is embedded in the ideal of strength through which the message of Islam is realised.⁵³² Faḍlallāh’s spirituality is transformative; it forms part of what I call the Shī‘ī transformative paradigm of empowerment, oriented towards movement and action and devoid of any interest in mysticism as such. Being aware of the importance of the spiritual component of a Shī‘ī movement, his aim was to put it at the service of revolutionary activism. It can be said that Faḍlallāh supported the idea of an Islamic revolution without Gnosticism.

For Khumaynī, mystic experience and tradition were the primary impetus for his leadership and vision of revival. It was not a mere tool, as Faḍlallāh considers it, but also an end in itself. In Lebanon, a cosmopolitan, multi-denominational Levantine merchant society, Shī‘ī thought could not take refuge or gain legitimisation in mysticism. Faḍlallāh rejected mysticism, an asset of quietist Shī‘ism, because it impeded the impulse of power. To sum up, although their aim was identical, namely that of reviving the spiritual force of the community, the discourses of Faḍlallāh and

⁵³² N. Pourjavady defines two main trends among the modern Shī‘ī scholars concerning their reception of Ṣūfism. “One group consisted of those who were exclusively specialized in law and who were against Ṣūfism and the Ṣūfīs. The second group of Shī‘ī *‘ulamā’* were those who believed in the theoretical aspect of Ṣūfism, particularly in the teachings of Ibn ‘Arabī, which they called *‘irfān* and *ḥikmat-i muta‘aliyya* whereas they objected to Ṣūfī practices, the institution of the *khānaqāh*, and the organizational structure of the Ṣūfī orders.” Nasrollah Pourjavady, “Opposition to Sufism in Twelver Shi‘ism,” in *Islamic Mysticism Contested: Thirteen Centuries of Controversies and Polemics*, eds. Frederick de Jong and Bernd Radtke (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 620.

Khumaynī approached the issue of spirituality and revolution from different perspectives.

This was a natural consequence of the different social and political contexts they lived in, and of the religious history of their respective communities. Therefore I oppose any assumption that considers Faḍlallāh's revolutionary activism as the Lebanonisation of Khumaynī's ideas. Their approach shared the same goals and the widely known interrelatedness of spiritual and material strength, but their argumentation differs profoundly, and most importantly, their projects were parallel not subsequent.

Concluding remarks

The most important features of Faḍlallāh's reinterpretation of spirituality can be summarised in the following. First, his perspective is social. In his understanding, four key concepts of Ṣūfism – *tawakkul*, *zuhd*, *qanā'a*, *jihād al-nafs* – have social impact on the individual's relying on or renouncing the community. Second, Faḍlallāh reiterates the enmity between reformists and Ṣūfīs, a salient phenomenon since the 19th century. Third, Faḍlallāh argues against quietism, deeply rooted in traditional Shī'ism, echoing the long struggle of political and activist Shī'ism to mobilise the community. Fourth, being fully aware and critical of the passive resignation among the Lebanese Shī'a in the seventies, Faḍlallāh dedicates much energy to describing and rejecting the kind of spirituality that generates weakness. Fifth, Faḍlallāh constructs his model of spirituality on the basis of Qur'ānic, prophetic and Imāmī sayings and experiences. Sixth, for him, two spiritualities exist: invigorating and repressive. As a reformist, he rejects the repressive one as it prevents the community from involvement and fight, while he defines the invigorating one as the spirituality that inspires social and political action.

In Faḍlallāh's system of *quwwa*, the function of spirituality is to activate power embedded in faith as an essential component of transforming doctrine into practice. This pragmatic spirituality – each component of which promotes and supports strength in a concrete, practical way – serves the empowerment of the community. Faḍlallāh's language is devoid of any mysticism, it offers a simple and conceivable guidance towards a practical and purposeful spiritual empowerment which is a prerequisite for attaining material power.

Chapter VI: Social Power

Introduction

In the previous chapters, power and activism have been shown to constitute the essence of Faḍlallāh's theology and spirituality as put forward in his *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*. The present chapter analyses Faḍlallāh's concept of social power. In the aforementioned book, different social aspects of *quwwa* preoccupy Faḍlallāh: social values, structures and actions as well as their social function in the empowerment of the community. Above all, Faḍlallāh seeks to instil solidarity, justice, and the obligation of "commanding right and forbidding wrong," (*al-amr bi'l-mā'rūf wa'l-nahy 'an al-munkar*) as means to create the ideal of a strong society. He endorses a narrative of two societies: the weak and the strong, arguing that beliefs, unity, and values determine the power of a community. He claims that the first Islamic community illustrates best the strong society. He confronts it with the weak society which lacks unity and solidarity – echoing to a great extent contemporary Lebanon.

Faḍlallāh's social theory – embedded in his theology and spirituality of power – transforms individual power into a collective deployment of action. Social power could be seen as a mediator between the theory of power and its political application. The chapter on "Social power" comes after spiritual power and precedes a series of chapters on political power. Thus, in the book, social power constitutes a transition from individual power – as put forward in his concept of theology and spirituality – towards attaining political power through social mobilisation. Therefore, it can be said that social power is the bridge between belief and revolution. This structure suggests a position of mediation between theory and practice, individual and political power.

Probably, Faḍlallāh's specificity lies in his idea of a coherent system of power in which social power is an asset to the autonomy of the Shī'ī community. Ideally, he sought to provide his community with permanent resources – institutions, charity networks, political organisation – and consequently social freedom before it claims a share in political power. For Faḍlallāh, society is the sphere in which power is embodied and the tool by which the first concrete empowerment of the Shī'ī community is realised.

In the following, first, I analyze his views with regard to the Shī'ī context. Second, I highlight his binary understanding of social weakness and strength as a narrative of social empowerment. Third, I emphasise Faḍlallāh's social functionalism, discussing his debt to Durkheim. Finally, it will be shown that his social thought found an echo in Ḥizbullāh's social activism.

1. Social thought in modern Shī'ism

Responding to social challenges from an Islamic perspective was a concern of the most influential thinkers of Shī'ism in the last century. From among Faḍlallāh's contemporaries, 'Alī Sharī'atī and Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr are considered as the leading Shī'ī social theorists. Their primary aim was to define the Islamic social philosophy and to differentiate it from the Western intellectual tradition. Both al-Ṣadr and Sharī'atī aimed to provide Islamic answers to the most dominant and appealing Western ideologies such as Marxism and capitalism.⁵³³

In particular, Marxism was a direct rival to Shī'ism in Iran and Iraq in the 1960s with its revolutionary call to the liberation of the oppressed. In this regard, Juan Cole maintains that the oppressive rule of the Pahlavi regime turned many students and intellectuals to a radical vision of Shī'ī Islam or to Marxism.⁵³⁴ Due the great appeal of

⁵³³ Several studies dealt with the social thought of Sharī'atī and al-Ṣadr. For example, see: S. F. Alatas, "Islam and Socialism: Perspectives from Autonomous Social Science and Occidentalism," in *Investigating the South-South Dimension of Modernity and Islam: Circulating Visions, Intellectual Figures, Locations*, eds. Georg Stauth and Helmut Buchholt (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2002), 113-129. Mir Mohammed Ibrahim, *A Reconstruction of Social Thought in Islam: a Case Study of Dr. Ali Shariati* (Srinagar: Valley Book House, 1997). Shahrough Akhavi, "Islam, Politics and Society in the Thought of Ayatullah Khomeini, Ayatullah Taliqani, and Ali Shariati," *Middle Eastern Studies* 24 (1988): 404-431. Mohammad Yadegari, "Shariati and the Reconstruction of the Social Sciences," *American Journal of Islamic Studies* 1 (1984): 53-59. Basheer Ahmad Dabla, "Sociology of Islam: Shariati's Viewpoint," *Islamic Culture* 57 (1983): 277-282. Akhavi, Shahrough. "Shari'ati's Social Thought," in *Religion and Politics in Iran: Shi'ism from Quietism to Revolution*, ed. N. R. Keddie (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 125-144. Rodney Wilson, "The Contribution of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr" to Contemporary Islamic Economic Thought," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 9 (1998): 46-59. Nakash, Yitzhak. "The Shi'ites and the Future of Iraq," *Foreign Affairs* 82 (2003): 17-26. Hanna Batatu, "Iraq's Underground Shi'a Movements: Characteristics, Causes and Prospects," *Middle East Journal* 35 (1981): 578-594. Keiko Sakai, "Modernity and Tradition in the Islamic Movements in Iraq: Continuity and Discontinuity in the Role of the Ulama," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 23 (2001): 37-53.

⁵³⁴ Juan Cole, *Sacred Space and Holy War* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), 11.

Marxist thought to the young and impoverished Shī'a, religious scholars and intellectuals had to craft a persuasive social thought in order to cope with the Marxist dominance in social theory. This meant the need to adopt some crucial Marxist concepts by reinterpreting the religious doctrines and “Islamising” its revolutionary agenda.

As for the impact of Marxism on the revolutionary activism of Shī'ism, Hamid Dabashi meticulously highlighted how social and political discontent gave an impetus for the transformation of Shī'ism into a revolutionary theology.⁵³⁵ This turn perfectly fitted to the “*ipso facto* religion of protest” as he calls it.⁵³⁶ However, after more than a millennium of quietism and collaboration with the state, Shī'ism had to redefine itself and restore its credibility, and at the same time, compete with secular ideologies such as Marxism and nationalism. Dabashi asserts that it was inevitable that both intellectual currents influenced revolutionary Shī'ism in its modern form.⁵³⁷ He claims that the ideologues of the Islamic Revolution – among them Sharī'atī, Murtaḍā Muṭahhari, Maḥmūd Ṭāliqānī, Mahdī Bāzargān, Abū'l-Ḥasan Banī-Ṣadr and even Khumaynī – sought to render the conceptual arsenal of secular ideologies operative in viable Islamic terminologies, and turn them into instruments of a mobilising force.⁵³⁸ Dabashi defines colonialism as “the principal cause of Shī'ī political revivalism, its main interlocutor”.⁵³⁹ In his view, it was the “nationalisation” and “socialisation” of Shī'ism in Iran that prepared it for revolutionary mobilisation and rise to power.⁵⁴⁰

In Iran, Sharī'atī set out to rediscover the Qur'ān in the light of Marxism and existentialism. The western-educated Sharī'atī faced a situation in which official Shī'ism became a tool of oppression. Sensing this fundamental contradiction between principles and reality, he became an ardent critic of the various socio-political manifestations of Safavid or “Black” Shī'ism. At the same time, he argued for the existence of the 'Alid,

⁵³⁵ Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, 1-38.

⁵³⁶ Dabashi, *Islamic Liberation Theology: Resisting the Empire* (London: Routledge, 2008), 67.

⁵³⁷ Dabashi, *Islamic Liberation Theology*, 79, 89, 91, 94, 98.

⁵³⁸ Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, 368.

⁵³⁹ Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, 76.

⁵⁴⁰ Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, 76. A similar correlativity between Marxism and Shī'ism can be observed in Iraq. For example, Y. Nakash in his book *The Shi'is of Iraq* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) emphasises the involvement of *mujtahids* in political activism to defend the Shī'ī religious identity amidst the spread of communism. Orit Bashkin in her book *The Other Iraq: Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009) shows how Marxism became the main ideology of radical opposition in modern Iraq. Joyce Wiley's book *The Islamic Movement of Iraqi Shi'as* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992) discusses some aspects of the competition between communism and the Shī'ī Islamic movement in Iraq. Finally, in his book *The Shi'ite Movement in Iraq* (London: Saqi Books, 2003). Faleh Abd al-Jabbar maintains that the Da'wa party, the main Islamist Shī'ī movement, recruited among former leftist activists.

“Red” or revolutionary Shī‘ism that by essence resists oppression and promotes an egalitarian society.⁵⁴¹ His ideas about society are compiled in a volume entitled *On the Sociology of Islam* that consists of his lectures given in 1968 specifically dedicated to the various aspects of his social thought. He presented revolutionary ideas by applying religious symbolism and transformed Shī‘ism into a theology of liberation.

The deadlock to which quietist perception leads was made explicit and plain by Sharī‘atī. For him, implementing religious ideals were not the primary goals, religion served as a powerful tool of mobilisation the aim of which was social transformation through liberation and revolution. Faḍlallāh too, differentiated between the destructive and constructive elements of Shī‘ī tradition and discarded the former, but did so from a juristic perspective and interpreted religion as a system of empowerment, the final goal of which is the implementation of religious ideals.

In Iraq, Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr, wrote a book specifically dedicated to the analysis of Islamic society: *Contemporary Man and the Social Problem (al-Insān al-mu‘āṣir wa’l-mushkila al-ijtimā‘iyya)*, but his other works such as *al-Madrasa al-Qur’āniyya* or the posthumously published *Our Society (Mujtama‘unā)* also contain essays and lectures on social issues. In *al-Madrasa al-Qur’āniyya*, al-Ṣadr provides a detailed analysis of the various social segments based on their attitude, the degree and nature of their involvement in the operation of the illegitimate rule.⁵⁴² He dedicates great attention to the ethics of weakness and differentiates between the deprived who collaborate with their oppressors and those who stand up against them.

Al-Ṣadr’s perspective left recognisable marks on Faḍlallāh’s commitment to activism, on his social criticism, and his refutation of Marxism. In the Ḥawza he set up in Beirut, al-Ṣadr’s books were part of the curriculum, therefore it can be said that his influence on Faḍlallāh is explicit. However, as the comparison of their social analysis shows, while al-Ṣadr provided an analytical perspective, Faḍlallāh’s approach was functional; he carefully selected elements of empowerment and integrated them into his system of power.

However, the Lebanese political and historical context differs from the Iranian and the Iraqi ones. The project of empowerment designed by Faḍlallāh for the Lebanese

⁵⁴¹ ‘Alī Sharī‘atī, “Red Shi‘ism,” accessed February 9, 2013, <http://www.al-islam.org/articles/red-shiism-ali-shariati>.

⁵⁴² Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr, *al-Madrasa al-Qur’āniyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifa, 1981).

Shī'a sheds light on these differences and raises attention to self-regenerating capacities inherent in Shī'ī thought that proved to be another significant factor next to discontent in preparing the intellectual ground for political mobilisation. In Lebanon, Faḍlallāh formulated his concept based on the Shī'ī dissatisfaction with their social conditions. By the late 1960s, the social status of the Shī'a became a matter on which the survival of the community depended. He transformed the theology of weakness prevalent amongst the Lebanese Shī'a into the theology of force, by selecting and emphasising the elements of strength and discarding elements of weakness. However, as a jurist he considered religion as a solid basis and source of empowerment rather than a mere political tool.

Faḍlallāh was concerned with the social structure and social values from the perspective of their relation to the quality and quantity of social strength they produce. Also, he was aware that several secular, revolutionary political factions were trying to attract and recruit the Shī'a. This fact prompted him to formulate his social concept as a prelude and prerequisite for activism and political change. He labelled any social philosophy other than the Islamic one as destructive for, in his view, all human social philosophies failed to respond accurately to the needs of human societies. Only a divinely-inspired social philosophy, the one that Islam exhibits, could provide such a solution.

2. Faḍlallāh's social theory

In Faḍlallāh's interpretation, society is the sphere in which the continuity of the Islamic message is maintained. Social power comprises social values, relations, and collective action. It allows, as a first stage, the building of bottom up power in contrast with bottom down empowerment through politics. This mechanism fits the paradigm of gradual transformation better as it engenders power in the various social structures – such as family, education, economy – rendering it sustainable, and helping to deracinate quietism and passivity. Social power contributes to the system of *quwwa* by establishing the social autonomy of the Shī'ī community. It transfers the power of belief into collective acts and fosters solidarity and “commanding right” between its members. The next step following social unity and empowerment is direct political action. Faḍlallāh

was aware of the importance of social power in providing the Lebanese Shī'a with their own social assets.

Faḍlallāh's starts his study of social power by stating that the Qur'ān or the reported traditions do not contain a comprehensive and detailed social concept. Therefore, he sets out to fill this gap, focusing on its intellectual, behavioural and legal aspects. His argument on the interrelatedness of salvation and the social formula, the characterisation of the first Muslim community, the description of weak society, the link between social cohesion and personal responsibility, and the importance of unity are substantiated by exclusively Qur'ānic passages. His imāmi references come from two Shī'i *hadīth*-collections: *Wasā'il al-Shī'a* and *al-Kāfī*.

Faḍlallāh's approach to power challenges Dabashi's claim that since Shī'ism is a religion of protest as soon as it succeeds politically, it negates itself metaphysically. As Dabashi writes "Shi'ism cannot be in a position of political power because the state that it thus forms will have to have a claim on a monopoly of violence, and it cannot claim that monopoly without turning every mode of opposition to it as the *de facto* versions of Shī'ism."⁵⁴³ This might be the case in Iran where Khomeynī did not build a community with charity services, family links, and other social bodies. Dabashi ignores the mechanism of clientelism, omnipresent in both Iran and Lebanon (and the rest of the countries in the region). It was this mechanism by which Faḍlallāh managed to carefully decouple the social and political spheres of power. Since they are autonomous spheres of power, the fact that the Shī'i community became politically dominant in Lebanon did not erode its social assets. For example, when Ḥizbullāh became part of the government in Lebanon, it acquired further credibility among its supporters as it turns political advantages into social privileges of the Shī'i community. Faḍlallāh's concept of social power supports my claim that the paradigm of transformation explains better the Shī'i impulse of power.

⁵⁴³ Dabashi, *Islamic Liberation Theology*, 70.

3. The weak society: Faḍlallāh's social criticism

From Faḍlallāh's perspective, a weak society is one that lacks social coherence. The lack of shared values, commitments and responsibilities exercises a centrifugal power that leads to destruction. He illustrates weak society by the Jewish community of the Prophet's time. The Jews of Medina he writes

had conflicting personal interests that made each faction or even each person an independent entity whose interests and goals conflicted with those of the others in the community (...) [The] difference in feelings, inclinations and orientations that turns into differing plans, actions, stances (...) is in fact internal fragmentation that evolves into an external one.⁵⁴⁴

As we can see, in Faḍlallāh's thought, weakness is not an attribute. Rather, it is a condition in which the community lacks the strategic power needed to maintain its integrity, exercise its interests and spread its values. Faḍlallāh considers attitudes based on individual inclinations and aspirations as by-products of human civilisation. Decline occurs when the individual's attachment to society is weakened and ego-centrism prevails. Such a society becomes defenceless and paralysed. The abandonment of supreme values that cement commitment and loyalty in the individual towards the community obliterates solidarity and creates a system of injustice and inequality. Religion, in general, and Islam, in particular, provides such values and guides their implementation.⁵⁴⁵

Nevertheless, by naming the Jews of Medina as representatives of the weak community *par excellence*, he politicises his argument by a purposeful overstatement regarding the supposed divisions in contemporary Israeli society. Considering the repeated military successes of the Jewish State over the Arab states, the projection seems to be forced and ideological. Also, he claims that non-Islamic systems are prone to disequilibrium because they lack cohesion and become fragmented along "conflicting personal interests",⁵⁴⁶ while in Islam the guarantee of equilibrium is solidarity.⁵⁴⁷ His

⁵⁴⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 121.

⁵⁴⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 122.

⁵⁴⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 21-22.

⁵⁴⁷ Regarding the function of social solidarity in Islam, Faḍlallāh asserts that "Islam has constructed the basis of the social power, on the social solidarity through adhering to the general and private

argument that non-Muslim societies despite their apparent strength suffer from individualism, disunity, lack of solidarity, immorality, and weakness is highly simplistic and built upon clichés.

In *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, manifestations of weakness are explored in three major aspects of social life: the intellectual, the emotional, and the practical domains. In his analysis of the weak society, Faḍlallāh criticises certain groups whose views pose a direct threat to social unity. Based on Qur’ānic principles, he singles out some deviant attitudes and identifies those who adopt them as elements that divide and thus weaken the society.⁵⁴⁸ He identifies three of them as particularly harmful: the luxury elite (*mutrafūn*), who dominate and exploit the others, the dividing elite of religious scholars and politicians (*mufarriqūn*), who seek to divide society so that they can exploit it to promote their own interests – and the heretics and non-believers (*aṣḥāb al-da‘awāt al-dālla wa ’l-kāfira*), who attack the belief of the Muslim society and thus shake the principles on which its system of values is based.⁵⁴⁹

Second, Faḍlallāh depicts the emotional roots of weakness. He considers feelings based on kinship and not on merit as a threat because they turn the absolute religious values into contingent ideas and substitute faith with human considerations. Serving the interests and contributing to the mission of the community should enjoy priority over any personal concerns or bonds. Only if Islamic values determine the thoughts and actions of the people, can the society be protected from individualist and destructive trends.⁵⁵⁰ At the practical level, a weak society is characterised by corruption in all sectors of society. The only way to eradicate the roots of this corruption is to fulfil the individual duty of “forbidding wrong”, rather than leaving the responsibility of dealing with it to the official authority.⁵⁵¹ There is a natural causality, through which passivity and negligence not only weaken a society but eliminate any chances for re-empowering it.

To support his argument, Faḍlallāh quotes Prophetic *ḥadīths* from Sunnī collections compiled by al-Bukhārī (and its commentary *Fath al-bārī* by Ibn Hajar) and

responsibilities as manifestations of emotional and intellectual commitment.” *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 143.

⁵⁴⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 128-132.

⁵⁴⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 127-132.

⁵⁵⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 139-41.

⁵⁵¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 152-154.

al-Tirmidhī.⁵⁵² The first of these Sunnī traditions is a reminder to the ruled to oppose the rulers whose decisions have destructive consequences for the community. The second Sunnī *ḥadīth* declares that being a Muslim does not exempt the sinner from due punishment. His selection of sources is determined by the topic he elaborates on. In his study of social power Faḍlallāh resorts to Sunnī references to emphasise the responsibility of the governed for their just governance and to eliminate deviation from among their ranks. His choice can be attributed to two factors. On the one hand, highlighting the requirement of unity demands a discourse that embodies this value and makes it tangible for the reader. On the other hand, it reflects the author’s intent to address the broadest possible audience and shows his concern about the Sunnī - Shī‘ī divide.

The Manichean social concepts of Faḍlallāh remind us of al-Ṣadr’s own binary divisions. They both differentiate between “good” social structures – called as appropriate (*ṣāliḥ*)⁵⁵³ by al-Ṣadr and strong (*qawī*) by Faḍlallāh – and the bad one labelled as weak (*da‘īf*) by Faḍlallāh, and termed as pharaonic (*fir‘awnī*) by al-Ṣadr. Both thinkers emphasise fragmentation and division as correlating with oppression and injustice, and dedicate attention to the corrupted structure and its agents who maintain and fossilise the destructive order. Even so, one can note a difference between the two perspectives: while al-Ṣadr’s primary concern was one’s attitude towards the oppressive authority, Faḍlallāh focused on the elements of unity and solidarity that guarantee social strength.

Furthermore, al-Ṣadr’s differentiation along the lines of income, profession and world-view is supported solely by Qur’ānic references, his analysis lacks clear and precise connections to contemporary social trends. In contrast, Faḍlallāh’s classification is based on negative social behaviours and (a lack of) sensitivity towards the marginalised. The dissimilarity between the two approaches can be explained partly by the different contexts: al-Ṣadr was writing under the growing pressure of the Iraqi Bāthist government and the unfolding terror orchestrated by Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, while

⁵⁵² Faḍlallāh left this source unnamed and it was not corrected in later editions either. This quotation is from *Fath al-bārī* by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalānī (d. 842/1428) the most valued commentary of Bukhārī’s collection.

⁵⁵³ M. B. al-Ṣadr, *al-Tafsīr al-mawḍū‘ī, ‘ulūm al-Qur’ān, maqālāt Qur’āniyya* [Thematic interpretation of the Qur’ān, Qur’ānic sciences, Qur’ānic essays] (n. p: Markaz al-Abḥāth wa’l-Dirāsāt al-Takhaṣṣuṣiyya li’l-Shahīd al-Ṣadr, 2000), 175-183.

Faḍlallāh was living and working in the divided and vulnerable Shīʿī community of Lebanon in the evolving civil war.

4. Faḍlallāh’s vision of a strong society

In contrast to the model of the weak society – the Jewish community of Medina – Muḥammad’s community stands as the perfect ideal of a strong “society”. The first Muslim society, as Faḍlallāh puts it, is a living, universal model, which should be followed in the present and the future. He offers a detailed analysis of how compassion, unity and common goals are embodied in social relations and practices, and eventually create indestructible social bonds. For Faḍlallāh

The term social strength refers to the strength that communities possess through unity the practical aspects of which are manifested in cohesion and mutual bonds (*tamāsuk, tarābuʿ*) among its members based on shared thought, feelings, and action towards a common goal.⁵⁵⁴

Faḍlallāh understands social strength as rooted in the interaction among the members of the society. Power in this sense is rooted in and secured by unity which in turn is constructed by the interplay of three major factors: cohesion, ideology, and joint effort. Faḍlallāh sets out to show the elements of this utopia in three areas that aim to replace the elements of weakness: the bond of belief – thought – feeling, social values and organic unity. In *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa* he mentions *tawḥīd* as characteristic of a society that strives to be righteous (*al-ahdāf al-qā’ima ‘alā ’l-haqq wa’l-tawḥīd*).⁵⁵⁵ The fact that he does not elaborate further on this essential Islamic doctrine may be attributed to his cautious awareness of the religious compositeness of the Lebanese society. While the obligation of “commanding right” has a distinct moral aspect that serves the purification of the Muslim community, emphasising the doctrine of *tawḥīd* might have fuelled and intellectually consolidated the already flared up inter-sectarian clashes.

⁵⁵⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 110.

⁵⁵⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 128.

4.1 The Society of believers: bonds of belief, thought and feeling

Faḍlallāh is convinced of the interrelatedness of the social and spiritual aspects of human life.⁵⁵⁶ He asserts that God's mercy towards mankind must be manifested in human relations.⁵⁵⁷ Thus, in a community of believers it is faith that determines values and in an ideal state, values should govern human interactions. Consequently, the intellectual (*fikrī*), emotional (*ʿāṭifī* or *shuʿūrī*), and practical (*ʿamalī* or *sulūkī*) aspects⁵⁵⁸ are independent of material circumstances.⁵⁵⁹ We can detect the integral unity of these aspects in Faḍlallāh's definition of co-operation as

based on compassion and internal collaboration in order to build the foundations (...) on harshness (*shidda*), power (*quwwa*), and violence (*ʿunf*) against the internal and external enemy, in order to protect the [social] structure against destruction and disintegration.⁵⁶⁰

As we can see, co-operation has an emotional basis, its aim is protection and its means may include the use of force. In this context faith has a tangible function: it generates the disposition that enables the believers to be compassionate and co-operative. It creates reality by shaping the consciousness of the individuals and, consequently, the norms of the community. As such, it secures order based on shared values and conventions. Religious institutions and practices reflect, maintain, and create cohesion among those who participate in them.⁵⁶¹

Furthermore, argues Faḍlallāh, compassion is a general attitude, an outcome of the consideration of objective circumstances.⁵⁶² By claiming that feelings and emotions are results of a personal internal process controlled by ideological convictions,⁵⁶³ Faḍlallāh's aim is to build up a logical sequence (*tasalsul manṭiqī*) that leads from compassion through social cohesion towards social strength.⁵⁶⁴ In his view, religious

⁵⁵⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 117.

⁵⁵⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 115.

⁵⁵⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 125.

⁵⁵⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 116.

⁵⁶⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 118.

⁵⁶¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 124.

⁵⁶² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 116.

⁵⁶³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 136.

⁵⁶⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 124.

obligations function “as norms that govern relations, define behaviour, and constitute the unifying element that reconciles the diverse components of a community”.⁵⁶⁵

Faḍlallāh’s focus on faith – as the primary and sole bond among individuals and groups – is supported by predominantly or exclusively Twelver Shī‘ī references. The first argument for which imāmi tradition is extensively quoted – attributed to Muḥammad Ibn ‘Alī al-Bāqir and Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq – considers devotion to God as the one and only base for human sentiments. In another part Faḍlallāh – referring to ‘Alī ibn Ḥusayn – calls for opposition to fanaticism. Twelver Shī‘ī traditions are also predominant in his treatise on social solidarity.

On the one hand, for him, the intellectual bases of social unity, the doctrinal beliefs as well as the general principles of life must be derived exclusively from the Qur’ānic revelation and must be preserved without any concessions to ambiguity or dualism.⁵⁶⁶ Therefore, propagating a view that challenges or attacks the ideological foundations of the society is forbidden. On the other hand, he accepts freedom in making individual choice in ideological issues, and considers conducting dialogue with those who have differing views as both a right and a duty. In the section on “the freedom of thought”, he reminds his audience of the examples set by Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq and ‘Alī al-Riḍā who exchanged ideas with non-believers and representatives of differing schools and doctrines. The Imāms appear as proponents of dialogue and co-operation based on shared values. However, Faḍlallāh explicitly stated that dialogue and co-operation in the final count were only tools to defend and spread the Islamic doctrine.⁵⁶⁷ Therefore, we can conclude that Faḍlallāh’s ideas regarding intellectual freedom carry considerable ambiguity.

4.2 Social values: justice, social responsibility and solidarity

Faḍlallāh support his contention that every idea must have a practical application by the Qur’ān, Prophetic as well as Twelver Shī‘ī traditions. He maintains that the Qur’ān is explicit in declaring practical action as the only real proof of the sincerity of

⁵⁶⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 122.

⁵⁶⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 125-7.

⁵⁶⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 132-134.

belief.⁵⁶⁸ Man’s mission is to realise divine justice on Earth, as the ultimate goal of Islam. Justice creates equilibrium in the society, a context within which Man is able to use his full capacities as God’s vice-regent. Faḍlallāh’s understanding of “justice” is based on the revelation. In individual life, justice is embodied in actions corresponding to the divine decrees that assure the ethical dimension of life, and thus serve the ultimate interests of human beings.⁵⁶⁹ Applied justice is the governance that bases decisions on the revealed distinction between righteousness and deviation (*ḥaqq wa-bāṭil*).⁵⁷⁰

Faḍlallāh argues that in Islam, social strength presupposes social cohesion through general and individual responsibilities.⁵⁷¹ This implies firmness and rigour against those whose ideas or actions weaken society from inside. Thus an internal cooperation based on harshness, power, and violence (*al-shidda wa’l-quwwa wa’l-‘unf*) is indispensable against those internal and external elements that promote disintegration and destruction.⁵⁷² Such actions are manifestations of the universal responsibility that each Muslim should bear.⁵⁷³ Practical involvement in social affairs can take many forms such as financial help, social awareness, forgiving and compassion, and fulfilling the obligation of “commanding right and forbidding wrong”.⁵⁷⁴ Faḍlallāh states that the refusal of a duty – abstaining from action – equals disbelief.⁵⁷⁵

Faḍlallāh believed that the distinct spirit of Islam is embodied in the traditions and institutions of the Muslim society, first of all in the form of solidarity among its members. The Qur’ānic statement that “believers indeed are brothers” (49:10) implies a spontaneous and practical responsibility for one another by the members of the community.⁵⁷⁶ Solidarity as a factor of social cohesion (*‘āmil tamāsuk ijtimā’ī*) is a legal obligation, and falls under the scope of individual responsibility for the common goals of the community.⁵⁷⁷ The section on the universal responsibility and solidarity as compelling for Muslims contains two Prophetic and seven imāmi *ḥadīths* – attributed to Muḥammad Ibn ‘Alī al-Bāqir, Ja‘far al-Šādiq and ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn.

⁵⁶⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 142.

⁵⁶⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 196.

⁵⁷⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 170.

⁵⁷¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 143.

⁵⁷² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 117-118.

⁵⁷³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 143.

⁵⁷⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 148-51.

⁵⁷⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 142.

⁵⁷⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 138.

⁵⁷⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 124.

Faḍlallāh claims that social solidarity is more important than the accomplishment of certain rituals.⁵⁷⁸ He denies that there is such a thing in Islam as individual salvation – *khalāṣ*⁵⁷⁹ – and claims that spirituality offers no salvation unless it is achieved within a society.⁵⁸⁰ He argues that law, ethics and society are so interrelated in Islam that no legislation that concerns the individual is devoid of social meaning, and a person's evaluation is based on his social manners. Faḍlallāh pushes this argument to the extreme when he declares that in Islamic law the individual, as such, does not exist separated from society.⁵⁸¹

4.3 Organic unity

Faḍlallāh compares social cohesion to the organising principle of a human body. He asserts that

The social and collective life of Muslims is an organic unity (...) This suggests to man that he does not represent an independent entity, rather a part of an integrated whole.⁵⁸²

This concept assumes that society is a dynamic, continuously changing unit that functions by responding to internal and external influences. Consequently, social processes are made up of the web of human interactions. Individuals are mutually dependent, and there is no tension between the interest of the community and that of its members. The basic principles of the community are embodied in all social phenomena and movement. Individuals can function only as components of a society; their existence gains its deep meaning through their contribution to the common goals.

For Faḍlallāh, what distinguishes the Islamic society from other contemporary or past formations is that those have been founded on *ʿaṣabiyya* (tribal bonds), *ʿunṣuriyya*

⁵⁷⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 147.

⁵⁷⁹ Faḍlallāh uses a Christian notion here. In Islamic terminology, salvation is rendered as *najāt*, *fāwz* or *falāḥ*. He was probably unaware of the Christian substratum of the word and borrowed it from literary Arabic, under the influence of Christian authors of early 19th century.

⁵⁸⁰ Faḍlallāh does not differentiate between community and society.

⁵⁸¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 111.

⁵⁸² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 136.

(racism); while in Islam bonds are based on the commitment to the revealed truth.⁵⁸³ In his view, shared visions on nature and society are indispensable for a community. The destruction of a normative order annihilates the morality built upon it and thus leads to chaos. Therefore, it is a collective interest to preserve and protect or to restore the ideological foundations of a common value system.⁵⁸⁴

Regarding the needs of the individual, Faḍlallāh insists that Islam promotes a realistic stance. It does not demand the suppression of subjective desires and emotions; however it requires that these do not weaken one's commitment to the Message.⁵⁸⁵ Man has the right to satisfy his natural needs but he has to set limits for himself to prevent his desires from becoming destructive. Religious regulations serve to assure integrity and equilibrium at the individual as well as at the social level. This way neither side is weakened or strengthened at the expense of the other. It is "a give and take process" that creates balance among the various constituents of the society.⁵⁸⁶ Faḍlallāh's Islamic social model reminds us of Sharī'atī's thought in many aspects. Sharī'atī claimed that the basis of social strength is the responsible attitude of the masses⁵⁸⁷ and "the scientifically demonstrable laws existent in the society".⁵⁸⁸ Both thinkers emphasised the importance of common faith and common goals. However, Sharī'atī's egalitarianism has clearly Marxist interferences by propagating "the 'system of Abel,' the society of human equality."⁵⁸⁹ In contrast, "brotherhood" in Faḍlallāh's interpretation is not related to the elimination of economic differences and social strata, rather to the practical solidarity among the members of the community.

4.4 Faḍlallāh's functionalist approach to social power

As it is to be proved in the following paragraphs, Faḍlallāh's model of the strong society reflects Durkheim's approach in many instances. In both paradigms, society is an organic unity whose constituents are mutually dependent members. These

⁵⁸³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 118.

⁵⁸⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 122.

⁵⁸⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 141.

⁵⁸⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 111.

⁵⁸⁷ Sharī'atī, *On the Sociology of Islam* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 2000), 48.

⁵⁸⁸ Sharī'atī, *On the Sociology of Islam*, 52.

⁵⁸⁹ Sharī'atī, *On the Sociology of Islam*, 118.

individuals are neither independent nor isolated; they have a specific function in the operation and maintenance of the system. The unity of the society is based on the equilibrium of its parts to which organic solidarity is essential. Society as a living organism is responsive to internal changes and external influences. Certain inputs may divert the predominant values of the society from justice, fairness and equity. Thus they cause loss of balance that challenges the stability of the system, and result in its dysfunction.

For Faḍlallāh, social cohesion as the major source of social strength is based on individual faith, the individual responsibility of fulfilling the legal commitments, and the common goals of the community.⁵⁹⁰ Society as a whole has a function in the context of the revelation: to implement divine justice on Earth. In his thought the individual and social aspects of the Islamist system are interrelated and consecutive. The state of disequilibrium occurs when the predominant values of the society diverge from the Islamic principles; that is, practice becomes detached from theory.

Functionalism considers the system as “homeostatic” or self-regulating, and thus able to restore the equilibrium or level negative influences in order to secure the stability of the establishment.⁵⁹¹ However, the self-regulating mechanism of a social system cannot operate without the various manifestations of force. Thus force and law are functional in controlling the system and assuring the effectiveness of its parts. In Faḍlallāh’s theory, force and primarily the “force of law” is essential in maintaining the equilibrium of the Islamic social order. Faḍlallāh defines *sharī’a* as “laws [that] point (...) in the right direction and (...) show (...) how to take steps to avoid any elements that might weaken society.”⁵⁹² In this sense the elements of the *sharī’a* are comparable to “social facts” in Durkheim’s definition. For Durkheim, social facts have an independent existence greater and more objective than individual perceptions. Furthermore, a social fact cannot be explained except by another social fact.⁵⁹³

In Islam – and thus for Faḍlallāh – the principles of *sharī’a* are ordained by God. The elements of Islamic law are instrumental to the realisation of the just society. Consequently, Faḍlallāh argues that “[i]t is the logical path towards social cohesion (...)

⁵⁹⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 124.

⁵⁹¹ Conteh-Morgan, *Collective Political Violence*, 51.

⁵⁹² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 124.

⁵⁹³ Durkheim, *Rules of Sociological Method* (New York: Free Press, 1982), 162.

to [put] Islamic laws into practice”.⁵⁹⁴ The biggest challenge to social equilibrium appears in the form of individual inclinations and aspirations. For Durkheim, disorder results from the inappropriate functioning of “solidarity-producing social process[es]”, the most important of which is interaction between members of the society.⁵⁹⁵ Thus force in its various forms from regulation to punishment is indispensable for the individual and consequently for social equilibrium.

The first source Faḍlallāh refers to in his treatise on social strength is an introduction to Western sociology written for an Arab audience.⁵⁹⁶ This implies that Faḍlallāh benefited from Western social thought and his point of departure is sociology – as his choice of the term *mujtamaʿ* instead of *umma* reflects. He used a language that his audience is likely to be familiar with: the basic notions of Western and Marxist sociology. However, the lack of references makes it highly probable that he selected appealing notions and vested the ideal, strong Islamic community with them in a superficial, “impressionist” manner, and thus designed an utopia rather than providing an analysis.

5. Commanding right

The last feature of a strong society is “commanding right and forbidding wrong”. It is a religious and political, communal and individual responsibility, and the success of its fulfilment presupposes individual awareness as well as social organisation. Solidarity as a comprehensive, practical attitude (*sulūk ʿamalī ʿāmm*) is a manifestation of divine mercy towards Man.⁵⁹⁷ It is also a legal obligation (*fīʾl-tashrīʿāt al-qānūniyya al-ilzāmiyya*) that creates social unity and integrity (*waḥda wa-salāma*), and consequently cohesion and strength (*tamāsuk, quwwa*).⁵⁹⁸ Society, as a whole, is able to assume this function only if its members fulfil their individual duties.⁵⁹⁹ In Faḍlallāh’s view, individual inclinations and aspirations constitute a centrifugal force that can endanger

⁵⁹⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 124. See also: Chapter 4 on social power.

⁵⁹⁵ Whitney Pope, “Durkheim as a Functionalist,” *Sociological Quarterly* 16 (1975): 364.

⁵⁹⁶ Ḥasan Saʿfān, *Āsās ʿilm al-ijtimāʿ* (Cairo: Dār al-Nahḍa al-ʿArabiyya, 1974).

⁵⁹⁷ See also: “divine mercy is manifested in (includes) human interactions (...).” *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 115.

⁵⁹⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 144.

⁵⁹⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 152.

solidarity and justice, and as such need to be controlled. Therefore, social justice and cohesion is inherently linked to the obligation of “commanding right and forbidding wrong”. It serves to regulate and unify the society, to build the base for a strong community, and to protect it against the individual tendencies that could result in its destruction.

Faḍlallāh defines *al-amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa'l-nahy 'an al-munkar* as the basis of Islamic obligations. It prompts the fulfilling of religious duties, and affects all branches of legislation. As a social and political organising principle it compels the rulers as well as the ruled to establish and maintain justice, order and security. For Faḍlallāh, it constitutes a “kind of solidarity” that is binding on all Muslims, as an indication of the personal responsibility for the community.⁶⁰⁰ He states that the obligation of “commanding right and forbidding wrong” sets the perspective for human social awareness. For Faḍlallāh evil does not occur by God’s decree. Social decline is the natural consequence of neglecting the duty of “commanding right and forbidding wrong” on a personal as well as on a community level.

In relation to *al-amr wa'l-nahy* Faḍlallāh once again reiterates his position on the scope of individual freedoms. He asserts that since the consequences of doing wrong will not be limited to those who committed it, Man is free in his own issues but not in those that affect the society.⁶⁰¹ Therefore, “Islam does not believe in absolute freedom only if subordinated to the requirements of the message and the society.”⁶⁰² He considers this as a norm that harmonises and unites the freedom of the individual and that of the community. If deviation is not confronted, the measure of action is lost.⁶⁰³ By wrong – *munkar* – Faḍlallāh means despotism, aggression, deprivation of rights, mistreatment, harm, injustice or oppression. The response to this belongs to the realm of “forbidding” – *nahy* – and includes armed resistance or – if the conditions are not guaranteed – boycott and exodus.⁶⁰⁴ Thus, it can be said that his concept of *al-amr wa'l-nahy* is politicised.

⁶⁰⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 151.

⁶⁰¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 157.

⁶⁰² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 152.

⁶⁰³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 155.

⁶⁰⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 155-6.

Neglecting the duty of “commanding right and forbidding wrong” leads to the destruction of faith and justice.⁶⁰⁵ Therefore, those who do not comply with it deserve to be outcast.⁶⁰⁶ He emphasises the individual aspect once again by stating that the members of the community can detect deviation more quickly than the authorities.⁶⁰⁷ Faḍlallāh stresses that the religion of the person who commits the sin is irrelevant, because arguing in favour of those who have adopted Islam but betray it with their behaviour, would open the way for corruption in the Muslim community.⁶⁰⁸ Faḍlallāh supports this argument mainly with Prophetic traditions but two *ḥadīths* – attributed to Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq and ‘Alī Ibn Mūsa al-Riḍā – are also quoted.

6. Faḍlallāh’s strong society as a utopia

For Faḍlallāh, Islamic society is the perfect social system in which the relationship between its members is that of brotherhood. It should follow the model of the Prophet’s city which established a unity of fraternity between the immigrants from Quraysh and Muḥammad’s supporters in Medina.⁶⁰⁹ This description of the first Islamic community is considerably utopian. He sets the community of Medina as a measure of evaluation for contemporary societies without specifying the application of principles in a modern context. Furthermore, he claims that there cannot be any reason serious enough to cause a fundamental rift in the Islamic community.⁶¹⁰

Had he not mingled the ideal with the real, he would have discovered that the contemporary Muslim society such as the one in Medina according to Durkheim’s classification fell into the category of mechanical solidarity.⁶¹¹ He hints at the problem of hypocrites, who lived among the Muslim community, but he does not elaborate on the issue and leaves other well-known conflicts such as the one between the *muhājirūn* and *anṣār* without mention. Moreover, he devotes no attention to the problem of the collapse of the Muḥammadian ideal following his death.

⁶⁰⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 158.

⁶⁰⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 152.

⁶⁰⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 153.

⁶⁰⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 152-8.

⁶⁰⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 138.

⁶¹⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 123.

⁶¹¹ Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, 31-68.

As with his thought on theology and spirituality, where he separates the weak and strong interpretations of Muslim traditions, Faḍlallāh's imagined society is selective. It carefully borrows elements of Muslim history, erasing Sunnī – Shī'ī differences and eliding the internal, structural, ideological issues that led to the disunity and fragmentation of Muslim societies. He attempts to derive the basic principles operating the imagined community of Medina without providing meticulous analysis a propos their implementation in the variously polarised modern world and especially that of Lebanon.

Also, he skips the questions regarding the connection between leadership and structure, and does not define clearly the scope of individual and communal responsibility. This is particularly conspicuous regarding the obligation of “commanding right and forbidding wrong”. Another problem with Faḍlallāh's use of this concept is that this basic principle is designed to govern an exclusively Muslim community. Without differentiating *umma* from society – delineated by the borders of the state – as inevitable in the Lebanese context – Faḍlallāh's thought loses its feasibility. He designs an Islamic social project without studying “whether” and “to what extent” the various element of this project fit into the very context in which it is articulated.

7. Society in Faḍlallāh's other writings

Faḍlallāh's later writings on society deal with three major issues. The most recurrent of them is human responsibility in the formation of a society. In his book *Ḥiwārāt fi'l-fīkr wa'l-siyāsa wa'l-ijtimā'*, Faḍlallāh devotes several chapters to the assertion that believers bear intellectual and practical responsibility for the herein and for the hereafter by implementing justice in the private and public spheres. He relates this to the requirement to be strong that in turn enables the Muslim society to become a force of goodness, justice and cultural ingenuity.⁶¹²

Faḍlallāh connects the issue of freedoms and the obligation of commanding right and forbidding wrong in his various statements. In the book *al-Ḥaraka al-Islāmiyya mā*

⁶¹² Faḍlallah, *Ḥiwārāt fi'l-fīkr wa'l-siyāsa wa'l-ijtimā'* [Dialogues regarding ideas, politics, and society] (Beirut: Dār al-Malāk, 2001), 198-205.

lahā wa-mā ‘alayhā, he asserts that the individual and communal freedoms must stay in balance. The obligation of *al-amr wa'l-nahy* is a responsibility of every believer according to one's capacities individually and in alliance with others.⁶¹³

Another principle Faḍlallāh never ceased emphasising is the inevitability of making Islam public by transforming its principles into practice manifested in all aspects of community life. Related to this in the Lebanese context, he devoted considerable attention to Islam as a social system and its relation to followers of other religions. He elaborated on the problem of religious minorities in an Islamic state in many of his writings, most importantly in *Fī āfāq al-ḥiwār al-Islāmī al-Masīhī*. Faḍlallāh's position was that Islam as a socio-political-economic system offers a framework like that of capitalism or communism. However, since it is based on revelation and aims at justice, it fits the best to the followers of other monotheistic religions. Consequently he discarded and considered all non-Islamic elements as obstacles to social cohesion and justice.⁶¹⁴

Another aspect of his ideas on the importance of social equilibrium appears in his commentary on *Sūrat al-A'raf*, about the "life-span" of community (*umma*). Faḍlallāh compares it to the lifespan of an individual which is connected to one's decisions and actions as well as to the surrounding conditions that strengthen or weaken the body. He states that the vitality of the community depends on human equilibrium which is the outcome of many factors such as culture, society, politics, human relations, security and economics. This equilibrium helps the perfection of its members and unifies the community. The spirit of solidarity is manifested in common goals and plans. The vigour of the community lasts until forces and acts of dissolution upset this equilibrium.⁶¹⁵

⁶¹³ Faḍlallah, *al-Ḥaraka al-Islāmiyya ma lahā wa-ma ‘alayhā*, 133-136.

⁶¹⁴ Faḍlallah, *Fī āfāq al-ḥiwār al-Islāmī al-Masīhī* [On the horizons of Muslim-Christian dialogue] (Beirut: Dār al-Malāk, 1994), 103-107.

⁶¹⁵ Faḍlallah, *Mīn waḥy al-Qur'ān*, vol. 10 [From the inspiration of the Qur'ān] (Beirut: Dār al-Malāk, 1998), 107-108, on 7:34.

8. Faḍlallāh's social thought and Ḥizbullāh's 1985 *Open Letter*

The aforementioned social empowerment of the Shī'ī community is best illustrated in the social activism of Ḥizbullāh that fills the gap in social services where the Lebanese state fails. Islamist movements (e.g. the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliated organisations in Egypt, Jordan and elsewhere) start competing with the regime at the social level and end at the political one. A close reading of Ḥizbullāh's 1985 *Open Letter*⁶¹⁶ reveals that it echoes some features of Faḍlallāh's social thought. Most importantly, it is emphatic about the cohesive force of common goals, and the commitment of the Islamic message to social justice and fighting oppression.

The *Open Letter* declares that resistance is an individual as well as communal responsibility.⁶¹⁷ People are urged to unite for a major goal and step over minor issues – even differences in religion – that cause rifts.⁶¹⁸ Ḥizbullāh's *Open Letter* not only promotes solidarity with all Muslims in the world, but also extends the call for Muslim – Christian co-operation in “forbidding wrong”, that is, to resist oppression and colonial ambitions based on shared values and shared experience.⁶¹⁹ The declaration draws attention to the dangers of fragmentation as serving the divide and rule policy of the oppressive powers.⁶²⁰

The manifesto defines Islam as a strong intellectual and political bond that creates and secures just rule. It insists that capitalism and socialism failed to set the foundations for a just and stable society, or to establish a balance between the individual and the community, between human nature and public interest.⁶²¹ Such criticism reiterates Faḍlallāh's argument on the interrelatedness of social equilibrium, justice and strength. In the Letter, Ḥizbullāh maintains that Islamic governance must be based on the unity of the members of the community.

Faḍlallāh's influence on the organisation has never been admitted on either side; however, it is evident that their analysis of the societal reality shows significant similarities. Ḥizbullāh's social strategy shows agreements with most values Faḍlallāh

⁶¹⁶ I read the text in Joseph E. Alagha's *Hizbullah's Documents: From the 1985 Open Letter to the 2009 Manifesto* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), 39-56.

⁶¹⁷ Alagha, *Hizbullah's Documents*, 53-54.

⁶¹⁸ Alagha, *Hizbullah's Documents*, 44.

⁶¹⁹ Alagha, *Hizbullah's Documents*, 46-47.

⁶²⁰ Alagha, *Hizbullah's Documents*, 53.

⁶²¹ Alagha, *Hizbullah's Documents*, 47.

sees as elements of strength. Ḥizbullāh put in place an effective and extensive chain of charitable institutions: schools, hospitals, surgeries, orphanages, and diverse social services that employ workers of various denominational background, and are open to serve clients of all faiths even though – following the Lebanese traditions – they are attended mostly by Shī'īs. The first such institutions were set up as personal initiatives by Faḍlallāh from the late 1960s.

His primary aim was to provide services to the poor Shī'a. However, since the suburbs of pre-war Beirut were inhabited by religiously mixed population, Faḍlallāh's institutions were always open to Sunnites, Druze and Christians. He considered social service as a means to create inter- and intra-religious cohesion, and also as the most authentic and peaceful tool of Islamisation. This tradition has been followed by Ḥizbullāh since its official formation and also as a means of its politicisation.⁶²² This can be considered a practical application of the concepts developed in Faḍlallāh's book.

Concluding remarks

The narrative of the weak and the strong societies Faḍlallāh endorses is a suggestive metaphor. In order to construct the basis of a strong Shī'ī community, Faḍlallāh reinterpreted the social principles of Islam. Similarly to his argument about the theology of power and spiritual force, he perceives social reality in dichotomies. His Manichaeism, a characteristic of radical and fundamentalist thinkers, becomes obvious. The principle of his evaluation of the various social and intellectual trends is twofold: whether they support the unity of the Muslim community, and whether they apply the principle of “commanding right and forbidding wrong”. For Faḍlallāh, spirituality does not offer salvation unless it is realised within the social matrix and individualism is banned from his ideal society.

Faḍlallāh selected his arguments consciously in order to support the absolute validity of his social system. In this process, he showed no concerns for the suitability of his ideals in a multi-confessional environment like Lebanon. Similarly, he did not hesitate to depict the first Muslim community vesting it with attributes such as organic

⁶²² Eitan Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 116. Alagha, *The Shifts in Hezbollah's Ideology*, 14, 208. Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 82, 104.

solidarity, a Western sociological term applied to modern societies. Nevertheless, Faḍlallāh's aim was not to measure the prevalent social concepts and to compare them with the Islamic norms following the requirements of a scientific analysis. He had to convince his Shī'ī audience – “the despised” of Lebanon (a term applied by Kramer)⁶²³ – of the self-sufficiency of the Islamic social formula in terms of its capacity of empowerment. For this, Faḍlallāh combined elements of Medieval Islamic social thought (“commanding right and forbidding wrong”) with Western social concepts (organic unity, solidarity) and interpreted them in an Islamic way, to put forward a project of revitalising the ideal Islamic society in the modern age.

⁶²³ Kramer, “The Oracle of Hizbullah,” 105, 128.

Chapter VII: Political Power

Introduction

As a result of more than a millennium of predominant quietism, the Shī'a were reluctant regarding active involvement in politics or transformation of the *status quo*. Reformist Shī'ī ideologues felt the need to challenge the understanding of some traditional Shī'ī concepts such as the postponement of the foundation of the Islamic state until the return of the *Mahdī*,⁶²⁴ passivity and inward religiousness during the occultation of the Twelfth Imām,⁶²⁵ insistence on the idea of infallible leadership,⁶²⁶ and dissimulation⁶²⁷. Activist Shī'ī clerics adapted the intellectual repertoire of Shī'ism and evaluated the conditions necessary for action that includes violence on the part of Muslims in different ways.⁶²⁸

In particular, Faḍlallāh's whole project of transformative power revolves around political power. It has been shown that he takes the theological, the spiritual and the social fields of power as preparatory stages for political *quwwa*. His constant call to action, emphasis on political force and total adherence to change and revolution can be seen as a political project designed for the Shī'a of Lebanon.

To elaborate on Faḍlallāh's concept of Shī'ī revolution, two aspects of the issue are studied in this chapter: his response to the socio-political context, and his reinterpretation of Shī'ism as a doctrine of power. Faḍlallāh reconstructed Islamic political theory with special attention to three distinct but interrelated spheres: revolution as a means of change, the functions of the state, and the rules of international relations.

He deals with political power in various chapters of *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*. The second chapter is dedicated to the theoretical legitimisation of the use of force by the oppressed against their oppressors. In the fifth chapter, Faḍlallāh re-

⁶²⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 262-4.

⁶²⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 274.

⁶²⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 269-71.

⁶²⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 274.

⁶²⁸ See e.g. Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*, 530-549; Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, 160-195.

evaluates the potentials of the Lebanese Shī'a by examining the significance of numerical ratio, and the importance of detailed action plans. In another section (Chapter 7), he defined *da'wa* as a tool that secures free “interaction” with reality⁶²⁹ but rejected the notion that Islam was or could be spread by force.⁶³⁰ Finally, in Chapter 8, Faḍlallāh studied the scope and legitimacy of force in bringing about the transformation of deviant social reality.

Faḍlallāh's thought on political power articulates an inherently Shī'i theory but he communicates it to the wider Islamic public. This characteristic assures him a place in what Enayat calls a “cross sectarian current” in modernist Islamic political thought.⁶³¹ It is suggested, here, that his Shī'i vision of power had a threefold aim: to assert the interests of the Lebanese Shī'a, to urge them to carry out radical change in the status quo, and to set up a plan regarding the possibilities and scope of Islamisation in Lebanon.

1. A Theory of Shī'i revolution⁶³²

In Faḍlallāh's thought, standing up against injustice is a religious duty and a political obligation.⁶³³ This distinction is mere rhetoric. For, in reality, he does not distinguish between them insofar as the Message of Islam, *risāla* is both the religion of Islam and its political order. Here, political obligation is not a commitment to a government or a movement in particular, but to the Islamic social-political order.⁶³⁴ In order to provide his theory of revolution with the best chances to appeal to a quietist audience, Faḍlallāh sought to define what makes rule and revolt legitimate, to place the

⁶²⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 228.

⁶³⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 226.

⁶³¹ Enayat notes that “[W]ith modernistic trends gaining ground among religious circles in the Muslim world from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, the barriers between Sunnis and Shi'is gradually became less insuperable, allowing a good many cross-sectarian currents.” Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, 41.

⁶³² This question is a very challenging one to revolutionary Shī'ism. See for example Abdulkarim Soroush's claim that “The Islamic Revolution Lacked a Theory”. <http://www.dr.soroush.com/English/Interviews/E-INT-20090504Shie-Paris.html>. Accessed 12 September, 2013.

⁶³³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 63-64.

⁶³⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 78-79 and 260-262.

fight in the context of belief against disbelief, relating it to the obligation of “commanding right and forbidding wrong”.

In view of the historical-political context, Faḍlallāh’s revolutionary theory aimed to promote the interests of the Shī‘ī minority in a system dominated by the Maronite and Sunnī elites that thwarted the Shī‘a’s rise to power. Faḍlallāh reconfigured the notion of force as an ideology of power the aim of which is to offer political and social justice to the disinherited Shī‘a. He attempted to uproot the hesitant attitude regarding any action that aims at change including violence by delegating it into the realm of individual responsibility and religious obligation.⁶³⁵

1.1 History as battleground

Faḍlallāh points to the inherent unity of the natural law and the dynamics of history as both follow the divine plan.⁶³⁶ In his view, history is a series of clashes between those who stand up for justice – the righteous oppressed minority – and that of falsehood – the supporters of the oppressors.⁶³⁷ Thus, history and politics are about force and fight in which power is essential to victory. This dynamic is perfectly manifested in the Prophet’s battles and the fights of ‘Alī and al-Ḥusayn. In the context of the Qur’ānic revelation, the struggle between truth and falsehood has metaphysical significance – regardless of the actual outcome of the conflict – by proving the liberating power of human efforts. Thus, in his analysis, Faḍlallāh defines resistance to tyranny as a primary duty.⁶³⁸

Consequently, the oppressed must strive for change and if defeated in one area, look for another opportunity to fight.⁶³⁹ He urges the weak and dispossessed to act by stating that the Qur’ān does not promise forgiveness to the deprived for their passivity in order to prompt them to act and to arouse “the spirit of rebellion” in them.⁶⁴⁰ He asserts that the fight and revolution of ‘Alī and al-Ḥusayn were the outcome of

⁶³⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 57.

⁶³⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 44.

⁶³⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 17-8.

⁶³⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 61.

⁶³⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 55.

⁶⁴⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 58.

circumstances that are not confined to a specific date and time but are to be repeated at the various stages of history.

1.2 Legitimisation of rule and revolt

The lack of justice deprives any authority of its legitimacy. Change should bring in ideal governance, characterised by its dedication to implement justice among the governed. Faḍlallāh argues that the core issue is not the presence of an infallible leader. Rather, it is the security of order and state. Quoting *Jawāhir al-kalām*,⁶⁴¹ Faḍlallāh states that the legitimate ruler at the time of the “occultation” was authorised to establish law and order in the community.⁶⁴² The condition of legitimacy is, therefore, not to comply with a transcendental criterion but the ability and commitment to implement the *sharīʿa* and safeguard stability. Faḍlallāh writes extensively about the interconnectedness of Islamic law and righteous governance through its commitment to divine supremacy.

For Faḍlallāh, Islam is a religion that came to change the world and uproot the existing reality in order to base it on the principle of justice.⁶⁴³ As such, it contradicts any form of tyranny and demands resistance to oppression.⁶⁴⁴ For him, accepting oppression sets in motion a vicious circle by generating a feeling of vulnerability and need for protection that, in fact, turns into another form of oppression. Whenever the oppressed renounce their “power of the self” (*al-quwwa al-dhātīyya*)⁶⁴⁵ they assist injustice for which they will be accountable.⁶⁴⁶ In his perception, weakness is the negation of Man’s responsibility towards the created world; therefore, it is a sin. Faḍlallāh delegates the notion of responsibility into the scope of the divine-human relationship.

⁶⁴¹ A comprehensive and encyclopedic work on Shīʿī jurisprudence by Muḥammad Ḥasan Najafī (d. 1850).

⁶⁴² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 264.

⁶⁴³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 255.

⁶⁴⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 55.

⁶⁴⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 57.

⁶⁴⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 56.

1.3 The use of force and revolutionary change

The chapter on the legitimisation of force against the oppressors (Chapter 2) follows immediately the chapter on the concept of theological force. This organisation and the inclusion of resistance in the compass of “commanding right and forbidding wrong” illustrates that the idea of resistance to tyrannical power has an emphatic position in Faḍlallāh’s thought.⁶⁴⁷

In accordance with his theology of force, Faḍlallāh considers human beings as the agents of change. The process presupposes human free will, starts from inside and extends to the public order.⁶⁴⁸ At the practical stage, the problem of forms of change arises. If the public order resists attempts at change by peaceful means, can the Muslim community carry it out by force? Faḍlallāh justifies violence by justifying first the necessity of an Islamic state and all the means – including violence – that facilitate the realisation of such a state.

He opposed the separation of religion and state claiming that Islam is both a religious call and governance. Therefore, it pragmatically adopts all necessary means – aggressive or peaceful – to administer private and public affairs according to the requirements of a particular situation.⁶⁴⁹ Faḍlallāh obliges every citizen – even non-Muslims – to recognise the rule of Islam, in order to control their potentially dangerous activities. In the case of Jews and Christians, this is meant to be an accommodation to the Islamic social-political order with no pressure to convert. As for the followers of non-monotheistic religions, conversion is obligatory even if nominal.⁶⁵⁰ His concern with order and stability, however, leaves a margin for some degree of tolerance, by claiming that the first Islamic authority did not interfere with the “hypocrites” unless they attempted to create chaos.⁶⁵¹

⁶⁴⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 268.

⁶⁴⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 257.

⁶⁴⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 260-262.

⁶⁵⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 241-243.

⁶⁵¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 244.

1.4 “Commanding right and forbidding wrong” and revolutionary change

For Faḍlallāh, confronting deviation is based on general juristic rules (*al-qawā'id al-shar'iyya al-āmma*) such as “commanding right and forbidding wrong”.⁶⁵² He explains the fights led by 'Alī and al-Ḥusayn in this context as based on and guided by Islamic norms.⁶⁵³ His notion of Islamic norms is vague and does not indicate a precise or juridical meaning. On this basis, standing against injustice and oppression is obligatory (*ḍarūrat al-wuqūf*).⁶⁵⁴ Accordingly, the legitimate means (*asbāb*) of the fight can be peaceful or aggressive depending on the demands of the situation, as indicated in the Qur'ān and in the Tradition.⁶⁵⁵

Michael Cook emphasised the change in requiring the Imām's approval and in the consideration of the ‘danger condition’ as two major aspects of uprooting political quietism in activist Shī'ism.⁶⁵⁶ Faḍlallāh's argumentation perfectly supports and illustrates Cook's remark. As for the need for the Imām's permission when the duty of “*al-amr wa'l-nahy*” involves violent acts,⁶⁵⁷ Faḍlallāh adheres to the concept of regulating order through the authority of the *imām*. He asserts that violence is legitimate, but should be authorised by the *imām*.⁶⁵⁸ However, his use of the notion of “imām” is close to the Sunnī understanding, with the meaning of state authority. With regard to the context, we can assume that what Faḍlallāh meant, here, is the approval and supervision of the most qualified jurist of the Shī'ī community. As such, his position is close to that of Khumaynī who argued that the most learned *faqīh* can lead the community in acts that imply the use of force.⁶⁵⁹

As Cook observed, the danger condition “voided not only the duty to proceed but also the virtue of doing so”.⁶⁶⁰ In the quietist tradition, danger comprised risking one's life, property and even untoward side-effects.⁶⁶¹ With activist thought a new “category of wrongs” (*ahammīyya*) emerged in “that the obligation to right them overrides the

⁶⁵² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 276.

⁶⁵³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 269.

⁶⁵⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 61.

⁶⁵⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 264.

⁶⁵⁶ Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*, 533.

⁶⁵⁷ Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*, 285.

⁶⁵⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 265.

⁶⁵⁹ Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*, 540.

⁶⁶⁰ Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*, 533.

⁶⁶¹ Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*, 276.

danger condition (...) typically such wrongs involve some threat to the very basis of Islam.”⁶⁶² This phenomenon is well exemplified by Faḍlallāh’s argumentation. He urges jurists

to take ‘commanding right and forbidding wrong’ as an ultimate proof that legitimates the revolutionary and reformist movements that resort to violence to achieve their mission, no matter how much loss it causes, provided that they stick to the principles in planning and executing, and take into consideration, as much as possible, the potentials of victory and safety.⁶⁶³

Faḍlallāh makes this statement in the context of the call to Islam, *da‘wa*, emphasising the vital necessity of spreading the Islamic message. He takes the latter to be the sole guarantee of securing the happiness of humankind. In his analysis of revolutionary action, Faḍlallāh distinguishes two major approaches in the jurists’ attitudes. The first group refrains from action if there is a risk of being harmed or injured. The other group suggests that every situation must be considered in its own right. Faḍlallāh agrees with those who support action with no conditions and no restrictions in cases when the foundations that preserve the *sharī‘a*, order or justice are at stake, even if action carries risk and danger.⁶⁶⁴ Faḍlallāh’s position lays the foundation for a theology of martyrdom.

He refers to Imām ‘Alī and Imām al-Ḥusayn as leaders of a movement of revolution or reform. He quotes *ḥadīths* by al-Bāqir about al-Ḥusayn’s fight at Karbalā’, and al-Ṭabarī’s account of ‘Alī to support his argument that these revolutionary or reformist movements (*al-ḥaraka al-thawriyya aw al-iṣlāḥiyya*) were nothing but the practical implementation of “commanding right and forbidding wrong”.⁶⁶⁵ In Faḍlallāh’s use *thawra* and *iṣlāḥ* appear as synonyms, which is nevertheless a disputed issue among quietists and most Sunnites.

⁶⁶² Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*, 534.

⁶⁶³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 270-271.

⁶⁶⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 266. Faḍlallāh’s ideas of declaring oppression, despotism, and injustice as “threat to the very basis of Islam” recall the obligation of forbidding wrong regarding a category of phenomena “of such relative weight (*aḥammīyya*) that the obligation to right them overrides the danger condition.” See: Cook, *Commanding Right*, 534. Regarding the fact that Faḍlallāh was al-Khū‘ī’s disciple, it is worth to quote Cook’s remark on al-Khū‘ī’s statement that “provided the efficacy condition is satisfied – what has to be considered is the relative weight (*aḥammīyya*) of the two considerations; forbidding wrong could thus be obligatory even with actual knowledge of consequent harm.” Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*, 535.

⁶⁶⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 268.

Faḍlallāh has recourse to the principle of “commanding right and forbidding wrong” in two senses. First, as an element of Sunnī public law designed to respond to the needs of the Caliphate. Second, when justifying the necessity of revolution Faḍlallāh uses “forbidding wrong” in its theological-political meaning – rendering it obligatory and associating it with action and the necessity of rebellion – in a similar manner to the Mu‘tazilī and Khārijī thought.⁶⁶⁶ According to Faḍlallāh, the comprehensive Islamic plan for change is associated with “forbidding wrong” in this second meaning. This second interpretation is understood as rebellion, *khurūj* by Sunnites. At this point, Faḍlallāh seems to endorse a Quṭbian (or Khārijī) discourse like in his justification of revolution against corrupted reality and unjust rulers.⁶⁶⁷

As for the condition of knowledge – to acquire the capacity to differentiate the wrong from the right⁶⁶⁸ – it is a duty and personal responsibility of all Muslims in Faḍlallāh’s argument.⁶⁶⁹ Regarding the condition of persistence – possessing proof that the offence is going to continue in the future⁶⁷⁰ – Faḍlallāh repeatedly stresses the dangers of prolonged oppression, and in his analysis of global injustice, he depicts it as long-lasting and quasi normalised status-quo of humankind.⁶⁷¹

2. Downplaying democracy

In line with his conceptualisation of force, Faḍlallāh plays down numerical superiority and democracy as valid means to acquire and hold power. The standard Muslim rhetoric on the relationship of quantity and power encourages the outnumbering of the rival communities. Faḍlallāh challenges this position and connects it to his criticism of the view that numerical superiority necessarily correlates with the rightness of opinion. He maintains that the opinion of the majority does not necessarily respect the transcendental norms of justice. Therefore, democracy does not guarantee

⁶⁶⁶ Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*, 226, 394.

⁶⁶⁷ James Toth, *Sayyid Qutb: The Life and Legacy of a Radical Islamic Intellectual* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 99-105.

⁶⁶⁸ Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*, 276.

⁶⁶⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 228.

⁶⁷⁰ Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*, 276.

⁶⁷¹ See *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 15.

righteousness; it is only a reflection of the philosophy and interests of the dominant groups.⁶⁷²

In contrast, Faḍlallāh propagates consultation (*shūrā*), the decisions of which can be in agreement with or in opposition to the opinion of the majority, but most importantly they correspond to the divine norms. He also claims that *shūrā* – a common idea propagated in Islamist and reformist literature – is the best way to avoid tyranny.⁶⁷³ This is a holistic approach that secures the universality of the Islamic model as opposed to any other solution that in one way or another create divisions in the society. In the traditional Sunnī understanding, *shūrā* presupposes the principle of election (*ikhtiyār*), while in Shī‘ism authority is based on the idea of designation (*naṣṣ*). Therefore, in the context of Shī‘ī thought, it is a vague notion that may carry autocratic tendencies.

In Faḍlallāh’s interpretation, *shūrā* serves above all one goal: to secure the control of the “right” – even if it is in minority – over the “wrong” – even if it is in majority. However, Faḍlallāh did not specify what makes one eligible for taking part in the council neither did he detail its decision-making process. As for the notion of *wilāyat al-faqīh*, in the 1980s, Faḍlallāh supported Khumaynī’s ideas. However, from the 1990s on, due to his claim of *marja‘iyya* he rejected *wilāyat al-faqīh* as a universal institution.⁶⁷⁴ Faḍlallāh defined the post of the *marja‘ al-taqlīd* as an exclusive, supranational, non-ethnic, merit-based authority.⁶⁷⁵

⁶⁷² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 170.

⁶⁷³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 171.

⁶⁷⁴ Aziz, “Fadlallah and the Remaking of the Marja‘iya,” 214 and Shaery-Eisenlohr, *Shī‘ite Lebanon*, 144.

⁶⁷⁵ The constitution of the Islamic Republic was amended in 1989, and the requirement that the *walī al-faqīh* has to be a *marja‘ al-taqlīd* (the primary source of emulation) was removed. Thus, the institution of *wilāyat al-faqīh* – coinciding with Faḍlallāh’s interpretation became more confined to the political system of the Islamic Republic. See Algar, “Response to Browers.” As Roy Mottahedeh pointed out, Faḍlallāh further modified the power of the guardian-jurist by saying, “There is no harm in having a number of *faqīhs* (jurists) taking care of ‘general matters’ in more than one Islamic region (*quṭr Islāmī*), unless this plurality does harm to all or part [of the Muslim community].” See: Roy Parviz Mottahedi, “The Quandaries of Emulation: The Theory and Politics of Shi‘i Manuals of Practice,” in *The Farhat J. Ziadeh Distinguished Lecture in Arab and Islamic Studies of the University of Washington* (2014). It is accessible in pdf form at:

http://depts.washington.edu/nelc/pdf/event_files/ziadeh_series/Ziadeh2011Booklet_FINAL.pdf

3. Islam as a religion of *da‘wa* and *jihād*

Faḍlallāh claims that the message of Islam demands the total transformation of the world according to the divine will.⁶⁷⁶ As a Shī‘ī jurist and ideologue, Faḍlallāh consistently refers to the Islamic character of his project of resistance and liberation. Regarding the Islamic character of the state, he asserts that

What Islam does is just forcing others to accept the laws of Islam, since they are under the roof of the Islamic state, a state that must be protected from any danger, since it is the state of God.⁶⁷⁷

This statement shows that, for Faḍlallāh, accepting the Islamic character of the state is primarily an issue of security and not that of creed or ideology. In contrast to Mūsā al-Ṣadr, Faḍlallāh claimed that the best form of governance in Lebanon would be an Islamic one. As noted before, Faḍlallāh understands Islam to be, above all, a system of thought and life that embodies the divine norm of justice and to which submission is the prerequisite. However, contrary to Khumaynī, in the Lebanese multi-confessional system, Faḍlallāh did not demand a total and rapid Islamic turn. He called it as a change for justice, the long-term guarantee of which is the Islamic order. This logic made Islamisation and change inseparable, but he designed his tactic with due respect to the reality on the ground.

Faḍlallāh dedicates an entire chapter (Chapter 7) to the spread of Islam as universal message in relation to the use of force. In this claim, he disagrees with the jurists who consider *jihād* as a means of *da‘wa* and asserts that force is needed to oppose aggression, to protect and ensure the freedom of the Message. However, he strictly forbids coercion in conversion. Furthermore, he relates *da‘wa* to liberation by defining it as “a means to free people and to protect them, after they had joined Islam.”⁶⁷⁸ Similarly, Faḍlallāh claims, *jihād* and the conquests did not serve conversion, but to bring people under the control of the Islamic state and Islamic laws, and liberate them from oppression. We can notice the same phenomenon as in the case of his equating *umma* with society. Here, Faḍlallāh considers Islamic rule as normative – which gives

⁶⁷⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 255.

⁶⁷⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 244.

⁶⁷⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 238-9.

Islam a political superiority even when the subjects are non-Muslims. Therefore, his perception cannot be considered as realist in general and in the Lebanese context in particular.

In Faḍlallāh's view, any idea or practice that negates human dignity and generates a feeling of weakness institutes practical paganism (*wathaniyya 'amaliyya*) which must be annihilated by all means.⁶⁷⁹ *Jihād* serves to secure the space for *da'wa*, and for state-formation without which this “practical paganism” cannot be uprooted and the ideal of justice cannot be implemented. As for the means of change, they can be peaceful – including persuasion and guidance – or violent such as revolt.⁶⁸⁰ Fighting for freedom means supporting God's cause by using the divinely legitimised methods as defined in the Qur'ān. These means correspond to the laws of nature (*yaltaqī bi'l-sunna al-ṭabī'iyya*). Thus, fighting and annihilating “the enemies of freedom and life” acquire religious and natural justification (*al-ṭabrīr al-shar'ī wa'l-ṭabī'ī*).⁶⁸¹ Such acts serve “the cause of God” who, in turn, provides the necessary strength for those who resort to arms.⁶⁸² We can assume that in Faḍlallāh's view the two most important legal duties for activism are *al-amr bi-'l-ma'rūf wa'l-nahy 'an al-munkar* and *jihād*.

Regarding the principle of freedom of religion, Faḍlallāh does not recognise individual freedom in the western understanding. He even explicitly states that:

The Islamic idea of freedom agrees with all states that root their governance in a complementary and comprehensive idea, to which all laws and practices are related; with those states whose democracy is called “directed democracy”.⁶⁸³

As it appears from the quote, in Faḍlallāh's thought Islam exceeds human measures; it is linked to the interest of humanity as dictated by God, the Creator, and this leaves no room for counter-freedom against God.⁶⁸⁴ In other words, Faḍlallāh adheres to the concept of “controlled” or limited freedom. Accordingly, on the status of non-Muslims in a Muslim state, Faḍlallāh is apologetic and radical. He isolates the polytheists, the disbelievers and the atheists from *ahl al-kitāb* (who should pay *jizya*).

⁶⁷⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 60.

⁶⁸⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 257.

⁶⁸¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 245.

⁶⁸² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 61-62.

⁶⁸³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 245.

⁶⁸⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 245.

Then, he states that Islam should convert the former because they represent an element of corruption on earth. There is only one way to do so, asserts Faḍlallāh: using force. Here, he considers force to be a way of reforming them. This verbal fallacy, typical of religious-political apologies, allows him to depict this group as uncivilised and to justify discrimination in the name of Islam.⁶⁸⁵ Submitting disbelievers, Faḍlallāh states, to the sovereignty of the Muslim state is not coercion even if it means that Christians and Jews should pay *jizya* and polytheists must convert to Islam.⁶⁸⁶

In the next step, Faḍlallāh arrives at the question of whether Muslims can declare an aggressive war on disbelievers (including Jews and Christians). He reconfigures the classical theory of *jihād*, claiming that the normal state of relations between Muslims and non-Muslims is peace, if peace secures the objectives of Muslims.⁶⁸⁷ In cases where peace becomes a weakness or a danger for Islam, war is legitimate. Faḍlallāh is a pragmatic radical for whom peace is accepted inasmuch as it is favourable for Islam. He defines two cases of such favourable peace: the voluntary conversion or the surrender of the enemy.⁶⁸⁸ Otherwise, in normal conditions, *jihād* is a necessity.⁶⁸⁹ Faḍlallāh is reluctant to accept *jihād* as a continuous total war against disbelievers. He rather wants it to be waged according to the interests of Islam. This stance endows his radicalism with a hue of reluctance.

Recently, Sami Emile Baroudi investigated Faḍlallāh's thought on international relations in the period between 1976 and 2006.⁶⁹⁰ The author points out that for Faḍlallāh, the Islamic use of power serves the defence of freedoms and Muslim territories, and to eliminate any obstacles to the peaceful spread of the Islamic message. In such cases, resort to the use of force is an obligation.⁶⁹¹ Baroudi's evaluation of Faḍlallāh's concept of *jihād* – as expounded in his various writings including *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa* – is that it contains some contradictions that stem from the lack of differentiation between rhetoric and content.

⁶⁸⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 242.

⁶⁸⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 244.

⁶⁸⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 246.

⁶⁸⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 247.

⁶⁸⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 249.

⁶⁹⁰ Sami Emile Baroudi, "Islamist Perspectives on International Relations: The Discourse of Sayyid Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah (1935–2010)," *Middle Eastern Studies* 49 (2013): 107-133.

⁶⁹¹ Baroudi, "Islamist Perspectives on International Relations," 111.

Baroudi claims that Faḍlallāh detached the notion of armed *jihād* from its broader definition as “all individual and collective endeavours in the name of Islam”; and for the former he prefers to use the term *qitāl*.⁶⁹² In Baroudi’s interpretation, for Faḍlallāh *jihād* is not the essence of Islam, only a means that serves specific goals.⁶⁹³ On the other hand, he admits that for Faḍlallāh the spiritual dimension of the fight is as important as its military aspects.⁶⁹⁴ Baroudi seems to disregard the fact that, for Faḍlallāh, the use of force is embedded in a coherent system where *jihād* has a multi-faceted meaning. These different layers complement each other. For this reason, *qitāl* by essence has to be placed in the context of the spiritual aspects of *jihād*.

At the communitarian level, as it seemed to Faḍlallāh in 1976, the reality on the ground provided no compass for a peaceful political process, and amidst the escalating violence, passivity risked the annihilation of the community. The deprived Shī‘ī masses aspired to transform the internal power structure of the community. At the national level, Faḍlallāh’s main concern was to change the patterns of power sharing in Lebanon and to extend and secure their participation in the Lebanese political and economic life. His uncompromising rhetoric served primarily to convince his own community that Islam is the only possible solution to their weakness. However, in practice, within an explosive national and international context, he had to be careful not to destroy the possibilities of future reconciliation and cohabitation.

4. Faḍlallāh’s Shī‘ī political project in context

Before evaluating Faḍlallāh’s political theory in terms of coherence and effectiveness, it is necessary to contextualise it in the rising revolutionary Shī‘ism of the 1970s and contrast it with the competing Shī‘ī views.

⁶⁹² Baroudi, “Islamist Perspectives on International Relations,” 114.

⁶⁹³ Baroudi, “Islamist Perspectives on International Relations,” 114, 115.

⁶⁹⁴ Baroudi, “Islamist Perspectives on International Relations,” 115.

4.1 Lebanese context: Faḍlallāh and Mūsā al-Ṣadr

Faḍlallāh's contribution to Shī'ī political thought could be best understood in light of the Lebanese context. In the sixties, a fervent movement, led by Mūsā al-Ṣadr, incarnated Shī'ī aspirations for power and ascendancy in Lebanon. To some extent, al-Ṣadr prepared the field for Faḍlallāh. As Faḍlallāh's immediate predecessor on the Shī'ī Lebanese political scene, with a different and competing vision of Lebanese Shī'ism, it is necessary to pay due attention to how the two projects interpret Shī'ism in a context of rising to power. It is argued, here, that there is a correlation but no causality between al-Ṣadr's strategy of Shī'ī revival and Faḍlallāh's project.

Mūsā al-Ṣadr (1928- disappeared in 1978), a religious and political leader was the first politically active Shī'ī cleric in Lebanon. He offered a new and radical interpretation of Shī'ism that served the program of social-political empowerment for the marginalised Shī'ī community. Upon his arrival to Lebanon in 1959, he engaged in institution-building and political activism. He was a man of action rather than a systematic scholar, spontaneous and agile with an outstanding sense for revitalising religion and transforming it into a means of mobilisation. In his discourse, as put by Shaery-Eisenlohr, he aimed to “position Shiites within the Lebanese national narrative” asserting “that the labels of underclass and rural are in fact the two components that make the Shī'a the most authentic Lebanese citizens”.⁶⁹⁵ However, as an Iranian-born newcomer to Lebanon he – as Ajami writes – “had to demonstrate his fidelity to the institutions and the welfare of the state”.⁶⁹⁶

Al-Ṣadr was a reformer who attempted to change the position of the Shī'ī community within the confines of the established political system. Fu'ād Shihāb's six-year rule (1958 – 1964) of *étatisme* offered a reasonably flexible framework for such an endeavour.⁶⁹⁷ For more than a decade, al-Ṣadr did not call for revolution. Up to the outbreak of the civil war and the subsequent formation of the AMAL militia in January 1975, al-Ṣadr used dialogue and peaceful mass mobilisation to express the Shī'ī demands. It was only after his efforts fell on deaf ears that his tone became more

⁶⁹⁵ Shaery-Eisenlohr, “Constructing Lebanese Shi'ite Nationalism,” 57-60.

⁶⁹⁶ Ajami, *The Vanished Imam*, 86.

⁶⁹⁷ Ajami, *The Vanished Imam*, 87.

threatening.⁶⁹⁸ For him, revolution was a radical, consistent, organised but not necessarily armed action, based on the mobilisation of the community's resources and potentials and expressed by the symbols of Shī'ī creed and history. He propagated nonviolence even after AMAL had been formed.⁶⁹⁹ Al-Ṣadr wanted to assert the state authority in the south, and did not believe that his community was prepared enough to enter and profit from an armed conflict.⁷⁰⁰ He had no scenario for organised military activity and no systematic intellectual argumentation at hand to support the obvious need for the use of force.

By the mid 1970s, his tactic turned out to be outdated; he lost the control and power necessary to influence the events on the national political scene as well as in the diffused and proliferating Shī'ī movement. In the summer of 1976, when Faḍlallāh wrote *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, al-Ṣadr had lost much of his influence on the Lebanese political scene as well as inside the Shī'ī community. In Ajami's words "The Shia establishment was still caught between the emblems of state authority and the new politics of militias and arms".⁷⁰¹ Al-Ṣadr was continuously criticised and condemned by the conservative Shī'ī religious authorities for his activism. Another stance of al-Ṣadr that gave rise to controversy was that in the midst of the devastating Christian offensives from January 1976, Mūsā al-Ṣadr entered into secret negotiations with Amīn Jumayyil, the leader of the Christian Phalange (*Katā'ib*) resulting in an agreement on the withdrawal of the Shī'ī population in Nab'ā – Faḍlallāh's constituency – without a fight.⁷⁰² However, Jumayyil broke his promise and made no distinction between the Shī'ī and Palestinian residents. Following the deportation of the surviving inhabitants to west Beirut, their properties were subjected to looting and destruction.⁷⁰³ Al-Ṣadr was heavily criticised for his ill-fated decision. Faḍlallāh did not question him publicly but it is likely that the failure of al-Ṣadr's approach and the consequent devastation caused a major shift in Faḍlallāh's perception along with tensions between the two leaders.⁷⁰⁴

⁶⁹⁸ Shaery-Eisenlohr, "Constructing Lebanese Shi'ite Nationalism," 66.

⁶⁹⁹ Ajami, *The Vanished Imam*, 166.

⁷⁰⁰ Ajami, *The Vanished Imam*, 172.

⁷⁰¹ Ajami, *The Vanished Imam*, 169.

⁷⁰² Hanf, *Co-Existence in Wartime Lebanon*, 244.

⁷⁰³ Hanf, *Co-Existence in Wartime Lebanon*, 223. Cobban, "The Growth of Shi'i Power in Lebanon," 142.

⁷⁰⁴ Sankari, *Fadlallah*, 160.

By 1976, the situation in Lebanon was that of open war, and the Shī'ī masses remained disorganised. Many of those who were ready to fight – having been disillusioned with the Palestinians and the Left or committed to their Shī'ī background – joined the AMAL. However, there was need for much more and, above all, for a specific and supportive ideology that makes the community responsive to the radicalisation and the escalating violence. It was in this context that Faḍlallāh formulated his ideas on the necessity and legitimacy of involving force in political action. Faḍlallāh's primary concern was to create an intra-Shī'ī consensus on the use of force. The community was scattered, devastated and left to its own resources. Faḍlallāh's task was to mobilise all the spiritual, social and political resources that were available to the Shī'a. Supported by a combination of tradition and action, he formulated a flexible theory that provided guidelines to a framework for ideology-formation as well as for finding solutions to the burning issues of the day.

First and foremost, Faḍlallāh's theory offered justification for the use of force. It aimed to persuade the Shī'a belonging to the broadest possible social, intellectual and political spectrum and standing. It was designed to be convincing for the religious and competitive for the leftists who attracted the Shī'ī youth. It helped the community define its "friends and foes", enabled them to form strategic alliances based on common values and in particular, on their common enemies. This theory was born amidst chaos; accordingly it distilled principles and set directives for quick and spontaneous action rather than offering a scrupulous, detailed long-term road map. Certainly, Faḍlallāh shared the opinion of al-Ṣadr on Shī'ism as a theology of liberation and the necessity of organisation and self-empowerment of the Shī'ī community.

Nevertheless, with the escalation of violence their views on tactical action and on the nature of the Shī'ī response diverged. Faḍlallāh embraced the need for a comprehensive theory, which is transformable into tangible power in a situation of war. He set out to explain how the intangible potential could be converted into tangible force. Faḍlallāh re-conceptualised force and claimed that standing up to injustice with the use of force if necessary, is the essence of Islam. He endorsed a pan-Islamic tone, giving the Shī'ī movement the shape of an Islamic movement, thus appealing to Sunnites and Palestinians in Lebanon. He avoided references to class struggle and evoked social solidarity of believers, thus diluting all classes. Faḍlallāh addressed the *umma*, the community of Islam, also beyond the borders of Lebanon.

4.2 Shī'ism as a power of change: Faḍlallāh and Khumaynī

For any Shī'ī political project to succeed, it must deal with a long tradition of quietism. Above all, the nature of waiting for the return of the *Mahdī* (*intizār*), the necessity of the presence of an infallible leader (*ʿiṣma*), and dissimulation (*taqiyya*) considerably challenged modern Shī'ī thinkers. In his monumental study, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*, Michael Cook showed how Khumaynī was a turning point in modern Shī'ism as he transformed its doctrine from quietism to a power of revolution.⁷⁰⁵ Reinterpreting these Shī'ī beliefs would also have to deal with a corpus of traditions that support quietism. Thus, Shī'ī revolutionaries instigated a new political theology of action that swept away centuries of immobility.

However, unlike Iran, in Lebanon, the Shī'ī movement is relatively recent and quietism was strongly rooted among the Shī'a, especially among religious scholars. In this context, Faḍlallāh undermines quietism in two ways. On the one hand, by unveiling its political agenda, stating that behind quietism there is a political will that aims to silence dissident voices and prevent organised action.⁷⁰⁶ Moreover, he considers quietism as corrupted Shī'ism based on falsified *ḥadīth* that serves “political agendas and the confessional trends”.⁷⁰⁷ On the other hand, he has recourse to hermeneutics, claiming that quietist Shī'ī traditions are valid only in specific cases (*khāṣṣ*), while the general rule (*ʿāmm*) supports activism.⁷⁰⁸

Thus, Faḍlallāh deconstructs the legitimacy of quietism as negative ideology and defines it as a state of exception. He perceives an alliance between quietist Shī'ism and the dominating political systems. As he puts it, quietist Shī'ism purposefully simplified the Imāms' attitude towards political activism and made their temporary abstaining from public action a general rule in order “to suit their own personal, political and confessional interests. These fabricators added all that could restrict people's actions, dissuade them from rebelling or criticising.”⁷⁰⁹ Here, Faḍlallāh uses a Marxist argument against quietist Shī'ism calling it a social ideology that justifies exploitation of the

⁷⁰⁵ Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*, 533, 540.

⁷⁰⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 271.

⁷⁰⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 276.

⁷⁰⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 273, 274.

⁷⁰⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 277.

masses. Furthermore, Faḍlallāh, as a jurist, deals with quietism as a manifestation of forged and unlawful Shī'ism.

Arguably, the political role of the Imāms in the post-Karbalā' era is a major milestone in the quietist justification of accommodating the political order. Faḍlallāh revisits this aspect, differentiating between two attitudes of the Imāms with regard to action. These two attitudes varied according to the circumstances and followed meticulous consideration of the chances of victory or defeat. He asserts that

[T]he Imāms supported some of the movements that rebelled against corrupt rule and they sympathized with their leaders. The Imāms believed in the great cause and the motives behind those movements, in so far as they were convinced that their leadership adhered to righteousness and to the true Islamic rule. These rebellions were not organised for personal gains, but sought to destroy oppression and wrong, in order to establish justice and righteousness.⁷¹⁰

Faḍlallāh – as mentioned above in relation to his concept of realism – claims that the Imāms sometimes supported, while in other cases opposed action by taking the “greater Islamic interests”⁷¹¹ into consideration. He puts great emphasis on the deliberate considerations that preceded any decision taken by the Imāms and the Prophet. He attributes their occasional refraining from action to their pre-knowledge that it would not fulfil the conditions of righteousness and, therefore, would lead to failure. For him, the competence and the purity of the goals of the movement were the obligatory preliminary of any activism that may imply the use of force. Faḍlallāh warned against selfish and reckless adventures. It is on these bases that he differentiates between a righteous and a corrupt revolution (*thawra mustaqīma* vs. *thawra munḥarifā*).⁷¹²

Closely connected to the issue of the political role of the Imāms, is the Shī'ī belief in infallibility (*iṣma*) of the Imām, which imbues every political action, he takes. Since for the time being, no infallible Imām leads the community, quietist Shī'a exclude political action. Faḍlallāh demystifies the political action of the Imām as stemming from ordinary planning rather than from their infallibility:

⁷¹⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 272.

⁷¹¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 278.

⁷¹² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 272.

The revolutions of Imām ‘Alī and Imām al-Ḥusayn were not the outcome of some unique directives or some hazy thinking, they were rather the result of ordinary circumstances; resulting from decisions (...) regarding the situations that make the battle an inescapable choice, the people who should participate (...), the military plans (...), and the legitimate principles that motivate the act.⁷¹³

Faḍlallāh criticises quietists for taking fallibility and human imperfection as excuses for passivity.⁷¹⁴ His position could be understood as a criticism of all passive political agents, especially Muslims. However, understood in the Lebanese context, one could hardly see him encourage other factions to raise weapons. In the same vein, he discarded all forms of esoteric thought that delegates perfection and truth to the domain of transcendence. Dedicated human action guarantees the power to uproot corruption, a state of mind to which every believer should aspire.

Besides, Faḍlallāh distinguishes between Shī‘ī political order and Shī‘ī messianism. Struggling to triumph over evil should not be related to the return of the *Mahdī*. He opposes those who hold Mahdism to be a central position in practical religiosity with two arguments. First, *intizār* carries the danger that the social aspect of religion will be neglected. Second, there has always been a need for state and order, and once these aspirations are marginalised, jurisprudence becomes meaningless.⁷¹⁵

Another notion Faḍlallāh reconsidered critically is *taqiyya*. He deals with it “as one of the most fundamental elements that affect the practical pattern of behaviour, in relation to the corrupt government”.⁷¹⁶ Faḍlallāh maintains that quietist Shī‘ism misinterpreted the notion of *taqiyya* endorsing unnecessary compromise with deviation and paralysed resistance. In this sense, *taqiyya* hinders the fulfilment of the obligation of forbidding wrong. He perceives it as excused and permitted only in exceptional cases, when disclosing identity would endanger action.

In his interpretation of *taqiyya*, Faḍlallāh displays similarities with Khumaynī who considered it as a temporary exception applied exclusively to protect religious goals rather than securing the life and status of the believers.⁷¹⁷ Beyond *taqiyya*, the two

⁷¹³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 270.

⁷¹⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 55-56.

⁷¹⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 263.

⁷¹⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 271.

⁷¹⁷ See, for example, his statement that “our Imams were sometimes subject to conditions that prevented them from pronouncing a true ordinance; they were exposed to tyrannical and oppressive rulers who imposed *taqiyya* and fear upon them. Naturally, their fear was for religion not themselves, and if they had not observed *taqiyya* in certain circumstances, oppressive rulers would have entirely rooted out true

jurists share many similarities although they expressed their ideas in different frameworks and rhetoric. For one, Khumaynī explained *intizār* as a phase of active preparation in which fighting can hasten the arrival of the Mahdī.⁷¹⁸ As it has been shown, Faḍlallāh eliminates mystic interpretations and derives the legitimacy of action from the practical necessity of establishing an Islamic order.⁷¹⁹ In the same vein, neither the *Mahdī* nor infallibility count as factors of victory in Faḍlallāh’s thought. In the Iranian revolutionary rhetoric, the eschatological notion of the *Mahdī* was used, together with the concept of *ṣāhib al-zamān*, as mystically present and providing guidance to the revolution. Also, Khumaynī, in a few instances, was referred to as the *nā’ib* of the Hidden Imām.⁷²⁰

Although both thinkers explained al-Ḥusayn’s sacrifice as a rational endeavour, Khumaynī referred to his plan as a continuation of al-Ḥusayn’s legacy, while Faḍlallāh did not go that far. Rather, he explained it as being rooted in, and legitimised by the same principles endorsed by al-Ḥusayn, that is, justice and legitimacy. Khumaynī as well as Faḍlallāh praised ‘Alī as a warrior and a statesman.⁷²¹ For Khumaynī, the launching and maintenance of Islamic political power for Islamic goals – including the reform of the religious institutions – had to be followed by the establishment of the Islamic state. Therefore, political revolution that aims to sweep away tyranny is unavoidable. This project implies the enforcement of the *sharī’a*, the unification of Islamic *umma*, and finally, liberating the oppressed of the world as a religious duty of all Muslims.

In this project, Khumaynī invested the scholars with special responsibility. For him, as for Quṭb, the Islamic state was a precondition for realising the Islamic goals. The final aim behind activism was the foundation of an Islamic state, which in a downward process enforces the principles and goals of Islam. He wanted a strong Shī’ī state that can equal Sunnī powers and fulfil a universal mission of political liberation. In

religion.” Khumaynī, *Islamic Government: Governance of the Jurist*, chap. on “The Form of Islamic Government,” in *Islam and Revolution*, 72.

⁷¹⁸ Saskia Gieling, *Religion and War in Revolutionary Iran* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1999), 121, 125. Also see, for example, Khumaynī’s declaration that: “We cannot accept Saddam and wait until the earth is filled with injustice and the Mahdi appears. We must act in accordance with Islam and the Qur’an and fulfil the obligation of *al-amr bi’l-ma’rūf wa’l-nahy ‘an al-munkar*. We must pave the way for the appearance of the Lord of the Age”. *Iṭtilā’āt*, 15/1/67, cited by Gieling, 53.

⁷¹⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 262-4.

⁷²⁰ Gieling, *Religion and War in Revolutionary Iran*, 125.

⁷²¹ Gieling, *Religion and War in Revolutionary Iran*, 108-9.

view of this, Khumaynī's project appears as a somewhat elitist enterprise with special roles assigned to the representatives of the religious establishment.

Faḍlallāh, as mentioned before, did not consider the Islamic state as a precondition for the success of the Islamic project. However, he agreed that renouncing the idea of establishing an Islamic state means the nullification of the *sharī'a*.⁷²² Still, he does not dedicate detailed attention to the legitimacy of the state in the period of occultation neither does he provide, in this book, a detailed plan for takeover. This can be explained by the fact that in Lebanon in the 1970s, the establishment of an Islamic state was absolutely out of question, and his main concern was to mobilise the biggest number of Shī'a from the widest possible political background.

Before outlining a project of state building, Faḍlallāh had to create a unified mass of devoted activists. While Khumaynī was concerned with the details of Islamic governance, Faḍlallāh's emphasis is on the transformative power inherent in religion. He is specific about two goals: the Islamisation of governance and that of the society.⁷²³ In *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, he expounds the two projects as inseparable. However, with respect to the social political reality, he gave precedence to the second one, which is to prepare the ground for change at the institutional level.

Both Khumaynī and Faḍlallāh considered opposition to tyranny as part of "commanding right and forbidding wrong".⁷²⁴ As Saskia Gieling points out, according to Khumaynī, it was a legal obligation to rise against *ẓulm* (injustice) and *jawr* (transgression). In this, he refers to a tradition of 'Alī, according to whom "commanding right and forbidding wrong" is a branch of *jihād*.⁷²⁵ However, Khumaynī did not use this obligation as an ultimate justification to activism. Rather – with a mystic undertone – he emphasised it as part of the universal combat of truth, *ḥaqq* against falsehood, *bāṭil*, an Islamic notion particularly stressed in Shī'ism.

⁷²² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 263.

⁷²³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 265.

⁷²⁴ For example, Khumaynī states that "The expression of opposition by religious scholars is a form of "forbidding the evil" on the part of the religious leadership, which creates in its wake a wave of broad opposition and 'forbidding the evil' on the part of all religiously inclined and honorable people. If the oppressive and deviant rulers do not bow to the wishes of such an oppositional movement... It will then be the duty of the Muslims to engage in an armed *jihad* against that ruling group." See: Khumaynī, *Islamic Government: Governance of the Jurist*, chap. on "The Form of Islamic Government," in *Islam and Revolution*, 114-115.

⁷²⁵ Gieling, *Religion and War in Revolutionary Iran*, 53.

Faḍlallāh was a pragmatic activist and preferred a down-to-earth approach to revolution. In his words

The wars of the Prophet were also subject to the natural conditions of war including consultation, planning, and application and met with different results, varying between victory and defeat.⁷²⁶

This approach demystifies divine intervention and makes it contingent on thoughtful action. The fact that Faḍlallāh defines consultation, planning, and application as constituents of “natural conditions,” leads us to the so-called efficacy condition in Shīʿī jurisprudence. The notion of efficacy – ability and preparedness for action – in activist Shīʿism is linked to the importance of being organised, and became primarily a matter of “social engineering” and power.⁷²⁷

Efficacy in Faḍlallāh’s understanding is primarily the conviction that Islamic revolutions must be based on and stick to a rational plan, and must be devoid of personal interests and ambitions.⁷²⁸ That said, complying with the obligation of *al-amr wa’l-nahy* presupposes individual preparation as well as social organisation. Besides, he warns against acts that may lead to foreign powers taking advantage of internal disputes, insisting that activists “must assure that there is adequate protection against opposing reactions that might put the country under the control of non-believers”.⁷²⁹

Put in context, Faḍlallāh aimed at a political project that changes the reality of the Shīʿa in Lebanon but is cautious enough to master the calculations of the political games, national or international, which limit Shīʿī aspirations. Ḥizbullāh might be considered to be the embodiment of this Shīʿī political project in the sense that it accepted to accommodate itself to the Lebanese system and act as a political party from the 1990s.⁷³⁰

The role that Shīʿī mysticism played for Khumaynī was given to the more tangible and intrasectarian concept of *al-amr wa’l-nahy* by Faḍlallāh. Khumaynī had to represent himself as a charismatic leader in a society where the majority of the population was

⁷²⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 270.

⁷²⁷ Cook, *Commanding Right and Forbidding Wrong*, 542-545.

⁷²⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 272.

⁷²⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 277.

⁷³⁰ Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God*, 72, 91-92, 94, 97-98, 100, 107, 112, 126, 128, 142-143, 154, 157; Alagha, *The Shifts in Hezbollah’s Ideology*, 36, 62, 70, 95-96, 115-122, 142-4.

Shī'ī and supported revolution, while Faḍlallāh had to offer a point of reference that convinces the quietists and unifies Muslims facing the danger of losing any influence over Lebanese politics. Both leaders aspired to power for the Shī'ā, but as already noted in Chapter 5.4 they considered different aspects of the Shī'ī creed as resources of self-empowerment.

5. Faḍlallāh's Shī'ī discourse

When Faḍlallāh reinterprets Shī'ism as a movement of change, he consciously adheres to the common Sunnī activist concepts, however, he substantiates them with predominantly Shī'ī references.⁷³¹ By this, he presents Shī'ism as a system of thought that carries a flexible but purist interpretation of Islam. Regarding the Shī'ī elements of Faḍlallāh's discourse, Baroudi claims that Faḍlallāh's primary concern was the formation of a united Muslim position against Western (and Soviet) hegemony in the region. He also argues that Faḍlallāh was "far less interested in promoting the Shī'ī doctrine" than in creating a universalist Islamist tone.⁷³² Baroudi accepts that "Faḍlallāh's Shī'ī background leaves a distinctive imprint on the style of his discourse (...) [however its] substance (...) essentially boils down to that of Sunnī Islamists".⁷³³ He adds that Faḍlallāh's counter-hegemonic language shares major similarities with secular Arab nationalist authors although it differs from the latter due to its "morphology within the sacred text (the Qur'an)".⁷³⁴

One probable reason for Baroudi neglecting the importance of Shī'ism in Faḍlallāh's thought is that he did not investigate *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa* thoroughly. Rather, he relied in his sermons and interviews with the press. The wider the public Faḍlallāh addressed was, the more he applied a universalistic Islamist rhetoric. A close reading of his sources and ideas, however, shows that Faḍlallāh's use of ideas and strategies of Arab nationalism and Marxism did not substitute in any way

⁷³¹ See, for example: "Imām 'Alī regarded his battle in Ṣiffīn against Mu'āwiya (...) as a practical implementation of the principle of commanding right and forbidding wrong. In the same way, Imām al-Ḥusayn in his turn, regarded his revolt against the deviated Umayyad dynasty as a change leading towards the just Islamic rule." *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 268.

⁷³² Baroudi, "Islamist Perspectives on International Relations," 124.

⁷³³ Baroudi, "Islamist Perspectives on International Relations," 125.

⁷³⁴ Baroudi, "Islamist Perspectives on International Relations," 125.

the Shī'ī core of his thought.⁷³⁵ Besides, when a Shī'ī thinker uses pan-Islamic rhetoric, he identifies Islam in its Shī'ī interpretation. The two are inseparable. Similarly, Islam in Sunnī ideology is the Sunnī orthodoxy.

Faḍlallāh entertains traditional Shī'ī themes such as commitment to justice, the special emphasis on “commanding right and forbidding wrong” and on resistance to oppression as religious duty in the focus of his discourse. These notions are not foreign to the Sunnī political expression but nor are they the most emphatic elements of it. In view of a supposed coherence of style and content, Faḍlallāh's aim could have been not only to promote intra-Muslim reconciliation but also, to imbue the modern Islamist discourse with Shī'ī elements. Similarly, his agreement with secular nationalists on certain issues was articulated in the language of religion with obvious Shī'ī undertone. Such discourse proves that modernist Islamism contains the major values – such as social transformation, a particular understanding of freedoms, and representation of national interests – propagated by the secular nationalists.

Besides the Qur'ān, Faḍlallāh's references include Shī'ī *ḥadīth* collections as well as Sunnī ones, works of *fiqh* by the representatives of modern Shī'ī scholars such as Muḥammad Ḥusayn Kāshif al-Ghitā' (d.1954), Ḥusayn Burūjirdī (d. 1961) as well as

⁷³⁵ After 1976, Faḍlallāh produced a rich collection of writings on various political issues. His most important books on the topic are *Irādat al-quwwa* [The Will to power] (Beirut: Dār al-Malāk, 2000) in which he writes extensively on the value of power in international relations. His *al-Ḥaraka al-Islāmiyya humūm wa-qaḍāya* [The Islamic movement: concerns and issues] (Beirut: Dār al-Malāk, 1993) studies the possibilities and ways of establishing an Islamic state with special attention to party politics and to the position of Hizbullah. It also details the practice of *ijtihād* in political decision-making. *Kitāb al-jihād* [The book of Jihād] (Beirut: Dār al-Malāk, 1998) is a collection of lectures from the 1990s on the subject of *jihād* in which he elaborates its various definitions and conditions. Another collection from the same period is a compilation of interviews conducted with Faḍlallāh, entitled *Hiwārāt fī al-fikr wa'l-siyāsa wa'l-ijtimā'* [Dialogues regarding ideas, politics, and society] (Beirut: Dār al-Malāk, 2001.). In this book, Faḍlallāh exposes his views on the necessity of changing the global system of power relations and transforming it into an alternative system based on justice. In *Iḍā'āt Islāmiyya* [Islamic Lights] (Beirut: Dār al-Nahār li'l-Nashr, 2003), he examines the scope of use of force in activist Islam, while in *al-Ḥaraka al-Islāmiyya mā lahā wa mā 'alayhā* (Beirut: Dār al-Malāk, 2004), Faḍlallāh elaborates on the constant and the variable in Islamic political action. In *al-Ijtihād bayna 'aṣr al-māḍī wa-āfāq al-mustaqbal* [Independent legal reasoning between the past and the horizons of the future] (al-Dār al-Bayḍā': al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-ʿArabī, 2009), Faḍlallāh details his views on the realistic political structure of an Islamic state.

Apart from his books, a remarkable collection of political *fatwas* are available on his official website (bayynat.org) on the rules of self-defence, commanding right and forbidding wrong, and his statements on various current political issues. This site provides his answers to questions such as the attitude towards a democratic system in the absence of conditions for establishing an Islamic state, his views on civil society, what makes a governance just and unjust, suicide operations that affect civilians, principles and exceptions in politics, participation in the Iraqi elections, the legitimacy of the Iraqi government, attitude towards the coalition troops, intellectual extremism, working with foreign investors, terrorist attacks in Western capitals, tackling differences in political opinion. These answers are much telling on how Faḍlallāh applied his theory on practical, day to day issues.

classical Sunnī authors like Ibn Rushd (d. 1198), and secondary literature by Muslim (Shī‘ī) authors and Orientalists.

In Chapter 2, entitled “*Strength against tyranny*”, his major sources are the Qur’ān and the Prophetic tradition. Remarkably, he applies an important account of al-Ḥusayn from al-Ṭabarī’s (d. 923) *Tārīkh* and not from Shī‘ī compendiums. In the quoted texts, al-Ḥusayn states that those who do not oppose oppression with words and deeds, will face the same eternal condemnation as their oppressors.⁷³⁶ However, in the last section on “commanding right and forbidding wrong”, he quotes traditions from *Nahj al-balāgha* and *Wasā’il al-Shī‘a* by al-Ḥurr al-‘Āmilī (d. 1623).

In Chapter 5, which deals with numerical strength, Faḍlallāh supports his argument that the minority can be the agent of righteousness by mostly Sunnī sources. In the section (no. 2) in which he stresses the qualitative aspect of numerical strength, he frequently draws on Prophetic *ḥadīth*.⁷³⁷ Similarly, his argument on the fickleness of majority opinion is substantiated by predominantly Qur’ānic statements. In the part entitled “Several small communities defeated big ones” (no. 7),⁷³⁸ he avoids Shī‘ī references and relies on the Qur’ān and Ibn Sa‘d’s (d. 845) account of the Battle of Ḥunayn (no. 9) in the biographical compendium entitled *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*.⁷³⁹ As for the Shī‘ī sources, in addition to *Nahj al-balāgha* and *Wasā’il al-Shī‘a*, Faḍlallāh quotes *Majma‘ al-bayān li-‘ulūm al-Qur’ān*, the most well-known Shī‘ī *tafsīr* from the 12th century by Shaykh Ṭabarsī (d. 1153) which is based largely on Mu‘tazilī sources.

In Chapter 7, where he deals with the relationship between *da‘wa* and *jihād*, he interprets relevant Qur’ānic statements. In addition, he quotes traditions from Badr al-Dīn al-‘Aynī’s (d. 1451) *Umdat al-qārī fī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* as well as from Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī’s (d. 1448) *Fath al-bārī fī sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*⁷⁴⁰ and *Wasā’il al-Shī‘a*.⁷⁴¹ From among the *fiqh* compendiums, he refers to Ibn Rushd’s *Bidāyat al-mujtahid wa-nihāyat al-muqtaṣid*, a book on Sunnī legal schools, as well as the views of the renowned Shī‘ī scholar Kāshif al-Ghiṭā’.⁷⁴² Faḍlallāh re-interprets these traditions

⁷³⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 67.

⁷³⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 165-7.

⁷³⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 173.

⁷³⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 175-7.

⁷⁴⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 222.

⁷⁴¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 223, 231, 233, 234.

⁷⁴² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 224.

and legal opinions in light of Imāmi *ḥadīth* with special emphasis on harmony between political action and the Islamic values and interests.

In the section on conversion, Faḍlallāh quotes Orientalists who held a positive view on the Islamic conquests such as Thomas W. Arnold's *The Preaching of Islam: A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith* (1896),⁷⁴³ and H. J. Deschamps' *Les religions de l'Afrique noire* (1954). He refers to a book entitled *Muqāranat al-adyān* (Comparative religions) which contains quotations from western authors on this topic.⁷⁴⁴ This serves the apologetic of Islam as a religion of *da'wa*.

Chapter 8 on change and power contains a section (no. 4) on the unity of religion and state. On the political and social nature of Islam, Faḍlallāh refers to *al-Badr al-zāhir fī ṣalāt al-jum'ā wa'l-musāfir* by Ḥusayn Burūjirdī – the *marja'* of the Shī'a between 1945 and 1961.⁷⁴⁵ The choice is interesting, since Burūjirdī is known for his apolitical approach. This quote, which – rather unusually – supports activism, could be used as a powerful argument against Burūjirdī's quietist followers. In the section on change by peaceful or violent means (no. 7), Faḍlallāh summarises Āyatullāh Muḥsin al-Ḥakīm's (d. 1970) opinion.⁷⁴⁶ A statement of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq substantiates the section on the Imāms' support of revolutionary movements (no. 12).⁷⁴⁷ In the subchapter (no. 17) dealing with falsification of *ḥadīth* (of which he accuses the quietist Shī'a), Faḍlallāh refers to a saying by 'Alī from *Nahj al-balāgha* in which he emphasises the unity and integrity of the Islamic community as priorities, and the importance of eliminating fears of action.⁷⁴⁸ This is meant to support Faḍlallāh's argument on two crucial issues: on the necessity of strategic cooperation between the Shī'a and the Sunna, and on the inevitability of activism.

Undoubtedly, Faḍlallāh does not reduce the Shī'i component of his references. He quotes from *ḥadīth* and *fiqh* compilations to make a case for activism. In addition, and for apologetic purposes, he relies on a wide range of sources, and his selection is rather eclectic. This explains his choice to quote Sunnī authors as well as relying extensively

⁷⁴³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 219, 238.

⁷⁴⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 237. He also quotes Bernard Shaw on p. 218, and John Frederick Denison Maurice on p. 219.

⁷⁴⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 261-262.

⁷⁴⁶ See the footnotes based on 'Abd al-Hādī al-Faḍlī's book *Fī intizār al-Imām* on p. 267 of *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*.

⁷⁴⁷ Quoted in al-Kulaynī's (d. 941) *al-Kāfi*. See: *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 273.

⁷⁴⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 278-9.

on Orientalists who held positive views on Islam. This is in sharp contrast with his earlier negative remarks on Orientalism,⁷⁴⁹ and most probably intended to leave space for an Islamist stance applicable in the Lebanese context. Faḍlallāh's ideas on the value of the righteous minority and the moral corruption of the majority are substantiated with almost exclusively non-Shī'ī sources.⁷⁵⁰ Using such references can be read as part of a tactical dialogue with the various denominational groups of the Lebanese society.

6. Evaluation of Faḍlallāh's political theory

Faḍlallāh's assertion that every political decision must be accommodated with "the prevailing circumstances"⁷⁵¹ leads to a discourse somewhat vague and plastic. If "lenience and violence", refraining from action and activism are equally justifiable tools as long as their outcomes are favourable to the community,⁷⁵² then pragmatism is limitless and absolute. This undermines the very principle of responsibility Faḍlallāh promotes, and makes his concept similarly adaptable for passivity and activism, radical Islamism and multi-confessional liberalism. For example, one could always find an excuse or a reason to fight or not to fight occupation and oppression. Put in the Shī'ī perspective, one could hardly imagine al-Ḥusayn's revolution if he had considered "the prevailing circumstances" before taking his decision.

Faḍlallāh does not show the same degree of radicalism as Khumaynī. His primary followers would be reluctant radical – to use Mohsin Hamid's term⁷⁵³ – Shī'ā who are sufficiently motivated, for social and political reasons, to revolt, but who take into account the compelling Lebanese environment and their lack of preparedness. Thus, they are expected to rise into power within the realm of the possible. Probably for this reason, Faḍlallāh remains theoretical. He avoids providing an exact road-map for the various aspects of revolution – such as the political party to lead the revolution, the priorities to pursue and the tasks to assume – neither does he detail the hierarchy of

⁷⁴⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 73-79.

⁷⁵⁰ See: *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 168-170.

⁷⁵¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 265.

⁷⁵² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 273.

⁷⁵³ Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (Orlando: Harvest Books, 2008).

Islamic values and goals that provide the basis for the use of force. After all, all these details matter only in proportion to the space acquired on the ground.

He provides guidelines for a system that embodies Islamic values, but without being specific about the structure of the resulting establishment. He gives no details on the structures of the Islamic state nor on the selection of the decision-makers. This vagueness in terms of means and outcome secures the flexibility of the project and leaves it open to a wide range of interpretations. His ideas as set out in 1976 provided a valuable theoretical back-up for the Lebanese Shī'ī activists, although, without the desperate political situation and the Islamic revolution in Iran, it would have needed much more and explicit elaboration to achieve the same effect in transforming the Lebanese political landscape.

Concluding remarks

The key notion of Faḍlallāh's political theory is his understanding of change as both an attitude and an aim that realises the establishment of a just political system based on Islamic values. Change presupposes contextualised discernment regarding the means of the process. Since confrontation with the enemies is unavoidable, the notion of change embraces *jihād*. Also, value-based transformation cannot go without Islamisation. Faḍlallāh elaborated on the concept of revolution to make it adaptable to diverse and antagonistic social and political environments. The combination of absolute goals and relative tools and strategies makes his approach fundamentalist, flexible and also reluctant at the same time.

For Faḍlallāh, revolution is both internal as well as a social and political process. It starts with greater *jihād* and continues with political and social organisation without specifying the end-result of the process. Any revolutionary act implies confronting internal weakness and dismantling oppressive forces and structures. In *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, Faḍlallāh focused on the attitude and principles that govern the transformation and described it as a gradual procedure based on intellectual and emotional conviction.

As a matter of fact, Faḍlallāh had to refute the objections of Shī'ī quietism to change by force. He reinterpreted the notions of waiting for the return of the *Mahdī*

(*intizār*), the passivity of *Imāms*, the necessity of the presence of an infallible leader (*‘iṣma*), and dissimulation (*taqiyya*) as exceptions. In his view, the Imāms and the trusted traditions call to responsibility, action and confrontation. In this regard, ‘Alī and al-Ḥusayn set the example for activist Shī‘ism.

For Faḍlallāh, revolution is a gradual procedure that presupposes greater jihād and aims at dismantling oppressive forces and structures. His description of the desired outcome, just order is utopian and theoretical. Faḍlallāh attempted to present Islamic values as appealing and beneficial for the entire population, in order to convince them that they would all benefit from a state based on such values. As far as international relations are concerned, Faḍlallāh appears to be a “reluctant radical”. He endorses *jihād* claiming that, in virtue of Islamic legitimacy, the war must be waged to respond to the challenges and to secure the spread of the Message. However, he asserts that Muslims should consider peace as the ordinary state of relations with non-Muslims as long as peace assures the interests of Muslims.

In Faḍlallāh’s line of thought, there is a conscious interplay between the Islamic ideals and reality. On the one hand, he reassures his audience of the supremacy of Islam and urges them to act and change the *status quo* according to the tenets of Islam. However, his insistence on considering the “prevailing circumstances” in the employment of his Islamist theory provides a unique flexibility to his ideas which is well reflected in the transformation of the militia of Hizbullah into a political party following the Ta’if accords.

Chapter VIII: Ethics of power

Introduction

For Faḍlallāh, the use of force and aspiration to power must be ethical, that is justified according to the tenets of Islam. In *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, he set out to define the moral rules that harmonize activism with self control, and promote just war but avoid the self-serving cult of power. He attempted to differentiate between the legitimate and illegitimate uses of force. Having considered some kinds of force as right and others as wrong, his next concern was to define its limits. As a finale to his exposition on legitimate power, he sought to state what differentiates power in the Islamic sense from the cult of power propagated by Nietzsche.

Faḍlallāh elaborates the ethics of power in two chapters. In Chapter 6, he deals with negative and positive force in addition to “just war”. In Chapter 10, he describes the ethics of weakness and the ethics of force. Faḍlallāh distances himself, and the Islamic concept of *quwwa*, from the cult of power as represented in Nietzsche’s philosophy. He frames his discussion within the divine command ethics in which the source of morality is God’s revealed law, Muḥammad’s practice, and the Imāms’ traditions. These sources of morality govern war and peace, violence and leniency. However, by the nature of the revelation, divine commands and models can only set the principles and not the details of a moral behaviour, leaving room for pragmatic thinking about the right action in a given situation.

This chapter aims to offer an in-depth analysis of ethical rulings as adapted and applied by a prominent and revivalist Shī‘ī jurist. First, I will explore Faḍlallāh’s understanding of the justification and the limits of force.⁷⁵⁴ Second, I will compare my findings on Faḍlallāh’s ethics of force to Morgan Clarke’s analysis of Faḍlallāh’s bioethics. Finally, I will interpret Faḍlallāh’s endeavour within the Shī‘ī tradition. Put in a wider Shī‘ī context, we will gain a fair assessment of the representativeness of his

⁷⁵⁴ As I indicated in the introduction, the notion of *quwwa* can be translated, as a rule, as force or power interchangeably. In few instances, force entails a degree of materiality and physicality while a spiritual being can be said to be powerful (God, for example). Thus, *quwwa* is power in general and force in particular uses (such as using force). For violence, Faḍlallāh uses the term *‘unf* and distinguishes it from power as violence *per se* is evil.

ethics of power. The ethical dimension of modern Islamist thought and that of Shī‘ism in particular, is usually neglected in Western scholarship.

1. Positive and negative power

For Faḍlallāh, power has to be exercised in the framework of an action plan which is based on Islamic moral principles.⁷⁵⁵ These consider power as legitimate as long as it serves the divinely revealed goals of Islam. Taking *sharī‘a* as the ultimate source of ethics seems to be evident for Faḍlallāh.⁷⁵⁶ At times, he refers to the Qur’ānic ethics, while in other instances he takes the practice of Muḥammad and the Imāms as a model for moral behaviour. In his view, reason is not the source of morality, but a complementary tool which allows a moral agent to act according to the Islamic principles on particular conditions. He differentiates between two sorts of Islamic objectives: those that come into existence as negative power and those that represent positive power.⁷⁵⁷ This distinction, however, does not imply outright value judgement as they both have a specific function.

Faḍlallāh’s use of the adjective “negative” needs clarification. As we could see in his chapter on social power,⁷⁵⁸ negative position is the refusal of an un-Islamic attitude or a practice.⁷⁵⁹ It stands for “forbidding wrong” in the social as well as in the personal sphere. With regards to power, in Faḍlallāh’s understanding, “negative power” (literally: the negative aspects regarding the major goals of power in Islam)⁷⁶⁰ is the one that impedes human beings from belligerence. He asserts that this “power protects itself from corruption or deviation”.⁷⁶¹ Negative power is a sublime energy which develops in the Muslim individual as an element of good rather than of evil, controlling Man’s inclinations towards aggression. In the exercise of power, it eliminates arrogance, *isti‘lā’*

⁷⁵⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 181.

⁷⁵⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 299.

⁷⁵⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 181-182.

⁷⁵⁸ See Chapter 4 section 22 in *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*.

⁷⁵⁹ “This means that all Muslims should reject and forbid all social, economic, political or educational evils, including deviation or corruption in any form. This is a practical way of eradicating elements of corruption and encouraging good works...” See: *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 152-3.

⁷⁶⁰ *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 181

⁷⁶¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 183.

and absolute hegemony.⁷⁶² Here, Faḍlallāh uses *isti'lā'* in a similar sense to that of *istikbār*, made famous by Khumaynī who applied it to denote mainly the politics of the United States. Indirectly, Faḍlallāh criticises powers that use force to impose their interests on other peoples even by bringing about destruction. Faḍlallāh, like Khumaynī, considered the “Third World” in general and the Middle East in particular as grounds exploited by the great powers for their own benefits.

Negative power appears in four elements. First, belief in God leads human beings to submit to a higher supernatural and absolute power in face of which they realise their inferiority. As such, faith dissuades human beings from hostility.⁷⁶³ Second, Islamic power rejects all forms of ostentation. Thus, the Qur'ān mocks those who act with arrogance, vanity and overconfidence.⁷⁶⁴ Another element of negative power lies in purifying the soul from the inclination to destroy others as a means to ease one's inferiority complex.⁷⁶⁵ Finally, the Qur'ān rejects tyranny which leads human beings to divide, colonise and exploit others.⁷⁶⁶ Therefore, we can state that for Faḍlallāh “negative power” is that which restrains the individual from going beyond the justified power. It is good and legitimate.

Below, I shall define positive power. It suffices, here, to note that “negative” power – even if at first glance the reader might think that it is a vice – prepares the stage for “positive” power. “Negative” power purifies the soul, at an internal level, whereas “positive” power projects action at the external level. However, unless one is thinking from the vantage point of Sūfism or Shī'ism (in which the apparent/latent *zāhir* / *bāṭin* category is an essential tool of thought), the presence of negative power does not imply necessarily the presence of positive power.

In his elaboration on negative power, Faḍlallāh is preoccupied with convincing the quietist Shī'a who considered power and the use of force in any form as immoral and illegitimate in the absence of the Imām, or had fears from retaliations by the Sunnī majority. Finally, power is immoral because it entails violence at some point. To reassure the quietist Shī'a, Faḍlallāh introduces “negative power” to denote the capacity to control violence and aggression. Thus, the believer whose motivation in the use of

⁷⁶² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 182.

⁷⁶³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 183.

⁷⁶⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 185-186.

⁷⁶⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 187.

⁷⁶⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 191.

force is not harming others can never be inhumane or oppressive, but stays in control of his animalistic instincts.

If “negative power”, which should be understood as passive power, makes human beings immune to ideas and practices that Islam rejects, positive power is what Islam aims to realise and embody.⁷⁶⁷ Thus, positive power is active. Faḍlallāh considers positive power as the struggle in the way of God.⁷⁶⁸ Since power is the gift of God, it should be used only in the way of God. Faḍlallāh’s Manichaeism is nowhere more evident than in this section. While any act by the enemies of Islam is necessarily evil, believers incarnate “positive power” which is in motion towards the implementation of Islamic law.⁷⁶⁹ In other words, positive power is physical *jihād* while negative power is spiritual *jihād*.

Faḍlallāh divides positive power into five elements. The first one, faith, as elaborated in the chapter on the theology of power, sets the basis for practical power. The second element is the protection of religion from persecution. The third element is assisting the persecuted against unjust powers of colonisation, exploitation and aggression. The fourth one is abating disbelief so that Islam could spread its message. The fifth element is self-defence and countering the aggression against Muslim peoples and lands.⁷⁷⁰

In this distinction between “negative” and “positive power”, Faḍlallāh aims to reassure his readers that his call to power is free from antagonism. In the introduction, he asserts that the poor and the oppressed must “look for new types of strength that they could use to defend themselves”.⁷⁷¹ Faḍlallāh makes clear that resorting to force can be inevitable but it can never be detached from the Islamic principles.⁷⁷² He acknowledges that human nature enjoys power because it satisfies its desire for assertion and glory. In history, movements and states such as Fascism push this tendency towards absolute power and self-serving violence. But Islam, which is rooted in and implements the divine will, sets clear moral guidelines that define such behaviour as indictable deviation. Moreover, Faḍlallāh asserts in an apologetic tone, that the internalised rules

⁷⁶⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 196.

⁷⁶⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 197.

⁷⁶⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 198.

⁷⁷⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 201-202.

⁷⁷¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 181-2.

⁷⁷² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 201.

of Islam free human beings from the desire for self-serving violence.⁷⁷³ As a Muslim theologian, Faḍlallāh believes that just war can only be such if sanctioned by Islam. There cannot be another just war, let us say for the sake of argument, declared by the Americans. For, as he thinks, Islam is the only true religion while other religions are false or deviated.

Faḍlallāh's distinction is detailed; it provides theoretical guidelines for major issues relating to power such as its purpose, means and limits, and the individual's approach to human potentials. Negative and positive powers in Faḍlallāh's description complement each other and seem, at times, to be a re-wording of his ideas on "commanding right and forbidding wrong". His core idea is that Islamic moral principles guide any thought and action which, in turn, are to implement these very principles. This technique makes Faḍlallāh's argument circular with a considerable degree of tautology.

The section on positive power repeats some observations already stated in relation to social power and the necessity to resist tyranny. While positive power is related to unity, solidarity and righteous action; negative aspects of power seem to resonate with the explication of spiritual power where he wrote extensively on the value of self-restraint. Moreover, the abundant Qur'ānic quotations about the awaiting punishment that can even take the form of natural disasters, provide an eschatological perspective that emphasises the inevitability of the failure of oppressive practices. This reasoning gives the impression of a somewhat utopian idealism. A factual juxtaposition would rather require a detailed analysis on the abuse of power, and the dangers inherent in the misinterpretation of the Islamic message. However, Faḍlallāh does not elaborate on these problems.

2. Characters of weakness vs. characters of power

Faḍlallāh's ideas on the morality of strength and weakness (Chapter 10) are rooted in his differentiation between "positive" and "negative" powers as presented in his chapter on the moral dimension of power (Chapter 6). In both cases, Faḍlallāh

⁷⁷³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 182.

repeatedly distinguishes power – which is right in both its negative and positive forms – from self-serving violence which is wrong whoever commits it. He makes a similar distinction between peaceful attitude and weakness. Force, in the Islamic sense, is never a goal in itself, but rather a tool to implement justice.

Faḍlallāh rejects violence whose aim is destruction and lacks the “negative power” of self-restraint. In contrast to what quietists might think, fighting the other is never Islamic without fighting one’s own self, and as such, it does not equal aggression. He aims to convince the quietist Shī’a that the conventional understanding of these concepts is simplistic and raises a major obstacle to the protection and implementation of the Islamic message. Thus, Faḍlallāh attempts to reconstruct the meaning of strength and weakness by applying the criteria of “negative” and “positive” powers.

In Faḍlallāh’s argument, the Imāms – who carefully decided upon whether to adopt a peaceful attitude or resort to force – are the embodiments of strength. They are depicted as strong even if they renounce the exercise of “positive power” in order to serve supreme values. Faḍlallāh praises patience which is by no means passivity. He quotes Ja‘far al-Šādiq who described it as a major virtue, the manifestation of inner freedom.⁷⁷⁴ He also cites Zayn al-‘Ābidīn’s supplication for forgiveness and self-restraint in *al-Šaḥīfa al-Sajjādiyya*.⁷⁷⁵ Faḍlallāh believes that these traits should be understood as signs of a noble sense of power, and delegates them into the realm of spiritual force or “negative power” in which manifestations of activism and power are inseparable from self-restraint and benevolence. In this sense, Faḍlallāh reiterates the concept that considers *jihād al-nafs* and *jihād al-ghayr* as an inseparable unity.

He draws attention to the fact that in the Qur’ān as well as in the Gospels, peaceful behaviour, patience, forgiveness, modesty, and tolerance appear as supreme values.⁷⁷⁶ On this basis, it might be assumed that God appreciates such attitude more than the use of force but also that these characteristics are only expressions of weakness.⁷⁷⁷ In response to these assumptions, he argues that withdrawal, non-violent protest, and forgiveness can be signs of strength inasmuch as they are part of a strategy

⁷⁷⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 306.

⁷⁷⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 188-189.

⁷⁷⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 299-300.

⁷⁷⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 300.

or result from self restraint.⁷⁷⁸ In another place, he defines violence as the power of justice and non-violence as the power of love that brings Man to God.⁷⁷⁹

In light of the redefined meaning of weakness, Faḍlallāh attempts to evaluate force, and the role of violent means (*ʿunf*). He claims that the use of force appears as weakness whenever it serves arrogance, injustice, and oppression. He quotes Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn declaring that arrogance manifests the oppressor’s fear of the people.⁷⁸⁰ For Faḍlallāh, the legitimate use of force must accord with the demands of both “negative” and “positive” powers. In other words, it can be applied only to protect values, prevent destruction and, therefore, it is a combination of self-control and determined action. Faḍlallāh quotes the passage from the Gospel in which Christ declares that his teachings would cause rifts among the people. He claims that both Islam and Christianity foster a balanced attitude and acknowledge violence in defence of the revealed truth and justice after all peaceful means have been exhausted.⁷⁸¹ We can assume that, for Faḍlallāh, there is no contradiction between religious principles and using force in defence of religion.

The criteria of differentiation between the deep meaning of weakness and strength supports the main thesis of the book. The aim of the argument is to prove that peace can never be realised in an unjust framework. Therefore, passive suffering denies the Islamic Message the power that creates and assures justice. Through this interpretation, Faḍlallāh wants to convince the quietist Shīʿa that the Shīʿī tradition which is committed to justice and peace has in fact always promoted power – and the means to acquire it – too. Moreover it considered them as the essence of religion. To support his argument, Faḍlallāh quotes Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq stressing the duty to protect the oppressed.⁷⁸²

Faḍlallāh’s exposition is repetitive. Much of what he says has already been stated in earlier chapters on spiritual strength and *jihād*. Probably, his aim is to reconnect the various topics into a coherent unity thus providing guidance for practical decision-making. It might also help him convince his audience and reassure them that all aspects of power he calls to are governed by Islamic ethics.

⁷⁷⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 301.

⁷⁷⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 308.

⁷⁸⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 310.

⁷⁸¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 308.

⁷⁸² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 184.

The numerous references to Christian teachings provide his argument with a universal shape, allowing him to broaden the scope of his ethics of power. Besides his probable goal of preventing the further alienation of Lebanese Christians, in this case, arguments from outside the Islamic tradition serve to illustrate that religion as such does not exclude the use of force. Moreover, every religion approves violent means once its values and believers are endangered. So, there is nothing particularly Shī'ī or Islamic about it. Faḍlallāh's choice exemplifies well the hybrid nature of modern Shī'ī thought. He borrows from various – Sunnī, Christian, Marxist – sources, then blends and harmonises them with the Karbalā' narrative in order to promote the actual political goals of the day, skilfully and cautiously.

3. Just war

Faḍlallāh tackles the issue of *jihād* in his sixth chapter on ethics of power.⁷⁸³ Here, he focuses on the purpose of the fight and evaluates violence on the basis of its relation to Islamic ethics. The hardest thing to justify for a Shī'ī thinker or jurist is *jihād*. Besides the dilemma posed by the lack of infallible leadership – as I detailed in sections 7.1.2, 7.1.4, 7.4.2 – the believer might be perplexed by the definition of Islam as a religion of peace and the promotions of violent means such as *jihād*.

In the introduction of the chapter, Faḍlallāh specifies a twofold perspective for his analysis.

The first is the relation between the general goals of the use of force in Islam and the religious foundation of morality. The second is the practical implication of the general idea based on the Prophet's legislative practice in situations of wars as a legislative basis for its implementation in Islam.⁷⁸⁴

As it appears from the quote, the major issues for Faḍlallāh to accommodate are: conciliating religious morality and the use of force, and its realisation in legislative practice. The passage thus summarizes the main elements of Faḍlallāh's ethics of power. He asserts that the use of force must be related to the Islamic principles and,

⁷⁸³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 206.

⁷⁸⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 181.

therefore, it is inseparable from religious morality. The decisions and attitudes of the Prophet embody these supreme, transcendental goals and as such provide the legal directives to the contemporary ethics of practical warfare.

Corresponding to the criteria of Just War Theory, Faḍlallāh treats the subject from two perspectives, namely the cause of the fight and the conduct of warfare. For both, the standards are set by the Prophet and the Imāms. War is never an aim in itself; it must take place “in the path of God... in order to maintain life with its values”.⁷⁸⁵ Based on the Qur’ān and the Tradition, *jihād* is permissible for two reasons: preventing greater destruction and defending the lives, the values, and the properties of Muslims. In more details, it serves to defend the dignity of human being, to confront oppression, to protect the oppressed, and to secure the implementation of the Islamic message. Once the conditions are fulfilled, resort to arms becomes a necessity imposed by the circumstances.⁷⁸⁶ Furthermore, he claims that the sacred nature of *jihād* requires a purity of motivation which is free of hatred and destruction.⁷⁸⁷

Jus ad bellum – the legitimised resort to war – is, therefore, exclusively dependent on whether the actual fight is deemed permitted in the Islamic law. This necessitates a three-fold consideration: the legitimacy of the cause, that of the authority who declares the war, and the just intention of the fighters. In Faḍlallāh’s thought, “just cause” refers to the purpose of the act which is to halt an unlawful practice. In this system, any act is nothing but a mere means in achieving divinely set goals. Consequently, its value is determined by its purpose. This makes Faḍlallāh’s divine command ethics purposeful, and places his Machiavellian concept in a frame controlled by religious law. Indeed, the end justifies the means, but the end there is God’s law, which, for a Muslim jurist brings, by definition, universal good to humanity. It sets the rules of war in the scriptures and the jurists take the charge of adapting them. This legal reasoning is typical of just war theologians and ideologues.

As for the eligibility of the authority, Faḍlallāh seemingly skips the problem since defensive or preventive war does not equal “fight for the sake of the call”.⁷⁸⁸ In the former cases, therefore, any learned man “who possesses the competence of science,

⁷⁸⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 199.

⁷⁸⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 211.

⁷⁸⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 209.

⁷⁸⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 223.

religion, and governance”⁷⁸⁹ can lead the community. The emphasis is again on the circumstances: it is the specific causes that necessitated and legitimised the wars led by the Prophet and the Imāms not the exceptional capacities of the leader. The same cause can legitimise contemporary warfare as well. In acts that may imply killing, Faḍlallāh endorses the opinion that the *imām*’s permission is needed to avoid chaos resulting from individual actions.⁷⁹⁰ However, the term “*imām*” here denotes leader in the Sunnī understanding of the notion rather than its Shī‘ī one.

While the problematic of the authority appears only as third in importance, intention precedes it as second since it is inherently related to the purity of cause and purpose. This criterion serves to exclude utilitarian tendencies and to secure the primacy of religious principles. Faḍlallāh denounces individual ambitions and emotional reactions such as revenge. The promotion of Islamic principles is the ultimate objective. Whether by peace or war, does not matter to Faḍlallāh. It is only in the Islamic framework that both can be right. The Islamic principles, by essence, are in harmony with the interests of the Islamic community and lead to the implementation of *Pax Islamica*.

An additional question emerges here. Does power serve truth or peace? Faḍlallāh repeatedly states that peace is the priority for Islam,⁷⁹¹ while the resort to violence is an exception. This might contradict the main idea of his theory of power, namely that power is ubiquitous. A closer look at his argument shows that peace in Islam is a desideratum, indicating its final victory. That is to say, what seems to be two opposing orders: nature (power pervades human existence) and norm (Islam shall bring in peace) are in fact the two faces of the same reality in Faḍlallāh’s system, and indeed in the perspectives of most Muslim thinkers today. The variable that links the two is God. That is why God, the source of power and the guarantee of Islam’s victory and peace, is important in Faḍlallāh’s system. He created nature as power, but chose Islam to bring it to peace. When a peaceful attitude appears as a sign of weakness and submission, Islam “prefers confrontation”.⁷⁹²

Furthermore, the juxtaposition of peace and truth is attested in Islamic milieus, especially in the Shī‘ī tradition. Sunnites had, in the majority areas of the Muslim world,

⁷⁸⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 263.

⁷⁹⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 265.

⁷⁹¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 210, 265, 283, 299.

⁷⁹² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 204.

power while Shī'īs claimed to possess truth. In fact, Faḍlallāh starts from the following dilemma. There are two things: the logic of power (mere power) and the power of logic (that corresponds to the revealed truth). To remove the opposition between the two, Faḍlallāh claims that Islam is not only truth, but also the power that implements it. It is then better than the logic of power because it puts this logic in the service of truth. Peace as such is not a value in itself for Faḍlallāh. Islamic principles equal peace in all Islamic-based systems of thought. The Islamic solution, so to speak, is a *Pax Islamica*. In this line of thought truth, Islam, power, and peace are all but faces of the same divine order.

Last resort in this context means that when the local and global political order leaves no space and chance for other than armed fight, justice must uproot injustice out of existential necessity. For Faḍlallāh, conforming to the religious criteria deprives violence of its negative connotation and transforms it into a tool of sacred goals. This understanding distinguishes primary values compared to which the rest of the principles appear as secondary. On the one hand, compliance with the primary principles, therefore, excludes the arbitrary or unjust use of force. On the other hand, justice, order, sovereignty appear as supreme values that are worthy of the utmost sacrifice.

Faḍlallāh places equal emphasis on the requirements of *jus in bello* – the right conduct of war – as on *jus ad bellum* (conditions that legitimate the declaration of war), claiming that “Everything in wartime should be subjected to the laws of what is allowed and what is prohibited (...).”⁷⁹³ He states that the use of force must be proportionate to the danger and the importance of the objective.⁷⁹⁴ Faḍlallāh’s assertion, that human losses and the costs of fight must be minimised,⁷⁹⁵ implies that self-serving destruction and vandalism are not legitimate means of deterrence or retaliation. In this, he refers to the warnings of the Prophet and Imām ‘Alī against encroachments in warfare from *Wasā’il al-Shī’a*.⁷⁹⁶ He calls for a careful consideration of the benefits and disadvantages of the struggle. He asserts that “the morality of war is based on the principle of importance as set by the Islamic legislation that contrasts the expected gains with the [predicted] losses”.⁷⁹⁷ Applying classical *fiqh* reasoning, he arrives at the

⁷⁹³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 212.

⁷⁹⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 206.

⁷⁹⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 210.

⁷⁹⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 209.

⁷⁹⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 212.

conclusion that if the benefit of an action is less than the harm caused, it is as if there was no benefit but if there is less harm than benefit in it, it is as if there was no harm.⁷⁹⁸

Furthermore, Faḍlallāh states that both violence and peace can be exercised and legitimised in view of the challenge the Muslim community faces.⁷⁹⁹ Consequently, the notion of transgression is evaluated in light of the Islamic principles and the actual situation on the ground. For Faḍlallāh, then, it is a matter of finding the appropriate and proportionate means and degrees of action rather than elaborating on what is permitted and non-permitted in a combat situation.

In 1976, when he wrote *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, “martyrdom operations” had not yet started. The problem of suicide and discrimination between legitimate and illegitimate targets arose in the 1980s, and Faḍlallāh treated the issue in several writings.⁸⁰⁰ He claims that “Man is ordered by God to use his strength and means wisely against evil”.⁸⁰¹ Elsewhere, he asserts that “the oppressed are not accountable for the harm caused during the course of a battle”.⁸⁰² These statements imply that the believer is responsible for resorting to action against injustice and for conducting war in harmony with the Islamic principles. However, he / she bears no responsibility for the destruction that results from armed fight.

In his article “The Unholy Uses of the Apocalyptic Imagination: Twentieth Century Patterns”, Scott Appleby provides an analysis of Faḍlallāh’s *jihādi* thought. In this, he states that violence for Islamic fundamentalists is inherently linked to “apocalyptic imagination”. His other assertion is that Faḍlallāh “sought to construe the violence as a moral and spiritual obligation within a religiously imagined world”.⁸⁰³ Finally, Appleby claims that for Faḍlallāh all the laws became subordinated to “the requirements of survival”.⁸⁰⁴

My observation is that although in Faḍlallāh’s thought religion is the matrix within which every worldly concept and phenomenon gains a specific transcendental

⁷⁹⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 213.

⁷⁹⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 205.

⁸⁰⁰ He believes that any military act by a soldier is legitimate if the battle is legitimate. See e.g. Faḍlallāh’s *al-Akhlāqīyyāt al-ṭibbiyya wa-akhlāqīyyāt al-ḥayāt* (Beirut: Dār al-Malāk, 2002), 42-43.

⁸⁰¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 198.

⁸⁰² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 62.

⁸⁰³ See his article: “The *Unholy Uses of the Apocalyptic Imagination*,” in *Apocalypse and Violence*, eds. Abbas Amanat and John J. Collins (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 2004), 69-87.

⁸⁰⁴ Appleby, “The Unholy Uses of the Apocalyptic Imagination,” 2.

meaning, it does not evolve around apocalyptic notions. As we might notice from his shelving of *Mahdīsm*, for Faḍlallāh *jihād* is a social-political act with concrete and tangible aims. On the one side, his approach substantiates the political aim of challenging the foreign and domestic agents of political and economic oppression with religious arguments. Thus, Faḍlallāh lays the ground for a Shī‘ī just war in Lebanon by extending its scope as a new chapter in the universal struggle of the oppressed against injustice. On the other side, complying with religious law, at every instance, is a prerequisite for the legitimate use of force.

Faḍlallāh’s position on the Islamic practice of war is evidently apologetic. He claims that Islamic battles, including the Prophet’s wars, evolved within the confines of defence or prevention, and served to liberate people.⁸⁰⁵ To support this statement, he refers to the contemporary Syrian Sunnī jurist Wahba al-Zuḥaylī’s, *Āthār al-ḥarb fī’l-fiqh al-islāmī* in which he claims that the Prophet’s wars were always preventive or defensive.⁸⁰⁶ Faḍlallāh’s interpretation of Islamic history is also simplistic. He does not acknowledge any discrepancy between Muḥammad’s prophetic vocation and his status as a warrior. Similarly, he does not detail the deviations that occurred during the conquests and denies their military aspects. Furthermore, he asserts that peace proposed by the opponent is to be accepted once Muslims achieve their goals.

The options Faḍlallāh offers – such as the enemy embraces Islam, mutual agreement is signed, or the opponent accepts financial obligations⁸⁰⁷ – reveal that his long-term goal was to establish a universal Islamic order. On the importance of summoning the enemy to Islam before fighting he quotes a *ḥadīth* from *Sharḥ al-Siyar al-kabīr* by Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Sarakhsī (d. 1090),⁸⁰⁸ and from Muḥammad al-Shawkānī’s (d.1834) *Nayl al-awṭār*.⁸⁰⁹ Faḍlallāh also recalls Imām ‘Alī’s postponement of fighting to summon the enemy to Islam from *Nahj al-balāgha*.⁸¹⁰

⁸⁰⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 208.

⁸⁰⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 207.

⁸⁰⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 212.

⁸⁰⁸ *Sharḥ al-Siyar al-kabīr* is a commentary on Shaybānī’s work *al-Siyar*, a Ḥanafī legal treatise on war and its consequences and on relations between Muslims and non-Muslims (some of its parts are termed today as international relations). See *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 211.

⁸⁰⁹ al-Shawkānī’s book is an explanation of *Muntaqā al-akḥbār*, a commentary on *ḥadīths* by the Ḥanbalī Majd al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1255), the grandfather of the famous Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328). From this volume, Faḍlallāh quotes a Prophetic *ḥadīth* stating that the only valid reason for fighting is to spread the word of God. See *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 213. However, Faḍlallāh emphasises that force is not essential for the call. *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 227.

⁸¹⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 211.

For Faḍlallāh, *jihād* was a natural but controlled response to any situation that endangered the implementation of Islam and imperilled its community. Attributing the cause of *jihād* to social-political anomalies and exempting the Muslim combatants from any responsibility for the destruction caused in the course of self-defence or preventive fight, deprived quietism of its legitimacy. The argument was formulated to convince the hesitant Shīʿa that in well-defined circumstances imposed from outside, it is against the religious tenets to stay passive, and resorting to arms is a proof of true spirituality.

4. Against Nietzsche

Faḍlallāh closes the last chapter of *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa* by distinguishing his concept of power from the self-serving cult of power. He needs to do so since he relates the supremacy of Islam to an apology for power, bestows human strength with religious value, attributes great importance to the state – paraphrasing it as the rule of law and order – and openly promotes militarism. In his exposition of each element, Faḍlallāh subordinates human power to divine power. However, in this final statement, he attempts to dispel all doubts regarding the cult of power as a totalitarian and discriminating project.

Faḍlallāh claims that the project of empowerment proposed by Nietzsche is essentially different from his Shīʿī concept of power. Quoting from a handbook entitled *al-Falsafā al-khuluqiyya* by Tawfīq al-Ṭawīl, Faḍlallāh assumes that power in the Nietzschean sense promotes violence *per se*, and attributes weakness to biological factors. Faḍlallāh argues that Nietzsche redefines morality and deprives it of its sublime content. This theory depicts empowerment as self-serving and absolutely confined to the realm of the material world. Nietzsche condemns what Faḍlallāh defined as “negative power” and attributes it to the weak “slaves” who constitute the majority of humankind.⁸¹¹ Faḍlallāh considers Nietzsche’s argument as Darwinist and racist.⁸¹²

Faḍlallāh’s description of the slave mentality, however, contains elements applicable to the quietist mindset as well.⁸¹³ He quotes a section in which “slaves” are

⁸¹¹ Faḍlallāh *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 310-311.

⁸¹² Faḍlallāh *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 212-3.

⁸¹³ Faḍlallāh *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 311.

depicted as wanting revolution and filled with desperate anger against their “masters” but unable to act. This description by all means reminds the reader of Shī‘ī history and, thus, can be interpreted as a call to self-reflection. Faḍlallāh indirectly urges his audience to give an honest answer to the question regarding the true reason for their abstaining from action.

As for the different notions of power in his undersanding and that of Nietzsche, Faḍlallāh elaborates on them in five points. First, he detaches violence from power, and defines violence per se as vice in opposition to power as virtue. Contrary to Nietzsche, Faḍlallāh perceives obedience, patience, and modesty as powerful virtues if appropriately understood.⁸¹⁴ Second, he states that in the Islamic perception, the genesis of power is spiritual while Nietzsche’s philosophy is materialist.⁸¹⁵ Third, for Faḍlallāh, power is not brute force but a reinvigorating potential and a tool of re-creation not of destruction.⁸¹⁶ Fourth, Faḍlallāh claims that adhering to righteousness and avoiding violence are in themselves manifestations of strength. This aspect recalls the notion of negative power.⁸¹⁷ Fifth, Faḍlallāh distances himself from contra-selection and cleansing out of evolutionist pretexts.⁸¹⁸

In his refutation of Nietzsche, Faḍlallāh once again calls for a re-interpretation of power, and defines it as a constructive potential that – in both its positive and negative forms – works in harmony with the revelation.⁸¹⁹ It combines spirituality as a factor of self-control with the use of material force as an inevitable tool of maintaining order and progress. He asserts that the root and aim of power in Islam are inherently transcendental. Faḍlallāh’s reinterpretation transforms the “slave” of Nietzsche into his ideal of “superman”. For Faḍlallāh, it is personal attitude that turns Man into a slave. He offers the alternative of perseverance and immunity to material power, and elevates

⁸¹⁴ Faḍlallāh *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 313-4.

⁸¹⁵ Faḍlallāh *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 314.

⁸¹⁶ Faḍlallāh *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 315.

⁸¹⁷ Faḍlallāh *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 315.

⁸¹⁸ Faḍlallāh *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 315.

⁸¹⁹ For the impact of Western thought on some of the contemporary representatives of Islamic Fundamentalism – among them Ḥasan al-Turābī, Rāshid al-Ghannūshī, and Faḍlallāh – see Martin Kramer’s article “Fundamentalist Islam at Large: The Drive for Power,” *Middle East Quarterly* (1996): 37-49. In *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, this is the only place where he quotes Western moral philosophy. Faḍlallāh fails to consult any book on ethics from the different ethical traditions in Islam whether philosophical or traditional. Furthermore, he mistakenly cites the name of Tawfiq al-Ṭawīl as Rafīq al-Ṭawīl in the text. In addition, he cites the title of al-Ṭawīl’s book as *al-Falsafā al-akhlāqīyya* while it should be *al-Falsafā al-khuluqīyya*. Such disinterest in engaging seriously Western philosophy on power shows his unwillingness to address a universal audience and his contentment with the Shī‘ī addressees.

quwwa above violence. Faḍlallāh employs the means available to the deprived and converts them into tools of empowerment.

A recent article by Zahrā' ʿAlī Makka in which she compares the philosophy of power of Nietzsche and that of Faḍlallāh, provides a remarkable insight in the reception of Faḍlallāh's ideas among his followers.⁸²⁰ The author claims that for Nietzsche, Man who has a necessary existence (*wājib al-wujūd*) is engaged in an existential struggle for power. In contrast, Faḍlallāh is seen as a proponent of the idea that Man has a contingent existence (*mumkin al-wujūd*), but bestowed with a message-oriented (*risālī*) vocation to develop social strength based on freedoms and change. Makka argues that Nietzsche holds to emotionalism and narrow interpretation while Faḍlallāh's philosophy of power is strategic and holistic.

Makka's paraphrasing of Faḍlallāh relies on the distinction between power, *quwwa* and violence, *ʿunf*. This verbal stratagem is typical of Muslim apologists, and shows their insistence on subjective assessment and conscious avoidance to evaluate an action based on its effect as exerted on others. Regardless of the labelling of an action as violence, force or power, the moment it harms another being, the victim, the terminological difference ceases to exist. Makka does not seem to be aware that Faḍlallāh's system is built on the same categorisation as Nietzsche's. In both systems, there are two camps: the powerful and the weak. Besides, both thinkers exalt power. The fact that Faḍlallāh considers power purposeful does not render his conception essentially different, since implementing a message which is deemed to bring justice into the otherwise unjust world in the name of a religion, is as destructive to humanity as any ideological project of power. Nietzsche and Faḍlallāh set the same frame but filled it with different content.

Faḍlallāh's approach to Nietzsche is reductionist. He carefully selects the ideas to refute in support of his own argument. Similarly, he gives no definition of Fascism other than its promoting racism and stimulation of colonialism.⁸²¹ Neither does he address the problem of praising state and order above all, militant activism, and the alleged superiority of a religious ideology and its followers. From this approach, it appears that

⁸²⁰Zahrā' ʿAlī Makka, "Falsafat al-quwwa bayna Nīṭshah wa 'l-marja' Faḍlallāh" [The philosophy of power between Nietzsche and the marja' Faḍlallāh] (website of *Mu'assasat al-Fikr al-Islāmī al-Mu'āṣir li'l-Dirāsāt wa'l-Buḥūth*, January 4, 2013). Accessed 07 July, 2014, <http://www.islammoasser.org/ArticlePage.aspx?id=790>.

⁸²¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 182.

his intention is not to explain the Islamic concept of force to outsiders but to his own mostly quietist followers. Faḍlallāh's account is based on secondary sources which is probably attributable to the fact that he was interested in how Nietzsche's ideas can be communicated and then refuted in an Islamic context.

5. Faḍlallāh's ethics in practice

Power and force denoted by the same term – *quwwa* – are not synonyms but they are interconnected. Aspiration to power implies the use of force and force is inevitable to keeping the attained power. Earlier – in chapters 8.2 and 8.3 –, I discussed the meta-ethics of power according to Faḍlallāh. The question that arises, here, is whether Faḍlallāh's applied ethics displays any consistency with his philosophy of power or not. To answer this question, I will deal with two issues that are subjects of heightened interest worldwide: suicide attacks and bioethics. None of them are elaborated on in *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa* but Faḍlallāh's views and statements on these issues best reflect how he applied these principles with regards to current, practical and controversial matters. The reason for I raise the question of his applied ethics is not about consistency but about clarity. One can get a better understanding of his conception of power if light is shed on how he actually answers concrete questions of ethics, as they occur in the real world.

As for suicide attacks, Faḍlallāh claims that upon two conditions can they be considered as martyrdom operations carried out in war situations. First, the primary condition is that the war must be deemed legitimate by Islamic law. Second, such action can take place only if there are no other options left for achieving victory. Once these two conditions have been fulfilled, it is necessary to balance between priorities. That said, martyrdom is never symbolic, it must lead to tangible results. As I observed before in chapter 7.4.2, Faḍlallāh praised 'Alī as a warrior and a statesman, not as mythical hero who volunteered for self-sacrifice. Consequently, Faḍlallāh arrives at the conclusion that since God has not revealed the mechanism of warfare it is possible to state that the loss of life with the aim to win over the enemy in an issue that has far-reaching consequences for humankind outweighs the death of a soldier by sacrifice. The sole difference from other military actions is that the combatant knows beforehand that he will die during the

operation. In his evaluation of the 9/11 attacks, Faḍlallāh asserts that they were not legitimate since no open war⁸²² is waged against the United States. However, he claimed that in the final count American politics is to be blamed for the situation that nurtured such actions.⁸²³

To take another example of Faḍlallāh's ethical thought, it is worth noting his position on cloning.⁸²⁴ Faḍlallāh did not allow procedures using donor sperm; and claimed that "the origin of the relation of the child to its mother is its being from her egg".⁸²⁵ This position has far reaching consequences regarding *in vitro fertilisation*, since it denies the filial relationship between the child and the woman who was the receiver of the fertilised egg. Her position is akin to the "milk mother".⁸²⁶ Against this background of legal restrictions, Faḍlallāh interpreted cloning as a permissible, but strictly controlled alternative of reproduction that eliminates legal problems existing in other solutions.⁸²⁷

This reasoning echoes Faḍlallāh's pragmatism and "theistic utilitarianism", which, as explained above, does not contradict his divine command ethics. This system of thought pays due attention to the underlying general principle behind declaring certain means ethical while forbidding others, and examines the aim of the given action in view of its relation to the supposed general principles. As an indispensable element, reference to the "benefit of humankind" appears as an ultimate argument.

⁸²² He uses the Arabic term *ḥarb ḥarra* which literally means hot war.

⁸²³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Akhlāqīyyāt al-ṭibbiyya wa-akhlāqīyyāt al-ḥayāt* [The ethics of medicine and the ethics of life] (Beirut: Dār al-Malāk, 2002), 42-43.

⁸²⁴ Talib Aziz and Morgan Clarke studied Faḍlallāh's argument on issues related to bioethics. See eg.: Morgan Clarke's "Islam, Kinship and new Reproductive Technology," *Anthropology Today* 22 (2006): 17-20. "Closeness in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Anthropology Today* 22 (2006): 17-20; "The Modernity of Milk kinship,"; Morgan Clarke and Marcia C. Inhorn "Mutuality and Immediacy Between *Marja'* and *Muqallid*: Evidence From Male In Vitro Fertilization Patients in Shī'i Lebanon," *Anthropology Today* 22 (2006): 17-20; "Fadlallah and the Remaking of the *Marja'iyya*" by Talib Aziz in *The Most Learned of the Shi'a: The Institution of the Marja' Taqlid*, ed. by Linda S. Walbridge (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 205-215.

⁸²⁵ Faḍlallāh, *Fiqh al-sharī'a* (Beirut: Dār al-Malāk, 2003), 3:523, referred to by Clarke and Inhorn, p. 419 fn. 44.

⁸²⁶ Clarke and Inhorn, 419-420.

⁸²⁷ Zaynab Ghushn, "al-Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh yashraḥ fatwā taḥlīlihi li-l-istinsākh" [Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh explains his fatwa on cloning], *al-Safīr*, 28 August 2001, referred to by Clarke and Inhorn, 420 fn. 47. As Clarke's interviewee, a *muqallid* of Faḍlallāh summarised: "as long as there is no hope, and as long as the baby will be born without birth defects, then it's okay, for the service of humanity. It's *ḥalāl*." Ibid, p. 420.

6. Faḍlallāh's ethics of power within the activist Shī'ī tradition

In order to properly evaluate Faḍlallāh's contribution to contemporary Shī'ī ethical views, it is worth comparing him with two notable Shī'ī jurists and thinkers who displayed genuine interest in ethical issues: Āyatullāh Khumaynī and Murtaḍā Muṭahharī. Their theories exemplify the effort of activist Shī'ī thinkers to redefine the categories of "forbidden" and "permitted" in light of the primary goal of the Message: the implementation of an Islamic order. This approach is explicitly voluntarist, however, similarly to modernist Sunnī thought, it presumes that God's will is purposeful.⁸²⁸

Khumaynī claimed that "The moral precepts of Islam are political as well."⁸²⁹ His primary concern was the criteria that guarantees the legitimacy of power and explained its ethical aspects in this context. Khumaynī asserted that the ethical conduct of the ruler is essential for gaining the support of the governed.⁸³⁰ Khumaynī evaluated "anger" in a way that recalls Faḍlallāh's ethics of force. For him, anger is an instinct that needs to be regulated. However, its charge is determined by its goal. Anger is positive and necessary for securing the protection and survival of values and life. Without anger, Man would be unable to face oppression and tyranny, and thus live in a state of moral weakness. Khumaynī assumes that anger becomes a negative trait when it is detached from this function and becomes devoid of self-restraint.⁸³¹

Faḍlallāh and Khumaynī share a similar activist approach. They both reinterpreted concepts such as force and anger that were discarded and condemned by quietist Shī'ism, and evaluated them based on their contribution to the Islamic goals. On the one hand, this conceptualisation defines force and anger as positive power, and self-restraint as negative power, each of which becomes futile without the simultaneous presence of the other. On the other hand, both arrogance and passivity – based on compromise

⁸²⁸ Daniel Brown, "Islamic Ethics in Comparative Perspective," *The Muslim World* 89 (1999): 186.

⁸²⁹ Khumaynī, *Sahīfēh-ye Imām*, vol. 13, p. 130, referred to in Sayyid Hasan Islami, *Imām Khomeinī, Ethics and Politics* (Teheran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works), fn.483. Accessed 21 June 2013, <http://www.al-islam.org/imam-khomeini-ethics-and-politics-sayyid-hasan-islami>

⁸³⁰ Khumaynī, *Sahīfēh-ye Imam*, vol. 8, p. 233, referred to in Ali Khaliqi, *Legitimacy of Power from Imam Khomeini's Point of View* (Teheran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, 2004), 119, fn. 3. Accessed 20 June 2013, <http://statics.ml.imam-khomeini.ir/en/File/NewsAttachment/2014/1926-LegitimacyofPower.pdf>

⁸³¹ See: Chapter 6 on "Ghaḍab" in Khumaynī's *Forty Hadith* (Teheran: International Affairs Department, 2003). Accessed 15 July 2013, <http://www.al-islam.org/forty-hadith-an-exposition-second-edition-imam-khomeini/seventh-hadith-anger-ghadhab>

instead of justified resentment – generates weakness, and are, therefore, considered as un-Islamic.

Murtaḍā Muṭahharī represented a more theoretical approach than Faḍlallāh and Khumaynī. He was concerned with the ontological basis of the universality of Islamic ethics. Muṭahharī distinguished inclination from will, and claimed that human weakness results from obeying inclinations and urges. In contrast, strength is related to will, which is governed by reason as well as by internalised norms. Muṭahharī claims that “moral imperatives relate to Man as a rational being”, and inspire acts that transcend the confines of one’s ego.⁸³² This idea corresponds to the distinction made by Faḍlallāh and Khumaynī regarding the evaluation of force and anger.

In his article “Islamic Ethics in Comparative Perspective”, Daniel Brown provides a detailed analysis of the main trends of Islamic ethical thinking. Brown claims that voluntarism fosters “a particular form of scripturalism which prefers specific, concrete cases over general rules”.⁸³³ Consequently legal decisions are derived from explicit instances as described in the Qur’ān and the *ḥadīth* by *qiyās* (analogical reasoning). Studying the views of Faḍlallāh, Khumaynī and Muṭahharī, an assumption can be made that the rejection of *qiyās* in Shī‘ī Islam prompted the activist thinkers to identify the general rules, and infer opinion from universal ethical principles as revealed in the Qur’ān. This conceptualisation gives much less scope for “scripturalist absolutism”,⁸³⁴ and, at the same time, grants the natural presence of a teleological perspective in activist Shī‘ism. Without this teleological perspective, activism could never win over quietism.

Brown asserts that in Sunnī Islam, teleology found its way through “a sort of theistic utilitarianism”⁸³⁵ that defines “the utility of an act (...) not by temporal goods, but in relation to eternal goods as defined by God”.⁸³⁶ At the same time, one of the main goals of activist Shī‘ism was to direct the believer’s attention from the awaited justice in the hereafter towards the demands and opportunities of the present. Brown claims that in (Sunnī) Islam, “utilitarianism and scripturalist absolutism are in tension”,⁸³⁷ even if it

⁸³² Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, “Eternity of Moral Values,” (*al-Tawhid Islamic Journal* 14), chap. on “Will and natural urge,” accessed 25 March 2013, <http://www.al-islam.org/al-tawhid/vol-14-no-3/eternity-moral-values-ayatullah-murtadha-mutahhari>

⁸³³ Brown, “Islamic Ethics,” 185.

⁸³⁴ Brown, “Islamic Ethics,” 190.

⁸³⁵ Brown, “Islamic Ethics,” 190.

⁸³⁶ Brown, “Islamic Ethics,” 188.

⁸³⁷ Brown, “Islamic Ethics,” 191.

is resolved regarding some issues such as smaller *jihād* that required no special justification.⁸³⁸ Since, in traditional Shī'ism, resort to fighting was restricted to self-defence, in activist Shī'ism, former principles (rooted in a sort of doctrinal absolutism) had to be unwaveringly overwritten. Based on this analysis, it can be said that, with the help of extrapolated general principles, Faḍlallāh, Khumaynī and Muṭahharī attempted to dissolve tension between deontology and teleology, and mobilised their followers to resort to – even violent – action.

Concluding remarks

Faḍlallāh's ethics of power constitutes the first systemic Shī'ī ethics of action. His conceptualisation of weakness and strength, negative and positive power, and just war promotes the idea that power should be under the control of Islamic purposes. That is to say, power should serve the objectives set by Islamic law and moral principles that stem from it. Faḍlallāh's approach to ethics is legalist and deontological. It relies on the divine command to set the confines to action. However, it also displays a considerable sense of utilitarianism. Faḍlallāh provides the moral agent with the freedom to adapt the general principles to the given circumstances. Accordingly, his ethics could be best labelled as theistic utilitarianism or purposeful voluntarism. Since divine command is purposeful, whatever serves that purpose is legitimate and ethical.

Critics would argue that, put in the Lebanese Shī'ī context; his enterprise could generate a deadlock conflict. If put in practice, it would be extremely difficult to secure co-habitation in a multi-confessional society. In Faḍlallāh's system, the intrinsic finality of the use of force to protect and secure the Shī'ī community is embedded in its extrinsic finality which is the dominance of righteousness on Earth and the spread of the Islamic message. Thus, any action that serves the community could be interpreted as ethical and legal due to its inherent connection to the divine plan.

Faḍlallāh's ethics of action urges us to reconsider the way we read modern Shī'ism. First, his references to the Shī'ī tradition are cautious and limited. He does not confine himself to the Shī'ī narrative of injustice. Instead, he selects elements familiar to

⁸³⁸ Brown, "Islamic Ethics," 189-191.

Shī'ī thought and reinterprets them as inspiration to action and mobilisation. Even characteristics such as patience which is traditionally considered as weakness should be reinterpreted as an element of power. Second, Faḍlallāh's ethics is hybrid. He extensively uses Sunnī sources to provide his project with a more consensual legitimacy. He also quotes and criticises Western moral philosophy. Here, Faḍlallāh aims to defend himself against accusations of Fascism. Finally, Faḍlallāh represents an example of Shī'ī pragmatism. Contrary to the Salafī literature on *jihād* which declares total war to its adversaries, Faḍlallāh wants his disciples to take into account the actual circumstances and balance of power in every action plan. Thus, action, caution and hybridity are the main characteristics of Faḍlallāh's project of power.

Chapter IX: Rhetoric of Power

Introduction

Any Islamist rhetoric of power aims both at persuasion and mobilisation. To mention only two from the prominent figures, Ḥasan al-Bannā in Egypt and Khumaynī in Iran fully exploited its capacities to reach out to the masses. Since Islamism had to face doubts about its ability to provide an alternative to nationalist and liberal ideologies, its preachers had to convince the public that it offered a viable solution to the problems of the day. Furthermore, it had to be sufficient and effective in order to recruit followers and mobilise them. That is the reason any piece of Islamist literature necessarily contains elements of polemics and call to action. This gives rise to a distinctive Islamist rhetoric that has been little studied.

A first monograph dedicated to studying Islamist rhetoric has been written by Jacob Høigilt, entitled *Islamist Rhetoric: Language and Culture in Contemporary Egypt*.⁸³⁹ He covers three Egyptian Sunnī preachers and intellectuals (Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī, ‘Amr Khālīd and Muḥammad ‘Imāra). Additionally, only a few articles analysed rhetorical devices frequently used in modern Arabic religious and political discourses. Against this background, I will analyse the rhetoric of Faḍlallāh aiming at two objectives. First, I attempt to show how his rhetoric supports his system of power. Second, based on my findings, I will compare Faḍlallāh’s rhetorical patterns to the patterns of Islamist rhetoric as defined by Høigilt.

In the previous thematic chapters, I analysed the way Faḍlallāh attempts to construct a coherent system of power. I emphasised Faḍlallāh’s philosophy of power as an alternative to other ideologies present in the same intellectual milieu. In the present chapter, I examine the rhetorical strategies by which he conveys his ideas. The use of rhetoric in his *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, as well as in his other writings and speeches, are manifold and predominant. They include arguments from scripture, necessity, virtue and instrumentality. Faḍlallāh has recourse to rhetorical questions, antinomy, metaphors and repetition as well to make his discourse convincing and

⁸³⁹ Jacob Høigilt, *Islamist Rhetoric: Language and Culture in Contemporary Egypt* (London: Routledge, 2011).

effective. Moreover, he uses master narratives to frame his project of power in the Shīʿī salvation history. As for the functions of his rhetoric, they aim mainly at reassuring the quietists that the quest for power is justified, and at mobilising the Shīʿa to take action.

1. Argument from scripture

In *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, the Qurʾān stands as the primary reference in Faḍlallāh's argumentation. He quotes the Qurʾān in 204 places on 333 pages. His method of citation is threefold. Sometimes, he enumerates the verses in groups in order to support his statement with no comments placed in between the passages, only introducing the topic at the beginning and concluding it in the end. In other cases, he juxtaposes seemingly contradictory statements from the Qurʾān, groups them, comments on them and after introducing the circumstances of the verses, he argues for one interpretation while discards the other. A third way of citation is when the verses are not grouped, but embedded into Faḍlallāh's train of thought. Thus, the theme evolves through the Qurʾānic passages carefully selected by Faḍlallāh. The only link between them is that they support the various aspects of the author's idea.

Faḍlallāh draws on thematic exegesis to cement his rhetoric. At the beginning of the chapters and sections, he identifies the theme to be elaborated on and selects verses or group of verses that are linked to the selected theme. Subsequently, he comments on the idea present in the citations rather than engaging in an analytic exegesis of the terms and sequences, or giving details about the circumstances of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*). Islamist rhetoric frequently employs this strategy. It consists in establishing an artificial coherence between the quoted verses and the author's interpretation, leading the reader to assume the unity of meaning all through the passage or section.

From the frequency of the Qurʾānic quotations, we can infer that he gives preference to the Qurʾān rather than to the *ḥadīth*. The reasons of this method are numerous. First, the Qurʾān, as Faḍlallāh perceives it, is a guideline for the prevailing state of affairs; it is about the renewal of the contemporary society, in terms of beliefs, ideas and practices. Already in the introduction, Faḍlallāh defines it as a "constitution" that regulates the various aspects of strength in all domains of life (*dustūran ʿamaliyyan*

li'l-quwwa).⁸⁴⁰ Besides, the Qur'ānic milieu provides a context equivalent to the up-to-date situation of Shī'a. As explained by Stephan Dähne, the rhetorical device called "equivalence of contexts" in classical Arabic literature meant the use of the Qur'ānic text with the aim of creating an intellectual, emotional setting in which the idea or the situation depicted in the Qur'ān echoes the experience of the audience. Thus "one finds the object of the speech subtly interconnected with the object of the respective Qur'ānic passage".⁸⁴¹ Faḍlallāh's Qur'ānic quotes interweave and saturate his own discourse to an extent that the readers feel as if the Qur'ān was directly addressing them through his own ideas. As a result, the narrative is intermitted by exhortative passages and the audience gets carried away by the flow of the Scripture while being indoctrinated by Faḍlallāh. Reading the Qur'ānic passages in the book, oriented by Faḍlallāh's discussion, turns this experience into an act of participation.

Another reason for Faḍlallāh's preference of the Qur'ān to *ḥadīth* is that Qur'ānic statements are general, rich in rhetorical elements and open to a wide range of interpretations. Also, they provide the theoretical bases for evaluating any subsequent religious text or act. A *ḥadīth* on the other hand, is a more detailed narration of a particular event. Thus, it is more specific and embedded in its context. A third reason is that the quietist Shī'a, being traditionists, build their argument mostly on *ḥadīth*. Therefore, Faḍlallāh quotes the Twelver Shī'ī *ḥadīth* only if it is in line with the activist stance of the Qur'ān. A fourth reason is that the Qur'ān transcends the Sunnī-Shī'ī divide and appeals to the entire community of Muslims.

A fifth motive is that Faḍlallāh was a *mufasssīr* himself and authored a 22-volume exegesis entitled *Min waḥy al-Qur'ān*, while he was not a specialist in *ḥadīth* (*muḥaddith*).⁸⁴² Sixth, it is a characteristic of fundamentalist rhetoric to quote the Qur'ān rather than the *ḥadīth*. This is so because many verses in the Qur'ān – contrary to the *ḥadīth* – are definitive in their meaning and transmission (*qaṭ'ī al-dalāla wa 'l-thubūt*). Therefore, they can perfectly serve the Manichaean fundamentalist discourse that aims to construct a precise notion of the self and the enemy, and consequently a

⁸⁴⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 19.

⁸⁴¹ Stephan Dähne, "Qur'ānic Wording in Political Speeches in Classical Arabic Literature," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 3 (2001): 7.

⁸⁴² Qur'ānic exegesis, embedded with political views, is another feature Faḍlallāh shares with Sayyid Quṭb. See the study on the latter's Qur'ānic commentary in: Olivier Carré, *Mysticism and Politics: A Critical Reading of Fi zilal al-Qur'an by Sayyid Quṭb (1906-1966)* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

homogeneous and exclusive enclave of “the righteous people”.⁸⁴³ This rhetorical device is an important tool to Faḍlallāh’s notion of history as “the history of the strong and their opponents and of the followers of truth versus the followers of falsehood.”⁸⁴⁴

2. Argument from necessity

Elizabeth Frazer and Kimberly Hutchings claim that in processes of the justification of political violence, rhetorical tools are strategies that make certain conclusions inescapable by demonstrating that there are no acceptable alternatives.⁸⁴⁵ One such tool is called “necessity arguments”. Agents justify political violence by claiming that it is a necessity and what is necessary should be done for the survival of the individual or the community. Thus, the argument from necessity appeals to the human instinct of survival. This is a captivating rhetorical strategy in an Islamic context, all the more so given that it is justified by the Qur’ān and the *sharī’a*. The Qur’ān supports the permission to fight non-believers by the necessity to defend the community of believers. As for Islamic law, it allows forbidden acts in case of necessity, *al-ḍarūrāt tubīḥ al-maḥzūrāt*.

In Chapter 6 of *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, Faḍlallāh argues for the right of the weak and oppressed to use force in confronting the oppressors. Here, the use of force is a legitimate right of self-defence. Besides, confrontation can serve to prevent greater destruction. Faḍlallāh insists that, without permission to use force in case of necessity, no moral principles or nothing sacred could have survived.⁸⁴⁶ Furthermore, he adds that the legal permission addresses pious people who, having resorted to fight, are not accountable for the harm they cause. The exposition is designed to deal with the major concerns of the quietist Shī’a in order to convince them that they are not only allowed but also expected to rise and fight for themselves. Faḍlallāh reminds them that piety is not enough, and in order to fulfil their religious obligations, they have to use force. Fight, therefore, becomes a must imposed by the circumstances.

⁸⁴³ Jonathan Lusthaus, “Religion and State Violence: Legitimation in Israel, the USA and Iran,” *Contemporary Politics* 17 (2011): 12.

⁸⁴⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 17.

⁸⁴⁵ Frazer and Hutchings, “Argument and Rhetoric,” 193.

⁸⁴⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 61.

In Chapter 7, while examining whether *jihād* is a means to call to Islam or not, Faḍlallāh maintains that there is no evidence that force is essential for the call. However, the early Islamic history shows that resisting aggression “needs an equal or more violent power”.⁸⁴⁷ The first Muslims left Mecca and engaged in fights with the non-believers to assure the freedom of religious practice and the spread of Islam. Faḍlallāh concludes that “force is one of the means to protect the Call and defend it from the challenges posed by its infidel adversaries”.⁸⁴⁸

3. Argument from virtue

Virtuous violence is defined by the values that motivate it and by “the character of those individuals engaged in it”.⁸⁴⁹ As a rhetorical tool, virtuous violence helps to avoid the conclusion that all kinds of political violence are necessary and rational. The argument from virtue reasons in two ways. The first one is the assumption that, in specific instances, force is virtue and since virtue must be realised, it follows that using force in specific instances is unavoidable. The other way focuses on virtuous agents. It assumes that everything done by virtuous people is good. Since virtuous people use force, it follows that using force is good. Both arguments are founded on the ethics of virtue inspired by Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*.

Faḍlallāh differentiates between good and evil uses of force: between killing and “fighting in the path of God”,⁸⁵⁰ between the violence of the oppressors and the violence of the oppressed.⁸⁵¹ He claims that attachment to material power makes Man disinterested in morality. In contrast to this, it is God who reveals the right use of force to Man through the *sharīʿa* which is the base of ethics.⁸⁵² Thus, Faḍlallāh’s concern with Islamic morality serves to reject the idea that violence as such is always a natural and rational reaction. Instead, he prompts a further distinction between virtuous and vicious violence. Faḍlallāh asserts that “The use of power that does not contradict Islamic

⁸⁴⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 227.

⁸⁴⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 228.

⁸⁴⁹ Frazer and Hutchings, “Argument and Rhetoric,” 181-182.

⁸⁵⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 198.

⁸⁵¹ See eg. *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 61.

⁸⁵² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 195

values is a moral virtue that helps to establish a decent life.”⁸⁵³ This redemptive and meaningful aspect of violence is rooted in the ethical teaching of Islam, which transforms human tendencies to selfish and oppressive violence into virtuous and heroic acts, including martyrdom. Consequently, the use of force is justified only if it reflects and embodies the virtues and values of Islam.

Besides the focus on virtues, Faḍlallāh’s discourse is centred on prominent figures who embody these characteristics. He strongly contests the view that the peace-seeking attitude of the Imāms validates lack of action for the contemporary Shī’a.⁸⁵⁴ Faḍlallāh claims that the Imāms refrained from action only when there was no leadership that possessed the necessary religious competence to lead the community to victory.⁸⁵⁵ However, he stresses that the Imāms supported all movements that acted according to the Islamic principles. Quoting a *ḥadīth* by Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq on the movement led by Zayd b. ‘Alī b. al-Ḥusayn, Faḍlallāh insists that the core issue “is not the nature or the legitimacy of the rebellion, rather the objectives and the leadership of that particular movement”.⁸⁵⁶ Faḍlallāh’s reference to the Imāms as ultimate models of action is an affective argument through which he secures the legitimacy of his own discourse.

Faḍlallāh dedicates two chapters to the ethics of power and several sections to interpreting “commanding right and forbidding wrong”, because his ultimate aim is to convince the quietist Shī’a that fighting for Islamic goals is virtuous. Faḍlallāh reconstructs the meaning of violence as virtue inasmuch as it means righteous use of force. Through his references to virtuous figures such as the Prophet and the Imāms who called to power, Faḍlallāh urges the Lebanese Shī’a to take action and expects a “keen response” from his audience.⁸⁵⁷

4. Argument from instrumentality

Faḍlallāh’s repertoire of arguments contains end-oriented justifications that Frazer and Hutchings describe as arguments from instrumentality. Such substantiations

⁸⁵³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 196.

⁸⁵⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 271.

⁸⁵⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 272.

⁸⁵⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 273.

⁸⁵⁷ Frazer and Hutchings, “Argument and Rhetoric,” 189.

evaluate violence as “‘instrumental’ for politics because it is an effective means for achieving political ends”.⁸⁵⁸ However, this kind of justification leaves two major concerns un-addressed: the relationship between means and ends, and the unpredictability of the outcome. This is why supplementary arguments⁸⁵⁹ such as arguments from necessity and arguments from virtue are applied. This phenomenon points to the fact that various types of arguments cannot be clearly separated even inside the same text and in most cases they are present simultaneously.

In the *Introduction* of the book, Faḍlallāh radically identifies power as the essence of life without which no self-esteem or progress is possible. Power helps to “put into practice righteous principles”.⁸⁶⁰ His assertion is that “the weak and oppressed were not able to win battles in support of their principles, thoughts and interests until they eventually got hold of the means or were in a position of power”.⁸⁶¹ At this point, he carefully mixes arguments from necessity and arguments from instrumentality. Although Faḍlallāh’s argument is seemingly built on existential necessity, it is a goal-oriented ethics of existence. The implementation of Islam is the ultimate aim of human life. Thus, mere survival, or refraining from action, renders existence futile. Muslim life has a unique value only because it is instrumental to the victory of Islam. If the instrument is endangered, the supreme goal is imperilled as well. The use of force, therefore, is based on the necessity to secure the existence of the instrument and, consequently, on the realisation of the supreme Islamic goal.

In the conclusion of *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, Faḍlallāh asserts that Muslims are expected to be strong in order to realise the major Islamic objectives, and to prevent the aggression of its enemies. For this, military, economic, political, and scientific power is needed, and force serves as a deterrent. Therefore, violence is justified inasmuch as it opposes and destroys oppressive systems and secures the necessary stability for implementing the Islamic order. Furthermore, he claims that “ability and weakness do not last for the entire life. Rather, they are restricted to limited phases.”⁸⁶²

We can conclude by saying that in Faḍlallāh’s thought power is both a value in itself and an instrument. This approach addresses the quietist Shī‘a claiming that force is

⁸⁵⁸ Frazer and Hutchings, “Argument and Rhetoric,” 181.

⁸⁵⁹ Frazer and Hutchings, “Argument and Rhetoric,” 181.

⁸⁶⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 16.

⁸⁶¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 17-18.

⁸⁶² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 321.

necessary, but always with the supreme goal of establishing an Islamic life, and never an end in itself. Also, by reminding the reader of the various aspects of force and the diverse manifestations of power, Faḍlallāh wishes to inculcate in his activist Shīʿī readers the idea that none of the aspects of power can be isolated from the rest.

5. Rhetorical questions

Faḍlallāh opens each chapter with a few rhetorical questions. This rhetorical tool is “an assertion in the form of an interrogative statement (...) characterised by (...) aggressive and polemical content in which two hostile voices are dialogically opposed”.⁸⁶³ A rhetorical question calls on the reader to choose from among two alternatives the one suggested by the author. Muhammad A. Badarneh identified four main functions of rhetorical questions in Arabic prose: 1. to confer a dialogic quality upon the text, 2. to launch a hidden polemic against those who have a differing view, 3. to question the foundation of differing views, and 4. to speak for and create identification with the reader. In the following, I am going to examine three sections in particular where Faḍlallāh applies this tool with respect to his assumptions, the dialogical context and the structure of the questions.

In the first page of *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa* he asks:

If Islam believes in force, is it blind force that justifies everything including aggression? Or is it the force that does not reach the point of aggression (*ʿudwān*)? (...) How does all this comply with Islamic morals such as forgiveness, tolerance and patience? Are the latter regarded as weaknesses that encourage Muslims to be submissive? Or are they aspects of strength that is in line with the Islamic concept? And [if so], how could this be the case?⁸⁶⁴

In these questions, Faḍlallāh addresses some of the essential issues dealt with in the book, and right at the outset makes his style polemic. The first two questions are in fact clauses of one single statement in which the opinion of those who promote unrestricted violence is presented in the subordinate clause and as such it is undermined

⁸⁶³ Muhammad A. Badarneh, “Exploring the Use of Rhetorical Questions in Editorial Discourse: a Case Study of Arabic Editorials,” *Text & Talk - An Interdisciplinary Journal of Language, Discourse & Communication Studies* 29 (2009): 639.

⁸⁶⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 13.

by the rhetorical question in the main clause asserting that Islam does believe in force but not in a blind one. The following four questions embrace another topic, the problem of morality with respect to strength and weakness. Here, the answer is provided in the concluding question that refers back to his preferred interpretation, thus disqualifying any differing views.

In these questions, Faḍlallāh summarises the essence of the book, declares his opinion, and addresses both the quietist and those who opt for spontaneous and limitless use of force. Later, in the middle of the book, in the chapter on the “morality of weakness and strength”, Faḍlallāh rephrases and repeats the first part of the rhetorical question exposed in the introduction.⁸⁶⁵ Here too, he applies the same technique by offering two alternatives and discrediting the first one by the last question that is in fact an assertion. The cogency of the concluding rhetorical question lies in the fact that it contains the ideologically and commonsensically⁸⁶⁶ viable alternative which is in line with the cultural code of the readers who are, therefore, expected to take it as self-evidently true.⁸⁶⁷

In Chapter 7, where Faḍlallāh examines the relation between the call to Islam and the Islamic concept of strength, he poses a rhetorical question where he applies the technique of double voicing.⁸⁶⁸

Are violence, force, compulsion, fighting and the like considered as acceptable ways to bring people into Islam? Was there no other option for those who refused conversion but submission regardless of their beliefs? And can we consider that the force used in the Islamic conquests was the prime means of spreading Islam across the world?⁸⁶⁹

Here, Faḍlallāh expresses ideas that are associated with the critiques of Islam. He takes these questions as opportunities to present adversary opinions and at the same time reduce their weight through the interrogative form. Later on, he dedicates the whole chapter to denying these statements and bases his argument on primarily Islam-friendly Western sources. With this, his aim is to question the very foundation upon

⁸⁶⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 181.

⁸⁶⁶ Badarneh, “Exploring the Use of Rhetorical Questions,” 650.

⁸⁶⁷ Badarneh, “Exploring the Use of Rhetorical Questions,” 652.

⁸⁶⁸ Badarneh, “Exploring the Use of Rhetorical Questions,” 643.

⁸⁶⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 217.

which critical discourse is built, to attack and cast doubt on the legitimacy and integrity⁸⁷⁰ of their argument.

Faḍlallāh's consistent resort to rhetorical questions – characteristic of *khuṭba* style rather than of a well-thought written treatise – proves his determination to further bolster the contrast between “us” and “them”. He sets the scene for two antagonistic discourses: that of his readers and that of his opponents inside and outside of his community. As the two types of rhetorical questions demonstrate, his aim was to persuade the insiders and to discredit those who are adversaries of Islam. This polemical tone is reflective of the style of *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa* generally, and makes the book similar to a chain of extended *khuṭbas*.

In each case, Faḍlallāh dedicates the entire chapter to answering the rhetorical questions posed in the introduction. As Badarneh terms it, he speaks for the reader.⁸⁷¹ He was aware that his readership was not a homogeneous group as they were composed of activist and quietist Shī'is, as well as Sunnites. Therefore, his discourse and references were primarily Islamic, focusing on the shared beliefs and values. His aim was to create further consensus built on this common ground. Faḍlallāh skilfully creates the illusion that there is space for the reader to interact with the text, but in fact he establishes false dichotomies and designs the discourse in a way to leave only one option to the reader.

6. Repetition

One of Faḍlallāh's most important rhetorical tools is repetition. He follows and makes use of a long tradition of Arabic prose in general, and religious-political discourse in particular in which redefinition of an idea is considered as a logical proof. As Barbara Johnstone indicates, the linguistic forms and expressions that provide the argument with cogency “are at the heart of the [Arabic] language, the discourse, and the rhetoric”.⁸⁷² Furthermore, she claims that “persuasion is a result as much, or more, of

⁸⁷⁰ Badarneh, “Exploring the Use of Rhetorical Questions,” 656.

⁸⁷¹ Badarneh, “Exploring the Use of Rhetorical Questions,” 654.

⁸⁷² Barbara Johnstone, “Presentation as Proof: The Language of Arabic Rhetoric,” *Anthropological Linguistics* 25 (1983): 56.

the sheer number of times an idea is stated and the balanced, elaborate ways in which it is stated as it is a result of syllogistic or enthymematic ‘logical’ organisation”.⁸⁷³

Johnstone’s remarks apply to Faḍlallāh’s argumentation in *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa* as well. He uses diverse tactics for repetition that include repetition of certain expressions, parallelism (repetition of form), and paraphrasing (repetition of content) in various ways. Out of the many examples of repetition that pervade the text and interconnect the various chapters, I highlight only showcases. The first one illustrates Faḍlallāh’s use of syntactic parallelism, both “listing” – repetition of entire clauses cited to provide examples or details⁸⁷⁴ – and “cumulative repetition” – in which semantically each one builds on the previous one and thus has a kind of cumulative effect.⁸⁷⁵ In Chapter 6, on the moral dimension of power, Faḍlallāh lists the reasons why Muslims need to resort to force in 5 points.

1. Making efforts to construct a life based on faith in God (*al-‘amal ‘alā binā’ al-ḥayāt*) (...) makes the movement stronger and faster (...) provides the actors with the feeling of confidence (...)
2. Protecting (*ḥimāya*) religion against the persecution of its enemies (...)
3. Supporting (*intiṣār*) the oppressed, exploited, and helpless groups against the oppressors (...)
4. Weakening (*iḍ‘āf*) the power of the nonbelievers, so that disbelief cannot hinder Islam from progressing (...)
5. Defending (*difā’*) ourselves, and stopping all kinds of aggression against people, lands and sacred places, and fighting oppressors.⁸⁷⁶

In the passage quoted above, the goal of using force is emphatic, placed at the beginning in each statement, and put in *maṣḍar* form. The use of verbal nouns provides the required action with a somewhat abstract sense – describes it as a value – but without depriving it of its dynamism, and thus presents it as a tangible duty for the reader. In the same section applying the same pattern gives the passage an internal rhythm. Two of the *maṣḍars* are synonymous (protect, defend), the rest – “making efforts to construct”, “weakening the nonbelievers”, “supporting the oppressed” create an intellectual context in which the use of force appears as constructive, purposeful, value-based. The explanations that follow the introductory statements cited above repeat the very same values and tasks: protecting Islam and the oppressed and weakening

⁸⁷³ Johnstone, “Presentation as Proof,” 52.

⁸⁷⁴ Johnstone, “Presentation as Proof,” 50.

⁸⁷⁵ Johnstone, “Presentation as Proof,” 51.

⁸⁷⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 201-202.

disbelief and oppressions. This common motif is present as a central idea in each of the five statements however extended with a particular additional aspect in each instance.

The second example from the Introduction of Chapter 3 on spiritual strength, illustrates Faḍlallāh's use of reverse paraphrase "in which the same action or event is described from two opposing perspectives"⁸⁷⁷.

It is spiritual strength that generates the sense of value in the human soul and detaches life from feelings of fear, sadness, anxiety, loss and laxity, and fills it instead with feelings of confidence, happiness and resoluteness in order to provide it with confidence, steadfastness, and clarity [of vision] in planning and stance. It is through spiritual strength that Man possesses power to confront his enemies. Lacking this would cause a sense of weakness, uncertainty that leads to internal destruction, fills the soul with terror, and crushes all preparations for resistance (...)⁸⁷⁸

The extended paragraph combines reverse paraphrase with cumulative repetition. Faḍlallāh makes the same statement twice to emphasise importance of spiritual strength. In the first half of the passage, Faḍlallāh states that possessing spiritual strength generates further values, while lacking it leads to the reverse of those values (fear vs. confidence, happiness vs. sadness etc.). In the second half of the passage, he repeats the same features and broadens the perspective with the anticipated consequences of both attitudes. This method carries away the reader's attention and creates an emotional identification with the message in which happiness is inherently linked to the capacity of resistance. Linking instinctive human desires to political stance through their connection to the identical source actually creates an imprinting in the reader's mind.

Faḍlallāh uses paraphrase on a large scale and in diverse ways. One of them is summarising of the "above stated", such as in the following:

[Quote from *ḥadīth*] On this basis, we can see that carrying out the mission of commanding right and forbidding wrong is part of a move to change the corrupt society into a righteous one and to resist injustice and oppression as the Prophet's words [*above*] clearly state.⁸⁷⁹

As we can notice in Chapter 2 on the use of force against tyranny from which the quote is taken, Faḍlallāh's method of presenting a topic follows a stable pattern. First,

⁸⁷⁷ Johnstone, "Presentation as Proof," 51.

⁸⁷⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 73.

⁸⁷⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 66.

he presents his hypothesis regarding the issue in question. Second, he provides quotes from the Qur’ān and the *ḥadīth*. Third, he summarises the content of the quotes. Fourth, he relates their content to his hypothesis. Fifth, he draws the conclusion in which he paraphrases the hypothesis. Any resort to non-Islamic sources carefully and purposefully supports his premise. Thus, practically, he never leaves behind the confines of the Islamic horizon. Faḍlallāh uses “summarising” as a tool of repetition in two ways: following the quotes from the Qur’ān or the *ḥadīth* as seen above, or following his own statements. An illustrative example of the latter is his exposition on the relationship between God’s power and human power. Following two extended sections on each aspect, he inserts a third one in which he summarises what he had just stated in order to exclude any contradiction between the two assertions.⁸⁸⁰

Another means of paraphrasing is applied by Faḍlallāh in the case of some ideas that pervade the texture of the book such as the obligation of “commanding right and forbidding wrong” and its interpretation as a call to force. Faḍlallāh deals with the topic in three chapters: in Chapter 2 on “the use of force against tyranny”, in Chapter 4 on “social strength” and in Chapter 8 on “change and force”. In each case, the core message is repeated and broadened with new elements corresponding to the main theme of the respective chapter. Thus, the idea becomes dominant in the book and provides a legal perspective to Faḍlallāh’s arguments for power and force.

Finally, it is necessary to mention some key expressions in the book such as “realistic vision / perception”, “corresponding to Islamic goals”, “standing up to tyranny / oppression”, “Islamic morality”, “defending the oppressed”, “resisting exploitation”, “complying to responsibility”. These words and notions and their synonyms are repeated in each chapter countless times. As a result, the reader has no choice but to remember them and becomes intellectually disposed to construct his / her own phrase from these expressions in any situation and recall it at any time.

Johnstone raised another highly relevant point in her analysis of repetition, namely the relation between truth and argumentation, saying: “argument rests on established truths, and truth emerges through argument”.⁸⁸¹ Faḍlallāh considers his argument as realistic but without aspiring to rationalism. Instead, he refers to reality as construed by him, as a universally acceptable, tangible human experience. The reality

⁸⁸⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantīq al-quwwa*, 45.

⁸⁸¹ Johnstone, “Presentation as Proof,” 53.

he explains is deeply rooted in and inseparable from the Islamic perception of life and politics, and embedded in the Shī'ī experience. Out of the elements of this construed reality, he creates a coherent structure by the re-definition and contextualisation of its elements, and thus aims to convince the reader that his perception reflects the universal, objective reality.

With Johnstone's words in mind – “repetition... is the key to the linguistic cohesion of the texts and to their rhetorical effectiveness”⁸⁸² – we can assume that repetition guaranteed the coherence of Faḍlallāh's system of thought. Also, it provided the text with an internal logic, even if this logic can be considered more of a verbal than a rational kind. Although sometimes annoyingly repetitious, the text is able to fulfil its primary goal: to inculcate in the reader a sense of identification with the author's point of view.⁸⁸³

7. Master narratives

Faḍlallāh's interpretation of the master narratives of Shī'ism resulted in a novel and persuasive message through which he managed to prompt radical change in the worldview and mentality of the Lebanese Shī'a. In my attempt to study the elements of Faḍlallāh's narrative of Shī'ī history, I rely on the categorisation of J. R. Halverson [et al.].⁸⁸⁴ They define master narrative as a comprehensive and “culturally embedded view of history” that provides a systematic understanding of the past, the present and the future of a community.⁸⁸⁵ It shapes the communal as well as the individual identity and merges them into a coherent whole through ideology and required action.⁸⁸⁶

Any master narrative is made up of narratives, a “coherent system of stories”⁸⁸⁷ that aim to provide a solution for a problem in the present by creating “a narrative

⁸⁸² Johnstone, “Presentation as Proof,” 47.

⁸⁸³ See: Johnstone's reference to Deborah Tannen's “Spoken and Written Language and the Oral literate Continuum,” in *Proceedings of the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society* (Berkeley: University of California, 1980), 7.

⁸⁸⁴ Jeffrey R. Halverson, H. L. Goodall, Jr., Steven R. Corman, *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

⁸⁸⁵ Halverson *et al.*, *Master Narratives*, 12.

⁸⁸⁶ Halverson *et al.*, *Master Narratives*, 21-22.

⁸⁸⁷ Halverson *et al.*, *Master Narratives*, 23.

trajectory”⁸⁸⁸ of conflicts, participants, actions, and events. Narratives employ archetypal characters – set in binary oppositions – relationships – alliances or conflicts – and “standard actions” required from the agents of the story.⁸⁸⁹ The solution to the ideological problem exposed in the narrative can only be found through the resolution of the original, real life conflict.

Faḍlallāh’s narrative comprises all the key elements of the Shī‘ī master narrative: the Karbalā’ event, history as a venue of salvation from corruption, and the problem of occultation. The elements of his master narrative convey one message, that of the Manichaean perception of history that permeates Faḍlallāh’s discourse. The basic conflict to be solved is the prevailing injustice and oppression in the contemporary reality. This generates the desire to change the state of affairs in accordance with the divine law that grants righteousness. The “narrative trajectory” constructed by Faḍlallāh explains that this desire can only be satisfied by acquiring inner strength and tangible power so that people wipe out injustice, as part of the divine mission assigned to them. Thus, Faḍlallāh constructed a new, universalistic master narrative of power as an essential means for realising justice that ultimately brings about salvation.

7.1 The account of Karbalā’ in Faḍlallāh’s narrative of power

The heroic battle at Karbalā’ in itself cannot be presented as a solution to the problem of oppression since its outcome did not result in deliverance. Nevertheless, in Faḍlallāh’s understanding, what happened at Karbalā’ is not an event in the past, rather a starting point of the ongoing effort to “change the corrupt society into a righteous one and defy injustice and oppression”.⁸⁹⁰ As such, it is part of the obligation of “commanding right and forbidding wrong”.

Faḍlallāh claims – contrary to the prevailing perception – that al-Ḥusayn engaged in the fight not only “to carry out the Imām’s divine duty” with full awareness of his destiny, but he was above all determined to restore “the just Islamic rule”.⁸⁹¹ In

⁸⁸⁸ Halverson *et al.*, *Master Narratives*, 19.

⁸⁸⁹ Halverson *et al.*, *Master Narratives*, 24.

⁸⁹⁰ Halverson *et al.*, *Master Narratives*, 67.

⁸⁹¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, 269.

Faḍlallāh's narrative, Karbalā' took place as a result of circumstances that are "familiar" (*ma'lūf*)⁸⁹² to his readers, an act of resistance to be repeated by all the faithful.

Besides the already highlighted antithesis of good and evil, Faḍlallāh introduces a new dichotomy between strength and weakness. Put in the new frame, Karbalā' is not only an open-ended conflict, but also a manifestation of power, courage, and hope. It is about accepting the allotted mission as well as about transforming the reality. The reinterpreted Karbalā' is the symbol of "noble sacrifice"⁸⁹³ but also that of determined action. Thus, the fruits of al-Ḥusayn's fight are still to come, and in Faḍlallāh's words "allure of a preferred ending is a powerful inducement to do whatever work is required to bring it about".⁸⁹⁴ Therefore, remembering Karbalā' must take place not through grieving but through action.

Furthermore, Faḍlallāh does not linger on portraying Mu'āwiya and Yazīd as archetypes of oppressors in order to describe the nature of evil. His narrative focuses on mobilisation and change. The inner conflict between weakness and strength is resolved by al-Ḥusayn the warrior, whose figure takes primacy over the archetype of al-Ḥusayn the martyr. For Shī'ī revivalism, "the trajectory of the master narrative of Karbalā' was satisfied by defiant martyrdom and not by a miraculous victory" – assert Halverson [et al.].⁸⁹⁵ Faḍlallāh in his treatise on power, gives a new direction to this "trajectory" in which martyrdom and resistance are not values in themselves, but only means leading to the final goal: power and justice.

7.2 The role of the *Mahdī* in Faḍlallāh's narrative of power

Belief in the *Mahdī* who will lead righteous Muslims to final victory over deviation and injustice is a dominant master narrative in Shī'ī thought. Traditionally, an essential role is attributed to the *Mahdī* in the cosmic conflict between the forces of good and evil. As Halverson [et al.] observe, the archetype of the hero and that of the saviour are united in the figure of the *Mahdī*.⁸⁹⁶ For hundreds of years, the archetype of

⁸⁹² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 270.

⁸⁹³ Halverson *et al.*, *Master Narratives*, 92.

⁸⁹⁴ Halverson *et al.*, *Master Narratives*, 21.

⁸⁹⁵ Halverson *et al.*, *Master Narratives*, 93.

⁸⁹⁶ Halverson *et al.*, *Master Narratives*, 107.

saviour – projected into the future – dominated the *Mahdī* master narrative of Shī'ism. Later on, Shī'ī revivalism emphasised the image of the hero – tied to events in the past – whose second arrival can be hastened by revolutionary activism.

Faḍlallāh tackles the issue from a de-mystified and pragmatic perspective. He inserts two brief sections on the problem of the absence of the *Mahdī* in the context of the necessity of Islamic governance (“Islam – a call and a state”)⁸⁹⁷ and the permitted means of change (“Change by leniency and violence”).⁸⁹⁸ This framing renders the problem of occultation secondary and deals with it simply to deny any views that oppose activism in the absence of the Imām. Faḍlallāh asserts that true change is never detached from the Islamic path and the final victory of the movement is realised with the return of the *Mahdī*.⁸⁹⁹ However, he insists that “the need for an order and state”⁹⁰⁰ is not restricted to the era of the Prophet and the Imāms. Therefore, fallibility does not exclude claims to power and authority. And, in turn, power and authority put at the service of implementing the *sharī'a* that “lays the foundations of justice in life”⁹⁰¹ are detached from the requirement of infallible leadership. With this statement, however, Faḍlallāh echoes the Sunnī position and puts aside a basic Shī'ī condition of legitimacy. Power inasmuch as it serves justice is legitimate, it enjoys priority over infallibility, and it is accessible to every committed Muslim.

7.3 Salvation history in Faḍlallāh's narrative of power

In Faḍlallāh's narrative, all the stories evolve around the importance of liberating Man from internal and external shackles, and serve to perceive the present conflict as part of a long “history of war and peace, [between] the followers of truth versus the followers of falsehood”.⁹⁰² This cosmic battle, however, must lead to the redemptive victory of righteousness over deviation, an outcome that can be guaranteed only by divine help and intervention.

⁸⁹⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 260.

⁸⁹⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 264.

⁸⁹⁹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 274.

⁹⁰⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 263.

⁹⁰¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 263.

⁹⁰² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 17.

For Faḍlallāh, the events of salvation history as described in the Qur’ān – and thus preserved in the collective system of belief – are to prove the legitimacy and necessity of resorting to violence in certain situations. In order to make the contemporary Shī’ī community part of this history, Faḍlallāh “travels” back and forth in time: from the present to the past then back to the present. In this way the plight of the Lebanese Shī’a is set in the frame of divinely guided history. In Faḍlallāh’s reasoning, the first Muslims did not resort to force out of mere habit. Rather, they fought for the just cause, in the same way as the contemporary Lebanese Shī’a are expected to do. He invokes relevant episodes of this salvation history and interprets them as necessary manifestations of the legitimate use of force. Thus, Faḍlallāh provides a constant moral framework of using force for his audience.⁹⁰³ This connection between the narrative of the past and the mobilisation in the present is a crucial aspect of Islamist discourse.

Faḍlallāh’s narrative of Karbalā’, his interpretation of the dogma concerning the *Mahdī* and the evolution of history all evolve around the same axis: the necessity of power. As Halverson [et al.] explained, narratives “provide every society with its own sense of rationality”.⁹⁰⁴ To understand how a narrative gains this logic-constructing capacity, its rhetorical organisation needs to be studied. Faḍlallāh’s narrative is based on coherent scriptural master-narratives of empowerment. To reassure the contemporary Shī’a that their battle now is a continuation of past struggles, Faḍlallāh provides analogies that help them reinterpret the experienced reality. His premise is that the present is overwhelmed with deviation and corruption taking the form of injustice and oppression. Faḍlallāh prompted his audience to identify with the courageous oppressed who have always resisted tyranny in the course of history, and to stand up for justice.

Faḍlallāh’s aim with reinterpreting master narratives was to put the problem of power in the centre of the consciousness of the quietist Shī’a. He provided a frame within which his audience could evaluate events and attitudes through their relation to the desired strength and power. Moreover, this perspective gave justification for acquiring power as well as for actions that imply the use of force. Faḍlallāh portrayed power – inasmuch as it is applied to oppose truth against falsehood – as a supreme value. His narrative offers not only an understanding of the reality but also an action

⁹⁰³ Mo Hume, “Questioning Violence: Meanings, Myths and Realities,” *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 28, (2009): 50.

⁹⁰⁴ Halverson *et al.*, *Master Narratives*, 17.

plan to change it by mobilisation and power. His argument was that fighting oppression is a sacred obligation of the faithful, and power that serves this supreme goal is a means of salvation.

8. Antinomy (*tibāq*)

In the justification of the use of force, Faḍlallāh's argument is based on the claim that it is Islamic as opposed to other non-Islamic forms of power and aggression. This approach necessitates the perception of a bipolar world in which what is Islamic is by essence good, and what is non-Islamic is essentially bad. Maintaining the constant tension between the two is indispensable for the internal logic of his reasoning. Therefore, in order to preserve the coherence of the argument, Faḍlallāh depicts the world through mutually exclusive antinomies (*tibāq*) a prominent rhetorical feature extremely popular in the current and past Arabic political and religious discourses. In this rhetorical figure, concepts with irreconcilably opposing meaning are juxtaposed in the same sentence or paragraph and shape the style and the argument of Faḍlallāh's discourse. Ideally in the rhetorical contrasts, words, clauses, or sentences are approximately equivalent in length and balanced by parallel arrangement in adjacent grammatical structures.⁹⁰⁵

From among the most prevalent *tibāq* pairs in *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, I will examine the following: positive (*ijābī*) vs. negative (*salbī*); goodness (*khayr*) vs. evil (*sharr*); falsehood (*bāṭil*) vs. righteousness (*ḥaqq*); strength (*quwwa*) vs. weakness (*ḍa'f*); faith (*īmān*) vs. disbelief (*kufī*); right (*ma'rūf*) vs. wrong (*munkar*); leniency (*luṭf*) vs. violence (*'unf*); realistic (*wāqī'ī*) vs. idealistic (*mithālī*).

The juxtaposition between “positive” and “negative” is used to describe attitudes and perceptions. In the text, they are directly contrasted nine times⁹⁰⁶ besides the titles of eight subchapters (six times in Chapter 4 and twice in Chapter 6), where Faḍlallāh denotes the topic by these concepts. Thus, he contrasts the positive and negative aspects

⁹⁰⁵ W. P. Heinrichs, “*Tibāk*,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. by P. Bearman *et al.*, vol. 10. (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 450-452.

⁹⁰⁶ See eg.: *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, pp. 64, 69, 75, 103, 109, 110, 196, 274, 284.

of the morality of power,⁹⁰⁷ as well as that of the theoretical, emotional and practical aspects of social strength.⁹⁰⁸ In each case, the term “negative” stands for rejection of what is opposed to the Islamic principles, while “positive” means what is in accordance with them.

The concepts of “goodness” and “evil” denote the intentions behind an action. They are directly juxtaposed ten times.⁹⁰⁹ Regarding the position of non-believers in an Islamic state, Faḍlallāh claims that they “must be acquainted with Islam, its justice, security, and goodness, away from the influence of atheism and its corruption (...)”⁹¹⁰ As such, evil is synonymous with corruption (*fāsād*) and exploitation (*istighlāl*), while goodness stands for justice (*‘adāla*) and security (*amn*) that serves the interest of human beings.⁹¹¹

The contrast between “righteousness” and “falsehood” is emphasised fifteen times in the book.⁹¹² The following quote summarises Faḍlallāh’s position on the Islamic goals and the necessity of human action put in the Manichaean framework of good and bad:

God does not like corruption [that opposes] the greatest aims of Islam, which establishes life on the basis of righteousness (...) [However,] it is not realised unless Man works on the basis of justice and reform.⁹¹³

Thus, righteousness sometimes appears synonymous with justice, reform and also unity of God (*tawḥīd*), while falsehood equals corruption and tyranny (*tuḡhyān*). The antinomy of strength / force / power as opposed to weakness interweaves *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*; it appears approximately 40 times.⁹¹⁴ In various forms, Faḍlallāh repeatedly reminds his readers that renouncing strength consciously and voluntarily counts as a sin and even as disbelief, while “the Islamic use of power does not lead to corruption, but seeks to promote the welfare of mankind in life”.⁹¹⁵

⁹⁰⁷ See eg.: *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, pp. 181, 196.

⁹⁰⁸ See eg.: *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, pp. 125, 127, 135, 139, 141.

⁹⁰⁹ See eg.: *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, pp. 96-7, 123, 154, 182, 195, 198, 242, 195, 197.

⁹¹⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 242.

⁹¹¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 97-8.

⁹¹² See eg.: *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, pp. 17, 96-7, 104, 133, 168, 169, 173, 178, 195, 210, 231, 242, 271, 327, 128.

⁹¹³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 193.

⁹¹⁴ See eg.: *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, pp. 7, 13, 19, 22, 32, 34, 35, 38, 43, 44, 48, 49, 57, 61, 62, 63, 69, 88, 98, 104, 109, 120, 165, 197, 204, 232, 257, 281, 286, 301-302, 305, 308, 310, 311, 313, 321, 327.

⁹¹⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 195.

Faḍlallāh uses *īmān* and *islām* as opposites of disbelief (*kufī*) and polytheism (*shirk*) fourteen times in the book.⁹¹⁶ Furthermore, *shirk* and *kufī* appear as inherently associated with oppression and injustice. Consequently, Faḍlallāh defines the primary goals of Islam as “establishing justice and removing oppression”.⁹¹⁷ He also condemns the governments that “take an Islamic character” but in fact discard the religious principles, accusing them of deviation, which is not differentiated from *shirk*.⁹¹⁸ Related to this is the distinction between *ma’rūf* and *munkar* which is central to Islamic legal thought. It appears in three sub-chapters, in the contexts of resisting tyranny, the social importance of legal commitments, and the use of force as a means of change.⁹¹⁹ Faḍlallāh sets another antinomy between the realistic approach as opposed to groundless idealism, stressing that Islam demands the practicality of ideas and emotions; otherwise they will turn out to be a dream or a mirage.⁹²⁰

Sometimes, Faḍlallāh reconciles binary oppositions such as lenience vs. force, freedom vs. compulsion⁹²¹ presenting Islam as a comprehensive system. For example, he asserts that “strength is neither the tolerance in times of peace to preserve life, nor is it the violence in times of war that demolishes life (...) Islam advocates both peace and war to preserve freedom, as well as all the virtues and principles it believes in”.⁹²² Thus, Faḍlallāh attempts to go beyond the “phenomenon” and declares the value-based inclusiveness of Islam in which the seemingly mutually exclusive means can be equally legitimate by rendering them Islamic.

The governing idea underlying Faḍlallāh’s bifurcation of all material and spiritual phenomena is his conviction that

The righteous, helpless people are left with two choices: either to abandon the call to Islam so that the oppressors enjoy corruption on Earth, or to confront the oppressors with all the means available: their property and their entire existence.⁹²³

⁹¹⁶ See eg.: *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, pp. 50, 60, 127, 142, 173, 240, 242, 248, 257, 260, 278, 279, 289.

⁹¹⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 65.

⁹¹⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 234.

⁹¹⁹ See eg.: *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, pp. 63-68, 96, 153, 155, 266-8.

⁹²⁰ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 141-142.

⁹²¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 243.

⁹²² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 205.

⁹²³ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 204.

For Faḍlallāh, neutrality is not a legitimate response to the challenges of life. Rather, it counts as weakness. Human beings are expected to draw a dividing line between what they seek and what they renounce.⁹²⁴

This overuse of antinomy emphasises Faḍlallāh’s Manichaeism, which is a salient characteristic of religious fundamentalist rhetoric. Besides promising salvation in the hereafter, he sets clearly defined political goals for this world as well. Faḍlallāh divides the world into “us, the believers” and “them, the infidels”, and exempts the believers from the burden of rationally defining what is right and what counts as wrong. In H. L. Goodall’s words, this approach “serves to simplify a complex world that is otherwise threatening, unknown, ambiguous, different, and often unfair, so much so that it becomes the duty of all true believers to rid the world of “them” [even] by force”⁹²⁵ Describing reality in binary oppositions is necessarily essentialist and offers a simplistic view of human existence. As such, it is valid only among the confines of a particular system of thought.

Used by a Shī‘ī religious authority words such as “justice”, “oppression”, “sacrifice”, “martyrdom”, “steadfastness” – as Charteris-Black puts it – “evoke iconic images that resonate with historical myths”, in the present case with the events of Karbalā’. In his reasoning, Faḍlallāh applies “paired dualities” such as “just” and “unjust”, “good” and “evil”, “freedom” and “subjugation”, “morality” and “immorality”. Following Charteris-Black’s approach, these “are mythic archetypes that evaluate human experience as either positive or negative”. Faḍlallāh applies dichotomies in order to establish a new – political – myth in which collaboration, quietism, compromises are associated with decay and deviation, while resistance, revolt, and activism equal life force.

⁹²⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 97.

⁹²⁵ H. L. Goodall, Jr., “Blood, Shit, and Tears: The Terrorist as Abject Other” (a paper presented at the conference on “Managing and Legislating Workplace Abjection,” University of York, United Kingdom, September 23, 2009). Quoted in Halverson *et al.*, 22.

9. Metaphors of battle(field)

Metaphors are essential to any rhetoric.⁹²⁶ They extend the meaning of a word into an imagined space in which the speaker, indirectly, influences the cognitive perception of reality held by his audience. In his *Poetics* Aristotle defined metaphor as “giving the thing a name that belongs to something else”.⁹²⁷ Thus, the metaphorical world of a *rhetor* creates an alternative “particular reality”,⁹²⁸ which interacts with “the conceptual system”⁹²⁹ of its receivers.

This shift is manifested in the “psychological association between the attributes of the original referent of a metaphor (that of a word in its source domain [where it ‘normally’ occurs], and those of the metaphor target [where it does not]”.⁹³⁰ The task of a rhetorician is to persuade the audience that the target (imagined world) is as true as the source (reality). A social and cultural value system can turn a metaphor into a myth. By myth, I mean “a narrative that embodies a set of beliefs expressing aspects of the unconscious [and] provides an explanation of all the things for which explanations are felt to be necessary”.⁹³¹ “Political myths” are created by binding novel modes of action to traditional values through metaphors. The evaluation implicit in figurative language, thus, appeals to the emotions of the audience and the resulting political myth becomes a venue for a new perception of a given problem.

Among the rhetorical tools applied by Faḍlallāh, metaphors have a special significance. In the following, I will look at one of the most recurrent of them in *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*: the notion of *maʿraka* battle(field). Battle or battlefield is the place or act in which force in any form is manifested. In my analysis, first I located all the occurrences of *maʿraka* and its synonyms in the text. Second, I distinguished the

⁹²⁶ On the use of metaphors in early Arabic literature see: Wolfhart Heinrichs, *The Hand of the Northwind: Opinions on Metaphor and the Early Meaning of istiʿāra in Arabic Poetics* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1977).

⁹²⁷ Aristotle, *The Poetics of Aristotle*, transl. by S. H. Butcher (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1902), accessed 12 February, 2014. <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1974>.

⁹²⁸ Souhad Kahil, “A Rhetorical Examination and Critique of Hezbollah” (PhD diss., Graduate College of Bowling Green State University, 2006), 17.

⁹²⁹ Jonathan Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric: The Persuasive Power of Metaphor* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2005), 15.

⁹³⁰ Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric*, 15, 14.

⁹³¹ Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric*, 22.

metaphoric from the literal use of the word. By identifying the target (the reference) and the context in the third step, I highlight the message conveyed by the metaphor.

Arabic provides a rich collection of synonyms for the concept of battle and fight. Faḍlallāh uses the words *qitāl*, *ṣirāʿ*, *ḥarb*, but the most often applied expression in the book is *maʿraka*. It is a locative that literally refers to the place of the confrontation, sometimes substituted with the expressions *sāḥat/ ḥālāt al-ṣirāʿ*, *majāl al-ṣirāʿ*, or *sāḥat al-ḥarb wa ʿl-qitāl* (the place of combat).⁹³² Faḍlallāh's choice of referring to the various situations embedded in human existence as *maʿraka* offers broad interpretation to the reader. The battlefield can be concrete or abstract, and the act itself violent as well as non-violent. The Arabic word *maʿraka* is translated as battle or battlefield, depending on the context.

As we have seen in the sections dealing with the various forms of *jihād*, change and resistance, fight is a positive notion for Faḍlallāh. All through the book, his aim is to demystify the resort to violence in order to defend and secure the values and interests of the community. With this goal in mind, Faḍlallāh imbues the book with the notion of *maʿraka*, insinuating that life in its all aspects is a battlefield where violence can be a basic and natural human response to the various challenges and dangers posed to the individual and to the community.

In Faḍlallāh's text *maʿraka* provides the source domain. The target domain is any perceived or real field where threat is probable. In fact, as I showed in the section on antinomies all fields of human activity could oppose Islam, therefore, any field is a battlefield. In the following, I detect the transformation stimulated by the use of metaphors that secure the persuasive capacity of Faḍlallāh's argument. I argue that the number and the extent of battle metaphors prove the martial character of Faḍlallāh's philosophy of power.

Jonathan Charteris-Black claims that metaphors relate abstract notions and "ideologies" to daily experience and thus make them affective and accessible.⁹³³ Consequently, it is necessary to point to the context, the tangible reality that inspires the use of a particular metaphor, which in turn legitimates a proposed ideology or policy. Faḍlallāh's use of the notion "battlefield" both metaphorically and literally connects the two realms into a coherent unity. On the one hand, this strategy demystifies violence as

⁹³² See: *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 28, 95, 97, 302.

⁹³³ Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric*, 22.

a concrete act. On the other hand, understood metaphorically, it integrates the daily human – not necessarily violent – reactions into the dominant Shī‘ī myth of cosmic battle against injustice and oppression.

Faḍlallāh uses the word *ma‘raka* and its synonyms in two ways: literally and metaphorically. The two uses intertwine and provide the text with semantic coherence. Considering the context in which the book was published – 1976 Beirut – it is not surprising that the literal and metaphorical meanings of battle and power are inseparable. The literal meaning refers to historical events as well as actions in physical combat. The metaphoric use connects the literal with the figurative meanings through its capacity to understand it in both ways. In some cases, the various uses are applied in the same statement.

Faḍlallāh refers to a wide range of Islamic battles such as Ḥiṭṭīn,⁹³⁴ Badr,⁹³⁵ Uḥud,⁹³⁶ al-Aḥzāb,⁹³⁷ and Ḥunayn⁹³⁸. Apart from the ideological significance of these events which is inherent to Faḍlallāh’s argument, these battles carry a political meaning as well. Considering the political situation in Lebanon at the time, the inferior position and fragmentation of the Shī‘a, the early battles of the Muslim community recall the potentials of the righteous minority and the importance of faith and organisation. In this discourse, the problems and enemies of the past are re-materialised in the present, with the same significance although in a different setting.⁹³⁹ The sections where battlefield is mentioned in its literal sense deal with topics such as the problem of material strength

⁹³⁴ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 236.

⁹³⁵ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 293-296.

⁹³⁶ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 270.

⁹³⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 270.

⁹³⁸ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 175-8.

⁹³⁹ Other examples in *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*: “Some people believe that the numerical strength secures victory and makes the losses not significant in the battlefield.” p. 163, “[There is a commonly held belief that] large quantity provides the basis for victory in the battlefield rather than the quality (...)” p. 173; “This feeling of weakness could have led to their defeat if some conscious people did not wake faith in them that pushed the battle towards victory.” p. 175; “The call to Islam is a supreme goal that justifies entering the battlefield for its sake.” p. 222; “The regulations of this faith calls for defiance in the battle till martyrdom (...) no matter how serious it is. (...)” p. 291; “The revolutions of the Imām ‘Alī and al-Ḥusayn were (...) the result of known circumstances (...) whether regarding the situations that made entering the battlefield inescapable or the (...) legitimate principles that motivate the action of the battle. Thus the outcome of the battle differs according to the various objective circumstances.” p. 270; “The Imams’ lack of support for revolts against the prevailing ruler (...) was based on the inability of their leadership to govern (...) and to achieve the desired victory in the battlefield.” p. 272; “Believing in Allāh makes the believer (...) rewarded in the hereafter, and in case of victory he earns God’s satisfaction in the herein with governing life in the battle of life (...) we have to believe in Allah with a faith that calls us to prepare for the battlefield of victory through understanding faith.” p. 292; “If there is no balance in the military power then the imposed battlefield becomes suicidal in which the opponent can easily and quickly win.” p. 303.

and numerical inferiority, the significance of having a specific strategy,⁹⁴⁰ and estimating the possibility to effect change in the status quo.

A more complex example is the issue of the so-called martyrdom operations. Faḍlallāh's practical stance is as follows: "...only in cases when sacrifice and suicidal operation is part of the strategic plan to buttress the stance amidst violence can we regard such [acts] as manifestations of strength complying with the nature of the battlefield."⁹⁴¹ In other cases, battle can be understood literally by the context. However, its meaning can be extended to become metaphorical as in the following statement: "a few believers could win over a large number of non-believers when they transformed their faith into a new element of force in the battlefield."⁹⁴² This idea is applicable to every situation when one is confident of possessing the truth while facing a numerically superior group that holds an opposing view.

The notion of battle(field) is applied extensively and above all as a metaphor. The topics in which battle(field) is used in a metaphorical sense include the right to stand up to tyranny, the importance of spiritual strength in dealing with various challenges⁹⁴³ and instinctive pulls,⁹⁴⁴ as well as the pitfalls of excessive retreat from the world,⁹⁴⁵ the significance of social strength, the relation of force to the call to Islam, and the importance of faith in generating strength. Faḍlallāh makes use of this metaphor also in

⁹⁴⁰ "How can we explain the victory of the infidels if faith in God was everything in the battle of life? (...) The case of victory and defeat in life is influenced by many objective causes related to the nature of the battlefield." *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 289.

⁹⁴¹ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 304. The order of the clauses is inverted in the translation for facilitating the understanding.

⁹⁴² Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 173.

⁹⁴³ Other examples in *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*: "The colonising powers' resort to the destruction of spiritual strength in order to win in the battlefield as start for their combat with the smaller nations." p. 73. "These malicious claims aim at creating scepticism about Islam's capacity to thrive in an environment where military power is totally absent and where there is freedom of thought, confined only to the battlefield of ideas." p. 217.

⁹⁴⁴ Other examples in *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*: "They do not seek to win over themselves in the battlefields of desire (...) they do not feel the presence of any sacred battlefield in such domains." p. 96. "[Those who seek pleasure excessively are] the same as the previous group [ascets] in being defeated in combat situations (*mawāqif al-ṣirā'*)." p. 97. "[Islam urges] to always engage in a battle against the means of oppressive deviation that weaken the will in the same way as we fight in the battlefield against external enemies (...). Therefore, we perceive the internal enemy (...) a greater danger than the external enemy, and the battlefield in which one confronts his / her oppressive desires as more noble than the battlefield where one fights his / her other enemies." p. 98. "If there was a spacious battlefield between you and your enemy you possessed freedom of action (...) as for the internal enemy (...) the two warring parties are you yourself (...) it is the most difficult battlefield (...)" p. 99.

⁹⁴⁵ "Getting off from the challenges of life (...) hinders Man from the opportunity to acquire strength through facing the challenges of the battlefield (*sāḥat al-ṣirā'*)." *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 95.

his definition of morality, the problem of change and the demand of infallible leadership, and in his concluding remarks on the ideal nature of power.⁹⁴⁶

An example for the metaphorical use of *ma'raka* is the following: “The state of anger prevents man from being consistent and stable in opposing the challenging forces. It leads to the loss of the reins of power in the battle, in which there is need for a personality who has the power of nerves to control the battlefield.”⁹⁴⁷ This statement is in the conclusion of the book. Thus, it provides a kind of synthesis of how Faḍlallāh imagines the righteous and purposeful use of force in all possible domains, in the battles of war as well as in the battles of everyday life. In each case, acting out of pure instinct can be fatal.

Battle(field) as a metaphor can refer to acts of resistance as well as the social, economic, political, and intellectual fields of life,⁹⁴⁸ and to the psyche of the believer⁹⁴⁹. Accordingly, the enemy can be all those who criticise Islam in any form, who cause a rift in the society, who resort to quietism, and those who act without self-restraint. Faḍlallāh returns to the old myth of the united, responsible, and determined Islamic community and personality.

⁹⁴⁶ Other examples in *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*: “Material strength is not decisive in itself for winning in the battlefield without its being based on spiritual strength.” p. 7; “Fragmented society is not able to win in the battlefield regardless the strength it has. A society in which solidarity and unity prevails balances the scale of the battlefield no matter how limited its strength is.” p. 8; “There are many other situations in which precaution is needed (...) before entering into the battlefield.” p. 210; “Some people might make a direct connection between these actions and the case of infallibility (...) guarantees the safety of the battlefield (...) and directs it to achieve legitimate objectives through righteous and lawful means (...)” p. 269; “Military conflict forces the two warring sides to fight in order to win in the battlefield. (...) withdrawal can be a sign of strength if it is part of a military strategy based on the objective conditions of the battlefield.” pp. 301-2; “Patience (...) enables the person (...) to bear the pain that is imposed on him as a natural characteristic of the battlefield.” p. 305; “(...) the need to protect Islam from its enemies, whom it is fighting in the battlefield of belief (*‘aqīda*) and life.” p. 320.

⁹⁴⁷ Faḍlallāh, *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 323.

⁹⁴⁸ Other examples in *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*: “[The] spiritual destruction that precedes the war of nerves determines victory or defeat in all battlefields of life.” pp. 86-87. “Jewish community and the (...) Muslim community when they stood face to face in the battleground of life and belief (*‘aqīda*) (...) the [solidarity] of the Muslims enlivened them in the centre of the battlefield. The same comparison can be made with the on-going battles between our societies and other societies in the battlefields of the present and that of the future, in the fight between strength and weakness and between truth and falsehood.” p. 120.

⁹⁴⁹ Other examples in *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*: “(...) submission to injustice means lack of faith (...) and deviation (...) The collaborators and those who are neutral standing in the battlefield between justice and oppression, and watch the battle from the sidelines, without helping the battle or participating in the fight, are responsible.” p. 69. “[The colonizers want] to weaken them psychologically (...) until they reach their specific goal in subjugating them without any effort or engagement in confrontation in the political and intellectual battlefield.” p. 78. “[V]ictory is being steadfast in the battlefield (...) the one who flees gets defeated.” *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*, 95-6.

Faḍlallāh’s technique is based on reification, the reference to abstract phenomena – such as tensions and confrontations characteristic to human existence – by the concrete notions of battle and battlefield. As Charteris-Black observed, the systematic nature of metaphor choices informs us how social relations are perceived in a given context, and how beliefs “are conceived and communicated”.⁹⁵⁰ In Faḍlallāh’s use, the metaphor of battlefield is ascribed to various actions suggesting an underlying “conceptual metaphor” that life is conflict. The conceptual (underlying) metaphor, “life is a battlefield” determines the choice of words such as “submission”, “collaboration”, “destruction”, “subjugation”, “destruction”, “confrontation”, “escape”, “neutral”, “steadfast”. Acts of the believers are described with the terminology of warfare, leading to either victory or defeat as if they were part of a military campaign.⁹⁵¹ Inherently related to this perception is the idea that religion was revealed to guide Man in the ongoing mythic cosmic clash of the good and bad. This affirms that religious metaphors can lead to a radical confrontational attitude. Furthermore, religion can provide the goals, the strategies, and even the tools of the combat.

The evaluation implicit in this semantic transfer is that the believer is a combatant, witness to his faith, a *shahīd* in all meanings of the term. The other party is depicted as an adversary to Islamic values and goals, alien, unjust, oppressive, and invading. In Charteris-Black’s analysis, “enemies can be classified into groups based on the targets of [the] metaphors”.⁹⁵² Faḍlallāh names the tangible enemies such as the imperialist powers, oppressive rulers, the rich, the corrupt religious leaders and politicians, the atheists, and their collaborators, and those who stay neutral.⁹⁵³ From among the abstract or unseen enemies he identifies exploitation, oppression, injustice, desire, ambition, fear, lack of faith, lack of confidence or excessive asceticism.

In this conflict model, the various tangible and intangible enemies are interchangeable since they share the same characteristics. Often they are made identical through the application of metonymy in which the tangible enemy such as the collaborators stand for weakness, colonisers stand for injustice, while activist Islam represents justice and its agents embody strength. The metonymy can be based on evaluations or causation but in each case the link is primarily emotional. In Faḍlallāh’s

⁹⁵⁰ Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric*, 3.

⁹⁵¹ Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric*, 90.

⁹⁵² Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric*, 90.

⁹⁵³ Chapter 4 on “Social Strength” in *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*.

argument, we can also detect “a slippage from a metaphoric relation of association to a logical relation of causation”.⁹⁵⁴ In the “metaphor frame”, the political establishment, the quietist Shī‘ī tradition, and non-Islamic ideologies are related as causes to the social-economic problems, and to the political weakness and deprivation of the community as effects.

As Charteris-Black rightly observed, the persuasive capacity of metaphors lies in the fact that they are culturally embedded and thus capable of arousing “hidden associations that govern our systems of evaluation”.⁹⁵⁵ Faḍlallāh, thus, faced the task to transform the negative resonance of fighting in the Shī‘ī circles into a positive one. In order to convince his audience, he had to appeal to the reason as well as to the emotions of his followers. Terming every aspect of human life as a potential or actual battlefield, Faḍlallāh made use of the power of metaphors in binding the “conscious and unconscious means of persuasion – between cognition and emotion – to create a moral perspective on life”.⁹⁵⁶ Thus, through the use of metaphors, Faḍlallāh managed to influence the emotional associations of the Lebanese Shī‘a and re-interpret the Shī‘ī *ethos*.

Concluding remarks

As Charteris-Black rightly observed, “[p]ersuasion is a multi-layered discourse function that is the outcome of a complex interaction between intention, linguistic choice and context.”⁹⁵⁷ In this chapter, I highlighted some of the rhetorical strategies employed by Faḍlallāh to persuade the quietist Shī‘a and analysed the way these tools transmit his message of power. Thus, I studied Faḍlallāh’s discourse of power as a text and a rhetorical strategy, closely related as they are in Islam and beyond. Faḍlallāh’s rhetoric constructs a religious ideology in which force is understood as virtuous, instrumental and necessary to promote the interests of the Shī‘a minority. He also uses the argument from the Qur’ān as an ultimate authority and quotes it widely to legitimise power. Moreover, repetition and rhetorical questions help Faḍlallāh create a coherent

⁹⁵⁴ Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric*, 100.

⁹⁵⁵ Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric*, 2.

⁹⁵⁶ Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric*, 13.

⁹⁵⁷ Charteris-Black, *Politicians and Rhetoric*, 30.

discourse. His Shī'ī master narratives, antinomies and metaphors foster a salvation history in which the good, oppressed Shī'a oppose the camp of evil, disbelief, and tyranny.

Faḍlallāh's discourse reproduces some of the main features of Islamist rhetoric, the main patterns of which are identified by Jacob Høigilt as authority, emotion and polemics.⁹⁵⁸ In *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*, Faḍlallāh does not make emotion central to his argument. However, it is present due to the extensive use of figurative language. He talks as an authority in declaring the need for a comprehensive Islamic theory of power, based on scriptural arguments and including ethics of power. Furthermore, as I showed above, he talks as an "aggressive polemicist"⁹⁵⁹ with one aim in mind: to convince the Shī'a of the inevitability of activism, and to provide them with the necessary self-confidence to engage in it.

In addition to authority and polemics, Faḍlallāh's rhetoric suggests three patterns that differ from the ones identified by Høigilt. These are justification, comprehensiveness and hybridity. Justification, a central pattern to Islamist rhetoric as a whole, consists in legitimating the use of force all along the discourse. Different arguments such as virtue, necessity etc. are used to persuade his audience of the legitimacy of violence. This pattern aims at the Islamisation of power. That is, while Islamist rhetoric acknowledges the difficulties of dealing with power from a religious point of view, it justifies force and ultimately Islamises it. Justification is also closely related to apologetics. Often, Faḍlallāh employs models of justification to counterattack criticism directed at Islam as a violent religion, based on *jihād*.

As for comprehensiveness, it arises from the idea that Islamic power is a totality that encompasses all aspects of life. To convince his audience, Faḍlallāh relies on rhetorical questions, repetition, metaphors and Qur'ānic verses to create an apparently reasoned and comprehensive representation of the world.

Finally, Faḍlallāh sustains a pattern of hybridity in his use of various rhetorical devices and various references including Sunnī, quietist Shī'ī sources, Orientalist, and other Western references. This intermingled variation creates a composite rhetoric that aspires to persuade through the multitude of rhetorical tools. However, the diverse elements add up to a coherent rhetorical strategy due to their interrelatedness serving

⁹⁵⁸ Høigilt, *Islamist Rhetoric*, 177-181.

⁹⁵⁹ Terms applied by Høigilt in *Islamist Rhetoric*, 179.

the underlying idea: discourse of power. Faḍlallāh substitutes logical reasoning with a complex rhetorical sleight-of-hand, leading his audience to believe in the validity of his ideology.

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this dissertation was to determine the contribution of Muḥammad Ḥusayn Faḍlallāh's concept of power to modern Shī'ism. Accordingly, the present study offers the first comprehensive research on Faḍlallāh's theory of power which he developed in his *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa*. This book provides a systematic and complex theory of power in which Faḍlallāh redefined Shī'ism, against quietism, as an Islamic activist movement of change and justice. He covered the theological, social, political, and ethical aspects of power in a de-mystified, pragmatic, hybrid discourse that greatly determined the path taken by Shī'i Islamists in Lebanon.

I argued that Faḍlallāh's concept of power represents a transformative paradigm which best explains the mindset and pragmatic characteristics of the Shī'i impetus for power. His theory has two angles: one that could be labelled – based on S. Clegg's theory – as “the circuits of power”. According to this perception the different constituents of power form a system in which they appear as both instruments and goals. The second is the modalities of power in which Faḍlallāh elaborates on the ethics and rhetoric of power.

The thematic analysis of *al-Islām wa-mantiq al-quwwa* and of his other writings – studied in chapters 3-7 of the present dissertation – covers the “circuits of power” such as theology, spirituality, society and politics. The study has found that Faḍlallāh construes the notion of power as an overarching system that embraces the spiritual and material realms of life, and equates Islam with just power. I argued that it is this systemic approach to power that allows and sets the ground for transforming faith, spirituality, social order, and politics into tools of empowerment. As a result, Islam appears as the sole legitimate holder of power which in turn necessitates a totalitarian order: divinely vested and submissive.

I also showed that Faḍlallāh centred his theology of power on linking *tawḥīd* to justice and transforming both notions into doctrinal bases of the believer's empowerment. Here, I highlighted the interconnectedness of faith and power, and the significance of causality and human free-will in Faḍlallāh's system of power. Furthermore, I showed that by these features Faḍlallāh transforms theology into a revolutionary doctrine.

An additional finding to emerge from this study is that Faḍlallāh's transformative Shī'ism reinterprets Ṣūfīsm and Shī'ī spirituality as "spirituality-in-action", turning it into an effective tool against colonialism and Orientalism. This invigorating spirituality contributes to transforming the theology of power into practice. Faḍlallāh's interpretation of mysticism enabled his theory to provide practical guidance to spiritual as well as to tangible empowerment.

The study of the social dimensions of Faḍlallāh's theory suggests that solidarity and the obligation of "commanding right and forbidding wrong" are intertwined in Faḍlallāh's perception of social power. I argued that Faḍlallāh's social theory – rooted in his theology and spirituality of power – transformed individual faith into a collective project of action. Furthermore, I emphasised Faḍlallāh's perception of social power as a venue for building power from below that turns social bonds into political action. In this regard, my analysis affirmed that his social thought found an echo in Ḥizbullāh's social activism.

Faḍlallāh's ideas on political power enhance the transformative paradigm as an effective way to read the history of modern Shī'ism. Faḍlallāh's reinterpretation of some traditional Shī'ī concepts regarding the *Mahdī*, quietism during the occultation of the Twelfth Imām (*intizār*), the necessity of infallible leadership (*'iṣma*), and dissimulation (*taqiyya*) are consistently marked by the call to action and the commitment to change and revolution. The transformative interpretation of theology, spirituality, and social values was a prelude to his concept of political power. I examined how Faḍlallāh reconstructed Islamic political theory regarding revolution as a means of change, the functions of the state, and the rules of international relations. I also analysed Faḍlallāh's concept of *jihād* and Islamisation. I showed that his pragmatism as reflected in his remarks on tactics and strategy made his Islamist approach flexible and even reluctant at the same time.

An original contribution of my dissertation is the study of the modalities of power in which I investigated the ethical and rhetorical aspects of Faḍlallāh's discourse on power. Both dimensions of modern Islamist thought and that of Shī'ism in particular are not sufficiently studied in Western scholarship. In my last two chapters (chapters 8 and 9), I offered an in-depth analysis of the ethical rulings set by Faḍlallāh and the rhetorical tools he applied in his argumentation.

With reference to Faḍlallāh's ethics of power, I claimed that his ideas as expounded in *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa* constitute the first comprehensive Shī'ī ethics of action, by providing a theologically justified alternative to quietism. In this, he covered every aspect of life that had been affected by the quietist interpretation of the religious tradition, and which Faḍlallāh perceived as an obstacle of change. First, I established that Faḍlallāh's understanding of the justification and the limits of force is framed by the "divine command ethics". In this system, whatever serves the purposeful divine will is legitimate and ethical. Accordingly, the forms, the conditions, and the scope of legitimate force are based on the Islamic revelation which makes this concept primarily legalist and deontological. This feature highlights the difference between the Nietzschean cult of power and what Faḍlallāh defines as Islamic. Another key observation of this chapter is that Faḍlallāh vested human beings with a high degree of freedom in adapting general principles to actual circumstances. I illustrated this claim with some of his legal opinions from the field of bioethics too. This character provides his ethics with a significant utilitarian dimension. As such, I concluded that his ethics could be best labelled as theistic utilitarianism or purposeful voluntarism.

The concluding chapter of the dissertation examined a little studied aspect of Islamist writings, the rhetorical tools that guarantee the effectiveness of their polemics and that of their call to action. I examined the rhetorical strategies Faḍlallāh uses to support his system of power. I showed that Faḍlallāh reconstructed the value system of the believers in two ways. First, he turned the use of force into part of the *shahāda*, and second, proved that every field of human existence is a battlefield. By interpreting life as a continuous combat he rewrote the myth of passive suffering and substitutes it with an activist – militant or political – Islamism. The rhetorical analysis suggests that Faḍlallāh's refutation of the image of Islam as a violent religion while still acknowledging the need to justify aspirations to power is built on his tactics of Islamising power and force. By his rhetoric, Faḍlallāh constructed a religious ideology in which power is understood as virtuous, instrumental, and essential to promote the interests of the Shī'a minority.

Faḍlallāh's *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa* was shown to be an alternative Shī'ī narrative of power the aim of which was to transform the Shī'ī community from quietism to activism. This narrative can be summarised in three features: compositeness (or hybridity), comprehensiveness, and concern with empowerment. Each of them is

simultaneously present in Faḍlallāh's work and they complement one another, giving it complexity and uniqueness.

First, the compositeness of Faḍlallāh's theory stems from his attempt to answer various challenges that Western thought (mainly Marxism and Orientalism), Sunnī fundamentalism, Shī'ī quietism, and secular Arab nationalism posed to a specifically Shī'ī mobilisation and activism. In his work, Faḍlallāh integrated traditional references with modern ideologies and created a new Shī'ī narrative of power, composed of leftist western notions and the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood in its Quṭbist trend. This heterogeneity gives his system of power pragmatism and flexibility.

Faḍlallāh's perception of Islam as a system echoed some ideas by Khumaynī and Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr, as well as Sayyid Quṭb's radical conception of Islam, *tawḥīd* and power, and Arab Marxist ideology. Faḍlallāh's voluntarist theological attitude comprises the refutation of the Marxist views, references to Shī'ī *ḥadīth* and ideas from Mu'tazilī theology. Regarding spiritual power, Faḍlallāh based his ideas on the reinterpretation of Ṣūfī concepts. In his concept of social power, he combined elements of medieval Islamic social thought ("commanding right and forbidding wrong") with Western social theory such as Functionalism. In his ethical views, Faḍlallāh did not limit himself to the Shī'ī narrative of injustice. Instead, he made extensive use of Sunnī sources, quoted and criticised Western moral philosophy. In general, we can conclude that Faḍlallāh's references to the Shī'ī tradition were cautious and limited. He constantly selected elements that were part and parcel of quietism and turned them into an inspiration for mobilisation and action.

Second, the comprehensiveness of Faḍlallāh's concept is rooted in the same reasons as its compositeness. He had to address social and political issues already dealt with by Marxists and Sunnī Islamist thinkers. As a top-rank jurist, he carried out this task from the position of a traditional Shī'ī authority and designed a concept of empowerment that encompassed all aspects of life. In Faḍlallāh's thought power is, therefore, a system that combines the spiritual and material realms of the created world.

Third, the concern with empowerment results from the will to provide the deprived Shī'ī community of Lebanon with a project of acquiring power. In Faḍlallāh's concept, each aspect of *quwwa* serves the empowerment of the Islamic community and every single aspect of quietism weakens it. Thus, he pursued two objectives. On the one side, he wanted to deconstruct the quietist Shī'ī narrative. On the other, he aimed to

reinterpret Islam as just power. Faith and spirituality are essential to the empowerment of the believer while social and political power emerge as expressions for collective power.

The findings of this dissertation support the idea that modern Shī'ī political thought underwent a transformative process, to which Faḍlallāh's theory was a significant contribution. The transformative paradigm I suggest helps to understand the Shī'ī change from quietism to activism in all its dimensions. Namely, it provides an explanation for the pragmatism and the complexity of revivalist Shī'ī political thought, contextualises it in its socio-political and intellectual background, describes its process, elements, and strategies and highlights its ultimate goal. This paradigm works particularly well in studying the ethical and rhetorical features of activist-revivalist narratives. I argued that understanding other Shī'ī thinkers and movements – past and present equally – is greatly facilitated by detecting the comprehensive and composite nature of their discourse put at the service of the project of coming to power.

As recent developments proved, Faḍlallāh's theory of power has far-reaching practical implications. This fact shows the effectiveness of his rhetoric put at the service of a coherent ideology. Faḍlallāh's ideas inspired the Lebanese Ḥizbullāh on two levels: in its commitment to change the status quo, and in its pragmatic attitude in daily political strategies. Ḥizbullāh is active and resorts to force in issues that bear a regional significance and are related to its existence and material security, such as financial maintenance and arms supply. The cautious communication and successful propaganda of Ḥizbullāh – that caused a rise in its popularity even among the majority of Lebanese Christians in 2006 – echoes the rhetorical strategies deployed by Faḍlallāh in his *al-Islām wa-manṭiq al-quwwa*. Due to its radicalism, pragmatism and reluctance – regarding Lebanese internal affairs – Ḥizbullāh can be regarded as a proto-movement of Islamic power as Faḍlallāh imagined it.

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