
Hizballah's Bekka Organization

by Carl Anthony Wege

Abstract

Hizballah views Iran's theocratic doctrine of clerical rule (velayat-e-faqih) as their marja ('source of emulation'). This theocratic marja undergirds Hizballah's malevolent Islamicism which is rooted in Lebanon's Bekka valley. The valley is both anchor and heart of Hizballah and precipitates the regions drift toward Iran.

Lebanon's Matawila

In the early twentieth century France sought the creation of a Christian-Arab state[1] in the environs of Mt. Lebanon[2] to further its political objectives in the French Mandate territories. In the 1920s France midwived a new Lebanese state with a confessional system dominated by the mercantile interests of a Maronite-Sunni axis to the disadvantage of the mountain-based clan leaders. The Matawila (as Lebanon's Twelver Shi'a community is often called) was, according to Yusri Hazran, dominated, between 1920 and the outbreak of the civil war in 1975, by a handful of families, including the al-Asad, al-Khalil, al-Zayn, Hamadah, Usayran, Baydoun, Al-Fadl, and the Haydar's.[3] Lebanon, like other states grafted into Near East societies by the colonial powers, was a 'weak state', which characteristically lacking intermediating social-political institutions linking the state and society. Although Lebanon had a civil bureaucracy and nascent political parties, they failed as intermediating social-political entities [4] in the absence of an organic Lebanese civil society.[5] Clan, tribe, and confessional associations were more important than intermediating political institutions.

The Lebanese Shi'a worldview reflected the personalism, clientism, and paternalism characterizing these clans, tribes, and confessional associations. That worldview evolved as political mobilization among Lebanon's Shi'a began in the 1960s in the context of both Lebanese modernization and an influx of Shi'a religious scholars arriving in Lebanon from Najaf (Iraq) after Iraq's 1968 Ba'athist coup.[6] Najaf's 'Circles of Learning' (Hawzat al-Ilmiyyah) included many students who were later to become the theological cadre in Hizballah.[7] The dynamics of emergent Shi'a student-teacher networks in the context of Lebanon's family-clan relations changed the worldview of Lebanon's Shi'a community and the worldview of what became Hizballah. The Shi'a in Lebanon's south were dominated by local landlords (Zi'am) and notables acting as nodes, controlling vast client and patronage networks. The Zi'am system did, however, not characterize the Shi'a community in the Bekka which was more rooted in clan and tribal relationships. The more than hundred clans of the Bekka Valley were defined by a social framework anchored in blood relationships, cousin- and other arranged marriage, and long running vendettas frequently involving disputes over land or women.[8]

The 1982 Israeli-Lebanon war precipitated the creation of Islamic Amal (Amal Al-Islamiyah), by Hussein Musawi[9] when he and approximately 500 followers from Musa Sadr's original AMAL [10] movement trekked east to Nabisheet (Hussein Musawi's home town) in Baalbek in Lebanon's Bekka valley.[11] They joined with Sepahe al-Quds (Jerusalem) elements of Iran's Revolutionary Guard[12] (Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, IRGC or Pasdaran) deployed in eastern Lebanon's Bekka valley in July of 1982. Sheikh Subhi Tufayli and his cadre from Lebanon's al-Dawah (the Islamic Call)[13] movement had already arrived in the Bekka, creating an environment conducive to the Islamist enterprise. A coalition developed between the Musawi organization, the followers of Sheikh Subhi al-Tufayli,[14] the Association of Muslim Students, [15] and the Association of Muslim Ulema in Lebanon.[16] The Pasdaran (Padan-e Inqilal-e Islami in coordination with the Iranian Embassy's in Beirut and Damascus)[17] drew from this - and the heart of Hizballah[18] began to beat in Baalbek.[19] In 1982 the Pasdaran's Sepahe al-Quds (under Mohsen Rafiq-Dust initially involving cadre trained by the PLO in Lebanese camps during the reign of the Shah[20]) were configured in the Bekka valley in camps near Zebdani, Baalbek,[21] Brital, and Nabisheet. The Sepahe al-Quds Pasdaran in the Bekka were particularly skillful in mobilizing revolutionary zealotry and systematizing mechanisms to nurture Hizballah. Iran's presence in the Bekka integrated Khomeini's foreign policy goals of exporting the revolution and creating an Islamic Republic in Lebanon through Hizballah. Many PLO-trained Pasdaran were familiar with Lebanon, concomitantly facilitating Palestinian relations with various Islamist factions within the Shi'a community.[22] The Pasdaran offered the Shi'a of the Bekka - and later the larger Shi'a community - an articulation of resistance that conformed to Shi'a religious tradition while creating a vision of something greater than a mere confessional militia.

In the Bekka, Hizballah supported the more impoverished part of the Shi'a against elements of the larger Shi'a clans including the Jafar's - even though the Jafar's, of Baalbek and Hermel,[23] were associates of what became core Hizballah clans like the Hamadis.[24] Bekka Shi'a clans include the Hamiya, Musawi, Aqeel, Shahadehs, and Ezzedeens. This, in return, facilitated the Guards integration into Lebanon's Shi'a Islamist movement.[25] In 1983 and 1984, Hizballah's developed regional organizations first in the Bekka (particularly in Brital, Hermel, and Baalbek), then in Beirut, and only lastly in the south[26] with features similar to those found in clan-based criminal organizations.[27] In the absence of state institutions, these organizations both rendered a form of justice and were a source of social services. The geographic regions themselves became sub-divided into sectors, creating a compartmentalized operational environment with the Bekka region. It was characterized by a focus on Hizballah logistics and training. As Hizballah's military component matured, small training camps like Yanta and Shaara near Nabisheet were closed and its Bekka-based facilities consolidated into six main venues described as including Ain Bourday and Homs Road near Baalbek, Nabisheet, Wadi Firsan and Nabeh El Assi near Hermel, and Wadi al-Yammounh adjacent to the Jbeil mountains.[28]

The Bekka's Dar al-Islam

The Bekka valley runs about seventy-five miles on a north-south axis between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon (Jabal al-Sharqi or Eastern) mountains, with a girth that averages about ten miles. There are two main rivers of note that transit the Bekka. The headwaters of the Litani originate west of Baalbek; it supplies southern Lebanon while it is also coveted by Israel.[29] The north-south axis of the valley characterized by geographic compactness masks its spatial complexity. Although multiple remote sensing modalities used by multiple foreign powers have probed every available physical aspect of the valley it has still retained some of its secrets. The Bekka has been an agricultural breadbasket going back to Roman times when it was the granary of Roman Syria [30]. The Bekka was also Lebanon's breadbasket but the civil war that began in 1975 saw commercial narcotic cultivation, which had always existed on the margins, become an integral element of the Bekka's agricultural profile. This commercial illicit narcotic cultivation was a mainstay of the valley's economy through the civil war, with essentially every community and militia playing a role in the enterprise. It was overlooked by the United States and other western countries as Lebanese factions supported by the United States were as compromised to the illicit growth and trade of narcotics as everyone else. Narcotic networks with assets operating in the Bekka were characterized by an exchange of cash and arms to Lebanese stakeholders in return for Bekka cannabis and heroin. Syrian occupation forces in the Bekka managed what amounted to a tax on farming operations involving narcotics cultivation and distribution networks. Manara and Hermel (in the Western Bekka) were a hub of cannabis cultivation. Heroin processing occurred in Baalbek, Hermel, Hellanyeh, Niha, Abbasyeh, Barqa, Laat, Zarazeer, and Kuddam. [31]

In addition, Iran began counterfeiting the famous \$100 "Super Notes" using the intaglio printing machines initially supplied by the United States to Iran under the regime of the Shah. The Bekka's Zebdani barracks at the Beirut-Damascus border crossing with Syria was the initial distribution node for the phony currency which first surfaced in Hong Kong in 1989. The actual counterfeiting operation was later moved to the Bekka with the fake currency distributed via the narcotics networks - with both Syria and Iran netting approximately a billion dollars from the exercise.[32] The Bekka itself was characterized by a mixed demography with Shi'a communities concentrated in the Baalbek-Hermel area balancing Greek Catholic domination by the Skaff clan of the Bekka administrative capital of Zahle near the Syrian border and southeast of mount Sanin[33] whose heights dominate part of the Bekka. Zahle and its 150,000 people sit astride the Barouni River and the town was used extensively by the Syrians during their 1976 – 2005 occupation of Lebanon. The Palestinian political presence in the Bekka is still anchored at the Wavel camp near Baalbek[34] where many Palestinian factions have offices. The Taalabaya region of the central Bekka, directly on the Syrian border, has offices and facilities for the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP & PFLP respectively). The PFLP General Command (an offshoot of the original

organization) is located in nearby Koussaya and opposite this area deployed in the Western Bekka near Kamed al-Lawz [35] Although now essentially defunct, the Abu Nidal Organization had maintained facilities at Yanta in the Rachaya district of the Bekka. A generation ago, the Bekka hosted a virtual alphabet soup of secular guerrilla organizations the bulk of which were defined by Marxist or pseudo-Marxist ideologies. Today one is more likely to find Islamist organizations and the concomitant splinter groups dotted across the valley. Iran has made common cause with the Sunni Hamas and the less significant Palestinian Islamic Jihad to gain entry into the Israeli conflict theater. Iran promotes some level of training for these groups under Hizballah auspices in the Bekka.[36]

Syria's dominance in the Bekka was rooted first in geography and, more recently, in its 1976 intervention in Lebanon's civil war. The Syrian-Lebanese border has always been somewhat ambiguous due to the reluctance of Damascus to recognize Lebanese sovereignty.[37] The major recognized crossing points in the Bekka are Jusia, connecting Baalbek and Homs in Syria and the Masnaa crossing on the Beirut to Damascus highway. However, there are an additional seventy odd crossing points that facilitate smuggling but are often little more than mule trails.[38] Bath'ist Syrian foreign policy had effectively adopted part of the pan-Syrian ideology expressed decades earlier by the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP)[39], arguing that geographic Syria should include present day Israel/Palestine, Lebanon, and Jordan. The organizational strength of the SSNP has always been greatest in Lebanon where it acted as a deniable Syrian intelligence asset. Syrian interests in Lebanon during its occupation were overseen by Ghazi Kan'an; he was responsible for Syrian military intelligence in Lebanon between 1982 and 2001. He later became the Syrian Interior Minister and in the end was reportedly assisted in committing suicide in 2005 - following the assassination of Lebanese President Hariri. Kan'an's replacement as head of Syrian military intelligence in Lebanon, General Rustom Ghazaleh, maintained the headquarters staff of about 100 Syrian military intelligence personnel in the small eastern Bekka village of Anjar[40] until Syria's formal withdrawal of troops in 2005. In addition to the Syrian presence, Anjar (also called Haoush Mousa) was home to approximately 2,000 Armenians settled there by the French from the Musa Dagh area of Turkey, following the Armenian genocide. It became home for both the Armenian terrorist group ASALA and the Justice Commandos.[41] Anjar was also alleged as a logistical hub for Sunni jihadists entering Syria in order to infiltrate Iraq and join the Sunni insurgency there.[42]

Syria's Hafez al-Assad also facilitated Pasdaran [43] operations in the Bekka to immunize his troops in Lebanon against Shi'a agitation that could destabilize his presence in Lebanon and precipitate further troubles in Syria with the Sunni Muslim Brothers. This was important with Assad supporting both AMAL and the Hizballah even given the greater Alawite affinity for the secularists of AMAL.[44] The Hizballah clans came to dominate the Bekka labyrinth, particularly the Baalbek-Hermel axis, in part due to a level of ideological commitment far in excess of that enjoyed by AMAL and various Christian and Sunni militias. Officers

administering the Syrian occupation were primarily committed to personal enrichment and only secondarily to upholding Syrian interests in Lebanon and preparing for the confrontation with Israel. The Bekka Hizballah clans and their allies in the Pasdaran could thereby navigate both the Syrian occupation authorities and rival militias to secure Shia interests.

Thermidor to the Harb Tammus

The fratricide of Lebanon's civil war became intra-communal with the so-called green terror within the Muslim community in the latter 1980s. This green terror ended, along with the Lebanese civil war, in the thermidor of the T'iaf Accords in 1989 which also marking Hizballah's evolution from a confessional militia into a larger political movement. By the early 1990's, Hizballah split into a relatively moderate, politically-oriented faction[45] and an Islamist faction. The Islamist faction itself divided, as Sheikh Tufayli attempted to create a 'Movement of the Hungry' in the Brital region of the Bekka, with aspirations corresponding to Hizballah's original program for an Islamic Republic of Lebanon. It was stillborn by 1998. The Islamic Resistance (al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya) thereupon became the 'mainstream' Hizballah Islamist faction looking no longer to create an Islamic Republic but rather to force the Israelis out of south Lebanon. In this they succeeded as Israel's Defence Force (IDF) withdrew in May of 2000.

Although Hizballah's status ascended immeasurably as it fought the IDF to a standstill in the summer of 2006, it nonetheless emerged from the war badly mauled. The progression of that conflict is discussed elsewhere yet it was a significant transformative event on multiple levels. In the summer war the Party of God became integral to the defense of whole of the Lebanese state against Israel. Hizballah demonstrated an emerging sophistication as a military force due, in part, to its close integration with elements of the Pasdaran. The reconstitution of Hizballah as it incorporated the lessons of the summer war into its organization has resulted in further evolution of the party. Syria facilitated the replenishment of Hizballah arms following the summer war to the degree of establishing what amounts to a Hizballah military base near Adra in an area northeast of Damascus to manage the transfer of arms into the Hizballah security pockets of the Bekka.[46] In the summer of 2008 Hizballah entered Mount Sannine in the Matar region (roughly a couple of dozen miles due east of Beirut) apparently to deploy remote sensing equipment, counter Israeli *in situ* devices from the summer war, and use the heights to command the entire central region of the Bekka valley.[47]

Conclusion: the Shi'a Tribal Flag

Charles Glass, a British journalist, observed that Near Eastern societies were better described as 'tribes with flags' than states. The phrase aptly describes Lebanon's Shi'a. The matrix of

criminal, militia, and Islamist networks create a system of variable sovereignties in the Bekka. The dominance of a given sovereignty at a given node at a particular point in time is a function of both internal and external conditions. Internal conditions are rooted in the concept of Ba'raka (charisma) and the leadership of the scholar-jurists (e. g. Fadlallah) with militants adhering to them on the basis of their personal charisma. Different personalities thereby rise and decline as their followings coalesce and disintegrate. The result is a set of fluid relationships around the followers of various Ulema. External conditions are configured by the rulers of Beirut and Damascus and, to a lesser extent, Tehran, Amman, and Tel Aviv. The Hizballah sovereignties in the Bekka are characterized by an intellectual frame of reference formed in the Hawzat's of Najaf and Qom. Understanding the Bekka's Hizballah sovereignties absent that frame of reference is akin to discerning the nuance and subtlety of a Jesuit worldview devoid of inculcation in the Loyolan tradition.

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Notes

- [1] This 'greater Lebanon' (Etat du Grand Liban) created by France, encompassed areas historically ruled by Fakhr al-Din (Fakhreddine II 1572–1635) and Bashir II (1788–1840). See Hanf, Theodor. *Coexistence In Wartime Lebanon*. Oxford: The Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1993, p. 64.
- [2] Mt. Lebanon was created as a separate administrative region within the Ottoman empire at the behest of the European powers, following massacres of Christians during civil strife in 1860.
- [3] Hazran, Yusri. 'The Shiite Community in Lebanon: From Marginalization to Ascendancy,' *Middle East Brief*, No. 37. Brandeis University: Crown Center for Middle East Studies, June 2009.
- [4] See Nazih Ayubi, 'Arab Bureaucracies: Expanding Size, Changing Roles'; in: Giacomo Luciani (Ed.). *The Arab State*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990.
- [5] Civil society here is understood in Lockean terms, i.e. wherein government is created by a social contract among individuals protecting life, liberty, and property.
- [6] Shapira, Shimon. 'The Origins of Hizballah', *Jerusalem Quarterly*, 46 (Spring 1988), p. 116. - The secular Ba'athist parties in Iraq and Syria were opposed to the Islamists who later created Lebanon's al-Dawah (the Islamic Call) movement.
- [7] These Hawzat were under the direction of Bakr al-Sadr and the students included Shams al-Din, Hussein Fadlallah (who studied under Baqr al-Sadr and Ayatollah Abol Qasim Musavi-Khoi), Subhi Tufayli, Ibrahim al-Amin, Hasan Nasrallah (who saw Ayatollah Khomeini when the latter was in Najaf), and Abbas Musawi among others. They were instrumental in the founding of Hizballah. See Hamzeh, Nizar and Hrair Dekmejian, 'The Islamic Spectrum of Lebanese Politics,' *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. XVI, No. 3 (Spring 1993), p. 36.
- [8] See 'Bekaa Valley clans sign peace pact', *France24*, 28 October 2009.
- [9] The Musawi clan members in the AMAL movement were more sympathetic to Iran's 1979 revolution than other Shi'a clans associated with AMAL.
- [10] These were primarily al-Dawah members who had infiltrated AMAL earlier, intending to maneuver the organization in an Islamist direction.
- [11] Hussein and his followers left the AMAL center in Beirut and seized AMAL offices and ordinance depots in the Bekka valley town of Baalbek.
- [12] Hussein Musawi initiated the split within AMAL during the Fourth Congress in Tyre in March 1982. See Sankari, Jamal. *Fadlallah: The Making of a Radical Shi'ite Leader*. London: Saqi Books, 2005, p. 196.
- [13] Originally an Iraqi Shi'a Islamist organization created by Baqr al-Sadr (a cousin of Musa Sadr) in 1958, Lebanon's al-Dawah (the Islamic Call) was formed in the late 1960s. Al-Dawah officially dissolved itself in 1980 in response to Khomeini's admonitions concerning Western style party organization. In practice, this had little impact as al-Dawah's members were integrated into the larger Hizballah movement. Those retaining less formal adherence to Dawah ideology tended to follow Hussein Fadlallah. They were heavily penetrated by Syrian intelligence by the late 1990s although they continued training at Hizballah camps until they created their own facilities in 1996. See *Intelligence Online*, 19 February 1998.
- [14] Sheikh Subhi al-Tufayli commanded the operational headquarters of Hizballah in Baalbek in close coordination with the Pasdaran. See Ranstorp, Magnus. 'Hizbollah's Command Leadership: Its Structure, Decision-Making and Relationship with Iranian Clergy and Institutions' *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 6, no. 3, 1998, p. 305. Tufayli was later Secretary-General of Hizballah but was ultimately expelled over his opposition to Hizballah's more moderate course. He then created a 'Revolution of the Hungry' (Thawrat al-Jiya') from his bastion in the Brital region of the Bekka in 1999 but the movement failed and Tufayli was marginalized as the century closed. See Shahanon, *The Shi'a of Lebanon*, op. cit., p. 123.
- [15] The organization was originally created by Lebanese Shi'a clerics in the early 1970s to assist Shi'a university students in avoiding worldly temptation.
- [16] Shapira, 'The Origins of Hizballah', op. cit., p. 124.
- [17] See Aboul-Enein, Youssef and Rudolph Atallah. 'Hizballah: A Discussion of Its Early Formation.' *Infantry*, 94 (3) May / June 2005 pg. 24. See also *Al-Muharrar*, Lebanon 28 July 1989. Iranian Ambassador to Damascus Mohammed Hassan Skhtari was instrumental in building Hizballah on the ground in the Bekka.
- [18] Iran decided to foster an Islamist organization using the Pasdaran rather than working with the more secularly oriented AMAL.
- [19] 'Islamic Jihad Seen As Pro-Iran', *New York Times*, 19 April 1983, p.12. The first Iranian volunteers were apparently sheltered at the Imam al-Mahdi school in Baalbek with an Iranian communications center in Ballbeks al-Khayyam hotel before the Guard acquired their better known bases in the valley. See Miller, Judith. *God Has Ninety Nine Names*. New York: Touchstone Books, 1996, p. 282.
- [20] Robin Wright. *In The Name Of God*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989, p. 109. Abbas al-Musawi was apparently in the first group of about 180 men given ideological and military training by the Pasdaran in Baalbek. By all accounts, he was quite inspired by the entire experience. See Sankari *Fadlallah*, op. cit., p. 194.
- [21]. See Taheri, Amir. *Holy Terror*. Bethesda, Maryland: Adler and Adler, 1987, pp. 122 - 123. The Pasdaran held the Sheikh Abdallah Barracks and al-Daek garrison in Baalbek. The Sheikh Abdallah Barracks would not return to nominal Lebanese army control until 1992. Several hundred Pasdaran were based in and around Baalbek and Nabisheet.
- [22] It is perhaps worth noting that Fatah historically had good relations, and some association with, the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood. It is therefore not amazing that they would make some common cause with Islamists among the Shi'a opposition. Arafat had previously co-opted Musa Al-Sadr and convinced him to allow Fatah to train early AMAL cadre. This even though the 1980s would also see Palestinian-Shi'a conflicts during the so-called war of the camps.
- [23] See Hamzeh, Nizar. 'Clan Conflicts, Hezbollah and the Lebanese State', *Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (Winter 1994), p. 433. The Hermel clans can be divided into two basic groups: the first includes the A'shair Shamasiyah, al-Shamas, al-Elawh,

al-Dandash, al-Alam, al-Awad, al-Nasreddine, and al-Ala'eddine clans; the second major Hermel clan group includes the A'shair Zouaiteriyah, al-Zouaiter, al-Jafar, al-Noon, al-Amhaz, al-Mukdad, al-Hajj-Hasan, al-Shryif, and al-Rabah clans.

[24] Harris, William W. *Faces of Lebanon: Sects, Wars, and Global Extensions*. Princeton: Markus Weiner Publishers, 1997, p. 304.

[25] Jaber, Hala. *Hezbollah: Born With A Vengeance*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, p. 117.

[26] See Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon*, op. cit., p. 114.

[27] In this organizational sense, they shared some characteristics with mid-20th century Cosa Nostra families.

[28] 'Hezbollah digs in deep' *Asia Times*, 25 July 2006.

[29] The watershed of the Orontes (Asi) river likewise arises near the Labwah springs east of Baalbek and flows north into Syria.

[30] The flat plain of the Bekka valley was known at one point as coele Syria ('hollow Syria').

[31] *US Congressional Record*, 27 July 1990.

[32] See 'Terror Dollars: Counterfeiters, Cartels, and other Emerging Threats to America's Currency', *Washington Post*, 6 March 1994; see also Gary C. Gambill, 'Syria after Lebanon: Hooked on Lebanon', *Middle East Quarterly*, Fall 2005: pp. 35-42.

[33] In mid 2008, Hizballah made significant areas of Mt. Sanin a closed military zone - apparently with the intent to establish command, control and remote sensing assets there.

[34] The camp is home to about 7,500 souls and dominated by the PFLP-GC and Syrian Palestinian Saiqa organization.

[35] Maroun, Pierre A. 'The Map of Terrorist Groups In Lebanon: The Syrian Moukhabarat Connection'; at <http://www.analyst-network.com/articles/78/TheMapofTerroristGroupsInLebanonTheSyrianMoukhabaratsConnection.pdf> accessed May 2010. The DFLP, PFLP, PFLP-GC are all beholden to Syria and operate under Syrian auspices.

[36] At the same time Iran has been much more circumspect in its relations with the Muslim Brotherhood, in deference to Syria, and Al-Qaeda, limiting their access to the valley.

[37] Diplomatic relations between the two states were not formally established until 2008.

[38] 'Smuggling Across the Syrian-Lebanese border', *Asharq Alawat*, 27 April 2008.

[39] Patrick Seale. *Asad: The Struggle For The Middle East*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988, p. 349. The SSNP, as a political organization, was founded by Antun Sa'ada in Beirut in 1932. It was characterized by a focus on secularism, a leadership principle (that was essentially proto-fascist), and a commitment to greater Syrian (as opposed to Arab) nationalism. The SSNP had splintered in the 1960s into right and left wing factions. When the Lebanese civil war broke out in 1975, the SSNP militia was still estimated to number about 3000.

Factions of the SSNP served in both the anti-government Lebanese National Movement (LNM) and in a collection of leftist parties the Syrians had organized in competition with the LNM - including a pro-Syrian faction of the SSNP under the leadership of Elias Knizah and Issam al-Muhayri. The pro-Syrian wing of the SSNP then allied with Syria in the prosecution of the Lebanese civil war after 1976. In return, the Syrians supported the SSNP with arms and money and ran a training camp for them in Didda, Lebanon. The SSNP militias have historically been well-organized; they fought to good effect during the early stages of the civil war and became one of Syria's major allies in the Lebanese conflict.

[40] The main Syrian intelligence facility was at the western entrance to the town which was also home to a Syrian detention facility under the command of Col. Yussaf Al-Abed in 2004.

[41] The Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) and the Justice Commandos (JC) were both Armenian terrorist organizations with grievances against Turkey for the Armenian genocide of 1915.

[42] Gambill, Gary. 'Salafi-jihadism in Lebanon.' *Mideast Monitor*, Vol. 3, No.1, January-March 2008.

[43] Syria supported Iran in the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq Gulf war. The Iranian dispatch of Revolutionary Guards to Lebanon implicitly supported the Syrians while Israel savaged Lebanon. This policy was continued by Bahir Assad, following the 2000 death of his father Hafez.

[44] It should be mentioned that relations between the Shi'a, Pasdaran, and Syrian security services were complex and changing. Syria actively assisted Hizballah operations prior to the Multinational Forces withdrawal in 1984. Thereafter the relationship was more problematic although Syria always collected a hefty share of the Bekka's drug trafficking operations. Ironically, the drug trade nonetheless gave both a steady source of income and provided a model of cooperation for all concerned. See Magnus Ranstorp. *Hizb'allah in Lebanon: The Politics of the Western Hostage Crisis*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997, p. 71. Shi'a clans in the Bekka involved with both drug smuggling and Hizballah included Hamiya from Taraiya village west of Baalbek, Tles and Mazloun from Brital town, and al-Masri from Hawr Ta'ala. See Benjamin Feinberg, Sarah Marek, and Jan Snadauf, unpublished paper *Hizballah and its Worldwide Crime/Terror Infrastructure*; SIS 596 - Transnational Crime & Terrorism, Professor Louise Shelley, December 20, 2005, p. 10.

[45] In just over a decade, this political faction developed to the point that a joint Hizballah-AMAL bloc received 35 Parliamentary seats in the spring 2005 elections. See Samii, Abbas William. 'Shiites in Lebanon: The Key To Democracy'. *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XIII, No. 2 (Summer 2006), p. 32.

[46] 'Syria accused of arming Hizballah from secret bases', *Times Online*, 28 May 2010.

[47] 'Lebanon: Hezbollah's New Mountain Hideaway', *Stratfor*, 15 July 2008 www.stratfor.com