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Recommended Citation

Wege, Carl Anthony. "Hizbollah–Syrian Intelligence Affairs: A Marriage of Convenience." *Journal of Strategic Security* 4, no. 3 (2011): : 1-14.

DOI:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.4.3.1>

Available at: <http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/jss/vol4/iss3/2>

Hizbollah–Syrian Intelligence Affairs: A Marriage of Convenience

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Abstract

Since the 1980s, Hizbollah has emerged as the guardian of Lebanon's Shi'a and a stalking horse for Iran. Syria, though allied with Tehran, seeks to manage Hizbollah's freedom of action in Lebanon and is eyed cautiously in Damascus. Hizbollah has managed to maintain independence from these Syrian efforts because of both Lebanese Shi'a religious élan and the protection given Hizbollah by its Shi'a allies in Iran.

Journal of Strategic Security
Volume 4 Issue 3 2011, pp. 1-14
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Hizbollah–Syrian Intelligence Affairs: A Marriage of Convenience

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Abstract

Since the 1980s, Hizbollah has emerged as the guardian of Lebanon's Shi'a and a stalking horse for Iran. Syria, though allied with Tehran, seeks to manage Hizbollah's freedom of action in Lebanon and is eyed cautiously in Damascus. Hizbollah has managed to maintain independence from these Syrian efforts because of both Lebanese Shi'a religious *élan* and the protection given Hizbollah by its Shi'a allies in Iran.

Introduction

Syria is historically and geographically ill-defined, although an identifiable Syrian ethnicity can be traced to the Biblical era. Nonetheless, the contemporary Syrian state deems Lebanon little more than an errant Syrian province, albeit one that has been at the economic heart of Syria since Ottoman times.¹ Syria's political objectives are to maintain authority over the Lebanese state and to manipulate both Hizbollah ("Party of God") and the larger Lebanese polity to Syrian advantage. On the other hand, Iran—with an historic connection to the Shi'a of Lebanon—seeks ostensibly to further the Shi'a Islamist revolution. Iran and Syria mutually desire to use Lebanon and Hizbollah as an asset in their own confrontations with Israel.

Beginning with the outbreak of Lebanon's civil war in 1975, Syria worked to penetrate and influence terrorist organizations and militias operating in Lebanon with the aim of furthering Syria's political domination. Syria

has been unsuccessful in its efforts to penetrate and control Hizbollah, due—in part—to Iran's interests in the Shi'a inhabitants of Lebanon. The *modus vivendi* (understanding) that finally emerged was one of Syrian tolerance for Hizbollah's relative independence in return for Hizbollah's facilitation of larger Syrian interests regarding Lebanon and Israel.

Syria's support of Hizbollah is an element of the marriage of convenience that characterizes the larger Iranian-Syrian entente. The changing nature of Iran's relationship with Syria mirrors, to a certain extent, the relationship between Hizbollah's security apparatus and Syrian intelligence. The genuine alliance between Hizbollah and Iran can be juxtaposed against Syria's desire to control Hizbollah activity in Lebanon. Essentially, Syria tolerates and supports Hizbollah's activities in Lebanon because Hizbollah furthers Syria's political and policy objectives. Syria's ability to attenuate the arms flow to Hizbollah is its primary source of influence. That influence is limited, however, by Damascus's need to maintain good relations with Tehran.

Syrian backing for Hizbollah operations has been characterized by a punctuated rhythm in the decades following Hizbollah's establishment. Syrian support was greatest between the Iranian creation of Hizbollah in July of 1982 through the Hizbollah operations aimed at driving the Multinational Forces out of Lebanon two years later. Following the withdrawal of Multinational Forces in 1984, Syria attenuated its support for Hizbollah operations as it altered its intentions regarding Israel and Lebanon.

When Syria wants to intimidate non-Shi'a Lebanese or Israel, it provides greater support for Hizbollah operations. Once those objectives are achieved, Syria reduces its support for Hizbollah. When Syrian assistance to Hizbollah is otherwise minimal, it nonetheless facilitates logistical support, in part, to maintain good relations with Tehran. The current Adra facility near Damascus, for example, is a case in point. It is within Syrian borders but acts as a Hizbollah arms depot and trans-shipment point, as well as a Hizbollah training facility. Syria's physical control of the facility allows it to attenuate the arms flow to Hizbollah in Lebanon. This nominal control, however, is undermined by the fact that the arms are financed by Tehran. Therefore, Damascus's ability to exercise its authority over the facility and Hizbollah is truncated, lest it incur Tehran's wrath.

The Foundational Syrian Intelligence Apparatus and Its Operations in Lebanon

While Syria managed to subsume its clan, tribal, and religious divisions under an authoritarian and secular Ba'athist state by the 1960s,² these factional loyalties continue to persist in its intelligence services.³ Syrian intelligence originated during the French Mandate (1923–1943) and was referred to as the *Deuxième Bureau* until 1969.⁴ The modern Syrian intelligence services emerged in the 1970s under (then) Soviet tutelage. They still reflect Soviet influence, albeit in a particularly Syrian political and cultural context. The historic heart of Syria's praetorian state during the regime of Hafez Assad (1971–2000) was a balanced triumvirate consisting of the General Intelligence Directorate (*Idarat al-Amn al-'Amm*), General Military Intelligence (*Shu'bat al-Mukhabarat al-'Askariyya*), and Air Force Intelligence (*Idarat al-Mukhabarat al-Jawiyya*).⁵ Air Force Intelligence is the smallest intelligence organ, but its role is significant in liaising with Syrian-sponsored terrorist organizations.⁶

Syria's foundational intelligence agencies are supported by derivative agencies in a security network whose primary imperative is the protection of Assad's (both Hafez's and Bashar's) regime. The primary external focus of Syrian intelligence is on the politics of Lebanon. During the last quarter of the twentieth century in Lebanon, Syria pioneered and perfected the operational use of state-sponsored terrorism as a covert tool of state policy.⁷ Elements of Syrian Military and Air Force Intelligence, in their early institutional iterations, created regularized procedures whereby Damascus would approve political targets and task a terrorist group operating in Lebanon, but dominated by Syria (such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Command [PFLP-GC]) as external assets. The PFLP-GC, in this example, would then carry out the operational particulars with Syrian intelligence support, thereby insulating the Syrian government from direct culpability.⁸

The ability of Syrian intelligence organs to infiltrate organizations in Lebanon is facilitated by a border that is somewhat ambiguous because of the reluctance of Damascus to completely demarcate the boundary or recognize Lebanese sovereignty.⁹ In essence, the border is merely an administrative division between eastern Lebanon and Syria proper, although there are two major recognized crossing points: at Jusia between Baalbek, Lebanon and Homs, Syria; and at Masnaa on the Beirut-to-Damascus highway. Several dozen additional informal crossing points are used primarily by smugglers.¹⁰ Individual Syrian officers administering the post-1976 occupation of Lebanon were often primarily concerned with per-

sonal enrichment, and only secondarily concerned with either Syria's Lebanese interests or the confrontation with Israel.¹¹ Syrian occupation authorities operated what amounted to a tax-farming system in the Bekka and allowed narcotics production to surge from regional to global significance while funneling hundreds of millions of dollars into the larger Syrian economy.¹² In addition to profiting from other kinds of criminal activity, Syria used Lebanese front men and Lebanese banks to launder money procured from corruption, and to facilitate particular terrorist operations.¹³ Since the nominal Syrian state lacked a private banking system, Damascus was quite dependent on the Lebanese banks for both normal economic transactions and for more nefarious Syrian activities.

Lebanese Militias as Syrian Instruments

The Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) was founded in Beirut and has traditionally maintained a substantial presence in Lebanon, along with several large, although factionalized, militias wholly beholden to Damascus. The Bath'ist foreign policy of modern Syria effectively incorporated part of the pan-Syrian ideology expressed decades earlier by the SSNP, arguing that geographic Syria should include present-day Israel/Palestine, Lebanon, and Jordan.¹⁴ The SSNP's significant links to many of the region's political radicals facilitated enhanced operational flexibility of Syrian intelligence interactions with terrorist organizations in Lebanon.¹⁵ The ability of Syrian intelligence to access the SSNP provided Syria's organs with an additional entrée into some of the major Palestinian militias, which Syria sought to infiltrate in order to bolster the Syrian intelligence apparatus.

Syria has used the SSNP as a level to manipulate various factions and militias in Lebanon, including Lebanon's Shi'a community. In 1986, for example, Hafez Assad deployed the SSNP militias to rein in Hizbollah, lest it threaten the continued viability of Shi'a Lebanese Resistance Detachments (aka *Amal al-Islamiyah*, or AMAL, which also means "hope" in Arabic), and thereby degrade Syrian influence over the Shi'a population.¹⁶ Hizbollah's ability to extend its *wasta*, or influence, deep into the Shi'a clans was in direct competition with Syria's effort to dominate the larger Lebanese polity. Assad used the SSNP to enhance his authority in Lebanon, while avoiding a direct confrontation with Iran that might have ensued had Syrian troops confronted Hizbollah directly. Syria and Iran then negotiated a cease-fire and *modus vivendi* between AMAL and Hizbollah, easing tensions until the T'iaf agreement ended the larger civil war in 1989. Syria also desired access to the Palestinian camps, whose extraterritoriality established by the Cairo Agreement was an intrinsic affront to the authority of Damascus.¹⁷ In addition to the SSNP,

organizations like the PFLP-GC furthered Syrian infiltration efforts. Although long beholden to Syrian intelligence, the PFLP-GC nevertheless shed its Marxist pretenses and embraced both Iran and Syria when Tehran began to fund the organization.¹⁸ The result was a PFLP-GC with some factions beholden to Iran and others more subservient to Damascus. The PFLP-GC became a Syrian tool, particularly in the Borj Al-Baraineh camp in southern Beirut, while other PFLP-GC factions cooperated with Iranian intelligence.

Syrian influence in the Hizbollah-dominated Bekka was enhanced through the presence of Syrian personnel in PFLP-GC facilities in Taalabaya, Koussaya (near Zahleh), and in the western Bekka area of Kamed Al-Lawz. Assad likewise used what was originally an Iraqi Shi'a Islamist *Dawah* organization to further its influence among Lebanon's Shi'a. 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 and officially dissolved itself in 1980 in response to Khomeini's admonitions concerning Western-style party organization. There was little practical consequence, as *al-Dawah's* members were subsumed into the larger Hizbollah movement. Those *Dawah* affiliates retaining less formal adherence to *Dawah* ideology tended to follow Hussein Fadlallah. They became almost completely infiltrated by Syrian intelligence by the late 1990s, although they continued training at Hizbollah camps until they created their own facilities in 1996.¹⁹ Additionally, Syria exercised its influence through compromised organizations. In so doing, it gained an independent modality with which to enforce its authority over recalcitrant Lebanese players through an autonomously operated system of detention centers in Beirut and Tripoli; in the Bekka towns of Anjar and Chtaura; and in prisons located at Palmyra and Mezza (in Damascus).

Iran's Sway with Lebanon's Hizbollah

A cosmopolitan Lebanese state created under French auspices was intended to protect Maronite co-religionists. Paris carved a Christian-Arab state out of greater Syria in the environs of Mt. Lebanon.²⁰ This Christian-dominated Lebanon was forged with a confessional system controlled by a Maronite-Sunni axis to the disadvantage of Lebanon's Shi'a.²¹ Lebanon's Shi'a, historically affiliated with the Twelver Shi'a of Iran, was relegated to third-class citizenship in their own country. The confessional system stratified Lebanese political institutions and civil society in ways that became increasingly untenable over time, ultimately leading to civil war and Syrian intervention. This was followed by two Israeli invasions aimed at settling accounts with the Palestinians. The

initial Israeli invasion is noteworthy for the establishment of an Israeli-occupied "security zone" roughly fifteen kilometers deep along Lebanon's southern border. In 1982 Israel invaded Lebanon in a more substantive way, intent on liquidating the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) infrastructure in Lebanon. While the Shi'a of Lebanon's southern region were in regular conflict with the Palestinians, the Israelis clashed with the Shi'a as well, precipitating Iranian intervention. Among the Shi'a, the 1982 Israel-Lebanon war catalyzed the emergence of Islamic AMAL and its coalition with the followers of Sheikh Subhi al-Tufayli and other Shi'a factions in Lebanon's Bekka Valley.²² The *Sepahe al-Quds* (Jerusalem) elements of Iran's *Pasdaran* (*Padan-e Inqilal-e Islami*, or Revolutionary Guards), in coordination with the Iranian Embassies in Beirut and Damascus, deployed in eastern Bekka in July 1982.²³ The *Sepahe al-Quds* built on this AMAL coalition and, thus Hizbollah was born.²⁴

The first iteration of Hizbollah included a security apparatus modeled on the AMAL security service and, more generally, Fatah's *Jihaz al-Razd*.²⁵ Hizbollah's initial operations were consummated using multiple organizational descriptors for this security apparatus.²⁶ Hussein al-Khalil first established Hizbollah's security apparatus in the Bekka during the summer of 1982, coordinating operations with AMAL before being formally subordinated to Hizbollah under Hussein Musawi after 1984.²⁷ The core Hizbollah security apparatus functions were configured and nurtured by elements of the Bekka's *Pasdaran Quds*.²⁸ Hizbollah's initial creation in the summer of 1982 under Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) auspices resulted in necessarily limited operations aimed at the coalescence of Hizbollah's constituent entities.

The first military efforts carried out with these proto-Hizbollah fighters were limited and intended primarily to gain control of territory in the Bekka Valley. These coalescing Hizbollah fighters were primarily opposed by scattered AMAL fighters and minor Bekka militias associated with existing clans.²⁹ The Israeli focus on the Palestinians was so intense that they missed the significance of the "Party of God." These early Hizbollah operations were organized with fighters drawn primarily from the Hamadi and Musawi clans, using various organizational names. Between 1983 and about 1985, Sheikh al-Musawi became operational head of the emergent security apparatus, with the Musawi and Hamadi clans remaining as core clans of the embryonic Hizbollah organization.³⁰

Hizbollah's security apparatus, as it developed, reflected the configuration, almost in a geographic sense, of the principal Shi'a clans in each of Lebanon's three distinct regions of Shi'a dominance, although the regional organizations in the middle-1980s included elements of other

clan-based criminal networks.³¹ The geographic regions themselves were subdivided into sectors, creating a compartmentalized operational environment. Hizbollah developed multiple and overlapping security organs derived from the original security apparatus. These subsidiary organs had primary responsibility for maintaining Hizbollah's organizational integrity as the militia developed with changing security needs and relationships. Hizbollah's operational security arm is strictly separated from the organization's political and military wings. That separation is more complete than the separation between most state political institutions and security services. Consequently, Hizbollah's political wing's ability to exercise administrative control over the military wing and its security organs has always been problematic.

At the end of Lebanon's civil war in 1989, Hizbollah created a dual policy in Lebanon. Hizbollah's military wing, the Islamic Resistance, continued operations aimed at the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon and provided armed protection for the Shi'a community in Lebanon. The logistical support for Hizbollah's Islamic Resistance was provided by Iran and facilitated through Syria. In the second track, Hizbollah entered Lebanese parliamentary politics, abiding by the political norms established with the 1989 Peace of Ti'af.³² Lebanese political stability increased, resulting in an evolution of Hizbollah's security apparatus to include security functions supporting the organization's social, political, and military operations. With Hizbollah's emergence as a political party representing the bulk of Lebanon's Shi'a, the security apparatus accrued some functions analogous to an Interior Ministry's.³³ Police functions became necessary to maintain both the integrity of the party and Lebanon's Shi'a body politic in territories controlled by Hizbollah.

In the 1990s, local military operations focused on Israel and its occupation zone in the south. The security apparatus managed overall coordination and maintained organizational integrity, enhancing guerrilla resistance until the Israelis were driven out in 2000.³⁴ Syria maintained an intelligence presence in every major Lebanese city, including a substantial one in the Ramlet al-Baida district of Beirut.³⁵ Kan'an's replacement as head of Syrian military intelligence in Lebanon, General Rustom Ghazaleh, maintained a headquarters staff of about 100 Syrian military intelligence personnel in the small eastern Bekka village of Anjar prior to Syria's formal withdrawal of troops in 2005.

After the Syrian withdrawal in 2005, Hizbollah adopted a new approach much more conducive to orderly governance which included giving tacit approval for the Lebanese army to act against criminal gangs in Beirut (which had become a car-theft capital) and in the Hizbollah stronghold at

Baalbek.³⁶ The security apparatus thereby separated traditional police functions from roles supporting military and covert operations. Following the summer war in 2006, Hizbollah's role shifted more to one of deterring Israeli incursion rather than resisting Israeli occupation. The incorporation of Hizbollah into the Lebanese polity as a formal partner in Lebanon's government, with ministerial responsibilities, concomitantly made it a greater target for Syrian manipulation as Damascus sought to maintain control over the Lebanese state.

Iran and the Narrow Hizbollah-Syrian Entente

Syria's troop withdrawal from Lebanon in 2005 was effectively reversed because of the efforts of the former head of Syrian Military intelligence, General Asif Shawkat, who was promoted to deputy chief of staff of the armed forces in 2010. Yet Hizbollah's liaison with the Syrians was more problematic than with Iran's *Quds* force and the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS).³⁷ Former Syrian President Hafez Assad facilitated *Pasdaran* operations in the Bekka to immunize his troops in Lebanon against Shi'a militants.³⁸ This was important, with Assad supporting both the Shi'a AMAL and the Shiite Hizbollah, even given the greater Alawite affinity for the secularists of AMAL.³⁹ The small Alawite community in Lebanon was concentrated in Tripoli and Akkar in the north, and historically its members joined secular militias and parties, including Lebanon's Ba'ath and Lebanese Community Party.

The major developments in the region since the summer war of 2006 have been the increasing role of Hizbollah in Syrian military doctrine and the growing integration of Iran and Hizbollah into the Syrian command and control apparatus. Hizbollah, while maintaining some features from its origins as a liberation organization, has developed many characteristics of traditional military organizations. Iran has facilitated this development, supporting the creation of several brigade-style organizations, as well as providing advanced infantry weapons and shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles. Post-war Iranian logistical support has resulted in a Hizbollah rocket arsenal nearly three times its size prior to the summer war, with a larger fraction of those rockets capable of carrying a more substantial payload with much more precise targeting. The number and quality of these rockets, and increasing confidence in Hizbollah's ability to use them effectively, are acting as significant deterrents against an Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

Hizbollah is also playing an operational role in the integration of some channels of the joint Iranian-Syrian command apparatus.⁴⁰ Syria and

Iran maintain a common interest in monitoring events in Lebanon and Israel. Consequently, an important element of the joint command apparatus has been the construction of electronic listening posts. Syria and Iran agreed to build four such signals intelligence stations and constructed them in the Golan Heights, the Al-Jazirah and Bab Al-Hawa' regions in northern Syria, and the Abu Kamal region of northeastern Syria.⁴¹

While it would be a vast overstatement to imply that the Syrian and Iranian military commands are wholly integrated, it is nonetheless appropriate to acknowledge a significant level of cooperation in Lebanon and in confrontations with Israel in that theater.⁴² Hizbollah's most notable role in this integration has been in expanding the scope of communication and signals intelligence. That scope ranges from support functions, such as guarding approaches to the Mt. Sannine and Mt. Barukh radar stations operated by Syria and Iran, to integrating Iranian intelligence personnel into Hizbollah operational command posts that engage Israeli military communications (as occurred during the 2006 summer war).

Conclusions

Syrian practice, since the beginning of the Lebanese civil war in 1975, has been to infiltrate and manipulate terrorist organizations and militias of all political stripes with the objective of turning them into Syrian assets. Such assets further Syrian policy in its ongoing confrontation with Israel. Syria has been unable however, to turn Hizbollah into a wholly owned asset, due to both the Shi'a religious élan and the protection provided to Hizbollah by its alliance with Iran. Hizbollah has evolved into a component of the Lebanese state, facilitating both Syrian and Iranian objectives while at the same time maintaining its autonomy. The *modus vivendi* is Syria's tolerance for Hizbollah independence and some Iranian role in Lebanon in return for Hizbollah support of larger Syrian interests regarding Lebanon and Israel.

About the Author

Carl Anthony Wege is a tenured Professor of Political Science at the College of Coastal Georgia in Brunswick, Georgia. He has taught courses on terrorism and published articles on Hizbollah and related subjects. Professor Wege has traveled in China, Latin America, and Africa and was recently in Israel as a Foundation for the Defense of Democracy 2011 Academic Fellow. The author may be reached for comment at: cwege@ccga.edu.

References

- 1 The Syrian polity includes Armenians, Circassians, Christians, Druze, Shi'a (Ismaili) Muslims, and Yzids, in addition to Sunni Muslims. The Druze and Alawites are among the most politically cohesive. See Reva Bhalla, "Syria, Hezbollah and Iran: An Alliance in Flux," *STRATFOR*, available at: <http://tinyurl.com/3kprooa> (www.stratfor.com/weekly/20101013_syria_hezbollah_iran_alliance_flux).
- 2 The Ba'ath (Renaissance) Party was founded by Michael Aflaq and Salah al-Din al-Bitar in the 1940s. It was intended as a pan-Arab party that would unite Arab peoples, regardless of religion, and allow them to confront Western imperialists. Ba'athist thought combined elements of nationalism and socialism, borrowing heavily from the nationalist theoretician Sati al-Husri.
- 3 The Syrian Ba'ath has made extensive efforts to remove religion from any public role. See Liad Porat, "The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and the Assad Regime," *Middle East Brief, Crown Center for Middle Eastern Studies* 47 (December 2010), available at: <http://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/meb/MEB47.pdf>.
- 4 Andrew Rathmell, "Syria's Intelligence Services: Origins and Development," *Journal of Conflict Studies* 16, no. 2 (Fall 1996), available at: <http://journals.hil.unb.ca/index.php/JCS/article/viewArticle/11815/12636>.
- 5 In late 2010, Military Intelligence was headed by General 'Abd al-Latif Qudsiyah, Air Force Intelligence by General Jamil Hasan, and State Security by Lieutenant General Ali Mamluk. The General Intelligence Directorate was a civilian agency having principal responsibility to contain domestic and foreign enemies of Hafez Assad. General Military Intelligence was the most extensive of the Syrian organs exercising both indigenous and international responsibilities.
- 6 See Carl Anthony Wege, "Assad's Legions: The Syrian Intelligence Services," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 4, no. 1 (1990): 92–93.
- 7 See Diane Tueller Pritchett, "The Syrian Strategy on Terrorism: 1971–1977," *Conflict Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (Summer 1988): 27–48. See also: Thomas Collelo, ed., *Syria: A Country Study* (Washington DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1988), 273.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 271.
- 9 Diplomatic relations between the two states were not even formally established until 2008.
- 10 See Thair Abbas, Mirsal al Tars, Hussein Darwish, Khaled al Arabi, "Smuggling across the Syrian-Lebanese Border," *Asharq Alawat*, April 27, 2008, available at: <http://www.asharq-e.com/news.asp?section=3&id=12560>.
- 11 See "Corruption subverts Syrian intelligence structures," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, June 2005. Endemic corruption, particularly at the middle management levels, resulted in considerable degradation of the Syrian services. This corruption was apparently rooted in a lack of policy oversight but obviously presents a serious counterintelligence problem, as well as other political problems.
- 12 After the Syrian withdrawal in 2005, Hizbollah disassociated itself from the Syrian-approved narcotics operations in the northern Bekka, resulting in the outlaws (*tuf-fars*) fleeing from both the Lebanese government and from Hizbollah.

- 13 See Gary C. Gambill, "Syria after Lebanon: Hooked on Lebanon," *Middle East Quarterly* 7, no. 4 (Fall 2005): 35.
- 14 Patrick Seale, *Assad: The Struggle for the Middle East* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 349. The SSNP, as a political organization, was founded by Antun Sa'ada in Beirut in 1932 and was characterized by a focus on secularism and a leader principle (that was essentially a proto-fascist), and whose treatise "The Growth of Nations" proposed a commitment to greater Syrian (as opposed to Arab) nationalism. The SSNP splintered in the 1960s into right- and left-wing factions; although as the Lebanese civil war opened in 1975, the SSNP militia was still estimated to number about 3000. Factions of the SSNP served in both the antigovernment Lebanese National Movement (LNM) and in a collection of leftist parties the Syrians 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, and 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, and 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.
- 15 Antun Sa'ada, the founder of the SSNP, made a great effort in the 1930s and 1940s to convert students at the American University of Beirut to his party. He succeeded in gaining a loyal following among some Palestinian students. These included notables such as Fu'ad Shimali, later of the Black September organization (an operations unit of Fatah); Bashir 'Ubayd, who was associated with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine; and Ahmad Jibril of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Command. Before these Palestinians migrated to other organizations, they cut some of their political teeth under the influence of the SSNP. See Ehud Ya'ari "Behind the Terror," *Atlantic*, June 1987, available at: <http://www.theatlantic.com/past/docs/issues/87jun/yaari.htm>.
- 16 Daniel Pipes, *Greater Syria: The History of an Ambition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 126. Syria had much more influence over the more secular Shi'a AMAL organization than it did over Hizbollah.
- 17 The Cairo Agreement of 1969 was the beginning of the formal process of making the Palestinians autonomous within the Lebanese state. The Melkart Protocol of 1974 set that process in concrete. The Lebanese government, for all intents and purposes, lost sovereignty over those parts of its territory inhabited by the Palestinians. Likewise, that extraterritoriality made it difficult for Syria to control the region. See Wadi Haddad, *Lebanon: The Politics of Revolving Doors* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown University with Praeger, 1985), 43–44.
- 18 The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine General Command was one of the offshoots of the countless internecine disputes between various factions within the Palestine Liberation Organization.
- 19 "Split in Dawwa Movement," *Intelligence Online* 329 (February 19, 1998).
- 20 This "greater Lebanon" (Etat du Grand Liban) created by France would encompass areas historically ruled by Fakhr al-Din (Fakhreddine II 1572–1635) and Bashir II (1788–1840). See Theodor Hanf, *Coexistence in Wartime Lebanon* (Oxford: The

Centre for Lebanese Studies, 1993), 64. 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.

- 21 This confessional system formally as well as informally segregated political institutions along sectarian lines, based on a single census of questionable veracity.
- 22 Sheikh Subhi al-Tufayli commanded the operational headquarters of Hizbollah in Baalbek in close coordination with the *Pasdaran*. See Magnus Ranstorp, "Hizbollah's Command Leadership: Its Structure, Decision-Making and Relationship with Iranian Clergy and Institutions," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 6, no. 3 (September 1994): 305. Tufayli was later Secretary General of Hizbollah but was ultimately expelled in 1998 over his opposition to Hizbollah'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 Rodger Shahanon, *The Shi'a of Lebanon* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 123.
- 23 Aboul-Enein, Youssef and Rudolph Atallah. "Hizbollah: A Discussion of Its Early Formation," *Infantry* 94, no. 3 (May/June 2005): 24. Iranian Ambassador to Damascus Mohammed Hassan Skhtari was instrumental in building Hizbollah on the ground in the Bekka.
- 24 Iran decided to foster an Islamist organization using the *Pasdaran* rather than working with the more secularly oriented AMAL. See "Islamic Jihad Seen as Pro-Iran," *New York Times*, April 19, 1983. The first Iranian volunteers were apparently sheltered at the Imam al-Mahdi school in Baalbek with an Iranian communications center in Baalbek's al-Khayyam hotel before the Guard acquired their better-known bases in the valley. See Judith Miller, *God Has Ninety-Nine Names* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1996), 282.
- 25 Prior to the rise of the Shi'a Islamists, Lebanese Shi'a tended to migrate into the Lebanese Communist Party or Fatah (even though the Shi'a and Palestinians would have strained relations in later years). The first exposure many Shi'a had in the 1970s to guerrilla training was under Fatah instructors.
- 26 Here Hizbollah followed the conventions of Fatah, wherein Fatah's Jihaz al-Razd security entity operated using the Black September Organization moniker during the 1970s.
- 27 Al-Khalil (who holds a degree in mathematics, oddly enough) became more of a politician with less involvement in operations. However, like Imad Mugnyah, he started out as a member of the Palestinian Fatah's Force 17 and commanded Fatah military formations in Tyre during the 1978 Israeli invasion. In the 1982 Israeli invasion, he fell back to Beirut with PLO forces; and after the Palestinian evacuation to Tunis, he migrated to Hizbollah, where he managed security for Hussein Musawi. Al-Khalil would briefly be in charge of Hizbollah foreign operations and then Hizbollah counterintelligence. He also maintained a parallel political role with election to Hizbollah's Shura (decision-making) Council in 1985. See Magnus Ranstorp, *Hizb'allah in Lebanon: The Politics of the Western Hostage Crisis* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 66. Khalil would later become chairman of Hizbollah's Politburo.

- 28 The mission of Quds is to export the Shi'a Islamic revolution, and it is functionally divided into geographically defined departments. The Lebanon/Palestine Department has been the most successful.
- 29 Although formed in response to the Israeli invasion of 1982, the IDF was preoccupied with the Palestinians and aware of little more than the arrival of the IRGC into the Bekka.
- 30 See al-Hayat, 27 November 1989. Some Hamadi clan branches had roots around the southern village of Sawaraneh as tobacco farmers. It claimed between two and three hundred members, many of whom migrated to Beirut. See "Germans' Captors Linked to Hezbollah, Other Shiite Kidnappers," *Associated Press*, June 16, 1992. There are also Hamadi clan branches based in the Hermel plain between Baalbek and Syria proper. Clan members have been prominent across the social spectrum, from Sabry Hamadi, a former Speaker of Parliament, to Hamadi clan elements prominent in the hashish industry. Across several decades, the Hamadis and Assads acted as Shi'a dynasties, with alternating service as Parliament Speaker.
- 31 In this organizational sense, they shared some characteristics with mid-20th century La Cosa Nostra families.
- 32 The Peace of Ta'if (the Wathiqat al-Mithaq al-Watani) was signed in the Saudi port of Ta'if in October of 1989 under Saudi and Syrian tutelage. It made some adjustments to Lebanon's pre-civil war political system while maintaining the characteristic allocation of political power along confessional lines. After Ta'if, Hizbollah compromised its earlier vision of an Islamic Republic outlined in the 1985 "Open Letter to the Oppressed of the Earth" and in 2009 issued a manifesto that committed the organization to consensus democracy in Lebanon. In Parliamentary matters Hizbollah would ultimately cement alliances with Nabi Berri's AMAL and Maronite Michel Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement.
- 33 Bryan Early, "Larger than a Party, yet Smaller than a State: Locating Hezbollah's Place within Lebanon's State and Society," *World Affairs* 168 (Winter 2006). A useful approach in understanding this phenomena is found in Trujillo and Jackson's "Identifying and Exploiting Group Learning Patterns for Counterterrorism" in Chen Hsinchun, Edna Reid, Joshua Sinai, Andrew Silke, and Boaz Ganor, eds., *Terrorism Informatics: Knowledge Management and Data Mining for Homeland Security* (New York: Springer Books, 2008), 175–195. Trujillo and Jackson identify a four-stage process of acquisition, distribution, interpretation, and storage that they use to model terrorist organizational learning.
- 34 This separation of military and intelligence functions was found to be operationally deficient during the 2006 Israeli-Hizbollah war. Consequently, leaders of Hizbollah military districts now are responsible for both intelligence and counterintelligence in their districts as part of their overall military responsibilities.
- 35 "Syria closes its intelligence base in Beirut," *Irish Times*, March 16, 2005, available at: <http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-24780295.html>.
- 36 Marlin Dick, "Hizbollah's Domestic Growing Pains," *Middle East Report Online*, September 13, 2010, available at: <http://merip.org/mero/mero091310>.
- 37 The main Syrian intelligence facility was at the western entrance to the town.

- 38 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 Bashar Assad as President of Syria after the death of his father Hafez Assad in 2000.
- 39 Alawites are regarded as "Nusairis" by many Sunnis after the sect's founder, Abu Shuaib Muhammed Ibn Nusair an-Numairi (d. 868). Syrian Alawites are likewise divided into roughly four tribal groupings: the Haddadun, Khayyatun, Kalbiyyah, and Matawirah, with the Assads deriving from the Numilatiyya wing of the Matawirahs. See Mahmude A. Faksh, "The Alawi Community of Syria: A New Dominant Political Force," *Middle Eastern Studies* 20, no. 2 (April 1984): 133–135. It should be mentioned that relations among the Shi'a, *Pasdaran*, and Syrian security services were complex and changing. Syria actively assisted Hizbollah operations prior to the Multinational Forces withdrawal in 1984. Thereafter the relationship was more problematic, although Syria always collected a healthy share of revenue from the Bekka's drug-trafficking operations. With its abundant ironies and anomalies, the drug trade nonetheless provided both a steady source of income and a model of cooperation for all concerned. Apparently, a fair amount of the heroin was exported through Beirut international airport, while the hashish was shipped primarily through the port of al-Mina near Tripoli. See Ranstorp, *Hizb'allah in Lebanon*, 71. Shi'a clans in the Bekka involved with both drug smuggling and Hizbollah 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 Snidauf, unpublished paper, "Hizbullah and Its Worldwide Crime/Terror Infrastructure," December 20, 2005.
- 40 In November 2005, Syria and Iran signed a joint Strategic Defense Cooperation Agreement that included a signals intelligence (SIGINT) codicil.
- 41 "Iran and Syria advance SIGINT co-operation," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, July 10, 2006.
- 42 The abovementioned command center at Syrian General Staff Headquarters in Damascus was apparently established to coordinate target packages for missile assets deployed for use against Israel in any future conflict. The joint Syrian-Iranian facility included liaison with Hizbollah.