



**NAVAL
POSTGRADUATE
SCHOOL**

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**LEBANON: A CONVERGENCE OF POLITICAL ISLAM
AND CRIMINALITY**

by

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September 2012

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			<i>Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188</i>
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instruction, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302, and to the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (0704-0188) Washington DC 20503.			
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)	2. REPORT DATE September 2012	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's Thesis	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Lebanon: A Convergence of Political Islam and Criminality		5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) Ryan K. King		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000		10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING /MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) N/A		11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government. IRB Protocol number ____N/A____	
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited		12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE A	
13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words) Kamal Salibi, a recognized Lebanese historian, described Lebanese society as "liberal and tolerant, traditional rather than zealous or fanatical in its attitude towards religion and political ideology." Unfortunately, the openness that defined Lebanon's success also led to its failures. Confessionalism, a fragile political environment resulting in a perpetually weak central government, and internal meddling by Lebanon's neighbors and imperial powers have framed its fractured history. The country of Lebanon is a sum of its parts (i.e., religion, politics, economy), parts that can be examined individually but are never defined one hundred percent independent of each other. A part of Lebanon that is often underestimated and overlooked is the drug trade, its influence on Lebanese politics and the consequences of such a relationship. In other words, control of narcotics trafficking through the Lebanese state has disproportionately influenced the political landscape of Lebanon, contributed to the disenfranchisement of many confessional groups – the Shi'a in particular, and as a result contributed to the rise of Hezbollah.			
14. SUBJECT TERMS Hezbollah, Hizbullah, Confessionalism, Communitarianism		15. NUMBER OF PAGES 117	
		16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU

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LEBANON: A CONVERGENCE OF POLITICAL ISLAM AND CRIMINALITY

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES
(MIDDLE EAST, SOUTH ASIA, SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA)**

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
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ABSTRACT

Kamal Salibi, a recognized Lebanese historian, described Lebanese society as “liberal and tolerant, traditional rather than zealous or fanatical in its attitude towards religion and political ideology.” Unfortunately, the openness that defined Lebanon’s success also led to its failures. Confessionalism, a fragile political environment resulting in a perpetually weak central government, and internal meddling by Lebanon’s neighbors and imperial powers have framed its fractured history. The country of Lebanon is a sum of its parts (i.e., religion, politics, economy), parts that can be examined individually but are never defined one hundred percent independent of each other. A part of Lebanon that is often underestimated and overlooked is the drug trade, its influence on Lebanese politics and the consequences of such a relationship. In other words, control of narcotics trafficking through the Lebanese state has disproportionately influenced the political landscape of Lebanon, contributed to the disenfranchisement of many confessional groups—the Shi’a in particular, and as a result contributed to the rise of Hezbollah.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my wife (Nohemi) and children (Miguel, Caleb, Gabriela, Marcela and Landon). I would never have completed this project without the sacrifice and loving devotion you all have shown during our time of separation. I would also like to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ through whom all things are possible...including completing a thesis.

A special thanks also goes out to Professor Ryan Gingeras for his mentorship and guidance throughout these two years.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

Kamal Salibi, a recognized Lebanese historian, described Lebanese society as “liberal and tolerant, traditional rather than zealous or fanatical in its attitude towards religion and political ideology.”¹ Unfortunately, the openness that defined Lebanon’s success also led to its failures. Confessionalism, a fragile political environment resulting in a perpetually weak central government, and internal meddling by Lebanon’s neighbors and imperial powers have framed its fractured history. The country of Lebanon is a sum of its parts (i.e., religion, politics, economy), parts that can be examined individually but are never defined one hundred percent independent of each other. A part of Lebanon that is often underestimated and overlooked is the drug trade, its influence on Lebanese politics and the consequences of such a relationship.

The main argument of this thesis is that control of narcotics trafficking through the Lebanese state has disproportionately influenced the political landscape of Lebanon, contributed to the disenfranchisement of many confessional groups – the Shi’a in particular, and as a result contributed to the rise of Hezbollah. Elements of this thesis will chronicle the volatile history of Lebanon, the genesis and evolution of its political system and how it contributed to the development of Hezbollah, but most importantly the history of drug trafficking and its influence on the socio-political landscape of Lebanon.

The key questions to be considered are: How did the drug trade contribute to the political landscape of Lebanon? How did that political environment facilitate the drug trade? In what ways did the nexus between politics and drug trafficking contribute to the formation of Hezbollah?

The primary question above is addressed straight away when one considers drugs as a commodity – a valuable raw material or primary agricultural product that can be bought and sold. The money generated by drug trafficking in Lebanon bought economic advantage, political influence and militia strength. It was a relatively cheap means by

¹ Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), 1.

which one confessional group could grow proportionally more powerful than another. The Maronites, Sunnis, and to some extent the Druze controlled Lebanese politics but also controlled a very important means of economic production – the agriculturally rich lands of the Bekaa Valley and southern Lebanon from the latter part of the eighteenth century into the civil war period.² Eventually, the harsh treatment dished out by the sectarian government led to a Shi'a awakening that culminated into the formation of Hezbollah. In summary, control of narcotics trafficking enriched those in power and enabled them to “solidify economic control of the dominant and more profitable sectors of the [legitimate] economy, the services and the commercial sector.”³ It is safe to say that the mafia-like means by which Lebanese politics and economics were controlled, maximum profit earned in the least amount of time and distributed to a select clientele, was another factor piled onto an already large number of Shi'a grievances. The Shi'a responded by providing their own political, economic and military security.

B. IMPORTANCE

The fertile soils of the Bekaa Valley and Southern Lebanon were once considered the breadbasket of Lebanon. Their bounty was once able to provide the majority of the food for the small country. Time and circumstances however changed the crops planted within the ground there. A weak central government, a strong economic group of elites, and external interference by regional neighbors and international powers contributed to a brittle nation. This unstable nation, made up of unequal parts, was the quintessential environment necessary for commodity trade such as narcotics. In fact, narcotics soon replaced grains and Shi'a activism replaced a quiescent regard for political involvement.

Most scholars would argue that in both instances drug trafficking and Shi'a activism arose from the ground out of necessity. The question to ask is why? The answer is a resounding need for self-preservation. Shi'a activism arose out of neglect by

² Stefan Winter, *The Shiites of Lebanon under Ottoman Rule, 1516–1788* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 178–179.

³ Fawwaz Trabulsi, *The Role of War in State and Society Transformation - The Lebanese Case*, Paper presented at the workshop on "War as a Source of State and Social Transformation in the Middle East" (Social Science Research Council, Paris, November 2–4, 1994), 15.

the central government and the constant threat of interference (be it internal by other groups such as the Palestinians or external by Syria or Israel). Drug cultivation provided a much larger rate of return than a food crop such as wheat or olives so survival dictated an inclination towards the former.

Mention the topic of drugs to a group of people and there is bound to be a half dozen different reactions ranging from legalization of drugs to frustration with the supposed 'war on drugs'. Whatever a person's opinion on illicit drugs, there is no argument that drugs are influential commodities around the globe. According to a Conflict Studies report titled, *Drug Trafficking After 1992*, "drugs turn over more money than any other business-after arms trafficking-an estimated 500 billion dollars per annum."⁴ That is a tremendous amount of money that opens up many opportunities. One of those opportunities is without a doubt political influence. Lebanon, throughout its unstable history, has had a weak central government unable to enforce the rule of law outside the capital city. Ms. Jamieson makes the argument that, "political instability is a major factor in the growth of the illicit drugs trade and is one of the biggest obstacles to combating it."⁵ Bringing this string of thoughts to its logical conclusion leads me to propose that drug cultivation and trafficking within and throughout Lebanon has had a greater impact on the political landscape of Lebanon than was previously supposed or admitted to; in fact, it has contributed to the development of Hezbollah.

Hezbollah, labeled a "terrorist organization" by the U.S. State Department, was responsible for more American deaths than any other group prior to 9/11. Hezbollah, however, is not defined solely within definitions placed upon it by the United States government. It is in fact recognized by many within and without the Muslim world as a traditional nationalist resistance organization, legitimately meeting the needs of its constituency while it fought against what Hezbollah considered a corrupt central government.

⁴ Alison Jamieson, "Drug Trafficking After 1992: A Special Report," *Conflict Studies* 250 (1992): 1-37.

⁵ Alison Jamieson, "Global Drug Trafficking," *Conflict Studies* 234 (1990): 1-41.

Without a doubt, Hezbollah is too complicated to be defined by only one of the previous descriptives. It is more than just a simple celled organism neatly described as a ‘terrorist’ or ‘nationalist’ organization. Hezbollah has matured beyond even its originators’ aspirations – toppling of the corrupt secular government and establishment of an Islamic state.⁶ Its interests are socio-politically diverse. Its intentions grounded in ideology and economy. And its reach is global. Put quite simply, Hezbollah has become more than a regionally influential and religiously centered political institution. It is more like an international corporation home-based in Lebanon and involved in a plethora of international issues to include: religion, politics, terrorism and crime.

Former Secretary of State Richard Armitage, an obvious proponent of the terrorist definition of Hezbollah, is quoted in a 2002 speech when addressing the threat posed by Hezbollah as “the A-team of terrorists.”⁷ The ‘hybrid threat’ posed by Hezbollah creates a challenge for the United States because the U. S. government must address Hezbollah within the context of Lebanese politics, regional security and global criminality.

All things considered, Hezbollah did arise because of genuine threat—Palestinian threat from within and Israeli invasion from the south. According to former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, “When we entered Lebanon...there was no Hezbollah...We were accepted with perfumed rice and flowers by the Shia in the south. It was our presence there that created Hezbollah.”⁸ The blatant neglect of Lebanese Shi’a by the central government coupled with violence promulgated by Palestinians and Israelis provided Hezbollah with a legitimate reason to participate in Lebanese affairs. Within the context of this thesis, Hezbollah will be defined as a nationalist group, existing at the nexus of political ideology, religiosity, and criminality.

⁶ Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 34–41.

⁷ Eben Kaplan, “The Al-Qaeda-Hezbollah Relationship,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, http://www.cfr.org/publication/11275/alqaedahezbollah_relationship.html.

⁸ Augustus Richard Norton, *Newsweek*, July 18, 2006 cited in Norton, *Hezbollah*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 33.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Lebanon

Literature that addresses the history of Lebanon is broad but centers around four main themes familiar within other artificially crafted countries in the Middle East: imperial intrusion, fragile central government landscape, sectarian rivalry/violence and domestic interference from border countries.

Imperial powers do not have a track record of lending credence to the most logical or amiable means of partitioning lands forfeited following a war. Large portions of land are carved up along unnatural lines, lines that bisect religious and cultural histories. To the victor go the spoils of war, and the European powers indiscriminately drew lines on a chart in order to partition up the Levant along economically beneficial lines. None of the resources utilized for this thesis argue that European involvement in this region had anything but a negative impact. In fact, Sandra Mackey summarizes bluntly the vigorous rejection of European imperialism by the inhabitants of Mount Lebanon. According to her, the ‘people of the mountain’s’ confessional identity was cemented by the Europeans’ greed for territory and wealth.⁹ In fact, Leonard Binder, in his work on Lebanese politics argues that ‘the deeply rooted communalism of Lebanese society’ has resulted in a nation ‘lack[ing] that attachment to the national society as a whole, that sense of identity...and revolves around an empty center.’¹⁰

A lack of national identity naturally results in a fragile central government unable to exercise authority outside of very defined boundaries, boundaries that are dictated by the integrity of community beliefs and primordial attachments. A collective solemnly pronounced sentence on Lebanese society, was provided in the edited work by Alnwick and Fabyanic:

Lebanon has been and seems to be destined to remain a fractured and divided society. This fragmentation is not a recent vintage and should not be attributed, as it frequently is, to the divisive presence of ‘borrowed ideologies’ and other alien groups or forces in the

⁹ Sandra Mackey, *Mirror of the Arab World: Lebanon in Conflict* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008), 33.

¹⁰ Leonard Binder, *Politics in Lebanon* (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1966), 2.

society. Long before the state of Lebanon came into being in 1920, it had been an enigmatic and puzzling entity; extremely difficult to manage politically or to cement into a viable and integrative social fabric.¹¹

Kamal Salibi, in *A House of Many Mansions*, illustrates why Lebanon was and continues to be one of the world's most divided countries because of the continuous argument over whose history is closer to the truth. Ironically, in the same book he also holds to the opinion that both Christians and Druze have never shown a keener consciousness of common identity. Salibi also proposes that Lebanon cannot afford divisiveness, that in order to develop and maintain a sense of political unity, it is necessary to distinguish fact from fiction and then build on what is real in the common experience of all groups.

Unfortunately, divisiveness has become a defining attribute of Lebanese culture. So engrained in the mindset of the Lebanese is sectarianism that Robert Fisk provided this solemn prognosis for Lebanon's future when he stated, "As long as it is sectarian, Lebanon cannot become a modern state. The problem is that without being sectarian, Lebanon will no longer exist."¹² According to Fisk, the very nature of Lebanon is the cancer that has been eating away at it since its inception. It is true that many sectarian groups have worked/work together, but it is never for the greater good of Lebanon. Rather these relationships of convenience most often resulted in the economic furthering of those involved to the detriment of those excluded. Thus Lebanon existed, and it could be argued exists today, balanced between the economic "interests of the upper-class and the passions of the lower-class clients."¹³

There does appear to be some argument as to when sectarianism began in the region. Some, like Stefan Winter, argue that sectarianism has been a part of the

¹¹ Lous J. Cantori et al., "Religion and Politics," in *Warfare in Lebanon*, ed. Kenneth J. Alnwick and Thomas Fabyanic (Washington, D.C. : National Defense University, 1988), 43–60.

¹² Robert Fisk, "Who's Running Lebanon?" in *The Independent* online, December 15, 2006 (<http://www.independent.co.uk/opinion/commentators/fisk/robert-fisk-whos-running-lebanon-428530.html>), 8, cited in Max Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shi'ism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 5.

¹³ Sandra Mackey, *Lebanon: Death of a Nation* (New York, NY: Doubleday, Publishing, 1989), 72.

Levantine landscape for centuries, not always to the detriment of those involved. When one studies Lebanon today, the most disenfranchised group mentioned is the Shi'a. But, according to Winters, "the sectarian, tribal and mercenary character of certain Shiites not only posed no obstacle, but virtually recommended them as government tax farmers over the local population."¹⁴ Weiss proposes however that sectarianism is best understood within the context of modernity by studying the gradual sectarian transformation of the Shi'a beginning during the French Mandate. He states quite plainly that "recent historian scholarship on Lebanon has more accurately located the emergence of 'modern' sectarianism at some point in the nineteenth century."¹⁵ Makdissi supports Weiss's description of sectarianism as modern in the Preface of his book when he states that, "sectarianism is an expression of modernity. Its origins lay at the intersection of nineteenth-century European colonialism and Ottoman modernization."¹⁶ Regardless of when it began, sectarianism is fuel that feeds the conflicts that have been waged throughout Lebanon's history and must be addressed as such.

David C. Gordon argues for the inclusion of foreign assistance in order to help Lebanon beyond its internal hurts. He believes "only an effective confrontation of [national] identification, of liberty with social equity, and of 'autonomy with foreign assistance', will provide Lebanon with the opportunity of ceasing to be only an arena of international conflict and of becoming a genuinely sovereign republic."¹⁷ According to Gordon, imperial interference may have been the cause of Lebanon's internal conflict, but it is also a necessary remedy in this modern age.

Lastly, in *The Phoenix Land: The Civilization of Syria and Lebanon*, Robin Fedden traces the history of the Syrian/Lebanese region from Ottoman rule to imperial mandates. He utilizes monuments and cities found throughout Syria and Lebanon as

¹⁴ Stefan Winter, *The Shiites of Lebanon under Ottoman Rule, 1516–1788* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 5.

¹⁵ Max Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shi'ism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 4.

¹⁶ Ussama Makdissi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), xi.

¹⁷ David C. Gordon, *The Republic of Lebanon: Nation in Jeopardy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983), 150.

stepping-stones into the past in order to understand the present (1965). It is Fedden's position that Syria and Lebanon are two of the most important - and least known - countries of the Near East. By focusing on particular points of interest - frontiers and meeting points between East and West - like a true historian he challenges the reader to gain a greater understanding of the current environment by increasing understanding of the past. Fedden asks a very pertinent question about Syria in the closing comments of his introduction. He poses two very important questions that are universal to all non-Western countries, then and today. "How is the Syrian [put in any Arabic nationality] to preserve all that is fruitful in his Islamic culture, when assimilating so much that runs directly counter to it? How is he to evolve a stable framework of ideas, a dignified and decent way of life, from this amalgam of old and new?" These are relevant questions that I dare to say have not been fully answered, but give glimpses into why the East and the West continue to struggle.

2. Shia and Hezbollah

Most writings cited in this thesis mention Shia within the Levant region beginning at the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire or just prior and describe them as a helpless minority¹⁸. A reader of such works will unfortunately come away believing that Shia have always been victims of tyrannical majorities, unimportant in the social or political aspect of the region. Shia social position has not always been bleak. According to Stefan Winter, the Shia of the Ottoman Empire, although not regional leaders were important participants within the Ottoman Empire from the late sixteenth century until the end of the eighteenth century and included influential families. Yes, Shiism is a minority branch of Islam, but that does not mean that Lebanese Shia, which gave rise to Amal and Hezbollah, have always been in the predicament they faced prior to the first Israeli invasion.

¹⁸ Hirst, *Beware of Small States*, 2010. Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon*, 2000. Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon*, 1987. Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon: Clans, Parties and Clerics*, 2011. Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism*, 2010.

The literature reviewed on Hezbollah approaches the organization from three different perspectives. The first perspective represents Hezbollah as solely an ideologically driven terrorist organization bent on the elimination of Israel (the Little Satan) and acting as a spoiler to all U.S. (the Great Satan) led policy initiatives in the region. The second looks at Hezbollah as a resistance movement exercising increasing political influence within Lebanese politics. The third perspective is a balanced view, showing Hezbollah to be a political resistance organization whose past actions are not altogether “clean”, yet which also has demonstrated responsible institutional behavior in line with international norms (i.e., providing social services to citizens). Complex problems are rarely solved with simple solutions. Hezbollah, with its involvement in Lebanese politics, terrorist operations, and criminal activities, is by every logical descriptive a complex problem that deserves more than a knee-jerk investigation.

Augustus Norton presents the most well-balanced and concise historical analysis on Hezbollah in *Hezbollah: A Short History*. He meticulously chronicles the rise of Hezbollah from its origins as an offshoot of the southern Lebanese Shi’a group Amal. Norton utilizes a historical narrative style, and the theme revolves around the factors leading to Hezbollah’s formation. His narrative encompasses inception of the group to late 2006, describing the ramification of the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah war, and more significantly, the play for power Hezbollah made with a call for a unity government. Norton’s predictive analysis has borne out in events culminating in Hezbollah achieving its goal of establishing a unity government, under President Michel Suleiman in May 2008. The current structure of the Lebanese government gives Hezbollah what they have been seeking: an “ability to veto government decisions.”¹⁹

A first-hand, historical perspective is offered by Hal Jaber’s, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance*. She builds upon local interviews with Hezbollah leaders from inception of the group, concluding with the ending of the Israeli military Operation Grapes of Wrath in 1996. Jaber’s factual account details multiple Lebanese perspectives on the Israeli occupation of Southern Lebanon, reasons for resistance, and support for

¹⁹ Christopher M. Blanc Thehard and Jeremy M. Sharp, “Lebanon,” *CRS Report for Congress* (June 12, 2008), <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33509.pdf>.

(and against) Hezbollah. The author argues at the end of this book that Hezbollah appears to be moving towards a more moderate political position and will continue to assimilate into the political arena. A major hindrance to assisting or speeding this transition is the branding of Hezbollah, by Western nations, as a stereotypical terrorist organization. “So long as the West and Israel continue to regard the problem as a crusade against terrorism they are in effect denying their own responsibility for fostering the conditions which gave rise to Hezbollah.”²⁰

Mohammed Ayooob gives a fairly balanced reason for why Hezbollah developed and became a Shi’a institution.²¹ He details a parallel, historical example between Hamas and Hezbollah showing them to be two groups who have resistance to a foreign occupier as their primary reason for existence. Ayooob argues for Hezbollah’s individuality as a group that is not solely interested in sowing the seeds of local or transnational terrorism. He concludes that Hezbollah’s goals are very local in nature and have a clear strategic-political objective.

They [Hizbullah²² and Hamas] are national resistance movements whose primary aim has been to end foreign occupation of their lands...They are political parties that participate in national politics with the aim of influencing their countries; domestic and foreign policies... In the process they have turned increasingly pragmatic... leading one to believe that they are well on their way to becoming “normal” political parties.²³

Ayooob’s dialogue leaves no argument as to whether or not he is proud of Hezbollah’s violent past. According to Ayooob, all roads lead back to the Israeli occupation and as such any violent act that can be justified in light of the occupation is sanctioned.

Eitan Azani has written one of the most thorough books about Hezbollah to date. The author’s main point is that “the Hezbollah movement is a product of the environment

²⁰ Hala Jabar, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1997), 214.

²¹ Ayooob, *The Many Faces of Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Muslim World*, 213.

²² Hizbollah and Hezbollah will also be used throughout this text depending on the quoted author’s usage.

²³ Ayooob, *The Many Faces of Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Muslim World*, 129.

in which it operates and of the interactions and the reciprocal relations between the players surrounding it.”²⁴ Azani’s management of the text leads the reader to believe that Hezbollah is an international corporation and its leader(s) are executive businessmen calculating the expansion of their ‘corporation’ just like a Fortune 500 company. This line of thought is highlighted by the comment that “the movement used a controlled policy that integrated guerilla warfare and terrorist attacks while taking into account ‘profit and loss’ considerations.”²⁵ Finally, with a distant respect, the author expresses to the reader Hezbollah’s keen social awareness, political prowess, and demonstrated military capability.

Judith Harik’s book, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, is a policy-focused book that revolves around Hezbollah. In it, she delves into a historically based account of Hezbollah’s formation with a summation of U.S. policy reaction towards the group in a pre and post-9/11 world. Harik emphasizes the political motivations of the Bush Administration with regard to branding Hezbollah a terrorist organization, and the ramifications that label ultimately has on furthering U.S. foreign policy goals in Lebanon, as well as the hindrance it places on possibly aiding Hezbollah’s assimilation into mainstream Lebanese politics. The book also explores the links between the Asad regime of Syria (and Iran) and its control/support for Hezbollah. Harik unabashedly labels U.S. interest in the region as hypocritical. She supports this accusation by the repeated policy of branding Hezbollah a terrorist organization on the one hand, and the seemingly passive acquiescence to any and all aggressive Israeli policies toward Lebanon.²⁶

Finally, Naim Qassem, the Deputy Secretary General of Hezbollah, in *Hizbullah: The Story From Within*, gives a completely firsthand account. Obviously biased and outright supportive of Hezbollah, it does offer insight into the group’s philosophy as well as an intimate perspective of someone on the receiving end of U.S. and Israeli policy

²⁴ Eitan Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 241.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Judith P. Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism* (New York: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2007), 201.

sanctions. A telling passage illustrates his attitudes well with regard to the on-again, off-again offers of U.S. Congressmen to meet with Hezbollah.

United States hostility has manifested itself through words and actions alike...[An] encounter between the Party and the United States administration will not add anything new to the acquaintance of each side with the other's views and would not alter the stance on either side.²⁷

In other words, both organizations know exactly what the other believes and neither of them will change the other's mind, so why talk. There is and will continue to be hostility amongst both parties. It is a useful insight into seeing this group through their own eyes and offers excellent perspective into how they perceive the diametrically different offerings of the U.S. administrations (sticks) and their regional neighbors (Syria and Iran-carrots).

3. Drugs

The literature on drug trafficking is almost universal in its assertion that the current policies are doing more harm than good. Prohibition, just like when it was enacted to combat the "evils" of alcohol, had the exact opposite effect policy makers assumed it would have: increased demand, an accommodating supply system, and a profit margin that pulled entrepreneurs into the market.

Douglas Valentine paints a compelling mosaic of the United States government's attempt to stop international drug trafficking before it entered U.S. borders as well as the initial agency tasked with sending the fight outside of the United States, the Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN). Valentine argues that, "federal drug law enforcement is essentially a function of national security... in its broadest sense: not just defending America from its foreign enemies, but preserving its traditional values... while expanding its economic and military influence abroad."²⁸ In *The Strength of the Wolf*, he weaves together the political, bureaucratic, and national-security problems that accompany any attempt to halt the leviathan that is international drug trafficking. Valentine conveys to

²⁷ Nasim Qassem, *Hizbullah: The Story from Within*, trans., Dalia Khalil (London: Saqi, 2005), 249.

²⁸ Douglas Valentine, *The Strength of the Wolf: The Secret History of America's War on Drugs* (New York, NY: Verso, 2006), 3.

his reader that even though a problem like drugs may appear to be a simple one to solve (simply eradicate them), numerous factors influence the ability to bring about such eradication. For example, FBN agents, while working abroad, often ran into investigative roadblocks put in place by other agencies (CIA and FBI), and FBN executives were often subordinated to spies, politicians and influential drug traffickers.

The bottom line is any and all attempts to combat the influence of illegal substances throughout the globe has been half-hearted at best because politicians have discovered that the war on drugs could be exploited for promotional purposes, the appetite for drugs is immense and the money to be gained is too great to ignore.²⁹

A plethora of historical documents chronicles FBN agents' interaction with narcotics traffickers in Lebanon through the 1950s. These FBN documents lay out the players, the areas of cultivation, and the points of entry into the country and points of departure out of the country. The leading players in the Lebanese drug business were "influential politicians", the area of importance was the Bekaa Valley, and the urban focus of drug trafficking was Beirut.³⁰ Most importantly, the coupling of politicians with drug dealers became so prevalent through Lebanon's history that those individuals were really one and the same. The drug trade became a source of immense income to very powerful people. It became a part of the political landscape to the point that FBN operations could not commence against certain individuals due to their political standing and their connections. A direct result of this relationship was the rule that 'He who controls the drugs, controls Lebanese politics.'

Lebanon's geographical importance to the drug trade at least through the 1950s cannot be understated and becomes clear reading through FBN agent reports. The laissez-faire attitude documented by the agents was expressed by senior political leaders down to the nameless merchant sweeping the sidewalk on some nameless Beirut street. As a matter of record, Charles Siragusa, an FBN agent stationed in Beirut clearly stated

²⁹ Douglas Valentine, *Strength of the Wolf*, 9.

³⁰ "Charles Siragusa to Mr. H. J. Anslinger, September 16, 1950. "Subject Files of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, 1916-1970, Records of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Record Group 170, National Archives Building II, Silver Springs, MD.

in correspondence to the Commissioner of Narcotics, Mr. H.J. Anslinger that “traffic in hasheesh, opium, and cocaine are widespread in Beirut.”³¹

Drugs, Oil, and War is a fascinating book about the nexus of these three issues. Peter Scott, utilizing the examples of Afghanistan, Colombia, and Indochina, explains the ‘necessary’ alliances made with drug trafficking proxies that facilitate indirect intervention in Third World countries and how such a relationship always has negative long-term consequences. According to the author, “the result has been a staggering increase in the global drug traffic and the mafias assorted with it.”³² The premise put forth by Scott is that the problem of terrorism the United States faces today is partly rooted in the historical context of previous U.S. policy decisions with respect to both drugs and oil. Recognizing the intermeshing of these three flammable issues and the failure of previous policy, the author advocates the rejuvenation of U.S. “soft power”³³ to deal with these complex issues.

Alfred McCoy, a professor of history at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and author, probes the conjuncture of illicit narcotics and covert operations over half a century in *The Politics of Heroin*. McCoy believes, like Peter Scott, and the data supports the theory that “prohibition has contributed to the growth of drug trafficking as one of the world’s largest industries. In the 1990s, the United Nations reported that the global drug traffic is a \$400 billion industry with 180 million users...”³⁴ McCoy identifies Lebanon, specifically the port of Beirut, as a way station for substantial shipments of opium and its derivatives from places like Iran and Turkey. Although the author’s major focus is on Southeast Asia, the fact that the market for narcotics is international required the author to address the trafficking routes throughout the globe.

³¹ “Charles Siragusa to Mr. H. J. Anslinger, September 16, 1950. “Subject Files of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, 1916–1970, Records of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Record Group 170, National Archives Building II, Silver Springs, MD.

³² Peter Scott, *Drugs, Oil, And War* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), xi.

³³ An ability to shape the preferences of others that tends to be associated with intangible power resources such as an attractive culture, ideology, and institutions (Joseph Nye).

³⁴ Alfred McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade* (Chicago, IL: Lawrence Hill Books, 2003), 22.

D. METHODS AND SOURCES

The country of Lebanon has never been able to transcend sectarian loyalties in order to achieve the desired nationalistic Lebanese identity. The primary presupposition of the National Pact and the Ta'if Agreement are that those who dwell within its borders have given up their primary identity for a nationally unified identity. Although the sectarian groups that occupy Lebanese land do not agree on much, it appears as if there is something that a majority of the confessional groups can agree upon—drug trafficking can facilitate the means by which to garner more power and control.

I have attempted to utilize source materials that support the idea that the political-criminal connection plays a more prominent role in society than many would choose to believe. Books written by recognized experts on Lebanon, its history and its politics often glance over this important connection because it is not the intention of the author to address the causes of Lebanon's ills, merely to address the sickness. These references support my argument and have provided me with a working knowledge of Lebanese history

I have also used a number of newspaper articles (the New York Times mostly) that helped in two ways: first and foremost they provided a sense of how Lebanon was perceived and defined; and secondly, they chronicled drug activity. It is understood that although newspaper articles are submitted for editing, they do not receive the same amount of peer scrutiny prior to publishing and will not include equivalent in-depth analysis as does an academic work. There is merit in their use, however, in that they provide another perspective on the subjects of Lebanon, politics and drugs.

Peer reviewed scholarly articles predominated the source list utilized for this thesis. Occasional opinion/editorial pieces in regional newspapers were used when possible. These by their very title, "opinion/editorial", promote one side of an issue over another. However, because individuals that have lived in the region or are currently living there offer the opinions, these must be considered opinions that have been influenced by the social undercurrent of Lebanon, not by casual observers from afar.

Several national and international reports (Congressional Research Reports produced over the last decade, United Nations reports on Transnational Crime and Terrorism, European Union policy documents, Open Source reporting/events and United States Policy documents with respect to the Global War on Terror) were also used. It must be considered that these documents may have been written with a particular political bent. In other words, their findings may have been pre-determined based on political motivations. This is a very conspiratorial position, but cannot be ruled out. That being said, they were all extremely helpful in expressing the immense influence narcotics trafficking has throughout not only the United States, but also the world.

National archives of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics were used to document first hand interaction between narcotics officers and traffickers within Lebanon during the 1950s. Direct correspondence between Lebanese based agents and their supervisors, field reports and bureau records during this period provided a substantial paper trail of evidence for this thesis.

A glaring shortfall is the total lack of any non-English resources. My inability to speak or understand any language other than English restricted the breadth of research material I could pull from. My lingual restrictions result in an incomplete picture of the region. The use of Arabic or French resources would have been extremely helpful.

E. THESIS OVERVIEW

This thesis aims to chronicle the volatile history that Lebanon has experienced since its founding in 1926, establish a picture of a fractured political system paralyzed by confessionalism, and explain how drug trafficking shaped the politics of Lebanon and contributed to the development of Hezbollah. Why is a study such as this warranted? There are no countries that the business of drug trafficking does not touch. It is a cancer that negatively impacts the social fiber of all nations. It brings in a net profit equal to that of oil production and because of that seduces many. Understanding who and what enable drug trafficking in Lebanon, and who profits from it, will provide analysts with a clearer picture of those who exercise influence within Lebanon.

The systemic analysis provided in this thesis will demonstrate that no matter the geographic location, the factors involved in the drug trafficking equation are the same. There are enablers, profiteers, and consumers. The line between these individuals is often blurred, allowing for involvement in multiple aspects of drug trafficking. The enablers in Lebanon are many. They are the farmers working the land to make a living wage, the local politician that turns a corrupt head or the local police that refuse to enforce the law. The profiteers are the large-scale landowners, the central government officials, and confessional group leaders. The consumers are the most egregious factor in this equation, for as long as there is a market for illicit drugs there will be an individual willing to provide them. Consumers will not however be addressed extensively in this work.

My job, interests and passions have turned my attention to the Levant region and Lebanon in particular. I consider it my responsibility as a citizen to speak out against the social ills I observe no matter where my gaze shall fall. So, I am taking this thesis as an opportunity to highlight what I consider to be a greater contributing factor to Lebanese socio-economic problems than has previously been attributed. Many of the authors quoted in this book address worthy topics of interest—Shi'a in Lebanon, the 1975 Civil War, Ottoman involvement in the Levant - and I don't wish to take anything away from their topics of interest. However, I believe drug trafficking is an issue that intertwines with many of the topics previously mentioned.

Chapter I will provide the introduction and foundation for follow-on chapters.

Chapter II will address the history surrounding the Lebanese nation. It will highlight the involvement that imperial and regional powers have had in Lebanon, the beginnings of sectarian conflict upon Mount Lebanon, and how sectarian tensions have been at the heart of all civil conflicts within Lebanon. Critical analysis of Lebanon's history, including understanding who controls economic interests like drug trafficking, will lead to factors that contributed to a fractured political system, rank with political corruption and nepotism.

Chapter III attempts to tackle the complex organization known as Hezbollah; how and why it began. The chapter will address the factors that contributed to the Shi'a awakening, specifically the blatant abandonment by the central government with respect to physical security, social welfare programs and infrastructure development. It will chronicle Hezbollah's genesis from a strident nationalist resistance offshoot of Amal, unhappy with participation in a corrupt political system. Chapter III will lay out the factors that contributed to Hezbollah's reliance on militancy to solve the political and security problems that threatened the Shi'a of Lebanon. It will also touch on the factors that contributed to Hezbollah's unprecedented rise to political prominence. Lastly, Chapter III will begin to connect drug trafficking, sectarianism and Hezbollah.

Chapter IV speaks to the big picture problem of drug trafficking within and throughout Lebanon beginning in the 1950s, those people involved in its perpetuation, the U.S. Federal Bureau of Narcotics' attempt to affect drug trafficking within the United States by attacking the problem at overseas origins such as Lebanon, and the role of sectarianism as it relates to drug trafficking.

Finally, Chapter V will draw conclusions based upon analysis in the preceding chapters and decisively show that drug trafficking has had a greater influence on the political landscape of Lebanon than previously considered. It will show that the complexity of the Lebanese political environment was, and continues to be, supported by involvement in illegal drug trafficking, and that it was rampant across all confessional groups. All of these groups (Sunni, Shi'a and Christian) had their hand in the proverbial narcotics cookie jar; but it is Hezbollah who now controls the cookie jar, adding to its coffers through illicit drug trafficking.

My conclusions are simple. First, drug trafficking contributed to the Lebanese political landscape seen today to a greater extent than has previously been acknowledged. The elite of all confessional groups have controlled all aspects of the economic system within Lebanon since its inception, and the illicit drug trade throughout its borders is no exception. Second, profits from drug dealing within Lebanon most certainly contributed to the nepotism, corruption and political advancement of many individuals involved in Lebanese politics. This heavy-handed manipulation of political and economic systems

within Lebanon established a system within which Hezbollah eventually took control and utilized to solidify its control over southern Lebanon and finance their military activities.

Unless a systemic problem-solving approach to social ills such as drug trafficking is taken, these problems will never be solved. In other words, drug trafficking cannot be eradicated simply by going after drug traffickers. The first step to take towards that end is to identify the interconnectedness of everything—the role of politics, social welfare, citizens' needs and demands, etc.

Lastly, the socio-political advantage provided by drug trade involvement, central government abandonment, and military oppression has all contributed to the development of Hezbollah.

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II. LEBANON: THE MEETING OF EAST AND WEST

To Beirut...

From the souls of her people she makes wine, From their sweat, she makes bread and jasmine. So how did it come to taste of smoke and fire?

–The Lebanese singer, Fayrouz³⁵

A. INTRODUCTION

Lebanon is a meeting place of East and West, a place where the solidly defined boundaries of religious ideology meet opportunism. This is not to say that religious piety is the goal of its entire citizenry, but an un-crossable line of personal and group identification invoked to further political and economic interests. Lebanon lies at the crossroads of the great land and sea routes that link Europe, Asia and Africa. “[It] benefitted from trade in times of peace and, as part of the principal invasion routes, suffered in times of war.”³⁶ Lebanon’s society has traditionally been known as “liberal and tolerant, traditional rather than zealous or fanatical in its attitude towards religion and political ideology.”³⁷ Point of fact, this makes it no different from many other Middle Eastern countries. Unfortunately, religious ideology is too often the identified reason analysts provide as an explanation for violence when they fail to look at a problem through a systemic lens. In other words, the complexity of Lebanon’s difficult history has often been lost in dramatically simplistic news headlines – Sunni vs. Shia, Maronite vs. Druze, ‘Religious’ conflict in the Middle East, etc. There is more to Lebanon’s history than battles fought in defense of religious ideology. Confessionalism and the delicate political environment it creates, competing economic interests, and internal meddling by regional and European powers have all contributed to its colored history. The focus of this chapter is the intersection of these political, religious and economic interests.

³⁵ Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation: The Abduction of Lebanon* (New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing, 1990), 92.

³⁶ Sandra Mackey, *Lebanon: Death of a Nation* (New York, NY: Doubleday Publishing, 1989), 19.

³⁷ Kamai Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), 1.

An assumption made in this chapter (and expounded upon in later chapters) is that drug trafficking has been a greater enabler of Lebanese social structure than previously considered. However, it is important to understand Lebanon's history before considering the systemic involvement of drug trafficking. This chapter will chronicle a historical foundation built by competing ethnic, religious, political and economic differences. Some important questions to be considered are: What laid the foundation for strict social identification? How did the major confessional groups establish their positions in Lebanese politics? How did confessionalism (sometimes referred to as sectarianism) affect the political landscape? Where does each group fit into the social framework of Lebanon? And how did the political landscape shape the politics of Hezbollah?

Students of the Middle East understand that Lebanon is a land of constant volatility. The Romans, the Islamic Caliphates, the Ottomans and most recently European powers all played a role in the shaping of what would become Lebanon. In other words, Lebanon has only recently become an independent nation, free from overt manipulation of its domestic affairs by external powers.

B. PRE-IMPERIALISM

The seed of confessionalism in Lebanon can be traced as far back as the soldier-slave kings known as Mamluks. These usurping rulers defined Pre-Ottoman power and identity from their seat of power in Egypt. The land they ruled extended into the region known as Greater Syria, which included Lebanon, from the end of the thirteenth century for the best part of 300 years. The Mamluk Empire was established on the back of military prowess, however that skill soon became secondary to social affiliation. Based mainly on the traditional oral histories of individual families, the Mamluk period...

... saw the expansion of the Sunni community in the coastal cities and of the Druze lords in the mountains as far north as the Matn district; the Shiites remained dominant in the Kisrawan and began to move into Christian dominated district in the fifteenth century, before being driven out of the Kisrawan by the Maronite recolonization push in the seventeenth century.³⁸

³⁸ Stefan Winter, *The Shiites of Lebanon under Ottoman Rule, 1516–1788* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 63.

The self-segregation that resulted in the region over time eventually played out to the Mamluk rulers' advantage. It has been inferred that "the Mamluks were clearly aware of the unique challenges they faced... but pursued no demographic policy as such, preferring, like the Ottoman authorities after them, to turn the inherent conflicts and divisions within its highly segmented society to their advantage."³⁹ Eventually, greater importance was assigned to ethnic affiliation, which contributed to increased conflict in the region and the gradual weakening of the Mamluk lords. Confessional conflicts were not the sole reason for the Mamluks' defeat, but regrettably a problem that would plague the region for years to come.

Ottoman soldiers captured Mount Lebanon and its surrounding area in 1516 AD.⁴⁰ They ended the Mamluk dynasty with the taking of Cairo in 1517.⁴¹ The location of the center of power may have changed when the Ottomans defeated the Mamluks, but religion and ethnicity remained crucial markers of difference in the Ottoman system. They defined communal boundaries and relationship with the seat of power. A concerted effort to control the urban centers with little regard for rural issues became a defining characteristic of the Ottomans (and those that followed). The Ottomans kept a rather loose reign on Greater Syria (land that included modern day Lebanon) for the first three centuries of their rule, choosing to concentrate their control in the main cities where their governor and garrisons were located and often leaving the hinterland to itself. Local elites eventually derived their power from their role as intermediaries between the Ottomans and the urban population, which the notables could speak for and control.⁴²

Beginning with Fakhr al-Din al-Manni, the founder and chief lordly supporter of Ottoman advance into the region in 1516,⁴³ elites began to capitalize on their exclusive relationship with the Ottoman government that was solidified when the Ottomans

³⁹ Ibid., 64.

⁴⁰ Helena Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985), 35.

⁴¹ William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2009), 34.

⁴² Sandra Mackey, *Lebanon: Death of a Nation* (New York, NY: Doubleday Publishing, 1989), 70 and 109.

⁴³ Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985), 37.

bestowed upon him and his successors the title of ‘Amir’ (commander or prince). According to Cobban, “The ‘autonomy of the local rulers’ was important for the emergence of an inter-sectarian system in the Mountain, [and] the various different lords were tied into a single system, by the maintenance of a single lordly family at its head.”⁴⁴ The succession of mountain princes, through political skill and maneuvering, maintained control of Mount Lebanon for nearly two centuries between the sixteenth and eighteenth century. Although the Manni dynasty eventually ended in 1697, the idea of privileged governing families continued between the major sects of the Mountain.

Without venturing too deep into Lebanese sectarian groups, it is important to provide a general survey of the sectarian make-up of the land and how they interacted. An initial glimpse at the sectarian make-up of the land of Lebanon may cause one to believe that there are merely Christians and Muslims present. However, these two groups are further divided into sub-groups that would take great offense if they were insensately labeled exclusively as Christian or Muslim. These sub-groups include Shi’ite and Sunni Muslims, Druze, Maronite Christian, Greek Orthodox, Armenian, Greek Catholic and a small group of others.⁴⁵ Their peoples came to the region during empire expansion campaigns and Crusades, in pursuit of economic gain and in search of religious freedom. The social interaction between the various communities was limited to economic and commercial exchanges. This ‘separateness’ resulted in each community developing independent social systems, with its own beliefs and values, communal consciousness, specific interests, and stratification system. Moreover, each community was virtually self-contained geographically: the Druzes and Maronites lived in their enclosure on Mount Lebanon, the Shiites in southern Lebanon and the Beq’a Valley, the Sunnis in the coastal cities and towns, and the Orthodox Christians in parts of North Lebanon and the city of Beirut.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985), 37.

⁴⁵ Alfred B. Prados, *CRS Report to Congress: Lebanon*, Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2007, RL33509.

⁴⁶ Latif Aubul-Husn, *The Lebanese Conflict: Looking Inward* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 6.

The identification of confessional groups and their role is so important that Soffer suggests, “The *key* to understanding Lebanon’s frequent crises and its fragile existence is its confessional or sectarian structure.”⁴⁷

Ottoman rule over the region was interrupted for nearly a decade when in 1831 the army of Muhammad Ali Pasha, led by his son Ibrahim Pasha, invaded Syria and routed the Ottoman forces within. The Christians, not happy with the current power dynamic and claiming that the ruling Druze community “enjoyed a privileged position in the system”⁴⁸, initially welcomed the change of rulers. However, Muhammad Ali’s autocratic governance, propensity for centralization and economic deterioration of the country eventually led to dissent.⁴⁹ European powers supported dissent while protecting and expanding their economic interests in the region. In fact, “the Egyptian invasion of Greater Syria triggered a European response that reveals the intricate linkage between the actions of local Middle Eastern rulers and Europe’s determination to defend its interests in the area.”⁵⁰ The Ottomans eventually gained back control of the region and by 1839 began to undertake implementation of *Tanzimat* reforms.

The *Tanzimat* was meant to embody the principles of legitimacy and liberty in the person of the Sultan, who as a ‘legitimate’ ruler decreed the religious equality of all his subjects. The Ottoman decrees within Lebanon during the *Tanzimat* period, while attempting to enhance civil liberties and grant equality, were ineffective; this was an example of grassroots reality taking precedence over political intentions. Makdisi recognized this and asked a simple question followed by a profound statement, “What about regions like Mount Lebanon where the Sultan was absent and where liberty and legitimacy were open to fundamentally incompatible interpretations? Ottoman reformers

⁴⁷ Arnon Soffer, "Lebanon: Where Demography Is the Core of Politics and Life," *Middle Eastern Studies* 22 (1986): 197–205.

⁴⁸ Engin D. Akarli, *The Long Peace* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 19–20.

⁴⁹ Gregory A. Francioch, "Nationalism in Ottoman Greater Syria 1840–1914: The Divisive Legacy of Sectarianism," M.A. thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2008, 31–33.

⁵⁰ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 73.

obviously did not take into account the demographic character of Mount Lebanon.”⁵¹ Demographic make-up of the region was not lost on European powers that “needed [distinct] local communities to justify their involvement in the Ottoman Empire.”⁵² Maronites and other Christians, encouraged by European backers, expanded their commercial ventures, established educational institutions and “generally asserted themselves in a manner that the Druze and Sunnis saw as overstepping the bounds of what was permitted to ‘minority’ subjects in a Muslim state.”⁵³ Fundamental interpretation differences of the *Tanzimat* decree, led to a manifestation of violence in 1841 between Christians and Druzes. An official separation of the two warring parties was eventually imposed using a geographically recognized line of demarcation, the Beirut-Damascus road. This European designed and Ottoman enforced separation, known as the double *qa'immaqamiyya* (district presidency), marked a more pronounced role Western Europeans would play in Lebanese affairs, for it was designed by the renowned Austrian Chancellor, Prince Metternich.⁵⁴

The “struggle over land and control of taxation, provided the impetus for inter-communal tensions” and “marked a redefinition of the relationship between religion and politics”⁵⁵ within a multi-religious society. It was also only the beginning embers of “smoldering Muslim resentment over this change in the accepted social and political order”⁵⁶ that manifested itself in sectarian massacres and full-blown civil war through the middle of 1860. The conflict between the two confessional groups left the mountain scarred, and constituted a turning point in modern Lebanese history. Hundreds of villages had been destroyed and thousands of lives were senselessly lost. Leila Fawaz, quoting Abkarius, writes that the conflict between Druze and Maronite got so bad that “when the news of the massacres in the Lebanon reached the ears of [his] Majesty the

⁵¹ Ussama Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism: Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000), 60–61.

⁵² Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism*, 61.

⁵³ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 90.

⁵⁴ Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985), 45.

⁵⁵ Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism*, 63–67.

⁵⁶ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 90.

Sultan Abd al-Majid Khan, it gave great pain to his Majesty and compassion for his subjects took hold of him” to the point the sultan shed “abundant” and “sincere tears.”⁵⁷

European powers pressed the Ottomans to quell the violence, resulting in dispatch of their Foreign Minister to Beirut and implementation of radical reform to the *qa'immaqamiyya* formula. A commission “representing Britain, France, Russia, Austria and Prussia, with the Ottoman minister in the Chair, convened to find a political settlement for Lebanon.”⁵⁸ By 1861 a new regime for Mount Lebanon was designated to operate under the guarantee of the five deliberating powers plus Italy. “The regime, still nominally part of the Ottoman Empire, would be called the *mutasarrifiyya*, or provincial governorship.”⁵⁹ The turbulence that plagued Lebanon since 1820 appeared to have ended, creative energies focused more on productive fields than political factionalism and Mount Lebanon began to gain a widespread reputation as the “best governed, the most prosperous, peaceful and contented country in the Near East.”⁶⁰ But perhaps this was a picture disseminated by the European and Ottoman powers who desired a return to more peaceful times.

This period, according to Weiss, was an “important watershed in the emergence of institutionalized sectarianism in Lebanon”⁶¹, for the rift between the Maronite and Druze communities was firmly established and violence towards other confessional groups an acceptable course of action. Makdisi captures the true environment of post-1860 violence when he uses a descriptive of the indigenous writers as being “overwhelmed by the urgency of proximity”, for to them “the war of 1860 was not simply a tribal problem that haunted the periphery of imperial or colonial concern, as it appeared to European and Ottoman officials, but rather a calamity that devastated local society, uprooted thousands, and left a legacy of mutual acrimony and fear both within

⁵⁷ Fawaz, *An Occasion for War: Civil Conflict in Lebanon and Damascus in 1860*, 101.

⁵⁸ Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon*, 50.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Samir Khalaf, *Persistence and Change in 19th Century Lebanon* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1979), 85.

⁶¹ Max Weiss, *In the Shadow of Sectarianism: Law, Shi'ism, and the Making of Modern Lebanon* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 9.

and, especially, between communities.”⁶² During this time of extraordinary transformation, violence became a tool of change and European involvement within the region more intrusive.

C. EUROPEAN IMPERIALISM

Lebanon experienced a lull in sectarian conflict between 1861 and 1914. The factions that occupied its lands had learned to live in relative peace until the Ottoman Empire and the *mutasarrifiyya* dissolved with the outbreak of World War I. It was the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement between Britain, France, and Russia that carved up the Ottoman Empire following its defeat and firmly established a constant European presence in the region. As part of the agreement, Britain won effective control over the area of Palestine, and France over the area that is now Lebanon and Syria. With the stroke of a pen, the provinces of Greater Syria were handed from one master to the next, from distant rulers (Ottomans) content on remaining detached as long as the required duty was paid to an imposing European power (France) bent on shaping Greater Syria for its gain.⁶³

The French claim to Syria was based on a combination of religious, economic, and strategic interests. France professed a “moral duty to continue its long-standing religious and educational activities in support of the Christian communities in the Levant—especially the Catholic Maronites of Mount Lebanon.”⁶⁴ The Christians understood that they would maintain a position of ensured comfort as long as the French were in control of the region. Therefore, it was in their best interest to further the interests of the French. France secured its mandate over its share of the ‘Levant’ territory, ousted King Faysal from Damascus, and proclaimed the creation of Greater Lebanon in order to begin the reorganization of the area in 1920.⁶⁵ A religious justification for French interference most certainly intensified the growing alienation felt by the Muslim communities. Ironically, the Shi’a ‘benefitted’ from the French mandate

⁶² Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism*, 169.

⁶³ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 163.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 218–219.

⁶⁵ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 218–219.

and creation of Greater Lebanon because for once they were legally recognized as a separate community. Legal recognition did not come with any other benefits and as such the Shi'a would remain the most disenfranchised group within the country for many years to come. Social change for the rurally located Shi'a may have remained relatively stagnant but the upward mobility of many Christians and Sunni in the cities developed at a rapid pace and had reverberating effects.

Change began most often away from the Mountain. People were moving into the cities and the traditional idea of power began to subtly change. Beirut became an important port with respect to transit trade. The blossoming middle class was beginning to flex its muscle and demonstrate its differences from the rural landscape. No longer was power focused solely in an individual because he was born into a historically powerful family. Lebanon entered into a time when economic power led to political power that must be balanced with inherited power.

Powers previously exercised on the local level were moved into a national venue by the French. The establishment of the legislature—the idea that officials would represent an entire population, not just their recognized religious organization—was a positive contribution made by the French and an idea that challenged the traditional 'za'im' role. Albert Hourani believed “this principle might indeed be regarded as the most important contribution made by the French to the political life of Lebanon.”⁶⁶ Also, the economic prosperity of the cities began to show as the political skeleton of Lebanon started to take shape. There is no doubt, according to Georges Hakim, “the upper class of rich landowners and capitalists [exercised] considerable influence in Lebanese economic and political life.”⁶⁷

It is also suggested by Hakim that much of the economic influence utilized by these capitalists resulted from what he calls “invisible receipts”. This revenue comes mainly from services rendered to foreigners in the fields of tourism, banking and trade,

⁶⁶ Albert Hourani, "Lebanon: the Development of a Political Society," in *Politics In Lebanon*, ed. Leonard Binder (NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 1966), 12–29.

⁶⁷ Georges Hakim, “The Economic Basis of Lebanese Polity,” in *Politics In Lebanon*, ed. Leonard Binder (NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 1966), 57–68.

particularly transit and re-export trade. Other ‘invisible’ income consists of emigrant remittances and foreign companies’ operating expenses.⁶⁸ Mackey suggests that a portion of the ‘invisible receipts’ mentioned by Hakim were a result of participation in the narcotics trade. She states that because Lebanon was a nation of meager natural resources and almost no industry, “it sustained itself on “invisible income. This revenue was derived from banking, transit trade, various forms of brokerage, remittances...and a healthy slice of smuggling and drug dealing.”⁶⁹ Charles Issawi supports this idea by providing a description of the dark side of economic development in Lebanon in the following manner:

Lebanon being Lebanon, there has been a proliferation of nightclubs, casinos, and other ‘abodes of wickedness,’ as well as a certain amount of smuggling into neighboring countries.⁷⁰

It goes without saying that when change brings with it economic fortune, that some of that fortune will be acquired through less than honorable means. This idea will be explored in greater depth in future chapters.

D. GENESIS OF A NATION

Michael Hudson dutifully described the genesis of Lebanon akin to being “born schizophrenic.”⁷¹ The documents that proved to be an unsteady foundation upon which the Lebanese political house was built contributed to its dreadful condition. They are mentioned now because instead of defining an environment of equality and merit, they contributed to the insidious confessionalism still seen today.

Lebanon has two foundational documents: a constitution and the National Pact. The Lebanese constitution of 1926 adopted the communitarian form of government used by the French for so many years to maintain power—ensuring the existence of a volatile

⁶⁸ Hakim, “The Economic Basis of Lebanese Polity,” in *Politics In Lebanon*, ed. Leonard Binder, 57–68.

⁶⁹ Mackey, *Lebanon: Death of a Nation*, 134.

⁷⁰ Charles Issawi, “Economic Development and Political Liberalism in Lebanon,” ed. Leonard Binder (NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 1966), 69–81.

⁷¹ Michael C. Hudson, *The Precarious Republic: Political Modernization in Lebanon* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985), 37.

political mix in which competition for power would be based on sectarian affiliations;⁷² however, it was the 1943 National Pact that truly defined the path of communitarianism and sectarian violence. The “close and dynamic collaboration between the Maronite president Bishara al-Khuri and the Sunni Prime Minister Riyad al-Sulh”⁷³ modernized the centuries-old struggle for power among religious communities into a conflict over political and economic power.

The French legacy, manifested in the establishment of the legislature, was conceived in the drafting of the Lebanese constitution. Scholars may argue over the extent of French influence in drafting this pivotal document but there is no argument in the statement that “[its] importance laid in its confirmation of the existence of a Lebanese entity separate from Syria and its consecration of the existence of ‘Greater Lebanon.’⁷⁴ The constitution stressed freedom and equality, although with some limitations. All Lebanese were guaranteed the freedoms of speech, assembly, and association within the limits established by law. There were provisions for the free exercise of all forms of worship, as long as the dignity of the several religions and the public order were not affected.⁷⁵ “The constitution provided for a single chamber of deputies that was elected on the basis of religious representation, a principle that had been accepted during the period of the *mutasarrifiyyah*. The precise formula for determining this representation was specified in the National Pact of 1943.”⁷⁶

Whereas the Lebanese constitution was an actual document of record establishing Lebanon, the National Pact was merely a verbal agreement between Christian (al-Khuri) and Sunni Muslim (al-Salhl) leaders. “Basically, the Pact provided that the Christians would recognize Lebanon as an Arab state which would coordinate its policies with its

⁷² Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 225.

⁷³ Picard, *Lebanon: A Shattered Country* (New York, NY: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 2002), 69.

⁷⁴ Caroline Attie, *Struggle in the Levant: Lebanon in the 1950's* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2004), 17.

⁷⁵ As'ad AbuKhalil, “Government and Politics.” In *Lebanon: a country study*, edited by Thomas Collelo, 137–177. Library of Congress, 1989.

⁷⁶ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 226.

sister Arab states, as a result of which they could be assured of the allegiance and support of the Moslem communities to an independent Lebanon.”⁷⁷ It defined the limits of equality penned in the Lebanese constitution and protected the confessional groups by ensuring an agreed upon ratio of 6:5 Christian to Muslim representation within the legislative body. This ratio was based on a census taken in 1932, taken to justify the creation of Lebanon’s government along sectarian lines and firmly establish the privilege of the Christian elite over Lebanon’s Muslim and Druze populations. In practice, key positions of power were clearly reserved based on sectarian group: the country’s president would be a Maronite; its premier a Sunni Muslim; the Speaker of the House a Shi’ite Muslim.⁷⁸ The National Pact moved the country closer to defining a Lebanese identity; however at the cost of cementing the Christians/Muslims division and alienating the other sectarian groups.

Sectarian, ideological and economic fissures began to manifest themselves following independence in 1943 (although the last French left in 1946). Internally, the government was dominated by elites who demonstrated little interest in improving the lives of most Lebanese. Powerful political parties (Kata’ib/Phalange=Christian, Jumblats=Druze) began to form along with regional and sectarian associated militias. Well into the 1950s disparities were evident everywhere. Christians were overrepresented in the government. Literacy rates among Christians were twice that in other communities and rural infrastructure development lagged far behind the rapidly expanding urban areas. Externally, a succession of coups d’etat in Syria, Iraq and Egypt brought to these countries a new generation of leaders genuinely committed to Arab Nationalism and the Palestinian cause. Also, the 1948 establishment of Israel and the resulting Palestinian refugee problem served only to exacerbate inter-communal tensions in Lebanon. Regional dynamics during this period exposed the country’s vulnerable

⁷⁷ Ralph E. Crow, “Religious Sectarianism in the Lebanese Political System,” *The Journal of Politics* 24 (1962): 489–520.

⁷⁸ Brenda M. Seaver, “The Regional Sources of Power-Sharing Failure: The Case of Lebanon,” *Political Science Quarterly* 115 (2000): 247–271.

sociopolitical structure to external pressure like never before.⁷⁹ It was only a matter of time before the artificial barriers that defined and separated each sectarian group collapsed under internal and external pressures.

The mini civil war of 1958 was a point at which the pressures weighing on Lebanon reached the boiling point. The eruption was “to the point where it threatened the very integrity of the state, of that most basic, most existential, of Lebanon’s internal conflicts, between its predominantly Christian, Westward-looking self and its predominantly Muslim, Eastward-looking one.”⁸⁰ Camille Chamoun, the Maronite president, stood in blatant opposition to Nasser and his vision of Arab unity and economic equality. In the eyes of many nationalists, Chamoun was in the same league as a pro-Zionist. Instead of seeking a middle ground with the incredibly popular Nasser, Chamoun sought refuge in Western assurances—specifically from Lebanon’s historic protector France. Conflict began to erupt as the country began to tilt more towards its Western-looking self. Muslim and Druze took up arms following electoral tampering, eventually controlling most of the countryside. By the summer of 1958, 2500 people had lost their lives and the Greater Lebanon of 1920 appeared ready to collapse. Western powers, moved by extenuating circumstances, eventually entered Lebanon, replaced Chamoun and restored confessional order.⁸¹

E. STATE WITHIN A STATE – THE PALESTINE ISSUE

“Hostilities between Arabs and Jews broke out shortly after the end of the British mandate in Palestine (1948) resulting in several hundred thousand Palestinian Arabs arriving in Lebanon, Syria and the Gaza strip.”⁸² Within Lebanon, they settled mainly in the Muslim enclave in Southern Lebanon, in the Sour and Nabatiyeh districts and avoided mixing with the Lebanese Christian community, forming the basis for poor relations in

⁷⁹ Latif Abul-Husn, *The Lebanese Conflict: Looking Inward* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 58.

⁸⁰ Hirst, *Beware of Small States*, 69.

⁸¹ Hirst, *Beware of Small States*, 70–71.

⁸² Harald Vocke, *The Lebanese War: Its Origins and Political Dimensions* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1978), 31.

later years.⁸³ Unfortunately, the majority of refugees were unskilled laborers unable to transition into the professional strata of Lebanese society. They were farmers that had lost their land, fated to fill in as cheap unskilled labor and relegated to the many refugee camps established and run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). These bidonvilles, or slums, quickly became synonymous with Palestinian deprivation.⁸⁴

Although a majority of Palestinian refugees were Sunni Muslim and they could have proved to be a potent political ally for Lebanese Sunnis, they were initially seen as an economic threat by both Christian and Muslim alike. In fact, “the *zuama* huddled and decided to impose stern limitations on the Palestinians”⁸⁵, even going so far as labeling them ‘non-nationals’, which barred them from any government employment.

It wasn’t until 1964, at the first two Arab summit meetings called by Nasser did the Arab heads of state agree, under Egyptian pressure, that a ‘Palestine Liberation Organisation’ (PLO) should be created and would have political responsibility for the rights of the Palestine Arabs.⁸⁶ This organization, of course, originally meant nothing more than “a docile body of well-behaved notables” easily controlled by the other Arab regimes.⁸⁷ Its first Secretary General, Ahmad Shukairi, believed the PLO should focus its attention on the corrupt Arab monarchies in Jordan and Saudi Arabia. His misguided leadership and perceived passivity among Palestinians led to the empowerment of more militant organizations such as *al-Fatah*, headed by Yasir Arafat. The PLO eventually morphed into an “umbrella organization under whose authority several different, and often fractious, resistance groups coexisted”⁸⁸ that launched raids across the border into Israel. Palestinian militancy inside Lebanon also sharpened the debate between those Lebanese who supported the Palestinian military presence in Lebanon and those who

⁸³ Rami Siklawi, “The Dynamics of Palestinian Political Endurance in Lebanon,” *The Middle East Journal* 64 (2010): 597–611.

⁸⁴ Mackey, *Lebanon: Death of a Nation*, 11 and 129.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁸⁶ Vocke, *The Lebanese War*, 32.

⁸⁷ David Hirst, *Beware of Small States* (New York, NY: Nation Books, 2010), 84.

⁸⁸ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 359.

opposed it.⁸⁹ The Maronites had expressed their reservations about the Palestinian movement from the beginning. The Palestinian issue cut to the very heart of the Lebanese political system and pressurized Lebanon beyond what it could endure. In fact, Mackey unabashedly states, “It was the Palestinians who would become the catalyst for civil war among the Lebanese, fatally split by religion, frozen in a political system bequeathed by a European colonial power, and embittered by economic inequalities and regional disparities.”⁹⁰

The PLO did not act independently, but were enabled by a regional actor with selfish interests. “In fact, the considerable Syrian backing helped the PLO in Lebanon to become an important military and political factor which presented a potential challenge to the weak Lebanese government, thus contributing to the outbreak of civil war in 1975.”⁹¹ The Syrians had a vested interest in keeping a buffer between them and the emboldened Jewish state to their south. The Syrian government encouraged and enabled the strengthening of the Palestinian ‘state-within-a-state’ and therefore condemned Lebanon. Lebanon was metaphorically offered up by Syria as a sacrificial lamb, an area of land in which to fight Israel without actually fighting Israel.

Lebanon and its people were eventually forced to endure hardships resulting from PLO attacks into Israel. The confessional group most dramatically affected by militant Palestinians, an aggressive Israel, and a meddling Syria was the Shi’a. Expecting relief from a PLO that had become aggressive towards its host and a weak central government that allowed such behavior, the Shi’a initially welcomed an Israeli presence in southern Lebanon. But, just like the Egyptian rulers that replaced the Ottomans, the Shi’a of Lebanon merely exchanged one taskmaster for another. The Israeli soldiers did not seem to differentiate between Shi’a, Sunni, or Palestinian. There was no difference between Muslims in the minds of Israeli soldiers on the Lebanese streets; a Muslim was a Muslim. The displacement and destruction the Shi’a endured at the hands of Israeli soldiers was

⁸⁹ Siklawi, “The Dynamics of Palestinian Political Endurance in Lebanon,” *The Middle East Journal* 64 (2010): 597–611.

⁹⁰ Mackey, *Lebanon: Death of a Nation*, 12.

⁹¹ Moshe Ma’oz, *Syria and Israel: From War to Peacemaking* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995), 162.

the straw that broke the proverbial Shi'as back. Years of negligence at the hands of the Lebanese government, disrespect from Palestinian guests, and the blatant disregard of basic human rights by Israeli soldiers pushed many to find protection through unity as the other confessional groups had in the past.

Israeli incursions into Lebanon were meant to destroy an identified enemy (PLO) that had become a nuisance to Israel and a parasite on Lebanon. Unfortunately, because of Israel's blatant disregard for the situation in which Lebanon's people found themselves, they ended up creating a second enemy—Shi'a militants which eventually evolved into Hezbollah. This organization is specifically mentioned because of its conflictual relationship with the United States and Israel. It is not the only organization within Lebanon that would consider itself an 'enemy' of the two Satans, but it is one that has had a strategic impact on American political and military policy. It is my argument that drug trafficking indirectly influenced the development of Hezbollah and directly empowers it now. Future chapters will attempt to tie all of these arguments together.

The first noticeable cry from the Shi'a people was made by Imam Musa al-Sadr, the founder of Amal (Movement of Hope). Al-Sadr worked tirelessly to mobilize the Shi'a community. He traveled the country reminding villages of Shi'a holidays and the pride associated with Shi'a history.⁹² Slowly a sense of community and political awareness began to develop. Al-Sadr was disgusted by the blatant disregard the Lebanese government showed towards the Shi'a, but he knew that in order to affect real reform he would need the help of other influential sectarian leaders. Al-Sadr's efforts were gargantuan but would be no match for the turmoil that was slowly coming to a boil all around Lebanon. An aggressive PLO, a weak central government and sectarian groups not willing to sit passively by and watch a growing conflict consume them soon challenged Al-Sadr's vision for Amal. A group of young Shi'a men had been awakened by the civil conflict around them and chose a more aggressive path towards Shi'a recognition – militant resistance backed by religious ideology.

⁹² Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 18–21.

“The schism in Lebanese society between those who detested the Palestinian presence in Lebanon and those who supported it imposed itself on the longstanding, unresolved issues that had divided the Lebanese since independence: Lebanon’s identity, its position in the Levant, and the extent of its ‘Arab’ obligations.”⁹³ Lebanon began careening toward civil war at the beginning of the new decade. In 1970, the newly elected Christian president, Suleiman Franjeh, a man claiming to be a direct descendant of a Crusader, took office after ‘winning’ by one vote. The president’s first act was to order a confessionally divided army to crack down on the Palestinian militias. The Muslim refusal to act on this order opened the door for the Phalange, the Maronite militia, to fill the void.⁹⁴ Lines were quickly galvanizing that, once crossed, would result in senseless annihilation for many years to come.

F. CIVIL WAR (1975–1990)

The fateful year of 1975 began with a classic dispute between Christian and Muslim. The Maronite leader and malefactor of 1958, Chamille Chamoun, after being granted extensive fishing rights lay claim to the fish off Sidon for his protein supplement company. Muslim fishermen, who dominated the fishing industry, strenuously objected to this government sanctioned and economically damaging power grab. Muslim political factions supported the fishermen by marching through the streets of Sidon and protesting against the government. Marouf Saad, Sidon’s mayor, while marching became the victim of an unknown assailant shot dead from a gunshot. His death turned the protests into riots that lasted for several days. The military was unwisely brought in to put down this confessionally charged disagreement. “The Sidon fishing dispute escalated into a showdown between all the forces of the right (Maronites) and the left (Sunnis, Druze & Shiites), between Christian and Muslim, that had simmered in Lebanon for decades.”⁹⁵

The resulting civil war only required a single act of political violence to transform the political tinderbox of Lebanon into a fire-scorched landscape. On Sunday April 13,

⁹³ Sandra Mackey, *Mirror of the Arab World* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008), 96.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁹⁵ Mackey, *Lebanon: Death of a Nation*, 156–157.

1975, unidentified gunmen killed four members of the Kata'ib (Phalange) Party in front of a Maronite church where Pierre Gemayal was attending mass, whereupon Kata'ib militia ambushed a busload of Palestinians returning from work and murdered all its passengers.⁹⁶ The PLO and its Jumblattist supporters responded and the domino effect of violence began. Greek Catholic towns in the Beqaa Valley became locked into clashes with some of its Shi'ite and Palestinian neighbors. Kata'ib militias fought Jumblatt militias across the country while an impotent Lebanese military stood by and watched. Political party leaders resigned their posts in protest and President Frangieh struggled to maintain a working government. "By September 1975...Ideology began to vanish in a maelstrom of base and petty interests. The Maronite militias killed one another for control of the port of Beirut and the profits it engendered. They fought each other for a percentage of the hashish trade..."⁹⁷

The security situation in Lebanon took a turn for the worse in October 1975. Violence from the countryside spilled into Beirut. It became a geometrically divided city with each sectarian militia holding defensive lines around their respective neighborhoods, while at the same time conducting offensive operations against other groups. The situation continued to deteriorate as the year drew to a close. "Throughout November and early December, the fighting continued... it hardly even paused to mark the arrival of reconciliation missions from such longstanding allies of Lebanon as France and the Vatican."⁹⁸ Kata'ib Party leader Pierre Gemayyel, in an attempt to gain an advantageous ally, headed to Damascus to ask for Syrian support on December 6, 1975. That same day, Kata'ib militia members were rounding up and killing any Muslim workers within western Beirut in retaliation for the murdering of four Kata'ib members. "On that single 'Black Saturday', no fewer than seventy Muslims—and probably more—were killed purely on the basis of the mandatory line in their ID cards denoting 'religious

⁹⁶ Adeed I. Dawisha, *Syria and the Lebanese Crisis* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1980), 29.

⁹⁷ Mackey, *Lebanon: Death of a Nation*, 162.

⁹⁸ Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon*, 130.

affiliation’.”⁹⁹ The Muslim/leftists to the spilled blood of sectarian members were crying out for vengeance and perpetuated the cycle of violence.

Throughout 1975 and into early 1976 Syria’s public stance on the violence perpetuated in Lebanon was one of peace negotiation and mediation. This does not negate the fact that even before the outbreak of war, Syria was providing “substantial quantities of arms to radical Palestinian guerilla organizations, which were transferred in part to the militant Lebanese groups.”¹⁰⁰ The first sign of Syria’s potential frustration at the violence across their border was manifested in January 1976. Syrian forces were moved to the Lebanese border “as a warning to Lebanese president Franjeh and Phalangist leader Pierre Gemayel that Syria would intervene to prevent a Maronite victory.”¹⁰¹ No group maintained an upper hand militarily for too long so when the battle rhythm shifted in favor of the PLO and its supporters (LNM Joint Forces), Asad changed positions and concluded that such a victory would be a threat to Syrian strategic interests.

Syrian forces crossed the Lebanese border at the end of May 1976 in order to impose order in the capital. They did not however engage in full-scale combat with Maronite forces, but with PLO and LNM Joint Forces in the mountain passes leading to Beirut. By October 1976 the Syrian army had defeated the PLO-Lebanese leftist alliance and assumed control of large parts of Lebanon.¹⁰² Syrian military intervention ended the first phase of the civil war but it did not end the Lebanese crisis. Lebanon was not lost, but it could not be restored or transformed. Power had been transferred “from traditional politicians and factions to new groups fielding their own militias.”¹⁰³ The Syrian regime

⁹⁹ Ibid., 131.

¹⁰⁰ Ma’oz, *Syria and Israel: From War to Peacemaking* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 1995), 165.

¹⁰¹ Mark Ensalaco, *Middle Eastern Terrorism: From Black September to September 11* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 93.

¹⁰² Edgar O’Ballance, *Civil War in Lebanon 1975–1992* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1998), 59.

¹⁰³ Mackey, *Lebanon: Death of a Nation*, 167.

would remain an intricate part of Lebanese domestic affairs for decades to come, ensuring that these new 'leaders' attended to Syria's interests.

Lebanese factional representatives and others deeply interested in the civil war met in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in mid-October 1976 to attempt to reach agreement on a lasting ceasefire. It was agreed that the Palestinians could remain in Lebanon as long as all combatants returned to the positions they held prior to April 1975. The other main issue, and one Syria was most interested in for it was accorded a dominant role in it, was the creation of a formal Arab Deterrent Force (ADF). Of note, a 'secret' clause between Syria and the PLO was inserted in the agreement that stated the "'Arafat Trail', the illicit supply route from Syria into southern Lebanon, would be reopened by Syrian troops to allow Palestinian units to move south to counter growing Israeli influence in the border area."¹⁰⁴

An agreement may have been reached on paper between religious party representatives, a Syrian presence may have brought a momentary calm, and many may have thought the fighting was soon to end, but that was not the case. Aggressive Palestinian action continued to be projected outwards into Israel and resumed against Christian and Muslim Shi'a alike. The impotent Lebanese government was no match for a well-armed, well-disciplined Palestinian force so Israel, like Syria had, threatened to intervene if Palestinians were permitted to increase in strength on the Israeli border. Starting in mid-1976, that intervention took two major forms: military support to Maronite militias fighting in and around the Lebanese capital and the introduction of the 'open fence' policy.¹⁰⁵ Israel's 'open fence' policy was a campaign to win the hearts and minds of Southern Lebanese Christians and Shi'a Muslims. They "were allowed into Israel in order to receive medical treatment, to work and to buy food/supplies."¹⁰⁶ The

¹⁰⁴ O'Ballance, *Civil War in Lebanon 1975–1992*, 59.

¹⁰⁵ Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon*, 147.

¹⁰⁶ O'Ballance, *Civil War in Lebanon 1975–1992*, 65.

‘Good Fence’ policy rapidly paid dividends for the Israelis in the form of homegrown Maronite militias—all armed by Israel—and located along the southern border of Lebanon.¹⁰⁷

The nation of Lebanon was stuck in the middle of a Syrian-Israeli struggle that would be played out on neither country’s own land. Syria was forced to be content with the land they already occupied and not push past the ‘Red Line’ Israel had drawn, running inland from a point on the coast about midway between Sidon and Tyre.

When one studies Lebanese history it quickly becomes apparent that it is a patchwork of violence connected by interim periods of calm. In March 1977, the tense peace that had settled over the country was shattered when “Kamal Jumblatt and two bodyguards wound through the twisting roads southeast of Beirut into a blazing ambush. The enigmatic Druze leader died instantly.”¹⁰⁸ His followers filled the streets with shouts of revenge and the blood of over 100 Christian souls over the next several days, even though none doubted the guilt rested on Hafiz Asad.¹⁰⁹ Eventually, another peace agreement was made—Shtaura agreement—but never implemented because none of the parties involved (the Syrian government, the PLO and the Lebanese government) were willing to make the first move towards disarmament.

“Between 1977 and 1982, a sullen three-way stalemate existed among the Christians, grouped behind the Lebanese Forces and armed by Israel; the alliance of the left, the remnants of the National Movement reinforced by the PLO; and Syria.”¹¹⁰ Almost a year to the date of Jumblatt’s murder, in March 1978 the Palestinian guerrilla group, Fateh, demonstrated their continued intentions to conduct surgical strikes into Israel. In the early morning hours of March 11, eight Fateh commandos infiltrated into northern Israel and hijacked a bus to Tel Aviv. The final carnage left thirty-one Israelis and six guerrillas dead. Retribution came swiftly on March 14 when Israeli military forces launched the ‘Litani Operation’ and swept into Lebanon, bombarding the bases

¹⁰⁷ Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon*, 158.

¹⁰⁸ Mackey, *Lebanon: Death of a Nation*, 168.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 173.

and supply routes used by the PLO and their allies.¹¹¹ Lebanon would be in a holding pattern of retaliatory actions for the next couple of years after that incident.

The PLO's belligerent attitude towards its host, specifically the Shi'a of southern Lebanon, and its constant forays into Israeli territory once again ignited the embers of a conflict whose flames seemed destined never to die down. On June 6, 1982, "fifteen years, almost to the day, after its greatest triumph, the Six-Day War—the Israeli army embarked on what its well-known historian, Martin van Creveld, called its 'greatest folly'"¹¹²—'Operation Peace in Galilee', the brain child of Ariel Sharon, Israel's defense minister. Sharon's intention was to succeed where other Israeli defense ministers had failed. He schemed, not only to grind the PLO in Lebanon to dust, but also to ensure its destruction by changing the political structure of Lebanon. Unfortunately, all he succeeded in doing is planting the seed of Zionist hatred in the hearts of all those that suffered during this invasion. I believe few would argue that during the succession of Israeli strikes, the "disproportionate force" used by Israel in order to "liquidate the PLO" resulted in the forced expulsion of one enemy from Lebanon (PLO) and the creation of another—Hezbollah (the topic of the next chapter).

Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 could be described as successful if one defined success solely as the expulsion of the PLO. Unfortunately, nothing occurs in a vacuum and the sectarian violence that was perpetrated during the Israeli advancement scarred the confessional relations for many years to come. Groups inflicted wanton acts of terror against their sectarian enemies under the auspices of righting past wrongs. The following passage encapsulates the sectarian hatred that was present in the lungs of Lebanese militiamen by 1982.

¹¹¹ Lewis W. Snider, P. Edward Haley, Abraham R. Wagner, and Nicki J. Cohen, "Israel," in *Lebanon In Crisis: Participants and Issues*, ed. P. Edward Haley and Lewis W. Snider (NY: Syracuse University Press, 1979), 91–111.

¹¹² Hirst, *Beware of Small States*, 135.

One Israeli soldier atop his tank, peering down on the carnage that was once the Palestinian and Shiite neighborhood of Sabra and the camp of Shatila, demanded of a Phalangist why his people were killing women and children. The militiaman shouted back, “Women give birth to children, and children grow up into terrorists.”¹¹³

The carnage of 1982 was not reserved for the Lebanese alone. The PLO were on their way out, but the enemy that replaced them proved to be far more lethal. Fundamentalist Islam had supplanted nationalism as the great new credo and popularly mobilizing force resulting in Lebanese warrior-Muslims with an agenda, allegiances and support that transcended Lebanon.¹¹⁴ The length to which a specific Islamic militant group (Hezbollah) was willing to go in 1982 was evident when two hundred and forty Marines and Sailors were killed by a devastating truck-bomb. Thus began the undeclared war between the United States of America and Lebanese Hezbollah.

Intra-confessional conflict quickly became as frequent as inter-confessional battles, as groups began to fight over the ‘spoils’ of war (economic and political power). Unfortunately, by 1985 the economy had hit a wall. “The cumulative effects of the years of destruction, the progressive erosion of the country’s social fabric, and a deeply ingrained sense of despair settled on the economy. A dead economy and high inflation followed. The only growth industry in war-ravaged Lebanon was the illicit drug trade.”¹¹⁵ Militias from all sides participated in one of the few lucrative means to make money. In short, everything that had enriched pre-war Lebanon was destroyed or beyond repair.

By 1989, there appeared to be some inclination toward conflict resolution between those that supported the status quo (the Lebanese Front and the Christian establishment) and the revisionists (Lebanese National Movement, the Muslim establishment, and the Palestinian resistance movement). The basic issues in dispute between the two groups were mediated by a high profile and authoritative Arab League

¹¹³ Mackey, *Lebanon: Death of a Nation*, 184.

¹¹⁴ Hirst, *Beware of Small States*, 173.

¹¹⁵ Mackey, *Death of a Nation*, 227–228.

committee that put forth proposals which were eventually approved by the Lebanese parliament in October 1989. The Taif Accord “allowed communal pluralism to maintain its legitimacy... It restored to the political system its structural options... And the accord established a framework for continuing and formalizing the resolution process that might, if properly implemented, lead to political integration and social harmony over a period of a generation or two.”¹¹⁶

The Taif Accord never accomplished what its supporters wished it would because it perpetuated the Lebanese problem—not all confessional groups benefitted equally from it. According to Abraham, “the Shi’ite and Druze communities were left out in the cold and had very little to gain from the Taif Accord. From their perspective, the agreement was concluded by their enemies, the Maronites and the Sunnites.”¹¹⁷ Devastating battles ensued because of its attempted implementation.

G. CONCLUSION – THE MEEK INHERITED NOTHING

Lebanon, “as an amalgam of religious communities and their myriad subdivisions, with a constitutional and political order to match, is the sectarian state *par excellence*.”¹¹⁸ Painted with the prejudice of external economic interests, Lebanon “has been presented... as a homeland for the area’s Christians but by the 1980’s this was clearly no longer the truth. It was equally the homeland of its Shiite, Druze, Sunni and other communities—each with their own rich vision of the country’s purpose.”¹¹⁹ The individual visions for the country and confessional desire for power at the expense of other groups led to political disenfranchisement, economic inequality and incessant religious conflict. Although considerable blame rests on external interference for Lebanon’s predicament, “the deficiencies of the political power-sharing arrangement and

¹¹⁶ Abul-Husn, *The Lebanese Conflict*, 4–5.

¹¹⁷ A.J. Abraham, *The Lebanon War* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1996), 177.

¹¹⁸ Hirst, *Beware of Small States*, 2.

¹¹⁹ Cobban, *The Making of Modern Lebanon*, 235.

its inability to regulate elite discord [and greed] as well as meet the needs of a modernizing country experiencing the forces of social mobilization”¹²⁰ must be considered.

Lebanon’s complex social environment possesses both vertical (within confessional groups) and horizontal (among confessional groups) divisions, which on occasion attempted to pull the society apart and threatened the delicate balance of power. Rather than being a source of enrichment, variety, and vitality, they have generated large residues of paranoia and hostility sustained by ‘ideologies of enmity,’ i.e., the affiliative idealizing of one’s group and the aggressive denigrating of another.¹²¹ Understanding the relationships (socioeconomic, political, and religious) between competing sectarian factions is crucial to understanding the outcomes of confessional conflict, such as the ascendancy of the Shiites and the eventual empowerment of Hezbollah. Moreover, understanding confessional or sectarian politics in Lebanon, each group’s multi-faceted agendas, and economic interests is crucial to understanding the context of how the drug trade shapes Lebanese politics.

The militant Shi’ite resistance group, otherwise known as Hezbollah, the topic of the next chapter, quickly realized at the end of the civil war that “in Lebanon, the meek inherited nothing”¹²², and in “the new reality power came from a gun.”¹²³ The social and political landscape was about to change yet again.

¹²⁰ Brenda M. Seaver, " The Regional Sources of Power-Sharing Failure: The Case of Lebanon," *Political Science Quarterly* 115 (2000): 247–271.

¹²¹ Kenneth J. Alwrick and Thomas Fabyanic, "Religion and Politics, ed. Kenneth J. Alwrick and Thomas Fabyanic (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, 1988), 43–60.

¹²² Mackey, *Lebanon: Death of a Nation*, 165.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 201.

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III. DRUGS IN LEBANON

A. INTRODUCTION

Lebanon has been shaped by multiple factors that included colonialism, conflict and corruption. The previous chapter discussed the development of the national resistance group turned political party Hezbollah at the nexus of these factors. Beneath the undercurrent of conflict that has defined Lebanese history, one issue has always been present to one degree or another—narcotics trafficking. The monetary benefit of drug trafficking provides substantial economic and political capital for any individual/group that chooses to participate in this dangerous illicit activity, which is why nearly all of the major confessional groups have been involved with it at one time or another. I contend the drug trade has been overlooked as an important contributor to the political landscape of Lebanon, directly by enriching those confessional parties that control it and indirectly by contributing to a nepotistic and corrupt socioeconomic system that gave rise to Hezbollah. The focus of this chapter is a strategic analysis of drug trafficking throughout Lebanon, what relationship drugs had/have with the confessional groups of Lebanon, and how/why the United States became involved in counter-narcotic operations in a seemingly inconsequential country.

Although drugs (hashish and opium in particular) have been a part of the Lebanese landscape since before its independence, they have never been thoroughly addressed as contributing factors to the Lebanese political scene. A natural question to arise is, ‘How could drugs contribute to the shaping of the political scene?’. Whoever controls the drugs, controls an extremely lucrative commodity. The monetary freedoms that drug trafficking provides, enriches those already in a position of economic advantage and allows one to unduly influence those already possessing political power.

Drugs are commodities that also provide a wage for their cultivator not comparable through legitimate agriculture, an enriching investment for the local strongmen (zaims or abada), and an exaggerated rate of return for those seeking or holding political power. Michael Johnson, a fellow at the Centre for Lebanese Studies,

Oxford supported this argument matter-of-factly in his book *Class and Client in Beirut* when he stated, “the warlords of Lebanon ran the hashish and heroin export trade... and various other rackets”¹²⁴. It was also the warlords that decided who were to represent their area of influence politically. So, whether directly or indirectly, narcotics have had an influence on Lebanese politics.

In order to appreciate the impact of drug trafficking within Lebanon it is important to take a step back to see the global picture of drug trafficking, how the international community began to rally around the ‘prohibition’ cause, and what eventually led to U.S. involvement in Lebanon with respect to drug trafficking. This paper is not meant to be a history lesson on drug trafficking around the globe. But it is sensible to at least discuss how substances that began as a “bad habit or vice in 1809, was later described as a disease of addiction in 1909 and then [became] something else in 2009.”¹²⁵

Beginning in an era of morally tainted racism and colonial trade wars, prohibition-based drug control grew to international proportions at the insistence of the United States. America and the colonial powers were confronted with the effects of drug addiction and abuse at home, and it was decided that a focused attempt to stem the flow of drugs into their territories from the sources was the best means by which to fight it. In doing so, they earned political capital back home and shifted the cost and burden of drug control to the drug producing countries with no cultural inclination or resources to take on such an intrusive task—and no economic or military power to refuse what was imposed on them. An unforeseen and unfortunate side effect of the Western control advocates’ prohibition focus (vice addressing demand simultaneously) was the development of the global illicit drug trade.

It could be argued that the first modern example of ‘global’ drug trafficking began with the Opium Wars (1839–1842 and 1856–1860). The English arrived in China in 1637 and eventually established an economic foothold when “the British East India Trading

¹²⁴ Michael Johnson, *Class and Client in Beirut: The Sunni Muslim Community and the Lebanese State, 1840–1985* (London: Ithaca Press, 1986): 200–203.

¹²⁵ Toby Seddon, *A History of Drugs* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010), 29.

Company was allowed to open a trading station in Canton in 1715”¹²⁶, marketing among other items opium from India. By 1729, rising opium use in China prompted an imperial edict that forbade the sale of opium for smoking purposes and in 1799, another edict prohibited importation.¹²⁷ The British East India Company, realizing the grave economic impact such a proclamation would have on its profits, pressured the British government to intervene. After the Second Opium War, China yielded to British pressure and once again allowed the importation of opium.

Nearly fifty years (Sept 20, 1906) after restrictions against the use of opium were removed, *The Peking Gazette* published a royal decree denouncing the “poison that practically permeated the whole of China.”¹²⁸ The Chinese Government Council laid the foundations once again for a prohibitionist environment by stating, “within a period of ten years the evils arising from foreign and native opium be equally and completely eradicated.”¹²⁹ After much discussion British and Chinese governments on January 27, 1908 accepted the ‘Ten Year Agreement’. According to the agreement, Great Britain would decrease the exportation of Indian opium by one-tenth.¹³⁰ It is inconsequential the amount of opium decreased with respect to this paper because the opium continued to make its way into China. What is important is that governments began to associate social problems with ‘drugs’ and to vilify these commodities that had previously been traded in the same manner as wheat or tobacco.

At the 1909 Shanghai Conference, the International Opium Commission¹³¹ met, but because none of the representatives possessed the necessary diplomatic authority to negotiate a treaty the end result was nothing more than fact finding and non-binding

¹²⁶ Jack Beeching, *The Chinese Opium Wars* (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), 11.

¹²⁷ Joshua Rowntree, *The Imperial Drug Trade* (London, UK: Methuen and Co., 1905), 6–13.

¹²⁸ Hamilton Wright, “The International Opium Commission,” *The American Journal of International Law* 3 (1909): 828–868.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ William B McAllister, *Drug Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2000), 28. The Commission consisted of all the colonial powers in the region – Britain, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Portugal and Russia—as well as China, Siam [now Thailand], Persia [now Iran], Italy and Austria-Hungary.

recommendations. It did however set the stage for future negotiations and agreements lobbied for aggressively by the United States. In the words of William McAllister, “addressing the opium problem directly, publicly and internationally was a way for the U.S. to achieve its domestic control objectives, to put an end to the profitable drug trade dominated by the colonial powers, and to curry favor with the Chinese and thereby hopefully improve Sino-American economic relations.”¹³² The U.S. lobbying eventually led to the 1912 Hague International Opium Convention and several years later, an agreement signed in Geneva concerning suppression of the manufacture of, internal trade in and use of prepared opium. The significance of these conventions is twofold: (a) narcotics control was established as an institution of international law on a multilateral basis; and (b) the framework for the national narcotics control regime had begun.¹³³

The end of the 1920s is when U.S. policy with respect to international drug trafficking began to solidify into an agency that would be the United States’ first line of defense against an ever-encroaching illicit drug market. William B. McAllister succinctly contextualized the worsening international drug problem at the end of the 1920s and the need for such an agency:

In addition to continued overproduction of opium inside China, statistical returns indicated that Chinese imports of manufactured drugs had skyrocketed. The European colonial powers continued to tolerate (and profit from) opium smoking through government monopolies. As western European governments pressured pharmaceutical companies to conform to more stringent control standards, unscrupulous operators moved to states that had not ratified the [Geneva] International Opium Convention.

¹³² William B. McAllister, “Conflicts of Interest in the International Drug Control System,” in *Drug Control Policy: Essays in Historical and Comparative Perspective*, ed. William O. Walker III, (PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 145, cited in Jay Sinha, “The History and Development of the Leading Drug Control Conventions,” in *Report for the Senate Special Committee on Illegal Drugs* (Canada: Parliamentary Research Branch, 2001, 10)

¹³³ I. Bayer and H. Ghodse, “Evolution of international drug control, 1945–1995,” in *United Nations Bulletin on Narcotics Occasional Papers* (NY: United Nations, 2000), 1–18.

Traffickers became more sophisticated in their operations, colluding with political and/or military brokers to avoid prosecution. Drug abusers and their suppliers acted as inventively as the diplomats and bureaucrats; those wishing to circumvent the system altered their routes of acquisition to fit the new pattern.¹³⁴

A large portion of the materials used to analyze the topic of drugs in Lebanon and their relationship to political position is found in formerly classified Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN) documents. These firsthand accounts from agents in Lebanon paint a picture of economic interest supported by political muscle. The drug crops were planted instead of food crops because they would yield a greater profit—a revenue commodity by landowners, farmers, and traffickers. To be honest, crop choice can be boiled down to simple math. If Farmer K can earn \$25/bushel for wheat but \$250/bushel for hashish, why wouldn't he choose the higher profit? It is too unfortunate that over time, the most productive region of Lebanon went from being the breadbasket of Rome to the money basket of confessional leaders and interfering regional powers.

B. FEDERAL BUREAU OF NARCOTICS

The premier American agency investigating international drug trafficking beginning in the 1930s was the Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN), led by Harry Anslinger from 1930–1962. The premise behind the Bureau's modus operandi was stopping drugs at their source before they entered the United States. Their mission proved to be a gargantuan task the FBN was not adequately manned to successfully accomplish. This did not mean however, that the FBN agents sent abroad did not attempt to stall the tidal wave of drugs heading towards the United States with gusto.

One of the identified source nations for hashish and opium trafficking by the 1940s was Lebanon. Lebanon's countryside, particularly the Bekaa Valley, was an agricultural wonderland rich with fertile ground for any crop cultivation. Wheat and barley crops that used to feed empires were abandoned in favor of more profitable crops. Unfortunately, the crop choice for many farmers was hashish since it yielded the highest

¹³⁴ William B McAllister, *Drug Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2000), 86.

profit. Lebanon's urban areas were not exempt from drugs' influence. Its capital city, Beirut, was like any major American city—a concentration of people, business, and government with appetites for making a profit and the feeling drugs provide.

Charlie Siragusa, working mainly out of Italy and the FBN's first overseas office, ran much of the investigation into drug trafficking within Lebanon. FBN agents working in Lebanon were like journalists, businessmen, and tightrope artists rolled into one. They developed contacts with traffickers, made purchases and passed on pertinent information to the Italy office for further analysis or possible arrests within Europe. An agent's greatest weapons were the informant networks built through interaction with local businessmen/dealers and a strong working relationship with local police. In Lebanon, arrests were not possible due to the high-level personnel connected to the drug trade. Investigations could not end in arrests because of the known collaboration between drug traffickers and politicians, so Lebanon became a springboard for investigations and arrests in other destination countries along the drug routes, including the United States.

Drug trafficking was a well-established part of the Lebanese economy by the time Charlie Siragusa decided to officially open an FBN office in Beirut in 1954. The Italian Mafia's decision to reroute most of the illicit heroin traffic to Beirut following the Italian government's crackdown on heroin made this a wise decision. Lebanon was increasing in importance to the international drug trafficking community due to the ingrained corruption among politicians and police that facilitated the drug flow into and through Lebanon. In fact, the operating environment was tense and fragile due to the potential for political backlash from parliament members involved in hashish cultivation—most notably members of the Maronite Christian minority and its paramilitary action arm, the Phalange.¹³⁵ Siragusa had to balance the effect of FBN operations on internal Lebanese politics, and operate within restrictions placed on him and his staff by U.S. agencies such as the CIA and the State Department. Lebanon was a tricky environment that required street smarts, cultural awareness, and a keen sense of survival.

¹³⁵ Douglas Valentine, *Strength of the Wolf* (New York, NY: Verso, 2004), 121.

No one knew these requirements more than Paul Knight, the first agent in charge of the Beirut office during the period 1954 thru 1961. During his tenure, it was known that he was an American Embassy employee, in the Agency for International Development's Office of Public Safety, which provided material aid to the Lebanese police forces. But Lebanese security also knew that CIA officers were working under the same Safety Program, and thus Knight had to keep some distance from the Embassy. Relationship building did not come easy because he held a personal passport, not a diplomatic one, and he lived in the St. George Hotel, posing as a travel agent. Living under multiple identities caused some concern for Lebanese officials because they were not entirely sure he could be trusted.

Paul Knight's initial contact was an influential figure, Lebanon's national security chief Emir Faoud Chehab. Chehab was tainted by his family's involvement in corruption during the French mandate, and therefore he could not help Knight build narcotics cases. Knight struck gold however when he was introduced to Hannah Yazbek, a Maronite strongman and an individual capable of introducing Knight to potential informers as well as providing intelligence on local narcotics traffickers. Knight explained the social layout of Lebanon clearly when he said, "They had a system in Beirut not unlike that in Chicago, in which the city was divided into ethnic and religious neighborhoods. Each neighborhood had a strongman, the *abada*, from whom criminals and businessmen alike bought protection. Hannah Yazbek was the Maronite *abada*. He was a hashish smuggler connected to the Gemayel family, which controlled the Fascist Phalange and collaborated with the Vichy French. And he was essential to getting the job done."¹³⁶ Through Hannah Yazbek, aka Abu George, Knight was able to develop the picture of drug smuggling operations in Beirut and the nearby Bekaa Valley, "the ancient Biblical land between Syria and Lebanon where hashish was grown and narcotics were smuggled."¹³⁷

The Federal Bureau of Narcotics branch within Lebanon was critical to support of the Bureau's primary mission—stopping narcotics trafficking at its source instead of after it gets into the United States. Although arrests were not directly made by FBN agents,

¹³⁶ Valentine, *Strength of the Wolf* (New York, NY: Verso, 2004), 123.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 124.

the networks developed by the agents contributed information that led to arrests in other countries along the narcotic routes to the United States. Their work provided an understanding of drug trafficking within and through Lebanon during the tenuous period shortly after its ‘independence’. The magnitude of drug trafficking within Lebanon, its pervasiveness among all confessional groups, and economic influence is evident upon examination of FPN documents.

C. DRUGS IN LEBANON (1944–1948)

Lebanon was a country of great socio-economic potential in the 1940s.¹³⁸ Its place within the world capitalist system was firmly established by the end of the Ottoman Empire through silk and agricultural food exports. Local markets were brimming with products imported from Europe and major industrial countries were investing massive capital.¹³⁹ The economy was booming in all sectors, including the drug trade that was in full swing by 1944. The Bekaa Valley was awash with hemp farms and Beirut port was a hub of narcotics trafficking. However, local leaders felt pressured to take a strong public stance against drugs because of the international pressure that was being exerted by the United States and its allies.

Lebanese leaders publicly opposed drug trafficking. Religious scholars called drug trafficking an offense against Allah and the secular government saw hashish production as a threat to society. Both groups of leaders responded to this social problem by issuing public statements denouncing participation in drug trafficking. Prominent sheikhs Ahmed Jarbou and Ali Hannaoui issued a fatwa that clearly stated, “It is to be regretted that hashish plantations exist in Jebel Druze... the Prophet has denounced [it]...God has forbidden it in His book...any land planted with Indian Hemp is cursed... All those who continue to grow Indian Hemp will be banned and excommunicated.”¹⁴⁰ Also, a government communiqué, issued March 29, 1944, reminded farmers and

¹³⁸ Galal A. Amin, *The Modernization of Poverty* (Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1974), 4–6.

¹³⁹ Elizabeth Picard, *Lebanon: A Shattered Country* (New York, NY: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 2002), 37–38.

¹⁴⁰ To the Secretary of State from George Wadsworth, May 1, 1945; Lebanon Folder 1, 1945–1953; Subject Files of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, 1916–1970, Records of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Record Group 170, National Archives Building II, Silver Spring, MD.

landowners that hashish production was strictly forbidden and the government would take drastic steps to destroy all hashish plantations.¹⁴¹ These proclamations did not have the effect hoped for by their writers. Hashish production increased, causing the government to take measures to eradicate its production. The communiqué, the fatwa and foreign government prompting essentially kicked off the 1944 ‘Hashish Campaign’—a superficial war on drugs waged by the Lebanese and Syrian governments in order to convince the United States that they considered drug trafficking a serious international issue.

D. THE 1944 HASHISH “CAMPAIGN”

Lebanon was considered both a thoroughfare for drugs and a major cultivator of them by 1944. As a result, the Lebanese government was experiencing increased pressure to enforce their anti-drug laws from states directly impacted by narcotics trafficking. The 1944 Hashish Campaign was the first attempt to suppress hashish production by a fledgling Lebanese government. Previous years’ campaigns (1942–1943) had been run by the Surete Generale aux Armees and the British Security Mission because Lebanon had been under the French mandate. By May of 1944, orders were sent out to all law enforcement posts to “prosecute the campaign with the utmost vigor.”¹⁴² The campaign got underway punctually in Syria, but in Lebanon—owing to overwhelming demands on certain Gendarmerie districts—work did not begin until the end of July. Despite the late start, the campaign was over by the end of August everywhere except for Jebel Druze where operations ended on September 8.

Ironically, the 1944 hashish campaign was deemed successful. Hashish cultivation was not entirely eradicated, but enough was destroyed it seems that the Lebanese and Syrian governments could applaud their efforts. It should be noted that hashish production increased following the government’s eradication efforts. According

¹⁴¹ To the Secretary of State from George Wadsworth, May 1, 1945; Lebanon Folder 1, 1945–1953; Subject Files of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, 1916–1970, Records of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Record Group 170, National Archives Building II, Silver Spring, MD.

¹⁴² Ibid., To Secretary of State from George Wadsworth, May 1, 1945. Referencing letter from Colonel sir Patrick Coghill to Lowa Sir Thomas Russell—“Hashish Campaign 1944.”

to the local Beirut paper, *Le Jour*, August 16, 1947, “four and one half million square meters of land under hashish was raised in 1944 and four times that much in 1945.”¹⁴³ The government explained this increase by providing two possible reasons: 1) depletion in hashish stock due to the success of the 1942/43 campaigns and 2) maliciously fostered rumors that there would be no campaign in 1944 (particularly in the Bekaa Valley).

Colonel sir Patrick Coghill, Chief of the British Security Mission, Syria and Lebanon, lauded the 1944 Campaign as “greatly satisfying” and “a matter of congratulations”¹⁴⁴. Any indication that the mission was unsuccessful was argued away. Coghill’s personal opinion of the Lebanese attitude towards the campaign is very interesting. He believed “the attitude of certain of the Lebanese Ministers was a combination of lip-service to the Western ideas about drugs coupled with dismay at seeing a principal source of income destroyed.”¹⁴⁵ It is unclear from the FBN correspondence report whether the ministers were referring to a loss of income to themselves or the farmers cultivating the hashish crop.

E. DRUGS IN LEBANON (1949–1953)

By the end of the 1940s, governments around the globe were cracking down more aggressively on criminal organizations involved in narcotics trafficking. Due to the Italian government’s aggressive crackdown on Mafia activity during the early 1950s, “it was determined that most of the illicit traffic in heroin had been rerouted to Beirut” where individuals involved in its movement had strong connections to law enforcement officers and politicians, and were sending their product as far as New York City.¹⁴⁶ It was becoming clear that movement of narcotics within and through Lebanon occurred with the full knowledge of individuals in positions of political influence. Information

¹⁴³ To Curtis F. Jones from George Wadsworth, August 20, 1947; Lebanon Folder 1, 1945–1953; Subject Files of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, 1916–1970, Records of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Record Group 170, National Archives Building II, Silver Spring, MD.

¹⁴⁴ To the Secretary of State from George Wadsworth May 1, 1945; Lebanon Folder 1, 1945–1953; Subject Files of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, 1916–1970, Records of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Record Group 170, National Archives Building II, Silver Spring, MD.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Valentine, *Strength of the Wolf* (New York, NY: Verso, 2004), 120.

provided during this period also proves that any government attempts to curtail the supply of narcotics within or through Lebanon were unsuccessful, or rather lackadaisical. Trafficking of narcotics remained a lucrative business for those involved, including government officials.

Evidence laid out in FBN correspondence plainly links high-ranking government officials to the drug trade. A litmus test of Lebanese politicians' involvement in narcotics trafficking was revealed by the extremely combative reaction to Lebanese Premier Abdullah Yafi's decision in 1951 to send troops to destroy hashish crops in the northeast. The *New York Times* on July 2, 1951 reported, "Men who had occupied high office went livid with rage," at the prospect of further government action against drug cultivation.¹⁴⁷ Why would a leadership decision to destroy an illegal substance evoke such an angry response from politicians, unless these politicians were in a position to lose a large portion of their income to the governmental crackdown?

The best documented case of a politically associated individual dealing in drugs during this period provided by the FBN documents was Jean Choery. The FBN determined without question that an attaché associated with the Lebanese Legation in Paris, Jean Choery, also known as Habib Khoury, was a known narcotics trafficker.¹⁴⁸ A delegate to the Vatican informed FBN Director, Henry J. Anslinger that Khoury was a Kavass (Turkish word meaning an interpreter-courier employed by Arab embassies) and also acted as a diplomatic courier, which made things easy for him to make frequent trips to Orly airfield in Paris, a well-known stop for drug trafficking.¹⁴⁹ He also had "influence and solid support among top ranking policemen and politicians."¹⁵⁰ A FBN memorandum stated quite matter-of-factly that:

¹⁴⁷ *New York Times*, July 2, 1951, 5:1.

¹⁴⁸ To the Honorable Charles Malick from H. J. Anslinger, February 10, 1953; Lebanon Folder 1, 1945–1953; Subject Files of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, 1916–1970, Records of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Record Group 170, National Archives Building II, Silver Spring, MD.

¹⁴⁹ To Richard Funkhouser from Harold B. Minor, January 29, 1953; Lebanon Folder 1, 1945–1953; Subject Files of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, 1916–1970, Records of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Record Group 170, National Archives Building II, Silver Spring, MD.

¹⁵⁰ Jean-Pierre Charbonneau, *The Canadian Connection* (Montreal: Optimum Publishing Company Limited, 1976): 98–99.

Khoury makes large deliveries of heroin and morphine bases...the narcotics are smuggled from Turkey to Beirut and then to Rome. [He] has been smuggling morphine and heroin to France and Italy for many months... It is believed he uses the diplomatic pouch for delivery... We believe that he was the source of supply for Akrom Yosef, a Lebanese student who was arrested in New York.¹⁵¹

Khoury's successful drug trafficking operations would not have been possible if he had not had a political network of support.

F. SYRIAN INVOLVEMENT

The issue of drug dealing diplomats brings up an interesting aspect of Lebanese history relevant to this topic—its relationship with regional neighbors and their involvement in drug trafficking through Lebanon. The initial breakup of the Ottoman Empire had left Syria and Lebanon one governed area. That of course was not to remain the case. France and England quickly imposed imperially drawn borders that eventually led to two distinct countries. Considering a shared history and the geographical proximity of Syria's capital to the Lebanese border, it is easy to understand why Syria maintained a vested interest in Lebanese domestic issues until its ouster in 2005. Also, the consistent instability within Lebanon posed a considerable risk of spillage into Syria and “provided strong incentive to intervene, in order to preempt any changes and direct them in ways favorable to itself.”¹⁵²

Syrian influence over Lebanese domestic affairs grew out of international concern over the Lebanese civil war (1975–1976). Syrian President Asad took full advantage of the international community's desire to provide stability to the Lebanese people and swiftly moved to inject Syrian influence throughout Lebanon. For example, operating under the guise of trying to end the civil war, Hafiz al-Assad began sending Palestinian Liberation Army (PLA) troops under his control into Lebanon. The process was really

¹⁵¹ To H. J. Anslinger from Charles Siragusa, October 20, 1952; Lebanon Folder 1, 1945–1953; Subject Files of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, 1916–1970, Records of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Record Group 170, National Archives Building II, Silver Spring, MD; H. J. Anslinger from Charles Siragusa, October 31, 1952; *ibid* Memorandum December 15, 1952.

¹⁵² Fred H. Lawson, “Syria's Intervention in the Lebanese Civil War, 1976: A Domestic Conflict Explanation,” *International Organization* 38 (1984): 451–480.

rather simple, “as Lebanese notables trooped to Damascus to confer with Assad, the Syrian-controlled PLA was patrolling Beirut and taking up positions in the Bika.”¹⁵³ The Syrian regime ‘considered control of the Bekaa and northern Lebanon essential for the maintenance of its influence in Lebanon’ because it provided a porous border through which to move East and a natural buffer to potential Israeli movements north.¹⁵⁴ In summary, initial diplomatic efforts translated into the establishment of an expanded military foothold and enabled the Syrian government to unilaterally exercise influence over Lebanese domestic affairs, to include a controlling interest in narcotics cultivation and trafficking within the Bekaa Valley. In fact, “the Assad-Franjieh (Lebanese President) relationship allowed the export of large amounts of hashish from the Bika Valley”¹⁵⁵ during the turbulent years that followed.

A look at the volume of drug trafficking before and after Syrian occupation is enough to convince any skeptic that the affinity Syria had for Lebanon was stoked by its overwhelming need for the revenue that narcotic cultivation produced. In 1975, prior to a full blown Syrian occupation, “Lebanon produced only about 100 tons of hashish per year. By 1985 hashish production had increased twentyfold, to 2,000 tons a year. In 1986 Lebanese hashish accounted for 75 percent of world production.”¹⁵⁶ Within a decade (1982–1992), the Syrians had taken advantage of the fertile Bekaa Valley by pushing cultivation to an unprecedented ninety percent of the land. They also gradually transformed a large portion of the hashish fields with a more lucrative crop, opium that reaps more than ten times the price of hashish per acre.

By the 1990s, Syrian military personnel, from junior officers to President Assad’s brother and the Minister of Defense, were reaping the harvest of narcotics trafficking within Lebanon. In fact, “Syrian military units were bordering cannabis and opium fields

¹⁵³ Charles Winslow, *Lebanon: War and politics in a fragmented society* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1996), 202.

¹⁵⁴ William Harris, “Syria in Lebanon,” *Middle East Research and Information Project* 134 (1985): 9–14.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 217.

¹⁵⁶ Michael Widlanski, “Assad Case,” *The New Republic* 206 (1992): 8–10.

and laboratories for making heroin and individual Syrian officers were making as much as \$30,000 a year from the trade. All told, the Syrian military was getting a subsidy of \$300 million to \$1 billion from the heroin trade.”¹⁵⁷

Narcotics cultivation and trafficking through Lebanon may have blossomed into a billion dollar cash cow by the early 1990s. But during the 1950s, before Syria had a sound foothold in Lebanon and was controlling much of the drug business in the Bekaa Valley, Syria needed to appear to support the American led, international anti-narcotics campaign. A peculiarity about the ‘war on drugs’ is that it is characterized with lofty idealism and impossible goals. Politicians, from Syria and Lebanon, knew this so they were able to swear with their right hands that they will do everything in their power to eliminate drug cultivation/trafficking within their borders and at the same time with their left hands pay someone to plow their hashish fields.

In order to put on a show of repression to outside governments, the Syrian government was a very ‘willing and eager’ participant in the aforementioned “Hashish Campaign.” Contrary to international perception, narcotics were flowing freely across the Syrian-Lebanese border while the campaign was executed. Progress Report No. 31, a report sent from the Lebanese FBN agent to the director of narcotics, clearly states that in 1950 “observations and previous information received by the Bureau indicated that there now existed the large-scale smuggling of crude opium from Turkey into Syria, eventually destined for foreign distribution from the port of Beirut.”¹⁵⁸ In fact, it was already known to the Bureau that “rich landowners in the Jebel Druze area had been growing marihuana for many years now and these landowners appointed all local officials including the police.”¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ *New York Times*, June 15, 1993, A27.

¹⁵⁸ To H. J. Anslinger from Charles Siragusa, September 14, 1950; Lebanon Folder 1, 1945–1953; Subject Files of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, 1916–1970, Records of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Record Group 170, National Archives Building II, Silver Spring, MD.

¹⁵⁹ To H. J. Anslinger from Charles Siragusa, September 14, 1950; Lebanon Folder 1, 1945–1953; Subject Files of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, 1916–1970, Records of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Record Group 170, National Archives Building II, Silver Spring, MD.

Not surprisingly, Mr. Owen Jones, Charge d’Affaires of the American Legation, Damascus, Syria, shared that to the best of his knowledge “the Syrian government is not involved in the production of hasheesh.”¹⁶⁰ The authenticity of such comments stands the test of time and highlights the fact that governments are often willing to overlook issues such as drug trafficking. The truth on the ground highlighted by FBN agents in 1950 Lebanon was apparently not a storyline the United States, Syria or Lebanon wanted to promote—drug trafficking was a profit-making business in the Bekaa Valley prior to Syrian intervention and flourished for three decades under Syrian supervision. In 1992 not much had changed; the State Department’s narcotics report read, “U.S. officials believe that individual Syrian soldiers and other officials stationed in Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley, as well as some higher level officials, are involved in the drug trade. This is in contradiction to the stated Syrian government policy...”¹⁶¹.

G. THE BEKAA VALLEY

The importance of the Bekaa Valley to the Lebanese drug trade cannot be understated. It was once ‘Lebanon’s breadbasket—rich with wheat, fruit and vineyards’ but was eventually transformed into a major narcotics cultivating region, eventually seeing its product sent as far away as the United States. Eitan Azani provides a plain, to the point descriptive of the Bekaa and drugs—

The people of Beqaa... engaged in growing and trading drugs. They were tough and assertive and opposed any representation of authority in their region.¹⁶²

All the literature researched on drug trafficking and Lebanon point to the Bekaa Valley as the epicenter. The region benefited from drug dealers operating in the Bekaa Valley because hashish made up a minimum of 10 percent of the cash crops within the valley. In other words, Lebanon’s major narcotics cultivation, refining and trafficking provided a necessary economic stimulus to the region.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Michael Widlanski, “Assad Case,” *The New Republic* 206 (1992): 8–10.

¹⁶² Eitan Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 51.

Correspondence between FBN agents included pictures and descriptions of hashish fields that continue on for as far as the eye can see. Farmers of the Bekaa Valley had a choice—cultivate a crop that is illegal both domestically and internationally and make a sustainable living, or cultivate a crop that yields a return considerably less and struggle to survive. In the absence of a more lucrative crop, local farmers will grow what is in demand and politicians will encourage that which puts money into state and personal bank accounts. A commodity that was desired throughout the international market and that brought a higher price than food crops turned Lebanon’s breadbasket into a money till for Lebanese politicians and Syrian military officers.

The close relationship between politics and hashish was reported back to the State Department in Washington, D.C. whenever new information came to light. A narcotics agent stationed in Lebanon in order to understand the relationship and to see the connections between individuals provided the following descriptive account of the drug-politician relationship.

The President of the Republic of Lebanon is the Chief Executive of the country. Under him is the President of the Chamber of Deputies, which is composed of deputies from the five districts, namely—Bekaa, South Lebanon, North Lebanon, Beirut, and Mt. Lebanon. Narcotic Agent Charles Siragusa did not mince words when describing the direct connection between political position and narcotics trafficking in 1950 Lebanon when he wrote:

Practically the entire production of hasheesh [was] in the fertile Bekaa valley, in the Bekaa district of the ‘feudal lord’ and President of the Chamber of Deputies—at the time Sabri Bey Hamede. Since he [was] the biggest landowner it [was] an accepted fact that the vast marihuana farms are either his property or rented by him to others.¹⁶³

It was speculated that when there were governmental pushes to repress hashish production, the only acres cultivated with hashish that were destroyed were those of

¹⁶³ To H. J. Anslinger from Charles Siragusa, September 9, 1950; Lebanon Folder 1, 1945–1953; Subject Files of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, 1916–1970, Records of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Record Group 170, National Archives Building II, Silver Spring, MD.

Hamede's competitors. So, not only did Lebanese politicians in 1950 use their positions to shield themselves from legal prosecution, but they also used them to get rid of any competition.

One can understand after careful examination of the FBN records that drug trafficking through Lebanon was firmly established by the middle of the 1950s. Narcotics were flowing out of, into and through Lebanon from the countries surrounding it, opium from Turkey via Syria on to Europe, cocaine from Europe into Lebanon, and hashish grown locally and exported. Those participating in, or rather controlling, the drug trafficking operations were most often influential figures or held a familial link to powerful political figures able to garner cover for their illicit activities. According to Robert Fisk, even though hashish production was officially illegal, "the 30 wealthy Lebanese families who controlled the crops were both politically and militarily powerful."¹⁶⁴ Also, it has been suggested that couriering was often done in diplomatic pouches during official government travel, providing diplomatic cover. Does this mean that high-ranking political figures are solely culpable for laying a foundation in the drug business for future political figures or organizations? No, but it does establish the fact that Lebanese politics and drug trafficking have a shared history.

H. DRUGS IN LEBANON (1960s AND BEYOND)

Drug trafficking continued through Lebanon in the 1960s and the 1970s, leading up to the beginnings of the civil war in 1975. Processing plants for heroin and opium poppies proliferated with the help of international gangs during this period. In fact, drug cultivation flourished in the Bekaa Valley during the lawless years of the 1975–1990 civil war, mostly under the watchful eye of Syrian military officers.¹⁶⁵ At the onset of the civil war, "a war economy developed in which militia leaders could accumulate profits from... the export of the refined products of cannabis and the opium poppy – both grown

¹⁶⁴ Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation: The Abduction of Lebanon* (New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing, 1990), 122.

¹⁶⁵ Yonah Alexander, "Narco-Terrorism: Some Strategic Consideration," *Crossroads* 20 (1986): 62.

in the Bekaa Valley.”¹⁶⁶ The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime data shows Lebanon was the major producer of illicit drugs in the Middle East during this same period.

In the late 1980s illicit cultivation reached its peak. Cannabis cultivation was estimated as high as 11,000 to 16,000 hectares during the peak years and yielded up to 1,000 tons of cannabis resin. Opium poppy, which was introduced in the 1980s, grew rapidly from 3,500 to 5,000 hectares yielding 3 to 5 tons of heroin.¹⁶⁷

From 1991 to 1993 Lebanese and Syrian forces attempted to once again eradicate illicit cultivation in the Bekaa Valley. While significantly reducing the cultivation of opium poppy and cannabis, the eradication campaigns were not integrated into a more comprehensive program and were therefore not successful. In fact, eradication in the absence of alternative income sources had an immediate negative economic impact on the population.

Driven by dire financial difficulties following the 1990s, many farmers reverted back to the cash-cow crops of hashish and opium poppies. Farmers blame the government for years of neglect and the Lebanese government blames the international community for failing to follow through on promises of agricultural and economic aid to farmers in the Bekaa¹⁶⁸-Hermel region. According to Beirut’s daily newspaper, Al Anwar (June 13, 2001), Agriculture Minister Ali Abdullah stated, “Donor countries have reneged on their promises to finance agricultural projects in the Bekaa valley.”¹⁶⁹ He is also quoted as saying, “If the farmers have resumed cultivating the illegal crop, it is not because they want to do so but because they have been forced to do it due to the difficult living condition.”¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Michael Johnson, *All Honourable Men: The Social Origins of War in Lebanon* (London: Ithaca Press, 2001), 226.

¹⁶⁷ “UNODC ASSISTANCE IN ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT IN LEBANON” WWW.UNODC.ORG/EGYPT/EN/LEBANON_PROJECT_ALTERNATIVE_DEVELOPMENT.HTML (ACCESSED SEPT 20, 2010).

¹⁶⁸ Spellings for this word will vary throughout depending on author’s use.

¹⁶⁹ *The Middle East Reporter*, June 23, 2001, 9–11.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

The Minister's comments highlight the very real fact that drug trafficking is not motivated by greed alone; real socio-economic crisis pushes the cultivators to participate in this process. According to a report by the French news agency, AFP, referenced in *The Middle East Reporter*, "Lebanese authorities are turning a blind eye to the return of drug cultivation in remote areas of the Bekaa valley. The 'authorities' flexibility has encouraged the inhabitants of 150 villages, out of 2000 to return to the cultivation of the illicit drugs."¹⁷¹ No one is certain how large an area is being cultivated. Estimates vary between 2,000 and 5,000 hectares. Some estimates go as high as 35 percent of the whole Ballbek-Hermel area.

I. THE FRENCH CONNECTION

Nations would often like to believe that what ties them together is a shared culture, brought from one state to another as people immigrate with hopes of a new and better life. That is most certainly true in many cases. New York's Ellis Island has been a beacon of hope for millions of individuals looking to make a fortune in the land of endless opportunity. Unfortunately, good intentions are not always the only luggage brought by people entering the United States. Drugs and the desire to build a market for those drugs are often what cross into the United States from countries far away—five thousand, six hundred twenty-two miles away to be exact. Beirut, Lebanon is on the eastern border of the Mediterranean Sea and by all accounts a long way from New York City, but it played a pivotal role in one of the most well known drug trafficking stories of the twentieth century—The French Connection.

By 1961 narcotics trafficking out of Beirut, Lebanon was firmly established to countries like Egypt, Italy and France. The genesis of this story is not Lebanon, but Turkey; however, Beirut played a very important processing and shipping role in the life cycle of heroin on its way to New York City. On December 16 a shipment of 51.1 kilograms of nearly pure heroin, over 112 pounds, arrived in Montreal via France. New York City was the culmination of its life cycle.

¹⁷¹ *The Middle East Reporter*, June 23, 2001, 9–11.

The narcotics started in Turkey where the poppies were cultivated and the opium harvested. It then made its way to Lebanon where the oily, musk-scented brown paste was sold and chemically reduced to a powdery, white morphine base. This potent base was then conveyed clandestinely to the sophisticated refineries in the south of France around Marseilles. Here it was chemically processed further into the drug known as heroin and made its illicit passage throughout the world. The load that arrived in Montreal could be expected to turn over as much as \$32,000,000 on the street. Theoretically, it was enough to supply every addict in the United States for eight months. It was the largest single shipment ever attempted.¹⁷²

Grunt police work was responsible for bringing the individuals involved in the French Connection to justice. The network of narcotics traffickers that stretched from Turkey to New York City via Lebanon and France had lost this round of a seemingly endless war on drugs.

J. CONCLUSION

Narcotics have been more than just another of Lebanon's social ills. They have been an unfortunate contributor to the development of Lebanon and its political system. Those involved with drug trafficking within and through Lebanon have not been a faceless mass of the underprivileged. Douglas Valentine states matter-of-factly in his book *The Strength of the Wolf*, "In Lebanon... the major hash growers were legislators and officials of cabinet rank."¹⁷³ People of influence and means have attached themselves to the illicit marketing of drugs in order to partake in the large profit margin they afford. We know that the overwhelming majority of narcotic cultivation occurred, and continues to occur, in the Bekaa Valley. This geographic area, historically tied to the Shi'a, has been ripe with narcotic cultivation for decades and has fostered a corrupt political environment from which Hezbollah was born and now finds it self leading.

¹⁷² Valentine, *Strength of the Wolf* (New York, NY: Verso, 2004), 66.

¹⁷³ Valentine, *Strength of the Wolf* (New York, NY: Verso, 2004), 170.

IV. HEZBOLLAH AND DRUGS

A. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter chronicled the development of Lebanese socio-political confessionalism and the eventual fifteen-year civil war that almost destroyed the country. This chapter will focus greater attention on the Shi'a of Lebanon, Hezbollah in particular, and its involvement in drug trafficking. Although its predecessor Amal had raised the voice of the Shi'a earlier, it was Hezbollah's rise "out of the heat of the resistance battle"¹⁷⁴ that truly provided the Shi'a of Lebanon with a strong voice and international attention. Some western governments have labeled it a terrorist organization. At the same time, its supporters defended it as a domestic political organization and the only proven resistance movement against Israel. While these titles are true, they fail to comprehensively capture the character of the group. Hezbollah is also a pragmatic and calculating organization that constantly analyzes the 'profit and loss' considerations of all its actions. To that end, I hypothesize that Hezbollah, by virtue of its positional authority, geographic origins and international influence, controls a large portion if not most of the drug trafficking moving through Lebanon. And as such, it has been co-opted into the very system of corruption it vowed to fight during its genesis.

Historically, the politically elite of the major confessional groups have controlled drug trafficking throughout Lebanon. However, the violence between and among confessional groups often overshadows issues such as drug trafficking. Instead of being seen as a significant contributor to the socio-political landscape of Lebanon, drugs are seen as a symptom of other more 'important' problems such as governmental ineptness, declining agricultural opportunity and corruption. However, I propose that drug trafficking is just the other side of any one of these issues.

Evidence points to Hezbollah's smuggling cocaine from Latin America into Europe and the Middle East, after having previously smuggled opiates from the Bekaa

¹⁷⁴ Eitan Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 241.

Valley in Lebanon. During the previous decade, Hezbollah has consistently cooperated with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) to export narcotics into Europe. It is safe to assume that Hezbollah involvement in drug trafficking and other illegal activity is increasing as sponsorship funding from regional interests (Iran and Syria) likely decreases. To that end, recent revelations about Hezbollah prove that the politically elite continue to utilize their seat of power to pursue an unjust dollar.

According to recent reporting by The New York Times, United States officials accused the Lebanese Canadian Bank of laundering money for an international cocaine ring with ties to Hezbollah. This public accusation resulted in the exposure of the bank's ledgers and more importantly shed light on a dark secret: the clandestine methods that Hezbollah uses to finance its operations. The books offer evidence of an intricate global money-laundering apparatus and new insights into the murky sources of Hezbollah's money. The bank appeared to let Hezbollah move huge sums of money into the legitimate financial system, despite sanctions aimed at cutting off its economic lifeblood. Mark Rubin, a resident scholar at American Enterprise Institute, is not surprised by Hezbollah's use of legitimate institutions to launder illicit funds. Lebanese banks are known for their involvement in money laundering since at least the 1950s.¹⁷⁵

While law enforcement agencies around the world have long believed that Hezbollah is a passive beneficiary of contributions from loyalists abroad involved in drug trafficking and a grab bag of other criminal enterprises, intelligence from several countries points to the direct involvement of high-level Hezbollah officials. One agent involved in the investigation compared Hezbollah to the Mafia, saying, "They operate like the Gambinos on steroids."¹⁷⁶

The rise of the Lebanese Shi'a to a position of political authority and social influence did not occur overnight. Throughout most of their history in the region, the

¹⁷⁵ Rubin, Mark, Resident Scholar American Enterprise Institute. Interview by author, January 30, 2012, Bahrain.

¹⁷⁶ *The New York Times*, December 14, 2011, A1.

Shi'a population has been a quietly enduring group most often detached from the centers of power and privilege. Their connection to the region is not, however, something completely unknown. So let us begin at the beginning.

B. SHI'A ORIGINS IN THE REGION

Establishing an exact date that the Shi'a population was established in modern-day Lebanon is open to conjecture due to the paucity of written records on the subject. Oral traditions of Shi'a scholars of South Lebanon teach their founding by Abu Dharr, a companion of the Prophet and a strong supporter of Ali's claim to the caliphate.¹⁷⁷ Early twentieth century scholars, such as Phillip Hitti and Henri Lammens, claim that the Shi'a communities are descendants of the Persians and still others postulate the present day Shi'a families have their roots in Yemenite tribes.¹⁷⁸ "However Shi'a Islam was established, it is apparent through written records that by the tenth century Shi'a groups were widespread throughout Syria (including Lebanon, Palestine and East Jordan)."¹⁷⁹

In the eleventh century, three local Shi'a dynasties (Buyids, Hamdanid, Isma'ilis Fatimid) each enjoyed a moment of glory. However, from the twelfth century onward the Sunni orthodoxy majority reduced the Shi'a in the region to the status of dissenters.¹⁸⁰ Over the centuries, the Shi'a congregated in two main areas of modern-day Lebanon. The first was Jebel Amil (Mount Amil), which is that part of the Lebanon mountain range in Southern Lebanon between the Shouf and northern Galilee. The second was in the northern reaches of the Beqaa Valley, around the towns of Baaleek and Hirmil.

Each group of Shi'a followed a distinctive path of development. In the Jebel Amil region, rain-fed agriculture predominated. Most worked the fields for the benefit of

¹⁷⁷ Albert Hourani, "From Jabal 'Amil to Persia'," in *Bulletin of the School of African and Oriental Studies*, vol 49 (1986), 133, cited in Roger Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon: Clans, Parties and Clerics* (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 13.

¹⁷⁸ Rula Abisaab, "Shi'ite Beginnings and Scholastic Tradition in Jabal 'Amil in Lebanon' in *The Muslim World*, vol. 89, No. 1, January 1999, 4, cited in Roger Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon: Clans, Parties and Clerics* (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 13.

¹⁷⁹ Roger Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon: Clans, Parties and Clerics* (New York, NY: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 14.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

landowning families (zuama), who in turn provided them with protection and arbitrated their disputes; a feudal system. In the northern Beqaa, the Shi'a were more nomadic and existed in a series of clans.¹⁸¹ The Shi'a, politically marginalized and economically disadvantaged, did not play a major role in the events that shaped the environment around them until well into the twentieth century.



Figure 1. Areas of Shia concentration in Lebanon (From: justworldnews.org¹⁸²)

C. SHI'A DEMOGRAPHICS—OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW

By the time of the 1932 census (the only one ever taken), Lebanese Shi'a was the third largest community. The geographic isolation they had been subjected to, however,

¹⁸¹ Helena Cobban, *The Shia Community and the Future of Lebanon* (Washington, D.C.: American Institute for Islamic Affairs, 1985), 2.

¹⁸² Justworldnews.org, (accessed February 2, 2012).

kept them apart from the political center of Beirut. The different strata of the community mentioned in the previous section continued along traditional lines until the mid-1960s when demographic changes in Lebanon began to result in noticeable changes within the Shi'a community. "The move from the village to the city, the expansion of education, the change of employment patterns (contributing to a middle class), the emergence of new competitors in the form of Lebanese leftist parties, and the power struggle amongst elites posed a threat to the elite and gradually diminished its control over the power sources and its influence in the community."¹⁸³ It is estimated that between 1952 and 1964 the residential population of Beirut tripled,¹⁸⁴ mainly due to transplanting Shi'a. Some authors (Johnson, Fawaz, Khuri) contend that the mass migration of Shi'a to the cities has been steady since *Le Grand Liban* was established¹⁸⁵, or mostly occurred prior to¹⁸⁶ or during the 1920s.¹⁸⁷

When the Shi'a moved from the rural outskirts to the bustling cities is not as important as why, and the resulting attitudes toward government. The agricultural opportunity in the predominately Shi'a areas of the country began to change from a labor-intensive market to a capital-intensive market, resulting in many uneducated farmers looking for laboring jobs in Beirut's building industry. The internal migration proved key to Shi'a politicization because "it gave rise to a large, discontented and marginalized minority ripe for political leadership."¹⁸⁸ As a result, the power vacuum once filled by familial elites (zu'ama) was filled by the two big Shi'ite movements—first by Amal and then by Hezbollah (out of the Bekaa Valley).

¹⁸³ Eitan Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 49.

¹⁸⁴ Samir Khalaf and Per Konstad, "Urbanization and Urbanism in Beirut: Some Preliminary Results," in *From Madina to Metropolis: Heritage and Change in the Near Eastern City*, ed. L. Carl Brown (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1973), 116–49.

¹⁸⁵ Michael Johnson, *Class and Client in Beirut* (London: Ithaca Press, 1986), 170.

¹⁸⁶ Leila Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth-Century Beirut* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 50.

¹⁸⁷ Fuad I. Khuri, "A Comparative Study of Migration Patterns in Two Lebanese Villages," *Human Organization* 26 (1967): 206–13.

¹⁸⁸ Shanahan, *The Shi'a of Lebanon: Clans, Parties and Clerics*, 34.

D. BEKAA VALLEY—NEXUS OF SHI'A ACTIVISM AND DRUGS

The area of modern day Lebanon has been internationally important as far back as the Roman Empire, during which time “the Bekaa provided imperial Rome with a sizeable portion of its grain.”¹⁸⁹ Unfortunately, times have changed the landscape of the valley and for some time now this area has become known for the cultivation of two seemingly different things: Shi'a ideological activism and drugs (mostly hashish). Bill Weinber blatantly stated, “Whoever holds the fertile Bekaa [Valley] holds the ticket to power. As the war escalated in the late 1970s, hashish, the traditional mainstay of the Bekaa, started to be replaced by the more lucrative heroin. Marijuana fields were converted to opium fields and hashish production compounds converted to heroin labs.”¹⁹⁰ In other words, the Beqaa Valley provided an ideal environment for social and agricultural opportunism, at times simultaneously.

Before proceeding, it is prudent to make sure the reader understands that the Shi'a, although the focus of this chapter, are not the only group with a history of involvement in the Lebanese drug business. According to Valentine, “the Maronites were deeply involved in financial crime and hashish smuggling”¹⁹¹ prior to the French mandate. And in his book *Drugs, Oil and War*, Peter Scott highlights Syria's involvement in the Beqaa with respect to drugs by mentioning the “heroin-financed intelligence activities among Muslims of men like Rifaat Assad, who controlled the drugs and laboratories of Lebanon's Bekaa valley.”¹⁹² Also, according to an executive intelligence report, “Syria angled to maintain a controlling interest in Lebanon, viewed by Assad and his friends in Israel as a highly profitable plantation for opium and hashish cultivation.”¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ Sandra Mackey, *Lebanon: Death of a Nation* (New York, NY: Doubleday Publishing, 1989), 21.

¹⁹⁰ Cheri Seymour, *The Last Circle* (Walterville, OR: Trine Day Publishing, 2010), 107.

¹⁹¹ Douglas Valentine, *Strength of the Wolf* (New York, NY: Verso, 2004), 124.

¹⁹² Peter Dale Scott, *Drugs, Oil, and War: The United States in Afghanistan, Colombia, and Indochina* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 50.

¹⁹³ Robert Dreyfuss, “The A. Basmouk Connection,” *Executive Intelligence Review* (1982): 51.

Those in power, regardless of affiliation, did not facilitate the narcotics trafficking in a social vacuum. Poor farmers trying to provide for their families were willing participants in the cultivation of drugs throughout the region. Why? The cultivation of hashish yields a greater return on investment than, say, vegetables or tobacco. According to Azani, “the people of Beqaa engaged in growing and trading drugs.”¹⁹⁴ And Norton states, “The hardscrabble Shi’a farmers could not subsist on what they earned growing tobacco, vegetables or fruits. In the northern_Beqaa ...poppies and hashish became valuable cash crops”¹⁹⁵, and well into the 1990s “the economy remained heavily dependent on agriculture, including illicit drug cultivation.”¹⁹⁶ It is naive to believe that narcotics trafficking throughout any region continues purely because “the government does nothing to help... and there’s no other substitute”¹⁹⁷, and therefore cultivation continues. The money that it provides all involved in this illicit activity is far greater than profit yields from legitimate ventures.

The individuals who developed and controlled the drug trade throughout Lebanon may not have all been Lebanese and were of different confessional groups, but they all held a keen interest in Lebanese politics. Historically, those individuals have been the socio-political elites of most of the major confessional groups and Syrian military officers operating in the Beqaa. Michael Johnson, a fellow at the Centre for Lebanese Studies, Oxford, supports this argument matter-of-factly in his book *Class and Client in Beirut* when he stated, “the warlords of Lebanon ran the hashish and heroin export trade... and various other rackets”¹⁹⁸. The individuals that controlled the political power in the country also controlled a great deal of the economic opportunism.

Drugs have been and continue to be grown in the Beqaa Valley. But, why do I emphasize drug trafficking throughout the Beqaa? It is also the launching point for Hezbollah. In fact, some of the same agents that enable drug trafficking in Beqaa gave

¹⁹⁴ Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God*, 51.

¹⁹⁵ Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 13.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 105.

¹⁹⁷ *The New York Times*, January 15, 1971, 65.

¹⁹⁸ Michael Johnson, *Class and Client in Beirut: The Sunni Muslim Community and the Lebanese State, 1840–1985* (London: Ithaca Press, 1986): 200–203.

rise to Hezbollah. The great distance “from the centers of control and influence (of the Amal movement, the Lebanese government, and Israel), but proximity to Syria empowerment allowed Hezbollah to develop almost unhindered its first year.”¹⁹⁹ Also, Shanahan calls attention to the fact that “in its early days, Hizbullah was a movement based largely in the Biqa’ [where] Iranian influence was the strongest and Hezbollah had the greatest freedom of movement because the Israeli invasion of 1982 had not penetrated into it.”²⁰⁰ Therefore, geography is extremely important when examining the relationship between Hezbollah, its rise to power and the proliferation of drug trafficking through Lebanon.

There is a connection between Hezbollah, the Beqaa and drugs, but in order to understand this connection more fully it would be prudent to establish greater familiarity with Hezbollah as a Shi’a organization and its place within the Lebanese political system. A discussion of Hezbollah logically begins with its predecessor and first large-scale mobilization of Shi’a communities, Amal.

E. AMAL (HOPE FOR THE SHI’A?)

The arrival in Lebanon of Imam Musa al-Sadr ushered in a new era in the history of the Lebanese Shi’ites. He was born the son of a leading Lebanese Shi’ite scholar, Ayatollah Sadr al-Din Sadr and studied under Ayatollah Mohsen al-Hakim in Najaf during the 1950s. Al-Sadr “set out to activate the politically quiescent Shi’ites and organize them as a formidable political force” through the adoption of a “reformist ideology comprising a potent combination of traditional values and modern concepts.”²⁰¹ In other words, al-Sadr believed that Lebanese Shi’a should abandon the traditional idea that political disenfranchisement was an inevitable result of the Shi’ite position in Lebanese society and begin taking an active role in the Lebanese political system.

The activism of Imam Musa al-Sadr began to slowly move the Lebanese Shi’a from the periphery of Lebanese society toward its center in the 1960s and 1970s. By

¹⁹⁹ Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God*, 60.

²⁰⁰ Shanahan, *The Shi’a of Lebanon: Clans, Parties and Clerics*, 114.

²⁰¹ Ahmad Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 20.

1969, following massive Israeli bombing raids on Palestinian bases in South Lebanon, Musa al-Sadr's efforts resulted in the establishment of the Supreme Islamic Shi'ite Council, "a democratically elected organization entrusted with the responsibility of representing the Shi'ite interests and religious endowments."²⁰² The council was the first of its kind in Lebanon and a giant step towards providing Lebanese Shi'a with a public voice.

In his most famous speech delivered in the Biqa Valley city of Ba'albak on March 17, 1974, Imam Musa al-Sadr laid out the grievances the Shi'a had against the Lebanese government and launched his popular mass movement, Harakat al-Mahrumin (Movement of the Deprived). "With his movement he vowed to struggle relentlessly until the security needs and the social grievances of the deprived—in practice the Shi'a—were satisfactorily addressed by the government."²⁰³ Shi'a grievances included political disenfranchisement, government corruption, lack of government investment in Shi'ite dominated areas and insufficient security provided against both internal (PLO) and external (Israel/Syria) groups. Through unrelenting determination, al-Sadr transformed the Lebanese Shi'a from a passive and isolationist people into a mobilized collective group working towards the realization of social and political goals.²⁰⁴

Although this organization was founded to operate within the existing political system, it is worth noting that in 1975 al-Sadr's organization developed into a military movement known by its acronym, Amal (Afwaj al-Muqawamah al-Lubnaniyyah, or Battalions of the Lebanese Resistance)²⁰⁵. It may have been the original Shi'a hope but it did not automatically attract a majority of the politicized Shi'a. The Shi'a communities had grown tired of Palestinian heavy-handedness and living in fear of the encroaching Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but Amal proved ineffectual in solving either problem. By the late 1980s, Amal was overwhelmed by the needs of 'their' constituents and weakened

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Augustus Richard Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1987), 46.

²⁰⁴ Eitan Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 48–49.

²⁰⁵ Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah*, 21.

from constant fighting. “What had been a dynamic and progressive movement in the early 1980s, with extensive popular support, became a full-blown patronage system with all the corruption, inefficiency, and inequity that Amal had long ascribed to the traditional *zu’ama*.”²⁰⁶ A call to action by men demanding more than words and symbols was about to begin.

F. HEZBOLLAH

Hezbollah emerged under the banner of radical Islam in the summer of 1982 as a cabal of several different Shi’ite groups (Hizb al-Da’wah, Amal, Islamist wing of Harakat Fatah, Lebanese Communist Party). The collective group began training in several locations throughout the Beqaa under the tutelage of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard that had entered Lebanon following the 1982 Israeli invasion; however, formal declaration of Hezbollah’s existence did not occur until the release of its open letter in 1985. The letter was addressed to the ‘Downtrodden in Lebanon and in the World’ and served as their political manifesto. In it, “Hizbullah outlines three guiding principles—belief in Islam, jurisdiction of the jurist-theologian, and jihad.”²⁰⁷

It was an accumulation of different events from 1979–1982, both external and internal, that provides the answer to why Amal was eventually seen as an inefficient representative of the Shi’a people and why Hezbollah was able to establish itself as the premiere Shi’a militia and political organization. Eitan Azani summarizes three strategic events that he believes (and I agree) set the stage for Hezbollah’s genesis: “Operation Litani, the disappearance of Ayatollah Musa al-Sadr, and the Iranian revolution.”²⁰⁸

The first strategic contributor to the development of Hezbollah was the entrance by, and protracted stay of, Israeli forces in southern Lebanon. Operation Litani (March 15, 1978), initiated to push the Palestinian guerrillas north of the Litani River, led to a two decade long Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon, displaced hundreds of thousands

²⁰⁶ Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 23.

²⁰⁷ Krista E. Wiegand, “Reformation of a Terrorist Group: Hezbollah as a Lebanese Political Party,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32 (2009): 669–680.

²⁰⁸ Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 56.

of Shi'a from southern Lebanon, and rendered Hezbollah's ideology palatable to many of the Shi'a in the region.²⁰⁹ The disproportionate consequences heaped on the Shi'ite of southern Lebanon led the UN Security Council, on March 19, 1978, to adopt Resolution 425, which called for the unconditional withdrawal of Israeli troops and the deployment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). The agreement that was eventually reached called for "the cessation of PLO military activity and partial Israeli withdrawal, which translated into handing over the area to its ally, mainly a Maronite proxy militia, the South Lebanese Army (SLA)."²¹⁰ An armed Maronite presence in a predominately Shi'a area provided Israel with a near ally, but did nothing to improve contentious confessional relations.

The SLA is an interesting organization, but no different than any of the other proxy groups supported by outside forces with a selfish interest in the balance of Lebanese political power. "The Israelis set up [the] new, 2,000 man 'South Lebanese Army', overwhelmingly Maronite-officered,"²¹¹ and provided a "host of Israeli 'advisers'"²¹² that remained in the ten-kilometer-wide security zone meant to serve as a defensive buffer along Israel's northern border. Truth be told, the area provided Israel with a greater ability to take offensive retaliatory action against nearby Palestinian refugee camps. In theory, the protracted Israeli presence in the predominately Shi'a area was to aid the SLA, but in reality it "let the genie [Hezbollah] out of the bottle"²¹³ according to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1987, who was later assassinated. Israel's most decorated soldier and future Prime Minister, Ehud Barak, put the matter succinctly in July 2006: "When we entered Lebanon...there was no Hezbollah. We were accepted with perfumed rice and flowers by the Shi'a in the south. It was our presence there that created Hezbollah."²¹⁴

²⁰⁹ Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 79.

²¹⁰ Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah*, 16.

²¹¹ David Hirst, *Beware of Small States* (New York, NY: Nation Books, 2010), 204.

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History*, 33.

²¹⁴ Ehud Barak, *Newsweek*, July 18, 2006, cited in Norton, "Hezbollah" (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 33.

The mysterious disappearance of al-Sadr while on a trip to Libya in August 1978 was the second strategic contributor to Hezbollah's creation cited by Azani, and fit nicely within the Shiite teaching of the 'disappearing Imam.' It became obvious to the religious leaders of the protest movement that this "disappearance provided the community with the necessary motivation for the continuation of a social protest."²¹⁵ However, propagandizing the disappearance of al-Sadr split Amal leadership between the cleric members of the Supreme Shiite Council and the new Shi'ite militants attracted to the sense of religious identity generated by an activist interpretation of Shi'ite ideals.²¹⁶

The Islamic Revolution in Iran (1979) was the final event that Azani points to as holding significant strategic importance in influencing the Shiite of Lebanon. There was a connection between the Shiite of Lebanon and the Iranian system through Iranian exiles, family ties, and the Shiite Ulema in Najaf and Qom (religious centers of Shiite teaching). "The Islamic revolution in Iran changed the regional power equations and, at the same time, became a source of pride and emulation for... the Shiite movements."²¹⁷ The Shiite of Lebanon had been shown that a religious revolution could achieve victory over the secular regimes propped up by the West.

The 1982 Israeli incursion into southern Lebanon to attack PLO strongholds was the proverbial "straw that broke the camel's back", and highlighted Israeli ignorance of the Shi'a and their indifference to the "warning delivered by the Israeli Arabist Moshe: 'Do not join those who murdered Husain, because if you bring the Shia to identify you with the history of [their] suffering, the enmity that will be directed at you will have no bounds and no limits.'"²¹⁸ The Israelis rolled into Lebanon bent on destroying one enemy, the PLO, but the net result of their operations that year created another, Hezbollah.

Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah's current Secretary General, insisted from the start of the organization that Hezbollah was first and foremost a nationalist resistance

²¹⁵ Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God*, 56.

²¹⁶ Hamzeh, *In the Path of Hizbullah*, 23.

²¹⁷ Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God*, 56.

²¹⁸ Sandra Mackey, *Mirror in the Arab World: Lebanon in Conflict* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008), 169.

movement required to protect the interests of Lebanese Shi'a, fight against the corrupt secular Lebanese government, and bring about the establishment of Sharia law throughout the country. In other words "the ideological framework of Hezbollah was religious and pan-Islamic and it aimed at the establishment of an Islamic regime in Lebanon since it considered the Lebanese government as corrupt and illegitimate."²¹⁹ Participation in the political process was initially not an option because corruption of the current government was a rally cry for Hezbollah's followers and at its start Hezbollah did not command the means or the manpower necessary to seize power in Lebanon.

The manner in which Hezbollah originally went about attempting to establish an Islamic regime is anything but heroic from the perspective of anyone outside of the Shi'a communities within Lebanon. Militant Shi'ite Islam within Lebanon, without argument, built its foundation upon ingenious forms of violence. Put plainly, Hezbollah is infamous for promoting the idea of suicide operations as a duty of all pious Muslims. Khomeini, Hezbollah's religious leader, justified those who undertook suicide attacks as doing the will of Allah and thus they would be rewarded for their sacrifice. Hezbollah's violence forged a movement out of despair, injustice, and suffering into focused rage toward a corrupt Lebanese government and the America that supported its policies.

During the decade between 1982 and 1992, Hezbollah's violent resistance established it as a permanent non-state actor on the international stage. The limits of violence were eventually reached so Hezbollah was required to modify its tactics and return to that which they abandoned in Amal, the struggle for ideas. Pragmatism gradually dampened Hezbollah's idealism so that its strategy of jihad eventually focused on not only military strength but also the political capital that came with winning hearts and minds. In other words, idealism was tempered with pragmatism.

It is interesting to note that prior to the 9/11 attacks Hezbollah was responsible for more U.S. deaths than any other organization—1983 attacks on the U.S. Embassy in Lebanon and the bombing of the Marine Barracks resulted in 302 American deaths.²²⁰

²¹⁹ Azani, *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 62.

²²⁰ Richard M. Wrona, Jr., "A Deafening Silence: Hizballah After the American Invasion of Iraq," M.A. Thesis, United States Military Academy, 2007.

Based on just those two pieces of Hezbollah history, it is not difficult to see why the United States labeled Hezbollah a terrorist organization in 2001. But is Hezbollah to be defined solely on one aspect of their past? If the answer is yes, why not define them by the great number of social programs they established and continue to run.

G. SOCIAL WELFARE, TERRORISM, OR POLITICAL PARTY

Feed those who need it, but do so especially when or where the sources of sustenance, physical, moral or spiritual are cut off

– *Quran, v.6141*

Hezbollah was born in violence aimed at a corrupt central government and meddling external forces; however, its leaders quickly learned that it needed to broaden its base and sink its roots firmly into the community. They accomplished this through joining the fight against IDF (Israel Defense Forces), providing the social services the government was either unable or unwilling to provide, and eventually fighting the political process from within by putting forth political candidates during elections. These two facts are important because they demonstrate a pragmatic evolution of Hezbollah's socio-political views and offer a convenient and legitimate means by which to launder illicitly gained profits. Am I suggesting that Hezbollah immediately began participating in drug trafficking in order to finance its social programs? There is no evidence suggesting that, so any assumption to that effect would be merely conjecture.

Hezbollah's Deputy Secretary General, Naim Qassem, describes the purpose and intent of the social service section in the following passage:

Hezbollah paid particular attention to social work. Not one aspect of aiding the poor was neglected as the party worked towards achieving joint social responsibility, answering the urgent needs and introducing beneficial programs. Such work was simply considered Party duty, and concentrated efforts towards raising funds and making available social service resources served towards achieving these goals. The Party worked to the best of its capabilities, cooperating with official institutions to respond to societal needs.²²¹

²²¹ Naim Qassem, *Hizbullah, The Story From Within*, trans., Dalia Khalil (London: Saqi, 2005), 83.

Put simply, Hezbollah's social programs are focused, deliberate efforts to meet the needs of those in need, with the potential political payout being infinitely more than is invested.

The social service section of Hezbollah has demonstrated the ability to meet the Lebanese community's needs in a manner far superior to the central government, and has become so important that it is estimated to have allocated an estimated 50% of its 2007 budget to the social service effort.²²² As a result of Hezbollah's generosity towards the Lebanese people, it need not worry about legitimacy and is, I believe, able to take liberties at the expense of the very people it helps. Examples of Hezbollah's safety net include The Jihad al-Binaa (JBDG), Islamic Health Organization, the Martyrs Foundation, the Women's Association, the Imam al-Mahdi Scouts and the education division.²²³ This is not a comprehensive list of Hezbollah associated organizations, but merely a glimpse at the means by which Hezbollah has ingratiated itself towards the Lebanese people.

Why are Hezbollah's social programs important? And what relationship do they have to drug trafficking? The government of Iran may invest a large amount of money in Hezbollah, but it doesn't provide nearly enough to cover Hezbollah's obligations. Money is important and there are no legitimate capital-raising means equivalent to drug trafficking. Illicit money is not the only enabler of Hezbollah, and the money laundering capability that legitimate businesses provides is invaluable. The problem of drug trafficking and its impact on the Lebanese landscape is a systemic problem and must be

²²² Bane, *Interview with Special Operations Command Levant Analyst*. Exact budgetary figures are not available. The annual budget for Hezbollah is within the range of \$500 million to a \$1 billion annually. The figures in this chapter and in the funding chapters are approximations based on interviews and secondary sources.

²²³ Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center at the Israel Intelligence Heritage & Commemoration Center (IICC), "Hezbollah: Profile of Lebanese Shiite Terrorist Organization of Global Reach Sponsored by Iran and Supported by Syria (Parts I and II)," (2003), 137. This is not a comprehensive list. The organization chart lists the primary groups.

addressed holistically. Therefore, “unless the 'legitimate' network is countered, no amount of drug interdiction efforts would have so great an effect on Hezbollah capabilities.”²²⁴

H. CONCLUSION – ENDS JUSTIFY THE MEANS

Hezbollah “began as a cat’s paw of Iran, a righteous, violently militant collection of young revolutionaries who had no time for mundane politics”²²⁵, but has transformed itself into “a sophisticated organization with different functions, including financial, judicial, social, political and military matters.”²²⁶ Testimony before a joint hearing of Congress estimates that by 2006 Hezbollah’s estimated annual budget to be around 100 million dollars (a very conservative estimate), most of which came from Iran.²²⁷ In addition to the Iranian aid Hezbollah has received over the years, money is raised through fundraising in Lebanon and through disparate communities all over the globe, to include South America, Europe, West Africa and even the United States. Hezbollah’s governmental representatives are also able to utilize their political position to obtain Lebanese government funding for projects within the Shiite population centers in Lebanon.

According to Frank Cillufo, Associate Vice President at George Washington University, speaking before Congress, “Drugs provide an opportunity to break free from state sponsors whose support may be dwindling or politically conditional. Hezbollah, for example, got into drug production in Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley to fill the void when

²²⁴ Rubin, Mark, Resident Scholar American Enterprise Institute. Interview by author, January 30, 2012, Bahrain.

²²⁵ Augustus Richard Norton, “The Role of Hezbollah in Lebanese Domestic Politics,” *The International Spectator* 42 (2007): 475–491.

²²⁶ Lara Deeb, *Hizballah: A Primer*, Middle East Reporter Online, July 31, 2006, <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero073106.html>. (accessed March 2, 2012).

²²⁷ U.S. Congress. Committee on International Relations. *Hezbollah’s Global Reach: Joint Hearing before the Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation and the Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia*. 109th Cong., 2nd sess., September 28, 2006, 60–61.

funding from Iran declined.”²²⁸ In addition, the Shiite group Hezbollah has long engaged in drugs-for-cash deals, with operatives smuggling cocaine from Latin America (often by way of the notorious “tri-border” region, where Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina meet) to Europe and the Middle East. In the past, Hezbollah has also “smuggled opiates out of Lebanon’s Bekaa Valley, a lawless area that is a haven for drug smugglers and Islamic terrorists... for the terrorists, drug trafficking serves as a lucrative means to further their jihad against the West.”²²⁹ Hezbollah is not the first group to take advantage of the fertile soils of Bekaa Valley, but they are the latest to utilize drug profits to support their socio-political machine.

Hezbollah successfully entered the political game in 1992. Since then it has become more entrenched in the mainstream political process with each successive election; however, Hezbollah has never forgotten its roots as a resistance movement. Interestingly, “Its dual role as a resistance movement and a political party has resulted in ‘Hezbollah’s oscillation between militancy and political pragmatism in the pursuit of its goals.’”²³⁰

Hezbollah is a complex organization that seems to defy a universal definition. First, it was a nationalist resistance movement that was established to fight against a corrupt central government unable to protect its people from outside interference. Then, it quickly became a grass roots organization that understood how to take advantage of the enormous political capital that results from managing social welfare programs for the Lebanese people (Muslim, Druze, or Christian). Hezbollah has been labeled a terrorist organization by the United States for its glorification and utilization of suicide bombings, two of which were directed at the United States in 1983—the Marine Barracks and U.S.

²²⁸ Frank J. Ciluffo, “Threat Posed by the Convergence of Organized Crime, Drug Trafficking, and Terrorism.” Statement, Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Crime, U.S. House, 106th Cong., 2nd sess., December 13, 2000, cited in Gretchen Peters, *Seeds of Terror* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 2009), 10–11.

²²⁹ Josh Lefkowitz and Erick Stakelbeck, “Islamic Terrorist Groups Use Heroin to Finance Their Terrorism,” in *Current Controversies: Drug Trafficking*, edited by Julia Bauder (Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press, 2008), 218.

²³⁰ Josh Lefkowitz and Erick Stakelbeck, “Islamic Terrorist Groups Use Heroin to Finance Their Terrorism,” in *Current Controversies: Drug Trafficking*, edited by Julia Bauder, (Farmington Hills, MI: Greenhaven Press, 2008), 122.

Embassy in Beirut—resulting in over 300 people killed. Finally, Hezbollah is a ‘corporate-like’ organization involved in legitimate businesses, but also unequivocally linked to illicit activities around the world. According to the Palestinian leader Yassir Arafat “the forces at work in the Arab world are like sand dunes that constantly form, alter, merge, and blur without respect to borders. Since the midpoint of the twentieth century, several of these metaphorical ‘dunes’ have drifted into each other in Lebanon.”²³¹ It is my contention that one of those dunes was, and continues to be, narcotics trafficking. The winds blew so powerfully against the metaphorical narcotics dune, that its sands began to fall within the United States and therefore caused U.S. law enforcement to focus its attention on Lebanon.

²³¹ Mackey, *Mirror of the Arab World*, 225.

V. CONCLUSION – PROFITS AND POLITICS

An attempt has been made throughout this thesis to discuss the complex nature of the Lebanese political system and the influence that drug trafficking has had on shaping it; specifically, how drug trafficking has contributed to the development of Hezbollah. A study on the effects drug trafficking has had on Hezbollah's development really requires the assumption of one thing only - that drugs are used as a highly lucrative commodity. For example, "drug cultivation flourished in the Bekaa Valley during the lawless civil war years (1975-1990) and constituted a main source of income for the Lebanese treasury, estimated at \$4 billion in 1989."²³² The financial windfall drug trafficking creates enriches and empowers its participants. In fact, drug trafficking was concerning enough to the United States government by 1930 that the Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN) was established to address the increasing problem of international drug trafficking into the United States. FBN agents were sent out to intercept the problem of drug production at the sources, and one of those sources turned out to be Lebanon. Despite the FBN agents' best efforts to hinder drug trafficking into the United States from Lebanon, production and trafficking within Lebanon continued for many years to come, centered around the Bekaa Valley.

Many years into a confessional war, a militant social movement began to materialize within the same fertile valley. This group of young men, angry with the political incumbents and perpetual corruption, was small in number but determined to change the direction that the Lebanese country was traveling. Hezbollah began with the blessing and means of Iran, but has evolved into a "complex, multi-faceted organizational apparatus [with] domestic activities in Lebanon and far-reaching transnational operations."²³³ A large-scale organization like Hezbollah requires a substantial mobilization of financial resources to support itself. The foremost answer to the question, "Where did Hezbollah get its money?" has always been Iran. A majority of

²³² The Middle East Reporter Weekly, vol 99, issue 1152, 2001, 9–11.

²³³ Martin Rudner, "Hizbullah Terrorism Finance: Fund-Raising and Money-Laundering," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33 (2010): 700–715.

researchers would agree that approximately \$100 million is supplied annually to Hezbollah. However, that is not nearly enough to cover the intelligence-estimated annual expenditures of around \$500 million.²³⁴ Profit margins for drug trafficking are colossal and could more than make up for any shortfalls that Hezbollah may experience.

The argument may be attempted that points out a lack of direct proof of involvement by Hezbollah senior leadership in drug trafficking. That point is noted, but not relevant to this thesis. Direct involvement of senior leadership in drug trafficking is not required for the organization to profit for the activity. There is evidence however to suggest an apathetic attitude toward where supporting monies come from, by the most senior Hezbollah leader, Sheikh Hassan Nazrallah. In a letter of appreciation to Arab businessman Assad Barakat, Sheikh Nazrallah “acknowledged [Barakat’s] continuous contribution and support for the children of those who fulfill their promises to God, becoming martyrs, who generously sacrificed their blood...”²³⁵. This statement may appear to be merely a benign comment or a genuine thank-you for legitimate support to a worthy cause. But the fact that Barakat is a ‘funds transmitter’ operating in the Triborder region of South America²³⁶ raises questions about the potential injection of illicitly gained funds into legitimate Hezbollah interests.

In order to fully understand the importance of drug trafficking as it relates to the development of Hezbollah, and to more importantly provide closure to this thesis, a comparison of Hezbollah to another resistance organization, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC), would be helpful. Outlining the development of this organization and then comparing it to Hezbollah will provide the reader with at least one other relational perspective between drug trafficking and political resistance. I offer the assertion that there are several similarities between the two organizations, mostly

²³⁴ Anti-Defamation League, “Hizbullah’s International Reach,” cited in Martin Rudner, “Hizbullah Terrorism Finance: Fund-Raising and Money-Laundering,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33 (2010): 700–715.

²³⁵ Rensselaer Lee, “The Triborder-terrorism nexus,” *Global Crime* 9 (2008): 332–347.

²³⁶ Region where the borders of Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay intersect. It has an estimated Arab population of ~20,000, mostly of Lebanese origin and is known as a hub for smuggling drugs, arms and illegal migrants.

occurring during the first couple of years of each group's development. But there are also subtle differences that I believe contributed to different opportunities and development.

Colombia, like Lebanon, is a country that has a rich history influenced by political unrest, nationalist resistance movements and the drug trade. Colombia never experienced major international conflicts, but had been in an almost permanent state of civil unrest since independence. Armed insurgent and terrorist groups are identified with Columbia's history of unrest and FARC cannot be separated from the political violence that affected Colombia. In fact, the unstable and violent political environment known as 'La Violencia' (1948-1958) was directly responsible for the generation of FARC.²³⁷ By 1964, the FARC, along with other communist groups, had emerged out of 'Independent Republics' and expanded their influence slowly over the next decade. Its development into a guerrilla force controlling over forty percent of the nation by 2000 was "due largely to the organization's participation in the drug trade and its involvement in other illegal, yet *highly profitable* activities."²³⁸

A series of meetings among resistance leaders, referred to as 'guerrilla conferences,' yielded a "strategy of reactive defensive operations directed at long-term conflict with the ultimate goal being the seizure of state power."²³⁹ FARC's strategy reflected the revolutionary euphoria of the 1960s. It is interesting to note "the majority of FARC members were drawn from vulnerable peasant colonizers...who turned to FARC for *protection* and for *organizing basic infrastructure*."²⁴⁰ The gradual rise of the FARC also involved the integration of students and middle-class intellectuals into an insurgent movement typical of the Cold War era. From an initial membership of only "43

²³⁷ June S. Beittel, *Columbia: Issues for Congress*, Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2010, RL32250.

²³⁸ Paul E. Saskiewicz, "The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia-People's Army (FARC-EP): Marxist-Leninist Insurgency or Criminal Enterprise?," M.A. thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2005.

²³⁹ Arturo Herrera Castano and Shane Tarrant, "Are the Guerrillas Gone? A Historical Political Economy And Social Analysis Of The Rise And Demise Of The *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias Colombianas* (Farc), 1964–2010," M.A. thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2009.

²⁴⁰ Saab and Taylor, "Criminality and Armed Groups," 459.

guerrillas, the FARC swelled to an estimated 16,000 to 18,000 combatants by 2001, making it one of the largest insurgent organizations in the world.”²⁴¹

With respect to the FARC, there is a debate over whether these insurgents should be considered political activists or criminals. According to Pulido, the monograph, ‘The FARC Cartel,’ reflects the view that insurgents are nothing more than drug cartels.²⁴² But Colombian academic Eduardo Pizarro Leongomez argued that the “FARC has not discarded political ideals in favor of private enrichment.”²⁴³ Former Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff member Roger Noriega argued, “While the popular moniker ‘narcoterrorist’ may overstate the relationship between the guerrillas and drug traffickers, it is clear that a symbiotic tie exists between these illegal groups.”²⁴⁴ I don’t believe just one ‘label’ completely encapsulates any organization. FARC, like Hezbollah, is not defined by only one aspect of its organization; whether it be socio-political resistance, social welfare programs, or narcotics trafficking.

Whether the FARC is driven by greed or grievance is an interesting question to consider. However, it is clear no matter what its motives the FARC dramatically increased its connections to the illicit drug trade during the early 1990s.²⁴⁵ This increased connection to drugs as a source of revenue, likely to fund military capability, was first authorized during the 7th Conference of 1982.²⁴⁶ But it was the window of

²⁴¹ Bilal Y. Saab and Alexandra W. Taylor, “Criminality and Armed Groups; A Comparative Study of FARC and Paramilitary Groups in Columbia,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 32: 455–475.

²⁴² Luis Alberto Villamarin Pulido, *El Cartel de las FARC*, (Bogota: Ediciones el Faraon, 1996), cited in Gregory E. Phillips, “Liberty and Order: Reintegration as Counter-Insurgency in Columbia,” *Fundamentals of Strategic Logic and The Nature of War Seminar N and C*, Naval War College, 2003.

²⁴³ Eduardo Pizarro Leongomez, “Toward an Institutional Collapse?” cited in James L. Zackrison, “Crisis? What Crisis? Security Issues in Colombia,” (National Defense University: Institute for National Strategic Studies, 1999), 16.

²⁴⁴ Roger Noriega, “United States Priorities in Colombia,” cited in James L. Zackrison, “Crisis? What Crisis? Security Issues in Colombia,” (National Defense University: Institute for National Strategic Studies, 1999), 113.

²⁴⁵ Arlene B. Tickner, “Colombia and the United States: From Counternarcotics to Counterterrorism,” *Current History* 102 (2003): 77–85.

²⁴⁶ Alaine Labrousse, “The FARC and the Taliban’s Connection to Drugs,” *Journal of Drug Issues* 35 (2005): 169–184.

opportunity provided by governmental targeting of narcotics traffickers, and the resultant weakening of the drug cartels that lessened competition in this area and for the first time in the early 1990s the FARC revenues were substantially increased. The main source of revenue came from taxing peasant growers in their zones of influence and by contracting out their services to the trafficker organizations to protect crops, processing laboratories and landing strips.²⁴⁷ The FARC's realization of the potential profits led them to "pursue many other forms of taxation, and further integration into other facets of the illicit drug industry to include airfield security and drug refinement."²⁴⁸ Increased monetary capacity meant increased capacity with respect to personnel, training and armament, resulting in a military force capable of challenging the central government.

In the late 1990s admittedly spotty evidence hinted that some FARC 'fronts' might have begun to operate their own processing facilities in remote areas of the country. There was, however, no indication that FARC personnel engaged in international drug smuggling activities outside of Colombia.²⁴⁹ FARC leadership replied to accusations of FARC involvement in Colombia's drug trade with the statement: "The truth is that we do not depend on coca."²⁵⁰ Colombian military leadership, in particular General Fernando Tapias, Commander of the Colombian Armed Forces, insisted that the opposite was the case: "I do not believe that anyone in Colombia or the world can doubt the links between drug trafficking and the rebel groups..."²⁵¹.

While income from the drug trade has certainly bolstered the FARC financially, it would be a mistake to conclude that drug money was in the past, or is now, essential to

²⁴⁷ Semana, "Informe Especial: Los Negocios de las FARC," *Revista Semana*, Edición 879 (Marzo 8 de 1999), cited in Dr. Bruce Michael Bagley, "Drug Trafficking, Political Violence and U.S. Policy in Colombia in the 1990s," Available at <http://www.as.miami.edu/international-studies/faculty/BruceBagley> (Coral Gables: FL 2001), 10.

²⁴⁸ Ramon D. Ortiz, "Insurgent Strategies in the Post Cold War: The Case of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 25 (2002): 127-143.

²⁴⁹ Steven Ambrus and Joe Contreras, "Fighting the Enemy Within: The 'FARC Republic': A New Outlaw State in the Heart of South America," *Newsweek International*, November 29, 1999; Reuters, "Colombia's Pastrana Plays down FARC's Drug Links," *The Miami Herald*, July 29, 1999.

²⁵⁰ Cesar Garcia, "Tirofijo: Si Me Muero, Hay Mil que Me Reemplacen," *El Nuevo Herald*, 30 de enero de 2000.

²⁵¹ Associate Press, "Comandante colombiano rebate declaraciones de lider guerrillero," *El Nuevo Herald*, 30 de enero de 2000.

the continuation of the FARC's war against the Colombian government. In the first place, there are a number of FARC income-producing 'fronts' that have never depended on either coca or opium poppy 'rents' to sustain their activities. Second, declines in income from drug sources could, and in all likelihood would, be made up by increasing earnings from kidnappings, extortion and revolutionary 'taxes' on peasants, landowners, businessmen and foreign multinationals.²⁵²

Recent events (not relevant to this thesis) have demonstrated that the FARC has lost some of its influence and is now a marginally effective political and military force. To the surprise of its supporters and its opponents, the FARC is clearly a shell of what it had been at the start of the 21st century.²⁵³

While the FARC and Hezbollah are similar organizations, at the same time they are very different. Both began in a predominately rural environment, drew the majority of its membership from the underprivileged class, and were eventually turned to by those most vulnerable in society for protection and basic needs. Hezbollah seems to have transitioned more seamlessly than the FARC however. Perhaps this is true due to outward interests and their manipulation of the internal Lebanese political landscape.

Ideologically speaking, both organizations began with an intransigent outlook toward the incumbent powers. FARC demanded a blatantly secular, Marxist-Leninist approach to governance within Colombia, while Hezbollah espoused a Shi'a Islamic state reminiscent of the Iranian theocracy for Lebanon. Both groups developed a military force capable of defending its supporters and projecting offensive power against its enemies. And both organizations have participated in the political process to some extent.

²⁵² Accurate information on FARC's drug-related earnings is exceedingly difficult to obtain, hence estimates vary widely from a low of US \$100 million to a high of \$600 million annually. For further discussions of FARC's income sources see Semana, "Informe Especial: Los Negocios de las FARC," *Revista Semana*, Edición 879, Marzo 8 de 1999; Douglas Farah, "Drug Sales Change Colombia's Power Balance," *The Washington Post*, November 4, 1999.

²⁵³ Arturo Herrera Castano and Shane Tarrant, "Are the Guerrillas Gone? A Historical Political Economy And Social Analysis Of The Rise And Demise Of The *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias Colombianas* (Farc), 1964–2010," M.A. thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2009.

Political participation is probably the area in which Hezbollah and FARC are the most similar. Although Hezbollah vowed never to participate in the corrupt Lebanese political structure, it has been a willing participant since the 1992 elections when it fielded as many eligible candidates as it could. Hezbollah's leadership learned quickly that "ideological intransigence can [quickly] lead to disaster"²⁵⁴, so instead of trying to change the political system through the barrel of a gun, Hezbollah has slowly become the controlling party through elections. This does not mean that Hezbollah has given up its guns. Hezbollah has been able to justify its disregard for the Ta'if Accords, which required the disarming of all confessional militias, by bringing up the constant threat posed by another potential Israeli invasion. The FARC also eventually softened its ideological package to deal with the Colombian central government, and as such transformed the nature of their competition with the state. In other words, throughout the 1990s the FARC "gave special importance to gaining a share of power at the municipal level within the state."²⁵⁵ The FARC and Hezbollah each exposed their government's "incompetence in dealing with the countries' biggest problems (social inequality, crime and deficient public services), and presented themselves as a credible alternative for good government."²⁵⁶

The research on the FARC appears to show that it more openly embraces the utilization of criminal activities (narcotics trafficking being just one example) to support its 'corporate' and 'social' ventures, but Winer and Roule state with complete certainty that "members of Hezbollah are linked to drug trafficking in Lebanon."²⁵⁷ Why is this? Hezbollah has been able to transition from nationalist resistance movement to militia to political power almost effortlessly while still remaining a little of all of them. The FARC, on the other hand, has reached an agreement with the Colombian government to maintain control of the autonomous regions from which it began, but has never truly

²⁵⁴ Roman D. Ortiz, "Insurgent Strategies in the Post-Cold War: The Case of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 25 (2010): 127–143.

²⁵⁵ Roman D. Ortiz, "Insurgent Strategies in the Post-Cold War: The Case of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 25 (2010): 127–143.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Jonathan M. Winer and Trifin J. Roule, "Fighting Terrorist Finance," *Survival* 44 (2002): 87–104.

transitioned from being a nationalist resistance movement into a legitimate political player. Whatever the reason for its stagnation, the FARC seems to be satisfied with its current condition.

I began this thesis with the argument that the control of narcotics trafficking through the Lebanese state has disproportionately influenced the political landscape of Lebanon, contributed to the disenfranchisement of many confessional groups—the Shi'a in particular, and as a result contributed to the rise of Hezbollah. In other words, the openness that defined Lebanon's success also led to its failures. Many researchers have looked at Lebanon and decided that Confessionalism, a fragile political environment resulting in a perpetually weak central government, and internal meddling by Lebanon's neighbors and imperial powers, have contributed more to its fractured history. It is true that Lebanon is a sum of its parts (i.e., religion, politics, economy), parts that can be examined individually but are never defined completely independent of each other. Lebanon must be looked at systemically and unless the drug trade, its influence on Lebanese politics, and the consequences of such a relationship are given more than just passing acknowledgement, the problem will continue to hold disproportionate influence within Lebanon and abroad.

“Although centered in Lebanon, Hizbullah and its front organizations reach out across international boundaries as regards operations and fund-raising efforts. Their financial tentacles reach across the world...”²⁵⁸. Hezbollah sits upon the social, economic and political mountain of success that it has built upon successful socio-economic support of the Lebanese populace. Yes, it has been the recipient of Iran's support since its inception, but it has grown beyond the means that Iran initially provided. Its influence and economic reach is truly international. The following quotes taken from an Alison Jamieson writing (although not referencing Lebanon or Hezbollah) and Augustus Richard Norton are fitting closures to this thesis.

Those who accumulate profits of thousands of billions [of lire] cannot be without a political project... It is the means whereby they enter the legal

²⁵⁸ Rudner, “Hizbullah Terrorism Finance: Fund-Raising and Money-Laundering,” 709.

market, take over banks or other economic structures; it is the beginning of the transformation from criminal system to political system.²⁵⁹ Politics, whether among Muslims or non-Muslims, are dynamic and contingent. It may be tempting to assume that behavioral verities are driven by ideological commitments, but the lessons of Shi'a politics in Lebanon point in a very different direction. Political constraints and opportunities are the desiderata (something that is needed or wanted) of political behavior and ideology takes a back seat....The game of politics may erode ideals, but the vast majority of Hizballah's followers want to be in the game.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁹ Alison Jamieson, "Drug Trafficking After 1992," 17.

²⁶⁰ Augustus Richard Norton, *Hizballah of Lebanon: Extremist Ideals vs. Mundane Politics* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1999), 35.

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