

The Tent Part 2

I wonder when did one of “Ahlu as-Sunna” from North Lebanon discover the presence of “Shia’a” in Lebanon.

“Come back, don’t play with those “Matawla”⁽¹⁾,” a lady, who admired the Phalanges Party, said to a boy when he went out to play near a farmers’ hut in the coastal area of Batroun. Although she did not know that someday, her beloved Phalanges and their offspring, the Lebanese Forces, would forge an alliance with “Ahlu as-Sunna”, she felt that there was something “wrong” with those “Matawla”. On that day, the boy discovered what has been (and perhaps still) unseen by Arab regimes: the “Shia’a” were present in the Arab world and (Mon Dieu!) also in Lebanon! It was the year 1970.

Was it necessary to wait for the arrival of Al-Khomeini in 1979 to remember Ali bin Abi Taleb? Was it necessary for Bush to invade Iraq to discover that there are Shia’a there? And when will we finally acknowledge that there are Shia’a in the Arab (not Persian) Gulf?

Let us remember the glory of Saddam Hussein in his “Qadissiah”⁽²⁾ in 1980. During those days, the overwhelming majority of Arab regimes, excluding Syria, were for the war on Iran, claiming that “Persians” are a threat to the “Arab Nation”, while ignoring that Iran was more of a “Nation” than us, we, the Sheikhs of tents, who encouraged Saddam’s war and later celebrated his execution after having lamented the demise of the Shah, as if he were not “Persian”.

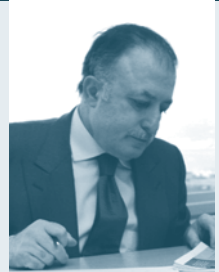
Let us remember Sharon when he invaded Beirut in 1982. What did the “Arab Nation” do about it? Nothing, only words... Al-Khomeini, on the other hand, announced at the time that he would send “volunteers” or soldiers from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard to “defend Lebanon” (and the South of course)⁽³⁾. And the miracle suddenly happens: did Iran and Iraq agree to forge peace? Of course not... Did the Syrian and Iraqi regimes agree to stop their petty and devastating war against each other? Definitely not...

The three found it convenient to agree that the Iranian Guard can fight as a “resistance” on behalf of the “Shia’a”, “Sunni”, “Arabs” and “Persians”. Ba’albek was the first stop.

Let us also remember the Syrian-Iraqi “cooperation” to facilitate the armed group’s road to Ba’albek despite the violent relationship between the two States. Apparently tents were then welcome in Ba’albek and not in Beirut or Tehran or Damascus, and certainly not in Washington.

Let us recall the Ta’if Conference in 1989 and its successive governments. At the time, a large part of South Lebanon was under occupation and the country was undergoing a painful recovery from a 15 year long civil war.

We decided that neither the South (although it is claimed as a “dear” part of Lebanon) nor the country itself were occupied. We believed Israel’s claim that only the “border fence” was occupied, ignoring that this “fence” encompassed 115 towns and villages. “Let the Shia’a liberate them if they want to,” we secretly said to ourselves.



We also decided that militia leaders (to say the least), who committed the ugliest crimes during the war, are the ones who would “lead the country toward a better future.” So we decided to “forget” and “deny” instead of “understanding”, “reconciling” and “forgiving”.

Lebanon, Syria, the Arab League, the United Nations or the “International Legitimacy” came up with a bright solution: Why don’t we “subtle” the “Resistance tent” to the Shia’a and the “Development and Reconstruction tent” to the Sunni?

As for secular parties, they can fulfill their dream of entering Parliament or the government, share the spoils and remember the days of Sana’a al-Muhaidly, Paula Abboud and Soha Beshara⁽⁴⁾.

Didn’t the “mastermind” and the players know that South Lebanon’s residents are “Shia’a” and that a monopoly over the Resistance would grant them and Iran power and control?

Didn’t the “mastermind” and the players know that when the Resistance is “Shia’a”, regardless of the circumstances, “Sunni” reactions would rain heavily in Lebanon and the Arab world and from and to Saudi Arabia?

Didn’t the “mastermind” and the players know that when Lebanon and Anjar are violated, via Anjar⁽⁵⁾, painful repercussions would pour into Syria and Lebanon?

Today, Hizbullah is facing many challenges:

- “Should you want an open war, then an open war it shall be.” But why should we grant “them” what “they” want?
- “The Islamic Resistance,” but why is it Islamic, not Arab or national? And how isn’t it Shia’a? Can the “Resistance tent” welcome the pictures of Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah, Subhi Saleh, Raymond Eddeh, Gregoire Haddad, Antoun Sa’adeh, George Habash and Gamal Abdel-Nasser, for example, along with the pictures of Khamane’i and Ahmadinejad, although Lebanon would look definitely better without pictures or slogans? And after that and most importantly pictures of Gandhi and Nelson Mandela to pave the road towards new horizons. Are peaceful resistance and civil disobedience not an option ever? If not, why? And if yes, when?

The “mastermind” and the players can play well and score points, but visionaries would change the game.

Jawad N. Adra

(1) The word “Matawla” is commonly used as a pejorative appellation of the Shia’a confession.

(2) Around 630 A.D., the Arab Army defeated the Iranians in the war of Qadissiah.

(3) This represents the official beginning of Hizbullah in Lebanon

(4) Sana’a al-Muhaidly (Syrian Social Nationalist Party), Loula Abboud and Soha Beshara (Communist Party) “secular fighters” against the Israeli Army in 1985. Rivalries between Hizbullah and those parties continued until the latter dominated the scene.

(5) The former Syrian intelligence headquarters was located in the city of Anjar which was visited regularly by Lebanese top politicians.