

## Why we don't need a Resistance



Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah addresses supporters. The Iranian proxy is more trouble than it's worth in Lebanon. (AFP Photo)

Saeed Jalili, Secretary General of Iran's Supreme National Security council, travelled to Damascus last week to reassure President Bashar Al Assad that Syria was very much part of the "axis of Resistance," an alliance he pledged Iran would not see broken. It can surely be no coincidence therefore that last Monday evening, Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah, another key component in the axis of Resistance, gave a rousing speech to the party faithful in which he argued why an armed militia was necessary to protect Lebanon from Israeli aggression.

"Have we reached a point at which we can really give up the Resistance?" he asked. "Let us put political rivalry aside. Can we really do without the Resistance?" Minutes earlier he claimed that "Israel is not attacking Lebanon because it fears the Resistance and this is called a strategic transformation."

Is Israel really a threat? Does it really want to attack Lebanon? Israel has invaded Lebanon in the past, most notably in 1978, 1982 and 2006. It also occupied much of South Lebanon for nearly two decades before withdrawing in 2000. In all cases, Israel was chasing down either the Palestinian Liberation Organization or Hezbollah, organizations that it would not tolerate on its northern border.

There is no evidence to show that Israel has territorial designs on Lebanon, nor would the international community tolerate it. The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, a tract held up by many conspiracy-obsessed Arabs as proof of Israel's expansionist ambitions, has long been exposed as rubbish. There may be disputes over water and perhaps even oil and gas, but there is no suggestion that these will turn into all-out war.

Thus the Resistance is a liability. As long as the party maintains, and even adds to, its sophisticated arsenal of long-range missiles - something it calls a deterrent - Israel will always be nervous and on a heightened sense of alert. It sees the party as a non-state actor that owes its ultimate allegiance to Iran, and Hezbollah's activities in the border region is more likely to lead to war than if it were not there at all. This was most keenly demonstrated in 2006, when a bungled kidnap attempt on Israeli soldiers led to a full-scale response that cost over 1,000 lives, over a million displaced and billions of dollars in damages.

Then there is the matter of trust. The days when Hezbollah's feats of martial endeavor were restricted to fighting an

Israeli occupation that ended in 2000 have long gone. Since then, the party has used the threat of violence, underwritten by its ability to mobilize its militiamen, to achieve domestic political ends. There was the 18-month sit-in in central Beirut between November 2006 and June 2008, the attempted coup in May 2008 and the collapse of Saad Hariri's government in January 2011. The party, which in 2000 brought a sense of pride to many Lebanese, has become a national hindrance.

There is no place in modern Lebanon for a political party that is stronger than many of the region's national armies. Lebanon wants to build on its democratic aspirations, create strong state institutions - and that includes the army - and build international relations through the offices of state.

Jalili said it. Hezbollah is a key cog in Tehran's regional ambitions in a Middle East that is rapidly shaping up into a standoff between Iran and Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey in the battle to determine the future of Syria. The frightening truth is that Nasrallah couldn't call time on the Resistance even if he wanted to.

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