

Hezbollah 'Resistance' Project Is Shaken by Syria Crisis

By: **Samer Frangieh** posted on Friday, Aug 31, 2012

In his recent speech on the occasion of Quds Day (a holiday expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people and opposing Israel's control over Jerusalem — or *al-Quds* in Arabic), Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah let out a cry of desperation. It reflected his loss of control over the situation and his confusion in the face of rapid developments in Lebanon and the region. The leader of the greatest divine victory admitted on the most ideological of days that things have gone “beyond the control” of his party, and that all it can do is observe the situation silently since the party has “ultimately become unable to act.”

About this Article

Summary:

Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah's admission that his party has begun to lose control shows the impact of the civil war in Syria, writes Samer Frangieh. The Michel Samaha affair hurt the group's legitimacy, and it faces the prospect of defeat in the 2013 elections. A universal “resistance” mantra wasn't enough.

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achieved after the July 2006 War victory and the phase of sectarian tensions that followed. As a result of some tribal clans maintaining a margin of independence, the social transformations and growing “bourgeoisie” arising from changes in the (Hezbollah-dominated) southern suburbs of Beirut, and the security chaos and proliferation of urban problems such as narcotics, Hezbollah faces the dilemma of managing a community, one which requires competencies not available to any party and threatens to turn it into an entity that emulates the Lebanese state in its failure.

This party's inability to assert social control coincided with political failure at home, represented by the poor performance of Hezbollah and its allies in the government. The party's bet — which is based on separating the issue of Hezbollah's weapons from government affairs — has failed, and it has been shown that the only political project of the (March 8) alliance is to exclude its opponent. This failure was further consolidated with the repositioning of MP Walid Jumblatt, which eliminated the possibility of an electoral victory for the March 8 coalition (in the upcoming parliamentary elections). After two years of governance, Hezbollah is facing a nightmare: a possible repeat of the results of the 2009 elections, if not worse.

This recognition of deep weakness was accompanied by an unprecedented threat to Israel. Nasrallah threatened to turn “the lives of hundreds of thousands of Israelis into real hell” and inflict on them the same number of dead and wounded as the Lebanese. Thus, a single speech incorporated both strength and weakness and a recognition of the party's impotence while threatening a doomsday — a new form of the Middle East's balance of power — with [Israel](#) at the bottom and “the military wing of the al-Moqdad family” on top.

Some have questioned Nasrallah's admission of weakness and consider the Moqdad spectacle as merely a message from Hezbollah and one of many tools – such as the families (of the Hezbollah members kidnapped in Syria who blocked a main highway in protest) or other “demand movements” – that the party uses when needed. But the party's relationship with the components of its community is more complicated than them using a given “tool” to gain more independence. The two sides coexist in various ways amid ongoing implicit negotiations, which are rearranged every now and then. What is no longer questionable is that the party is losing its prestige, and is growing weaker both at home and abroad.

The party's growing weakness has different aspects. Within the supportive environment of the resistance, the party no longer enjoys the standing it achieved after the July 2006 War victory and the phase of sectarian tensions that followed. As a result of some tribal clans maintaining a margin of independence, the social transformations and growing “bourgeoisie” arising from changes in the (Hezbollah-dominated) southern suburbs of Beirut, and the security chaos and proliferation of urban problems such as narcotics, Hezbollah faces the dilemma of managing a community, one which requires competencies not available to any party and threatens to turn it into an entity that emulates the Lebanese state in its failure.

This internal decline is surrounded by a larger crisis. It is [the Syrian revolution](#) and its political, security and sectarian implications. This episode may have the greatest impact on the future of the resistance because it threatens to eliminate the financial foundations for the (resistance) project.

As for the moral (aspect), the “comrades-in-arms” speech and the arrest of (former pro-Syrian Information Minister) Michel Samaha withdrew all legitimacy from the party and its resistance, turning it into a mere partner in the Baathist killing machine.

The Hezbollah project has fully and quickly collapsed, despite the group’s military superiority and known political firmness. But this collapse did not come as a result of a cosmic conspiracy, fifth column, terrorist infiltration, or even fierce internal opposition. More precisely, no specific actor is responsible for this collapse. The roots of the party’s collapse are elsewhere, outside of politics, in its traditional or conspiratorial sense.

The cause of this collapse is unknown. Its broader headline is the restoration of “everyday life” to its owners. This life is what led to the failure of the project of building a “resistance” society and transforming the southern suburbs into a camp whose only rhythm is resistance and its requirements. Everyday life flows beyond these outdated concepts. The (people) seek to connect, have fun, progress and live in comfort, and they even have grudges and aspirations. The moment the resistance assumed its ideological control, it began to lose its effectiveness, as it transformed itself into a moral force, which was circumvented by a community that aspires to live.

The restoration of everyday life by its rightful owners was also manifested in the solid Lebanese system and its sensitive balances. This shattered Hezbollah’s dream of control. The moment the slogan of resistance was elevated to the status of a new constitution, the party’s ability to manage Lebanese politics began to deteriorate.

The party discovered that its allies have interests, concerns, and even ambitions, and that the slogan of resistance was no longer sufficient for them (that is if they believed in it in the first place). Despite the party’s intervention, threats, and reminding of regional dangers, it was forced to accept the STL funding, the release of the (Lebanese) spies (convicted of collaboration with Israel), and stood idly by as it watched its allies hurl stones at each other. Thus, the slogan of resistance became a burden and substance for political blackmail exploited by allies and opponents alike.

Hezbollah was also hit hard by another development no one stood behind, even if Nasrallah tries to search for the hidden Zionist hands behind it. It is [the longing of the Syrian people for freedom](#) and to rid themselves of a tyrant. It is a longing for normal daily life, free from emergency laws. Despite the rejectionist speech and Hezbollah’s attempts to re-emphasize the priority of Palestine and the resistance, the Syrian people decided to terminate the reign of terror that lasted for decades. The return of normal life in Syria would not have been directed against the resistance had Nasrallah not favored the preservation of the resistance’s land bridge (Syria) at the expense of the freedom of the Syrian people. In light of the systematic genocide being carried out by their “comrades-in-arms,” the slogan of resistance has become a moral shame, which is only effective in justifying the massacres of the Assad family.

Hezbollah did not merely collapse in front of a few, rather it collapsed and was stripped naked before everyone. It collapsed in front of a people that gain their rights from those who want to recruit them for messianic projects, completely irrelevant to their own lives. In different ways — whether through the lethal glorification of politics, lethal blackmail of glory or outright exclusion — the concept of open resistance, and its requirements that people oppose the rhythm of life, has collapsed.

This does not mean that daily life is (filled with) absolute good. Daily life is ambiguous as life should be. It includes the beautiful and ugly, the youths who want to live, the tribes that want to kidnap, the need to relate to the other while having an isolationist fear of this same other. It also includes aspirations for social

advancement and bitterness toward the advancement of others; liberation revolutions and sectarian fighting; wisdom and madness; as well as Maher al-Miqdad, Gebran Bassil, Abu-Ibrahim, and others who are struggling for a less miserable or freer life. However, with all its contradictions, this everyday life remains contrary to the logic of Hezbollah, which only views it as a field belonging to the group, an area for conspiracies or a supportive environment (for the resistance). Hezbollah may succeed in re-purposing this life, but the battle will inevitably end in favor of life.

Given this downfall, it is no longer enough to admit impotence and that things have gotten out of control. It is also no longer sufficient for the man who gave a cry of despair to remind us that things did not get out of control on their own, but that there are actors who encouraged, drove, incited, justified, supported and planned for this chaos. Michel Samaha is not the only mastermind here. Nasrallah should have complemented his cry of despair by two small confessions: **the resistance project as a social project has ended**, and everyday life, the Lebanese system and the simple aspirations of the Syrian people deserve to be a starting point for a new policy, not just arenas or targets of salvationist projects.

The fall of Hezbollah is the fall of the last bastion of authority (not a state, citing Maher al-Miqdad's favorite dichotomy) that considers daily life as a mere cause of discomfort that needs to be suppressed or severed in the name of a value that is supposed to be our only way to achieving salvation. The restoration of daily life of its rights is not salvation, but is the beginning of either a political phase or civil war. And it has become clear that there is no place for Hezbollah between these two possibilities.

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