

Will Qusair's Fall Change The Balance of Power in Lebanon?

By: Claire Shukur Translated from [As-Safir \(Lebanon\)](#).

It was Qusair's day par excellence.

About This Article

Yesterday [June 5], the Lebanese awoke to news from across the border that the Syrian opposition's "Stalingrad" [had fallen](#). The Lebanese are divided between those who "celebrated" the fall of Qusair into the hands of the Syrian army and its ally Hezbollah, and those who are frustrated by the Syrian opposition's successive failures and their high cost on the revolutionaries and their Lebanese supporters.

For Hezbollah's public, it was a new "divine victory," like that of summer 2006. Today, the official Syrian flag is fluttering in the main square of Qusair, which has been reduced to rubble mixed with the bodies of dead fighters. The Lebanese people's opposing feelings were reflected in social media, where some Lebanese celebrated while others mourned.

The morale of some became sky high, while for others it dropped to the ground. That is nothing new given how the Lebanese are divided over the Syrian regime and over Hezbollah's involvement in the battles of Qusair.

The Lebanese have opposing assessments of the situation. Those who oppose Hezbollah's involvement consider Qusair, which is near the Lebanese border, as just a small part of the Syrian revolution, with no special strategic value. For them, Qusair is not the [Bekaa Valley's gateway to Homs](#), nor a main event in the two-year Syrian war.

For Hezbollah's supporters, Qusair is the heart of Damascus because it links the Syrian coast with Syria's south and center. This means that Qusair's fall will reopen the supply lines between the coast and the interior. Moreover, Qusair connects the south to the north and after it is cleared, the Syrian army will be free to go to Aleppo, Idlib and Damascus to complete its mission.

Summary :

Hezbollah thinks the fall of Qusair may shift the balance of power in Lebanon in its favor, while Hezbollah's opponents think that it changes nothing on the Lebanese political scene.

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Two Local Assessments of the Syrian Events. The Fall of Qusair with Regard to Lebanon: A Political Nonevent or a Jackpot?

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From the perspective of those on Hezbollah's side, Qusair's fall means that the bet on ousting President Bashar al-Assad has failed. The Syrian army has the initiative on the ground and the opposition cannot raise its ambitions. Rather, the opposition should read between the lines regarding the US-Russian dialogue, which will produce a new reality.

The first result of Qusair's fall is the weakening of the divided Syrian opposition on the eve of the [Geneva II international dialogue conference](#), where the opposition would be unable to ask for more than a few reforms. With each passing day, the opposition is moving closer to accepting that the balance of power is in the regime's favor, and thus must lower its ambitions.

The Lebanese believe that Qusair's fall will separate the Lebanese and Syrian events. In other words, the cutting of the main smuggling routes for weapons and fighters between Akkar and the Bekaa on the one hand and Homs on the other will end the interdependence of the military situations in Lebanon and Syria.

Some argue that Qusair's fall may cool the tempers of some of the hotheads in Lebanon, especially since Tripoli's volcano would not have erupted had they known that the situation in Qusair would end in Hezbollah's favor. So the situation in Qusair might make the March 14 movement reconsider its calculations and agree to a formula that would finally give birth to Lebanese Prime Minister [Tammam Salam's cabinet](#).

But Hezbollah's haters are minimizing the importance of Qusair's fall. They think that Hezbollah needed a "jihadist" mission in Syria after its prior excuses of [defending Shiite shrines](#) became unconvincing.

Hezbollah's haters believe that Hezbollah is trying to exaggerate the significance of Qusair's fall to mark a moral victory that would allow Hezbollah to continue its fight in Syria. Hezbollah's opponents think that the Syrian army's mission is not just Qusair; the Syrian army must also take the large cities, or the regime may not last.

So the withdrawal of the opposition fighters from Qusair does not mean, in the opinion of the March 14 movement, that the opposition has given up on that town, which the opposition may seek to recover. In classical warfare, armies should avoid entering cities. So Hezbollah's opponents think that the party committed a strategic mistake by entering Qusair.

On that basis, Hezbollah's opponents do not see a strategic victory for Hezbollah because the party cannot convert Qusair's fall into [political gains in Lebanon](#). Hezbollah's opponents think that Lebanon is awaiting the outcome of the entire Syrian crisis. According to the March 14 movement, whether Qusair falls into the hands of the Syrian army or its opponents changes nothing for Lebanon.