

## HOW TO SAFEGUARD THE CEDAR REVOLUTION IN LEBANON

Professor Marius Deeb,  
Middle East Studies Program,  
School of Advanced International Studies,  
Johns Hopkins University,  
1740 Massachusetts Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20036

A statement for the hearing of the House Committee  
International Relations convened on July 28, 2005

□

"Lebanon Reborn? Defining National Priorities and Prospects  
for Democratic Renewal in the Wake of March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2005"

Thank you Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, for inviting me to testify today. The Cedar Revolution in Lebanon would not have been possible without the UN Security Council Resolution 1559 of September 2, 2004 which empowered the Lebanese people to rise up against Syrian tyrannical domination. The models they emulated were those of the Rose Revolution in Georgia, and the Orange Revolution in the Ukraine. The culmination of the Cedar Revolution occurred on March 14, 2005 when the political opposition mounted an unprecedented peaceful and non-violent rally of 1.2 million Lebanese calling for freedom from Syria and the withdrawal of its troops and intelligence apparatus (al-Mukhabarat) from Lebanese territory.

The Cedar Revolution, as I see it, has three objectives. First and most important, the end of the Syrian military occupation - this was achieved in large measure in the aftermath of the demonstrations, and officially completed by April 26, 2005. Whether all Syrian Intelligence (al-Mukhabarat) agents have left Lebanon is a moot question. For almost three decades, Syria's occupation of Lebanon, transformed a number of political parties and organizations into instruments of its own Intelligence Services. Those included minor parties like the Lebanese branch of the Syrian Ba`th Party and the Syrian Social Nationalist Party, as well as major organizations such as Nabih Berri's Amal Movement and Hizballah. I argue that although Syria has withdrawn its army and its official Intelligence apparatus from Lebanon, it still maintains a very large Trojan horse called Hizballah.

The second objective of the Cedar Revolution is to achieve a complete reconciliation between the various religious communities. This attempt at reconciling all parties began as early as the Summer of 2000 when the Maronite Patriarch Cardinal Sfair visited the Druze leader Walid Junblat. The visit was followed by the reconciliation of the Druze leader and the former Lebanese president Amin Gemayel (a Maronite), and eventually with Samir Ja`ja`, the Maronite leader of the Lebanese Forces. A reconciliation between the Druze and the Christians is the sine quo non condition for the renewal of Lebanon because these two communities were

instrumental in the creation of Lebanon in the late 16th century. Although reconciliation among the various religious communities has been practically achieved there is still the issue of granting amnesty to the officers and the rank and file of the dissolved South Lebanon Army. This demand has been voiced recently by the Maronite Patriarch Sfair, and it seems that a solution is in the offing.

The third objective of the Cedar Revolution is for the Lebanese to be free, and to be able to enjoy the basic freedoms of speech, of the press, of worship, as well as to have free elections, and a free independent judiciary. Lebanon is a religiously divided society and therefore the only democracy possible, according to the Political Science theorist Arend Lijphart, is what is called Consociational Democracy, a genre of democracy that represents all communities and not just the majority. His theory was based on his comparative study of Lebanon and Switzerland.

Unfortunately the recent parliamentary elections which were held in May-June 2005 were not conducive to this form of representation. The electoral law, applied in the recent elections, was created in 2000 by the head of the Syrian Intelligence Services. Its purpose was to pit the various religious communities against each other by marginalizing the Christian communities in Beirut, the South and the North. It was also custom-made to serve the interests of the Amal organization and Hizballah, the leading Syrian proxies in Lebanon. The Maronite Patriarch Sfair called, to no avail, for the return to the 1960 electoral law, which divided Lebanon into smaller constituencies, and allowed voters to be familiar with the candidates and choose those they believed would best represent their interests.

To achieve a balance within Lebanon a new electoral law should be devised, based on the 1960 electoral system, so that all religious communities feel represented, and full members of the Lebanese polity. The Christians should not be treated as Dhimmis, that is, second-class citizens, and be dependent on leaders from other religious communities to represent them. They should be able to choose their own representatives in parliament. After an electoral law is issued, a new parliament should be elected to reflect the will of the Lebanese electorate. Unless this is done long-term stability will remain permanently elusive.

To safeguard what has already been achieved by the Cedar Revolution it is of the utmost importance that the UN Resolution 1559 be fully implemented. This means implementing the resolution to dissolve all militias, ie primarily, Hizballah. The disarming of Hizballah will not only benefit Lebanon but also the Middle East and the West. It will eliminate the second most powerful Islamist terrorist organization (after al-Qa'idah) in the world. Hizballah, working for its two masters Iran and Syria, was responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Americans and Europeans starting with the suicide bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut on April 18, 1983, and the simultaneous suicide bombing of the U.S. Marines and French troops

of the Multi-National Force on October 23, 1983 through hostage-taking during the 1980s and continuing with its role in the Khobar bombing in Saudi Arabia targeting American servicemen on June 25, 1996. One can argue that the terrorism perpetrated by the Iran-Syria-Hizballah triangle prepared the ground and inspired Bin Laden's al-Qa`idah.

Lebanon would be the first to benefit from the disarming of Hizballah because it would mean putting an end to the existence of a state within a state in the regions of Lebanon controlled by Hizballah. The Lebanese national army could disarm Hizballah peacefully or otherwise, because no sovereign state should tolerate a militia which controls part of its territory. Second, Syria's political influence would be weakened because Hizballah is the major Syrian proxy in Lebanon. Third, disarming Hizballah would debunk the myth that it is a resistance movement with the objective of liberating Lebanon from Israeli forces. Today it justifies its existence by claiming that Israel is still occupying part of Lebanon, namely the Shib`a Farms, and that it, Hizballah is defending Lebanon's territorial integrity.

When Israel withdrew from southern Lebanon and dismantled its security zone on May 24, 2000, President Hafiz Asad panicked and decided to create a pretext for keeping a low-intensity conflict across the Lebanese-Israeli border by claiming that a small enclave of the Golan Heights called Shib`a Farms belonged to Lebanon. That was used to justify keeping Hizballah fully armed and deployed at the Lebanese-Israeli border.

The people of southern Lebanon would be relieved if Hizballah were to be disarmed, because the so-called war of liberation which was fought by Hizballah for the last twenty years was a senseless war contrived by Syria, which has brought them nothing but death and destruction. I have demonstrated in my book Syria's Terrorist War on Lebanon and the Peace Process how Israel was willing to withdraw from Lebanon as early as 1983 when it signed the May 17, 1983 Agreement with Lebanon under the sponsorship of the U.S. Syria fought this agreement, in order to keep the Lebanese-Israeli border ablaze, and Hizballah its tool for war and terrorism.

Fourth, the disarming of Hizballah will have an immediate impact on its two masters Iran and Syria. It would curtail considerably their ability to engage in terrorism against Lebanon, the West and Israel with impunity as they had done throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

Fifth, the disarming of Hizballah will remove the threat that it poses against Israel because it has deployed an estimated nine thousand Katyusha rockets, and has received from Iran the 240-millimeter Fajr-3 missiles with range of 25 miles, and the 333-millimeter Fajr-5 missiles with a range of 45 miles. Hizballah has also received from Syria the 222-millimeters rockets with a range of 18 miles.

Sixth, Hizballah has developed strong ties with the Palestinian

organizations Hamas and Islamic Jihad and has inspired them and has helped them in their terrorist operations. Therefore disarming Hizballah would curb those who seek to undermine the peace process.

Seven, a leading operative of Hizballah, Imad Mughniya, who is on the list of twenty-two most wanted terrorists issued by President Bush on October 10, 2001, has links with Bin Laden's al-Qa`idah since the mid-1990s. He trained members of al-Qa`idah to launch coordinated simultaneous terrorist operations. Therefore disarming Hizballah would make a dent in our war against terrorism.

In summary, I maintain that a genuinely representative democratic system in Lebanon can be achieved first, by the creation of a new electoral law devised to satisfy all the religious communities. And second, by the full implementation of UN Resolution 1559 which would eliminate the state within the state created by Hizballah and its political ally Amal. This would undoubtedly curtail the practice of Muhasassa, and would curb the corruption which has become pervasive in Lebanon under Syrian domination. The popularity of Hizballah is exaggerated because it is based on fear as Hizballah is heavily armed and is based also on its usurpation of the powers of the state in the regions which are under its control. If these conditions are changed then Hizballah could be challenged and even defeated at the polls and Lebanon can become a freer and more democratic polity.