

A Victory for Lebanon and For Peace in Southwest Asia

by Christine Bierre

The Lebanese opposition and majority at a meeting with other Arab leaders in Doha, Qatar, announced on May 21 that they had reached an historic agreement on Lebanon. The results constitute an important victory for Lebanon, for both Muslims and Christians, declared Michel Aoun, the president of one of the two largest organizations of the Lebanese opposition, the CPL, in a statement to OTV television. All the demands of the opposition were met at this conference. First, Gen. Michel Suleiman, the head of the army, and the consensus candidate for the Presidency, was accepted by all parties, as part of the larger agreement: On May 24, by an overwhelming majority, Suleiman was voted President of Lebanon, to assume office immediately.

However, his election is premised, as the Lebanese opposition had demanded it be, on two conditions: 1) the nomination of a national unity government, where the opposition will have a one-third blocking minority; and 2) the adoption of a new electoral law, preceding new legislative elections. It was decided at Doha, that a government comprised of 30 ministers would be constituted, among which, 16 would go to the present majority, 11 for the opposition—Hezbollah, the CPL of Michel Aoun and Amal—and 3 would be named by Suleiman himself.

As for the new electoral law, it was decided, as the opposition had demanded, that Lebanon would return to the 1960 electoral law. Sheikh Hamad ben Jassem Al-Thani, the Qatari prime minister, who announced the agreement at a press conference, also stated that the Lebanese factions had decided to abstain from using weapons for political purposes and to respect Lebanese sovereignty. Nabih Berry, the president of the parliament, and a close ally of the opposition, was happy to announce, as well, that the Beirut sit-in organized in November 2006 by the opposition, will be lifted at the same time.

A Lebanese source close to the opposition rejoiced over the agreement, saying that, “with it, a page is definitely turned since the 1967 Israeli War, because since that time, everything that happened in Lebanon has been the result of a regional power play by the various international forces. This agreement is the first one to have been reached since then in the interest of Lebanon and by Lebanese forces.”

If the relief is general, the situation ahead will not be easy.

This is an agreement that solves constitutional questions, a Hezbollah source told Scarlett Haddad of the Beirut daily *L'Orient le Jour*, but the political problems remain to be solved. There remains a battle over determining who the prime minister will be, and who will get what ministries.

A Strategic Defeat for the Anglo-American War Party

What led to this whopping defeat of the Bush-Cheney forces controlled by the trans-Atlantic imperial faction run out of Britain? Beyond the show of strength of the Lebanese opposition internally, the pawns of the Bush-Cheney offensive collapsed under the weight of their own folly. Well-informed Lebanese and French sources report that Bush's speeches at the Israeli Knesset on May 15, and at the World Economic Forum in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt one week later, enraged their last moderate allies in the region—Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan—provoking a rapprochement between them and the so-called radicals, Syria, Iran, and Hamas.

According to the French intelligence website Bakchich.com, it was Bush's unqualified support in those speeches, for Israel and against both friend and foe within the Arab and Muslim world, which led to the total discrediting of the Bush option, which was to maintain all of the regional frictions and conflict near the boiling-point, and pave the way for perpetual war in the region, the number one goal of the British.

Thus, Bush launched an indirect charge against Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, for having imprisoned cadre of the Muslim Brotherhood, and of the liberal movement Kifaya. But what really infuriated the moderate Arab states, according to this same source, was the avowal by Bush that he would not be able to deliver on his promise to create a Palestinian state, before the end of his term in office, in January 2009.

The outrage was such, that at the World Economic Forum, Mubarak's son, Jamal, was overheard saying that there was nothing now to stop Egypt from reaching a rapprochement with Iran. Others were threatening to restart Egypt's own nuclear power program, and some were even contemplating talking to the Russians. In the same vein, Bakchich.com reports that soon we might expect the opening of the border be-

tween the Gaza Strip, governed by Hamas, and Egypt, because Hamas leaders have become regular visitors to the Egyptian foreign affairs ministry, and of the Mokhabarates, the military intelligence services of Gen. Omar Soleimane, potential successor to Mubarak.

Lebanon may be the beneficiary of the strategic shift now underway. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan reconciled with Syria, will have to pay the bitter price of having to force their Lebanese protégés of the majority to make concessions to the Damascus-allied opposition. Never, underlines could this regional configuration of forces, which favors the “radical currents,” have emerged without the insane behavior of George W. Bush in Israel and in Egypt.

Also important to understand how this victory occurred, is the fact that the United States made no apparent effort to sabotage the Lebanon accord, a sign of a renewed power struggle between the Bush-Cheney apparatus and what remains of the neoconservatives on the one side, and traditionalist American forces opposed to those policies, around figures like Defense Secretary Robert Gates and the majority of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff and the CIA, on the other. While it appears that these forces have won this battle, all observers agree that the war will not be definitely won, until Bush and Cheney are out of the White House, in January 2009.

According to Washington sources, the backdrop to the fight inside the Bush Administration is Vice President Cheney’s continuing push for military action against Iran, before Bush-Cheney leave office. Under “Global Strike,” the Strategic Command program, initiated by former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, under the so-called “revolution in military affairs,” the United States could launch long-range bomber attacks on Iran, on a moment’s notice. It is the continuing possibility of this scenario that has prompted Gates and others to warn that a new war in the Persian Gulf would be “catastrophic.”

The other great loser in this affair is France, which was totally absent throughout the crisis, and is now paying for its allegiance to the imperial faction in London, and its Cheney allies in Washington. Not only did France join in the virulent attacks against Iran and Syria, and heap support on the Lebanese pro-Bush Siniora government, but, following the end of its mission in Lebanon, it dismantled the experienced team of diplomats and intelligence officers around Jean Claude Cousseran which, at the beginning of the Sarkozy Presidency, had assembled all the conditions for a just solution of the crisis in the region.

How France Shot Itself in the Foot

In a recent article, *Le Canard Enchaîné* reported that the French government was totally out of touch with the recent Lebanese crisis, thus paying for its support for the London-Cheney offensives in the region. “No important information reached Paris, either from the French embassies in Beirut or

Damascus, nor from the DGSE [foreign intelligence] correspondents. Better, if one dares to use that word, the French diplomats were reduced to having to phone Lebanese journalists or their Parisian colleagues to try to get some information! In a similar vein, they didn’t see anything coming last month, when Saudi Arabia,” mandated by the trans-Atlantic British empire faction, “pushed the Lebanese government to take on Hezbollah, taking the risk of igniting a new confrontation between Sunnis and Christians, on the one hand, and Shi’ites, on the other.”

Le Canard notes that, this time around, it was the Qatari Emir who led the peace negotiations, and not “by accident. His diplomats, and even he, himself, talk to everybody—to the Syrians, Hezbollah, the Iranians, to Hamas. Another advantage: The relations of the Emir with the United States are rather good. With France also: He played an active role, including financial, during the liberation of the Bulgarian nurses held in Libya.” Indeed, to make sure that the final Lebanon deal was not sabotaged after the fact, the Emir of Qatar flew to Riyadh, to meet with Saudi Arabia’s King Abdullah, to personally secure Saudi backing for the agreement.

The fact is, as one Beirut-based intelligence source reported, Hezbollah’s brilliant flanking of the Siniora/Hariri provocations, at the beginning of May, delivered a strategic defeat to those trying to provoke a new Lebanese civil war. The fact that Hezbollah demonstrated an ability to take over West Beirut in a 24-hour period, but worked closely with the Lebanese Army, in turning control over to the sovereign military force,

LaRouche Cites Turkish Role in Diplomacy

Lyndon LaRouche on May 23 underscored the significance of the Turkish mediation in the recent Israeli-Syrian talks, citing the late Turkish leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s (1881-1938) role in combatting the Anglo-French Sykes-Picot Treaty, which sought to carve up the former Ottoman Empire into French and British colonial spheres of control, in the aftermath of World War I. Atatürk countered the Anglo-French machinations by negotiating a firm border agreement with Syria. This assertion of the sovereign power of the governments of the region set a precedent which is now, once again, being pursued, to secure a permanent peace between Israel and Syria.

constituted a devastating defeat for the trans-Atlantic war party and their Lebanese assets. It was that decisive defeat of the provocation that laid the basis for the Qatar-mediated breakthrough.

France Loses Twice

France is also paying for its bad foreign policy choices with the Turks. “The Sarkozy team, very hostile to the entry of Turkey in Europe, is no longer popular with Ankara,” says *Le Canard*. “The Turkish leaders are still not authorizing overflights by airplanes delivering equipment and men to the members of the French deployment in Afghanistan. And when a negotiation between Syria and the Israelis, via Turkey, emerged, Ankara made it a point not to inform Paris.”

The Syria-Israel talks, brokered by the Turkish foreign ministry for over a year, were also announced the same day that the Qatar-mediated Lebanon breakthrough was achieved. Israeli and Syrian foreign ministry officials were in Turkey for three days of indirect talks, in recent days, and all three countries declared that those talks were productive.

Iran Makes Proposals for International Cooperation

This is an unofficial translation of the letter sent to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon by Manuchehr Mottaki, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Following the letter is the full text of the Iranian package of proposed international cooperation. The translation comes from the Institute for Science and International Security.

13 May 2008

Excellency,

As I informed you in my previous communications, the Islamic Republic of Iran, as a responsible Member State of the United Nations Organization, and based on its international rights and obligations, has always emphasized the importance of multilateralism. Unfortunately, a few countries, with political motivations and objectives, have raised some ambiguities over Iran’s exclusively peaceful nuclear program and have used the UN Organs as a tool, thus, undermining the integrity and credibility of the United Nations.

Whereas the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has, time and again, confirmed the non-diversion of Iran’s nuclear program, and based on the agreed work plan between Iran and the Agency the remaining issues are completely resolved, and while the nuclear program of the Islamic Republic of Iran and all nuclear activities of our country

are currently under the full-scope safeguards of the IAEA, the UN Security Council has persisted on its illegal measures.

I have already brought to Your Excellency’s attention, in details, my Government’s arguments and reasoning regarding the unlawfulness of the intervention of the UN Security Council in Iran’s peaceful nuclear program. Indeed, the Islamic Republic of Iran still maintains that constructive interaction and reasonable and just negotiations, without preconditions and based on mutual respect, is the basic solution for the promotion and improvement of international situations and circumstances. On the same basis, the Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to negotiate with the 5+1 Group within a specific framework on issues of mutual interest. The Islamic Republic of Iran is of the view that resorting to the two-track approaches that comprise intimidation and negotiation not only will not help resolving issues, but will indeed further complicate the situation.

The Iranian nation is a peace-loving nation that has spared no efforts to contribute to global peace and stability. Iran’s capabilities and power can contribute to regional and international peace and stability. The Islamic Republic of Iran believes that sustainable regional and international peace and stability, economic relations, free trade, energy security, combating terrorism and narcotic drugs, as well as peaceful uses of nuclear energy provide appropriate common grounds for long-term and sustainable cooperation.

Given the present circumstances at the regional and international levels, the Islamic Republic of Iran considers the introduction of a new and comprehensive initiative, aimed at achieving sustainable and constructive interaction, as an imperative. On its part, the Islamic Republic of Iran, following thorough and proficient studies and considerations, has carefully prepared a package containing important initiatives and proposals in different political, security, economic and nuclear fields, to be submitted to countries of the 5+1 Group. This package has been prepared as a basis for comprehensive and thorough negotiations with the said countries, based on collective commitments as well as justice, sovereignty and mutual respect. We are of the firm belief that the present package will provide an exceptional opportunity for real and serious cooperation among the concerned parties.

I would like to emphasize on this important point that the principled approach of the Islamic Republic of Iran towards this package is a strategic one. Therefore, I hope that the concerned parties would acknowledge the importance of the proposed package and its substance, as a comprehensive solution to the regional and global problems and challenges. The package can be a basis for long-term cooperation. I hope the concerned parties would welcome it and would deal with it constructively.

Manuchehr Mottaki
Minister of Foreign Affairs
of the Islamic Republic of Iran