

ReViews¹ - 7th Issue:

Battle for Control by the Resistance Network

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In a recent document entitled “[Terror is an Existential Threat](#)”, the Reut Institute contended that Israel currently faces a new type of security challenge, embodied in the “Resistance Network”.²

The Resistance Network has succeeded, mainly through terrorism, in preventing Israel from any military or political achievement leading towards its secure existence. Instead, it promotes the creation of a reality consisting of a single Islamist state in place of Israel.

However, the Resistance Networks should not be seen solely as an ‘Israeli problem’ as it acts in the context of the regional struggle for Middle East supremacy.

This issue of ReViews cites a variety of quotes which demonstrate the Resistance Network’s primary characteristics including its systemic nature and its aspiration to take over or undermine local governments in the context of the current regional conflict.

The quotes below refer in particular to three Resistance Network actors – the Palestinian Hamas, the Lebanese Hizbullah and the Mahdi Army³ in Iraq – as well as their connections to Iran and Syria.

Systemic nature of the phenomenon

The Resistance Network is a systemic phenomenon, consisting of a proliferation of state and non-state actors dispersed throughout a number of countries. The various actors are motivated by a common purpose and therefore collaborate extensively with each other.

- A mid-level Mahdi Army commander said of his 300 fighters sent to Lebanon to fight with Hizbullah: “They are the best-trained fighters in the Mahdi Army.” A senior American intelligence official stated on the matter: “[The Mahdi Army] have been a link to Lebanese Hizbullah and have helped facilitate Hizbullah training inside of Iraq, but more importantly Jaish al-Mahdi⁴ members going to Lebanon” ([New York Times](#), 11/28/06).
- A UN report stated Hizbullah provided training to 700 Islamic militants from Somalia, while Iran and Syria provided weapons. ([New York Times](#), 11/15/06).
- Hamas Political Bureau Head Khaled Mashaal stated that although Hamas and Hizbullah operate in two different arenas, “We are partners in the resistance plan” ([Ynet](#), 11/14/06).
- Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Mashaal agreed on cooperation between Iran, Palestinian Authority and Hizbullah and Iranian financial support to Palestinians. ([Ha’aretz](#), 2/05/06).
- Sudanese Islamic Movement deputy head S’uah Al-Fath stated: “I say to Hamas...we support you with money, with men, with women, we support you with the media, we support you with politics, and with everything we own. We support you with our souls” ([Al-Jazeera TV](#), 2/14/06).

¹ **ReViews** is a product of the Reut Institute which presents quotes and reports from a variety of sources, which indicate a political trend of long-term strategic significance for Israel.

² The Resistance Network is a phenomenon in which various political actors promote a radical agenda through strategic cross-boundary collaboration, the use of terror and violence and often by attempting to control the governing institutions in the territory from which they operate.

In the case of Israel, the Resistance Network constitutes a new security and political threat, since through the use of terror from Lebanon and the PA, it prevents Israel from political and military achievements.

³ The Mahdi Army in Iraq is a militia force led by Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. Sadr also controls 30 of the 128 seats in the Iraqi Parliament which belong to the United Iraqi Alliance, the Shiite alliance which has a majority.

⁴ Jaish al-Mahdi is the Arabic name for the Mahdi Army.

- Yemenite head of Al-Iman Islamic University Abd Al-Majid Al-Zindani raised funds for Mashaal: “The support we can provide at present is money...I am donating 200,000 Riyals to my brothers in the Hamas...government. The Hamas government is the Palestinian people’s government today. It is the jihad-fighting, steadfast, resolute government of Palestine” ([Al-Jazeera TV](#), 3/23/06).

Taking control of and/or undermining local governments

Actors in the Resistance Network do not necessarily offer an alternative to official state institutions. Instead, they attempt to control the local political systems from within. In the process, they challenge the legitimacy of the current ruling party.

Palestinian case

Hamas’ apparent intention is to take over the Palestinian national movement by taking over the PLO as the Sole Legitimate Representative of the Palestinian people. Thus, controlling the PA was the first stage in the Hamas plan to take over the Palestinian national movement.

Hamas contends that the PLO is illegitimate because it is dominated by Fatah and does not include Hamas representation. Therefore, Hamas demands reform that will increase its share of power.

- Mashaal met with representatives of Palestinian factions residing in Damascus, including those outside the PLO. He stated that within two weeks a committee would begin reviving PLO institutions, in accordance with a decision by Palestinian factions at the beginning of the year ([Ha’aretz](#), 12/6/06).
- Palestinian Minister of Refugees’ Affairs, Dr. Atef Adwan called the PLO Executive Committee “a group of old men, who represent nobody but themselves, and whose main goal is to correspond to American policies even if that comes at the expense of the Palestinian people.” (Ma’an, 12/03/06).
- Hamas demands reforms in the PLO as a condition for joining the organization ([Ha’aretz](#), 2/7/06).
- Hamas spokesperson Moussa Abu Marzouq: “Our next step will be to reform the PLO, and to reorganize it on the basis of the proper principles” (Egyptian TV, translated by MEMRI, 2/13/06).
- Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri: “Hamas holds the PLO to be the legitimate Palestinian source of authority, but [Hamas] demands it to be reformed” (Arabic BBC, 3/23/06)
- Mashaal stated: “As for the PLO, as I have said, for some time we have been striving to rebuild the organization...so it can become a Palestinian home for all, and a source of authority, in and out of [the Palestinian territories].” ([Al-Jazeera TV](#), 1/29/06).

Lebanese case

Hizbullah is not necessarily interested in a civil war or full control of the Lebanese government. Rather, it seeks a third of the seats in government in order to have veto power over it. This would apparently be the first stage in a plan to redesign the current proportional representation system based on the Taif Accord.

- Five Shiite ministers resigned from the government due to their refusal to “to cover up what we are not convinced of, and what might damage the supreme national interests.” ([Ynet](#), 11/11/06).
- Hizbullah Deputy Secretary-General Naim Qassem stated: “Either we will wait with little patience, to give a chance for the talks to come up with a result...or we will discuss with our allies the program of our protests, which will be wide, God willing” ([New York Times](#), 11/12/06).
- Naim Qassem stated: “The present government...is an unconstitutional government and its decisions are illegal. If it...continues to function when it lacks any authority, then it should be put on trial...This government...is to be blame for everything that occurs to this country” ([Website of the Islamic Resistance in Lebanon](#), [MEMRI translation to English](#), 11/19/06).
- Naim Qassem on Al-Manar TV: “This government has lost its legal and constitutional legitimacy - yet it continues to hold sessions and to make decisions that are of no practical value, since they are

unconstitutional. As long as the government is illegal, its sessions are likewise illegal” (Website of the Islamic Resistance in Lebanon, [MEMRI translation to English](#), 11/27/06).

- Hizbullah’s website stated: “What [can be done] after an illegal government has taken over the executive power in the country? [The Shiite ministers] deprived [Siniora’s] rule of its constitutional legitimacy when they resigned from a government that no longer represents the aspirations of the vast majority of Lebanese, and the question of it being replaced has become an inescapable demand.” ([Website of the Islamic Resistance in Lebanon](#), [MEMRI translation to English](#), 11/19/06).
- Hizbullah Executive Council Chairman Hashem Safi Al-Din stated: “Lebanon does not have a legitimate and legal government, but only a group that claims to be a government, [...] that is usurping the government” (Website of the Islamic Resistance in Lebanon, [MEMRI translation](#), 11/24/06).
- On Al-Manar TV, Hizbullah Secretary-General Sheik Hassan Nasrallah stated: “The government’s failure is the result of its being a one camp’s government. In Lebanon, in its ethnic and multicolored composition, one camp cannot rule. This government has proved that it is unable to meet its obligations and it has failed, and therefore we call for a unity government” ([Ynet](#), 11/30/06).

Connection to regional struggle for power and Sponsorship by Iran and Syria

The Resistance Network presents a threat not only to Israel but also to other states in the region, such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt. In the current context of the ongoing regional battle for supremacy, the organizations of the Resistance Network are being sponsored by Iran and to some extent by Syria.⁵

- PA Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh hailed Ahmadinejad: “Your bright position confirms you truly belong to the world of Islam...All the Palestinian brothers of the Iranian President take honor in his stance” ([Moqavemat](#), 12/02/06).
- The White House stated that it was “increasingly concerned by mounting evidence that the Syrian and Iranian governments, Hizbullah and their Lebanese allies are preparing plans to topple Lebanon’s democratically elected government” ([New York Times](#), 11/02/06).
- Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri met with Ahmadinejad and with Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in Iran and stated: “America and the Zionist entity are trying to keep the Islamic Republic [of Iran] from exerting its spiritual influence in the region, [but] the Islamic Republic of Iran will be the leading force in the new phase [that has begun]” (Al-Mustaqbal, [MEMRI translation](#), 11/15/06).
- US General Hayden testified to Congress: “...I have all the zeal of a convert as to the ill effect that the Iranians are having on the situation in Iraq.” Senior American intelligence official: “There seems to have been a strategic decision taken...by Damascus, Tehran [and] Hizbullah, to provide more support to Sadr to increase pressure on the US” ([New York Times](#), 11/28/06).
- Muqtada al-Sadr traveled to Iran where he said his Mahdi Army would defend the Islamic Republic of Iran if it was attacked ([Christian Science Monitor](#), 1/30/06).
- Arab states are concerned about Hizbullah’s attempted take-over of the Lebanese government. Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa stated: “I am worried about the situation [in Lebanon].” In Saudi Arabia, King Abdullah urged the Lebanese to “protect national unity.” Jordanian Foreign Minister Abdel Ilah Khatib stated: “Jordan supports the government of Lebanon and its institutions. Lebanon is going through a delicate period and it is the responsibility of Arab brothers to stand by its side” ([Daily Star](#), 12/05/06).

End.

⁵ See also the quotes in the previous section of the document on Iran’s support for Hizbullah and Hamas and tying Iran, Syria, and Hizbullah to the Mahdi Army in Iraq and the Islamic militants in Somalia.