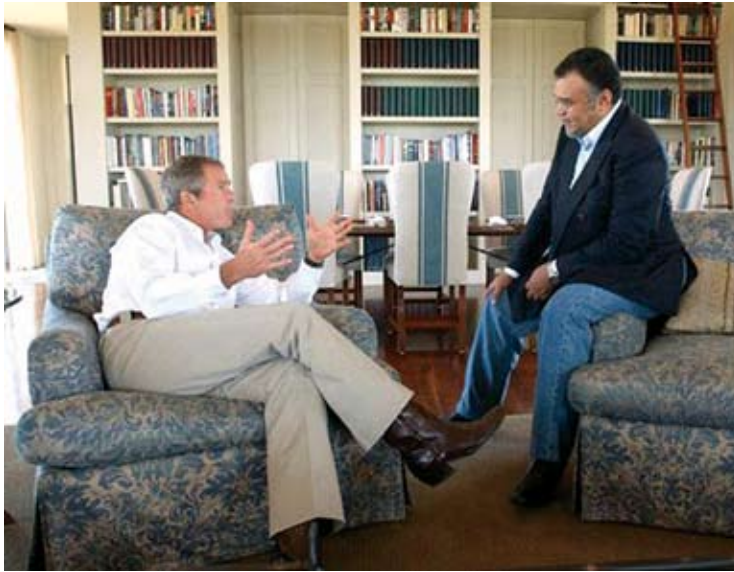


# New Southwest Asia War Drive Stymied

by Dean Andromidas

The British attempt to transform the ongoing Lebanon political crisis into a sectarian civil war that would have ignited a regional conflagration with global strategic consequences, has, for the moment, been stymied, by what Lyndon LaRouche has described as a “strategic asymmetric” effort by leading Asian nations, with backing from some U.S. patriotic factions.

The aborted operation was clearly “made in Britain.” Senior intelligence sources pointed to forces in Saudi Arabia and deep in that country’s “Wahabi clerical establishment” as having been key to the operation. These forces were acting to widen the sectarian divide between Saudi-backed majority Sunni Muslims throughout the region and Shia Muslims in Lebanon, Iraq, and Iran. This points directly to the key British intelligence asset, Saudi Prince Bandar bin Sultan, who, over decades, has received hundreds of millions of dollars from the British defense contractor BAE, for the purpose of running dirty operations throughout the region. While Prince Bandar has been widely associated with the Bush family, and with the U.S.A., through his quarter-century tenure as ambassador to the United States, *EIR*’s 2007 probe of the BAE “Al Yamamah” scandal revealed that Bandar has been a lifelong asset of



White House/Eric Draper

*Saudi Prince Bandar bin-Sultan has, over decades, received hundreds of millions of dollars from the British defense contractor BAE, to finance dirty operations throughout the region. Bandar has been widely associated with the Bush family; he is shown here with President Bush at the Crawford Ranch, in August 2002.*

British imperial intelligence services, a fact clearly acknowledged in the Prince's own 2007 authorized biography.

Through the beginning of May, according to U.S., South-west Asian, and European sources, a dialogue had been taking place, between the Lebanese government coalition led by Anglo-Saudi agent Saad Hariri, and the opposition led by Hezbollah, Amal, and Michel Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement. Then Saad Hariri, who holds dual Saudi and Lebanese citizenship, returned from a two-month stay in Saudi Arabia, where he runs his multi-billion-dollar Saudi-backed business empire. During his stay in the kingdom, British tool Vice President Dick Cheney was in the Saudi capital, while on a tour pushing his war schemes against Iran, and Iran's purported "surrogates," Hezbollah and Hamas.

Within days of Saad's return to Lebanon, the government coalition began a series of provocations against Hezbollah, painting it as a sectarian militia, backed by Iran and Syria, as a pretext to internationalize the crisis. Virtually overnight, coalition leaders like Druze chief Walid Jumblatt, went from dialogue to vitriolic attacks on Hezbollah. The Saudi-financed Mufti of Lebanon, Sheikh Al-Kabani, issued an vitriolic attack on Hezbollah. which, in the Lebanese context, is simply a provocation for violence. The government then issued an order to Hezbollah to close down its telecommunications network, and dismissed Beirut International Airport security director Gen. Wafiq Shoukair, falsely claiming that he was linked to Hezbollah. The two moves broke an all-party agreement not to change the political status quo until the impasse over the election of a new President was resolved, and was seen by Hezbollah as a "declaration of war."

## Civil Disobedience Campaign

In response to these provocations, the opposition, including Hezbollah, initiated a civil disobedience campaign, which was joined by the country's leading trade union federation, which linked the protest to demands for relief from spiraling food prices and inflation.

The same intelligence sources revealed that the Hariri-backed gunmen were deployed into the streets of Beirut, provoking gun battles against Amal and Hezbollah. The international news media played their assigned role, depicting the violence as an Iranian- and Syrian-backed Hezbollah takeover of Beirut. In reality, the Hezbollah moved in self defense, rounded up Hariri's gunmen, and turned them over to the Army.

Saudi-financed militias loyal to Hariri, unable to garner any support from the wider Sunni community, collapsed in the face of the well organized opposition. Meanwhile, the Christian community, even those loyal to the ruling coalition, refused to support Hariri's putsch. Moreover, the Lebanese Army, which represents all sectarian factions, stayed neutral. Significantly, the U.S.-financed and -trained Internal Security Forces also remained neutral. The wild claims that Hezbollah had "occupied" and laid siege to Beirut, bore no relationship to reality, as the Army moved to take control after Hariri's private militia collapsed.

Within 48 hours, the balance of forces dramatically shifted, with the ruling coalition almost hopelessly discredited. Hariri found himself without a militia and clearly exposed as an agent of the London-Saudi plot to destabilize the country. Jumblatt, the anti-Syrian firebrand, found his leadership of the Druze community successfully challenged by his rival Talal Arselan, who is aligned with the opposition, and the hapless Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, after expressing a desire to resign, was convinced to hang on by the U.S. State Department.

Meanwhile, a hastily called meeting of the Arab League found itself deeply divided between one group, led by Saudi Arabia, and another by Syria. According to [almanar.com.lb](http://almanar.com.lb), Saudi Foreign Minister Saud Al Faisal launched a wild attack on Iran and Hezbollah calling for the Arab countries to send troops to Lebanon. This was countered by Syrian Ambassador Yussuf Ahmed, who accused Faisal of seeking to mobilize the Arab world to save the Hariri ally, the universally despised Lebanese Forces chief Samir Geagea. Ahmed added, "Do you want to impose your conception, and tell us that Iran is the enemy, not Israel, that is killing children on a daily basis? You want to impose on us that Iran is the enemy—this country that has always stood by our causes."

Rather than send troops, the Arab League sent a delegation, led by Arab League Secretary General Amir Moussa and Qatari Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad Bin Jasssem al-Thani, which included the foreign ministers of Alge-

ria, Djibouti, Jordan, Morocco, the U.A.E., and Yemen. After meeting all parties, the delegation managed to broker a deal in which the government rescinded the two actions against Hezbollah's telecommunications network and the dismissal of General Shoukair. In return, the opposition lifted its siege of the airport, and talks between the government and opposition are scheduled to take place in Doha, Qatar, under the sponsorship of Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassem al-Thani.

Barring outside pressure from either London or Washington, the talks could break the impasse over the election of current Army chief Gen. Michel Suleiman to the Presidency. This would require the government to recognize opposition demands for the formation of a unity government.

## No Consensus for War

The most likely reason for the collapse of the BAE-directed Beirut putsch was the fact that, outside of London and the neoconservatives gathered around Cheney, there is absolutely no will for a new war in the region.

The only internal force involved was an ad hoc group called "Friends of Lebanon"—the U.S.A., France, Britain, Spain, Italy, Germany, Saudi Arabia, the U.A.E., Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar, the UN, the Arab League, and the Council of Europe—which was formed on the sidelines of the international meeting on Iraq, held in Kuwait at the end of April, under chairmanship of French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner. Their response to the crisis was nothing more muscular than a conference call and a statement calling for end to the violence, and the election of a new Lebanese President, without conditions.

President George W. Bush issued a statement on May 12 attacking Hezbollah, Syria, and Iran as responsible for the Lebanese crisis, and declaring that the United States will continue to support Siniora and the Lebanese Army. On May 14, chief of the U.S. Central Command, Army Lt. Gen. Martin Dempsey, was in Lebanon, where he met Suleiman and the Lebanese defense minister.

Reflecting the broad consensus that the Bush Administration's policy is bankrupt, the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), in its *Middle East Newsletter*, published a scathing critique of the Administration's policy. Released on May 14, by its Middle East program director Jon Alterman, it reviewed the list of U.S. policy failures in the region, including Iraq, Arab-Israeli peace talks, Lebanon, Syria, Iran, etc., noting that "virtually all these problems are worsening as the administration prepares to leave



UN/Ryan Brown

*Former President Jimmy Carter's recent Mideast peace initiative was praised by Lyndon LaRouche as an important contribution to the war-avoidance effort.*

office.... Indeed, things in the Middle East have gotten so perilous that Iraq is beginning to look like a possible bright spot...."

Countering the Administration's failed Middle East policy, is the growing consensus in Washington and Israel, around the need to begin a Syrian-Israeli peace process as key to shifting the region from endless war to one of resolving all the regional conflicts. Lyndon LaRouche has supported calls from Syrian and Israeli leaders for such talks.

## The Carter Peace Initiative

Damascus has played host to a number of influential American policymakers, including a Rand Corporation delegation led by former National Security Advisor (to President Jimmy Carter) Zbigniew Brzezinski, earlier this year. More significant, was the April visit, by former President Carter himself, who met with Syrian President Assad and leaders of the Palestinian

Hamas movement. Carter's peace initiative (see *EIR*, May 2, 2008), praised by LaRouche as an important contribution to the war-avoidance effort, highlighted Syria's potential role, as key to resolving all the conflicts in the region, especially in the context of a Syrian-Israel peace process.

The impotence of the Bush Administration's policy was highlighted, when Bush's appearance at Israel's 60th anniversary celebrations, was welcomed by a Grad Katyusha rocket fired from Gaza into the middle of Ashkelon, over nine miles away. Ninety people were injured, four seriously. For the Israelis who were wounded in the attack, Bush's promise to eternally defend Israel rang hollow.

While the British-orchestrated attempt to blow up Lebanon has been aborted, British intentions have not. The Saudi-backed *Al Hayat* newspaper has published threats by leaders of the terrorist group Fatah al-Islami, of revenge on those "bowing the heads of the Sunni in Beirut," with "bloodshed." *EIR* has documented (see the June 22, 2007 issue, "Who or What Is Fatah al-Islami") that this group is financed out of Saudi Arabia and is comprised mostly of non-Lebanese. Fatah al-Islami, which is linked to Saab Hariri, was activated last year, to launch attacks against Hezbollah. But the operation backfired when the group, basing itself in a Palestinian refugee camp in the north of the country, carried out attacks against the Lebanese Army. The conflict lasted several weeks, left 169 soldiers dead, and further consolidated strategic cooperation between the Lebanese Army and Hezbollah, a cooperation that proved key, this month, in foiling London's plans to blow up the entire region, as part of its global "Hundred Years War" drive.