# ‘Spider web’ theory unravels

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 30.09.2024

On May 26, 2000, during victory celebrations in Bint Jbeil following the IDF’s withdrawal from Lebanon, Hezbollah’s leader Hassan Nasrallah declared: “This Israel, with its nuclear weapons and most advanced warplanes in the region, I swear by Allah, is actually weaker than a spider’s web… Israeli society is war-weary and lacks the resilience to endure a bloody conflict or suffer casualties. Israel may appear strong from the outside, but it’s easily destroyed and defeated.”

These remarks, dubbed the “Spider Web Speech,” were long considered – even beyond Israel’s enemies – to reveal genuine trends in Israeli society. At the time, Nasrallah was viewed as someone who could read Israel like an open book. He clung to this belief even after the Second Lebanon War. The internal strife that plagued Israel throughout 2023 only reinforced his conviction that his prediction was coming true.

However, the past year, particularly its final weeks, is forcing Israel’s adversaries, and others, to reassess their fundamental assumptions about the country. They’re confronted with Israel’s unexpected stamina in a prolonged, multi-front war and its willingness to take bold, calculated risks. They failed to grasp the profound impact of Oct. 7 and the seismic shift it triggered in Israeli thinking and behavior.

This ongoing conflict is being closely watched not only by Iran and its proxy militias but also by those suffering under their oppression. It presents an opportunity for Lebanese power brokers to break free from Hezbollah’s suffocating influence. US presidential candidates, the leaders of Russia and China, and heads of state still formulating their stance towards Israel – be it partnership or rivalry – are all keenly observing.

The dust has yet to settle over the Dahieh district of Beirut. Hezbollah remains disoriented, struggling to chart its course. Tehran debates the extent of its involvement in any response. The world anxiously watches for signs of escalation into all-out war. Meanwhile, Israel experiences moments of resolve tempered with readiness for various scenarios – but certainly not complacency. Israel’s sustained military actions clearly demonstrate its determination to effect fundamental change, not merely settle for a symbolic victory.

Ironically, Israel may come to miss Nasrallah, as he can no longer face his followers and admit, “I was wrong.” His name joins the long list of terrorist leaders who bought into the flawed “spider web” theory. Their demise stands as a testament to its failure.

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