

America's Story with Iran and its Hezb in Lebanon

(Translated)

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Ustadh Ahmed Al-Qasas – Lebanon

What is happening in Lebanon? Who decided the ongoing war there? Who is directing it? Has the United States really decided to eliminate Iran's Hezb there?

Also, when Hezbollah was subjected to a shocking attack, with thousands of pager and communication devices, in the hands of its members, being blown up, and its Secretary-General assassinated days later, along with most of its senior leaders, questions arose: Who was the perpetrator? Was it the Jewish entity? Or was this an act of a larger scale than the entity itself?

If this decision was too large for the Jewish entity to take, then all that remains is that the United States took the decision, whether it was the direct perpetrator or the acted through the Jewish entity itself. Then came the widespread destruction of villages in southern Lebanon, the Bekaa Valley, and the southern suburbs of Beirut, with clear American support, to remove all doubt that a massive American decision was behind what was happening, with an obvious goal: to deliver a severe, perhaps even devastating, blow to the Hezb, targeting its organizational structure by killing its top leaders and military commanders from the first and second ranks and below, as well as destroying as much of its military stockpiles and strategic weapons as possible.

It also aims to pressure and strangle the Hezb through the widespread destruction of its sectarian communities' villages, cities, and other facilities. This dangerous decision to destroy the Hezb's structure and strangle it is an American decision, which the occupying entity was authorized to implement on behalf of America, and also on its own behalf, as it has the greatest interest in eliminating the military force that has always posed a threat to its security, and has been a threat to it since the 1990s, and up until the war of destruction that began the day after the Al-Aqsa Flood invasion in October of 2023, in addition to Iran's competition with the Jewish entity for influence in the Arab ash-Sham region.

Now, what is behind this US decision, which surprised many stakeholders and observers, after years of relying on the Hezb as a key player in Lebanese domestic politics, and even regional politics? Why has it decided to strike the Hezb with this harsh blow now? And what is its goal? Is it to eliminate the Hezb completely? Or merely end its military role? Has it decided to end its hegemony over most of Lebanon's political power? And for whose benefit? And why?

The answers to this question will shape the political landscape and clarify the reality of what is currently happening in Lebanon. Let us begin by providing an overview of the Hezb's history in Lebanon and the nature of the role it has played, leading up to the current situation.

The Hezb of Iran emerged in the early 1980s, a few years after the establishment of Khomeini's state in Iran. Its emergence simultaneously coincided with the massive invasion of Lebanon by the Jewish occupying army in 1982. After penetrating Lebanese territory, reaching the capital, Beirut, and deep into the mountains and the Bekaa Valley, the Hezb returned to settle in the southern lands, which had become an arena of military resistance to the occupation. Various forces from the political and sectarian components participated in this resistance, before the Hezb later eliminated all these forces and assumed the mantle of the resistance force alone.

The Hezb's initial emergence occurred in those volatile circumstances, eluding American control. The Hezb's leadership was assumed by individuals characterized by sincerity and a desire for Jihad. One of their earliest acts was the 1983 bombing that killed hundreds of soldiers from the international forces that had landed in Lebanon following the invasion of the Jewish entity's army, primarily the US Marines. The perpetrators claimed responsibility for these bombings in the name of "Islamic Jihad." The Syrian regime soon subjugated the Hezb, in collusion with the Iranian regime, and removed its first Secretary-General, Sheikh Subhi al-Tufayli, along with its sincere leaders who had exercised free will.

Iran then assigned its Hezb's military decisions to Hafez al-Assad, whose forces controlled a large part of Lebanon, to regulate the pace of its military operations, in accordance with his policy, which in turn complemented American policy in the region. During that period, the Hezb played no role in Lebanese domestic politics or in the official government, which, since 1990, had been under the complete guardianship of the Syrian regime. The Hezb's activities were limited to resistance activities, and this resistance achieved remarkable success in 2000 by forcing the occupation forces to withdraw their forces beyond the Lebanese border. Of course, this achievement was not outside the framework of American policy. Instead, it was naturally included within it, as it was not US policy for the Jewish occupation forces to remain in Lebanon. UN Security Council Resolution 425, issued in 1978, required the withdrawal of the occupation forces from all Lebanese territory.

Several years later, pivotal events in Lebanon pushed the Hezb to the forefront of political activity. In 2005, while the United States was mired in the Iraqi quagmire, a plan to end the Bashar regime's hegemony over Lebanon was being hatched in Lebanon. It was concocted by former Prime Minister Rafique Hariri, his friend, French President Jacques Chirac, his comrade, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, and Lebanese leaders, most notably Druze leader Walid Jumblatt.

Despite the Bashar regime's and its ally, Hezbollah, attempting to thwart this plan by assassinating Hariri, the Syrian army was forced to withdraw in April of that year. Hariri's assassination had the opposite effect, provoking the majority of Lebanese, particularly Sunnis, with tens of thousands gathering in massive demonstrations in downtown Beirut on March 14, to protest the assassination. This embarrassed America, which instructed Bashar to withdraw his forces from Lebanon. This propelled Hezbollah to the forefront of Lebanese politics.

At the time, America was mired in the quagmire of Iraq following its invasion, and amidst the alliance of other major powers against it, and found Lebanon slipping from its grasp in favour of European influence, America, in agreement with Iran, pushed its Hezb to enter power. This was not to hand Lebanon over to Iran. Instead, it was to create a balance with the powers cooperating with Europe, and prevent them from monopolizing Lebanon until they made their final decision. Since then, what is known as the "March 8 Alliance" emerged, led by Hezb's party, versus the "March 14 Alliance," led by the head of the Future Movement, Saad Hariri, son of Rafik Hariri. Lebanon remained captive to this balance and conflict between the two alliances until 2016, when the March 14 Alliance fell apart and actual power in Lebanon fell to the Hezb and its allies.

In 2015, after years of Iran providing invaluable services to America, most notably Iran's significant contribution to suppressing the popular revolution in Syria and supporting the Assad regime, and at a time when America was deciding to reduce its burden in the region to focus on confronting China in the Far East, the Democratic Obama administration reached a nuclear agreement with Iran, as part of a deal that included a number of contentious issues between the two countries. One of the consequences of this understanding was that Obama agreed to delegate power in Lebanon to Iran's Hezb. America then instructed Future

Movement leader Saad Hariri, who held the largest bloc in parliament at the time, and was considered the leader of Lebanon's Sunnis, to agree to the election of Michel Aoun, an ally of Iran's Hezb, as president of the republic, after nearly two and a half years of the position being vacant. He was elected in 2016.

Not only did the Hezb assume the presidency, but Hariri also made a concession to the Hezb by agreeing to amend the electoral law. The elections resulted in the Hezb and its allies winning an absolute majority in parliament in 2018, while the Sunni-affiliated Future Movement bloc significantly declined in size and influence. Some Iranian officials declared at the time that Iran's empire had reached the shores of the Mediterranean. Indeed, the Hezb's euphoria after these elections reached its peak, as it felt it had become the undisputed power broker in Lebanon, surpassing all other political forces, along with its possession of a military force comparable to the official Lebanese Armed Forces. The Hezb had long leveraged this power to confront anyone who posed a threat to its interests and influence, in any way. However, the Hezb's dominance of official power was contingent on the durability of the alliance on which it relied. The power the Hezb held was based in three factions: one represented by the Hezb itself, the second by Michel Aoun's faction, and the third by Saad Hariri's faction. If one of these factions were broken, the coalition would collapse, and the Hezb's hold on power would collapse, or at least its grip would loosen. This is what actually happened later, specifically in 2019.

A long time passed after this understanding between the Iranians and the Obama administration before Trump took office in early 2017, reversing the understandings achieved by his predecessor with Iran. Trump immediately unilaterally withdrew from the nuclear agreement and many of its provisions, re-tightened the economic blockade against Iran, and even humiliated it by assassinating the head of its military axis in the region, Qassem Soleimani in 2020. As for Lebanon, the first signs of Trump's reversal of this understanding came when he rushed to reap the harvest prematurely, instructing Saudi Arabia's ruler, Bin Salman, to detain Lebanese Prime Minister, Saad Hariri, and force him to submit his resignation via a video message from Riyadh, in his haste to break Tehran's hold on Lebanon. It was clear that Trump took this step without coordination with American constitutional institutions, the deep state, or even his then-Secretary of State. International pressure, spearheaded by France, led to Hariri's release, his retraction of his request to resign, and his continued tenure in office for two more years, before resigning at the behest of the Trump administration itself.

In 2019, after signs of a financial collapse appeared in Lebanon. France, as usual, called for an international conference to support Lebanon financially, under the title of the CEDRE (Conférence économique pour le développement et la réforme avec les entreprises (Conference for economic development and reform with the private sector). The conference raised approximately \$12 billion to be injected into the Lebanese economy to prevent its collapse. However, the United States pressured donor countries to postpone disbursing their voluntary contributions until Lebanon took serious measures to combat the corruption that enables thieves in power to plunder these funds. Naturally, withholding these funds led to the financial collapse that America wanted for Lebanon in order to put an end to the power of Iran's party. The early signs of a financial collapse in Lebanon led to massive protests in all major cities, blocking international roads in what resembled a popular revolution. This created the conditions that prompted Hariri to resign from his government, under the pretext of complying with the will of the people.

The Shiah duo, Nasrallah and Berri, as well as their ally Michel Aoun, were unable to conceal their deep anger and confusion at the sudden resignation of their ally, Saad Hariri, who had been a key pillar of their era. All their attempts to persuade Hariri to reverse his resignation failed, and the alliance upon which the party had relied to seize power in Lebanon unravelled. The resignation of Hariri's government exacerbated the financial

collapse to the point that the Lebanese pound lost 95% of its value. Lebanon plunged into political, economic, and security chaos as demonstrations and protests intensified, often marked by significant violence, resulting in scores of deaths and injuries. The American group immediately began promoting the nomination of a neutral prime minister for a government composed of technocratic ministers, unaffiliated with any of Lebanon's influential political movements. Then, after the end of President Michel Aoun's term in early November 2022, and Parliament's inability to elect a new president due to the new balance within it, resulting from the Future Movement's withdrawal from its alliance with Hezbollah and the Aounist movement, the United States instructed opposition MPs to call for the election of a neutral president. The Army Commander General, Joseph Khalil Aoun, was, and remains, the most prominent and serious candidate. However, Iran's Hezb remained committed to its candidate, Suleiman Franjeh, until the Hezb received that devastating strike at its head last September. More than two years have passed since Lebanon was without a president, and it is run by a caretaker government, that resigned about two and a half years ago. All these circumstances rendered the Lebanese entity a tattered rag. Yet, Hezbollah showed no flexibility in giving up its authority, hoping for a deal between Washington and Tehran that would maintain its upper hand. The situation worsened further with the Al-Aqsa Flood operation in Gaza on October 7 of last year, forcing Hezbollah to declare what it called a "war of support." This war neither enriched nor spared the people of Gaza from the crimes of the Jewish occupying entity. Its sole purpose was to maintain Tehran and its Lebanese Hezb's leadership of the Axis of Resistance. The arrogance of Iran and its Hezb suggested to them that the Jewish entity would not add a war with the Axis to its war in Gaza, given the Axis's balance of terror and deterrence with the Jewish entity.

However, Iran and its Hezb's position grew increasingly precarious as the regime's assassinations of their military leaders in Lebanon, Syria, and Iran itself escalated, without the Axis daring to mount an appropriate response. This was followed by the major shock between September 17th and 27th, the ten days that witnessed the bombing of thousands of Hezbollah members carrying pagers and walkie-talkies, followed by the assassination of the party's Secretary-General, Hassan Nasrallah. Neither Iran nor its Hezb would have imagined that America, with its democratic leadership, would take this monumental decision and deliver a devastating blow to the Hezb's power in Lebanon.

This devastating, massive strike, followed by a devastating war that razed entire Shiah villages to the ground, and targeted all of the Hezb's leaders for elimination, is proof that the decision is far bigger than the occupying entity itself. America's supportive stance in this ferocious war is confirmation that it is the state actor that decided to break the back of the Hezb, to which it had handed power in Lebanon only a few years earlier. It has once again reverted to the demands it had been putting forward since the fall of the Hariri government in 2019, and the presidential vacuum in 2022: the election of a president, and the appointment of a prime minister of its own choosing, and the formation of a government of technocratic ministers, with no connection to the Lebanese political environment. This time, however, **it is** under the scorching heat of destruction, killing, and displacement, in addition to efforts to undermine the Hezb's military capabilities and remove its threat from the Jewish entity on the border with occupied Palestine.

The most important question now is: What made the United States, even after Trump's defeat in 2020, and the Democratic Party's return to the White House, continue working to eliminate Iran's Hezb in Lebanon, after handing it over hand-to-hand, and even decide to eliminate its military power and undermine its political structure by killing all its leaders? The answer lies in several political factors, the most important of which are the following:

1. Iranian hegemony in the region has expanded to the point of becoming a regional empire, with its influence extending into Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Gaza, and Yemen. This has heightened the arrogance of the region's revolutionary hawks, making them ready to rebel

against many American decisions in the region, most notably Soleimani, whose assassination came at the beginning of 2020. It is therefore incumbent upon the United States to reduce Iranian influence and restore it to its natural level, as determined by it. One might ask: Didn't the United States bring them this vast influence in the region? The answer is: Yes, it did. However, this was not part of a prior strategic plan to establish a vast empire for Iran in the region. It is not within the rationale of colonialist powers to establish regional empires that possess the capabilities to compete with and oppose them, or at least outmanoeuvre them, in their areas of influence. However, the repeated instances of failure, and factors of necessity in the region, have forced the United States to delegate many of its tasks to Iran. America failed in Iraq after the 2003 invasion, and the world's powers rallied against it. This failure served to increase Iranian influence there. It failed to maintain Lebanon under the guardianship of its agent, Bashar, in 2005, so it sought Iran's help against the pro-European forces. It failed to crush the Syrian revolution between 2011 and 2013, so it sought help from Iran and then Russia.

These years represented an opportunity for Tehran to expand its influence in the region and strengthen its military power. In the eyes of the Americans, this extensive reliance on Iran was a necessary and temporary phase dictated by those circumstances. When those circumstances ceased, the former state was obliged to reduce its influence and trim the wings it had extended across the region.

2. The American decision to reduce Iran's influence was not intended to return to the regional order that prevailed before this expansion, that is, the order established by Britain and its ally France after World War I, based on the Sykes-Picot agreement and its sister agreements. Instead, its goal was to complete the project begun by the neoconservatives in 2003 when they occupied Iraq and began a plan to divide it federally into sectarian, denominational, or ethnic cantons. They were planning to occupy more countries in the region to implement the same scenario, but they failed at the time due to the entire world rallying against them. They sank into the Iraqi quagmire, and their control over Lebanon was weakened in 2005. Then came the Arab revolution at the end of 2010, which spread to Syria in March 2011, becoming their primary concern. However, the division that Syria has become between local, regional, and international powers, along with the deliberate displacement of millions of its Muslim majority, has tempted the United States to return to its partition project once again. Ash-Sham, its Syria, along with Iraq, is now ripe, in the eyes of the Americans, for an American restructuring on the ruins of the Sykes-Picot formula, by dividing its countries along ethnic, national, sectarian, and religious lines, under titles such as federalism or administrative decentralization. This comes after the United States and its allies transformed the Sunni Arab majority into a minority like all other minorities there.

3- The United States reversed its decision to partially withdraw from the region, devoting itself to China, and strengthening its influence in the Far East. After attempting to engage China in a Cold War with itself and its allies, and failing to persuade Russia to join this project, it sought to de-escalate relations with China and ease tensions between them. The Biden administration then decided to discipline Russia by involving it in the Ukrainian war and undermining its relationship with Europe. Undermining this relationship led to Europe being involved in a gas shortage crisis, as Russia was the primary, if almost sole, source of gas supply to Europe. The United States was keen to secure an alternative source of Russian gas for Europe to sustain its independence from Russia and, consequently, to isolate and weaken Russia economically. So, what is the alternative source of gas for Europe? It is the Eastern Mediterranean. Now, this brings us to the next point.

4- For years, the Eastern Mediterranean region, the coasts of Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine have begun to acquire a new meaning in the eyes of major powers, led by the United States. In addition to these countries being adjacent to the Jewish occupying entity, which makes them strategically dangerous, and in addition to their important commercial

position as the gateway to Western Asia, overlooking the Mediterranean and Europe, they have also, in recent years, become among the countries with the largest gas reserves. Their perception has become similar to that of the oil-rich Gulf states, and they have even surpassed those countries due to their proximity to the European continent, a continent in dire need of an alternative source of Russian gas, which has been cut off since the outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2022.

The United States has been actively pursuing the demarcation of the maritime borders between Lebanon and the occupying entity to secure the flow of gas from the Karish field, which is close to Lebanese territorial waters. Indeed, gas began flowing immediately after the Lebanese authorities signed this treacherous agreement, which was approved by Iran's Hezb and followed indirect negotiations with it. However, this field only meets a small portion of the European market's gas needs. Europe is looking forward to establishing more gas extraction platforms in the Eastern Mediterranean, including Lebanon. The French company Total, along with other partners, began exploring for gas off Lebanon's southern coast under contract with the government dominated by Iran's Hezb. However, the United States interrupted the process by pressuring Total to withdraw, claiming that the exploration had not resulted in any gas discoveries. America does not want Lebanon, which is controlled by Iran's Hezb, to achieve this gain. Instead, it wants to further weaken and pressure the Lebanese entity, until it seizes its authority and changes its system to bring it under its direct control. It can then, through an agent authority, oversee gas extraction, award contracts to companies, and distribute shares. This would make it the one controlling the supply of gas to Europe after this had been a privilege of Russia for decades.

This is the reality of what is happening in the region. The war raging in Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon for more than a year is merely the continuation of a devilish plan whose implementation attempts began in the early 21st century. The United States, with both its Republican and Democratic wings, now believes that the time has come to complete this plan and declare a "New Middle East", which, since the invasion of Iraq, has been said to be sketched in blood. These criminal wars and devilish plans that America is implementing in our countries in collusion with its international, regional, and local allies will continue to shed our blood, destroy our cities, displace millions of us, violate our honour, and plunder our wealth unless the Ummah rises up in an aware uprising to free itself from the grip they have tightened around our necks. This grip is nothing but the tyrannical and mercenary regimes that have ruled our lands and transformed them into huge open prison camps for decades. This is so that we may establish on its ruins a state that belongs to us and to our Deen, Islam, to which we belong. A state that upholds the sovereignty of Shariah, and embodies the authority that Shariah has entrusted to us by appointing an Imam to whom we pledge Bayah allegiance to hear and obey, so that our entity, identity, personality, decision, and the fortress in which we take refuge, are all restored to us.

The Messenger of Allah (saw) said, «إِنَّمَا الْإِمَامُ جُنَّةٌ، يُقَاتِلُ مِنْ وَرَائِهِ وَيُنْتَقَى بِهِ» **“The Imam is a shield, behind whom Muslims fights and by whom Muslims seek protection.”**