

# Israel Strikes Syria to Keep the USA in the Levant 20 Years After the Unconditional Withdrawal From Lebanon - What Has Been Achieved?

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa, USA](#)

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*Following its [defeat](#) in the second war on Lebanon, Israel discovered that its only way to suppress Hezbollah would be to close the supply line between Lebanon and Syria. That could only be achieved by removing **President Bashar al-Assad** from power, disrupting the "[Axis of the Resistance](#)" that extends from Tehran to Baghdad, Damascus, Beirut and Gaza. But Israel and the [US](#), supported by [Saudi Arabia](#), Qatar, the Emirates, Turkey, [Europe](#) and many [other countries](#) all failed to achieve their goal of making Syria a failed state. President Assad called upon his allies whose own national security was in jeopardy. If Syria were to fall, jihadists of al-Qaeda and the "Islamic State" would be fighting in the streets of Beirut, Baghdad and Tehran. The jihadists would also be powerful enough to remove Russia from its Syrian naval base and to export the war beyond the Levant's borders. So, Israel and the US failed to destroy Syria and to corner Hezbollah. On the contrary, Hezbollah has become stronger than ever. The Resistance has reaped the harvest of its victory. It has become the decision-maker with key institutions in Lebanon.*

Israel sought to destroy Hezbollah because it is an obstacle to Israel's expansionist plans in Lebanon, namely to steal Lebanon's water and some of its territories, to force a peace deal of unconditional surrender, to break Lebanon's alliance with Iran and deprive Tehran of its strongest ally in the Middle East. For the last forty years, since the victory of the "Islamic Republic" in 1979 led by Imam Ruhollah Khomeini which unseated the US proxy ruler, the Shah of Iran, Washington has imposed sanctions, because Iran has refused to submit to US power and because it supports its allies in the Middle East, mainly Palestine, Lebanon and Syria, to stand against Israel.

In 2006, the US was [involved](#) in the planning of Israel's war on Lebanon. At the 2006 G8 Summit, **President George W. Bush** described the relationship between Hezbollah, Iran and Syria as one of the root causes of "instability": "*The World must deal with Hezbollah, with Syria, and continue to work to isolate Iran.*" (Roshandel J. & Lean C.N. (2011) [Iran, Israel and the United States](#), ABC-CLIO, CA, p. 109).

US **Secretary Condoleezza Rice** refused to mediate a ceasefire unless "[the conditions are conducive](#)", thinking Israel would win the war. Hezbollah was not only left on its own to face the US and Israel, but Lebanese US-Saudi proxies (Prime Minister Fouad Siniora and Druse leader Walid Jumblat) supported the position of the US and Israel, and argued that there was "no point in a ceasefire." (Wilkins H. (2013). [The Making Of Lebanese Foreign Policy: understanding the 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War](#), Routledge, Introduction).

When Israel failed to achieve its objectives, the US [agreed](#) to mediate an end to the war. Negotiations concentrated on ceasing all hostilities (not a ceasefire) between the two countries. Tel Aviv and Washington failed to obtain the deployment of United Nations Forces in Lebanon, UNIFIL, on the borders with Syria. The US sought to accommodate Israel in its attempt to gain by negotiation what it failed to achieve using its huge war machine in 33 days of the war in 2006. "Israel's objective was never realistic", [said](#) Israeli **Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni**.

When its attempt to control the Lebanese-Syrian borders failed after its defeat in the 2006 war, Israel had one remaining option with which to counter Hezbollah: [close the road via Damascus](#) and find a way to curb Hezbollah's supply line. This required war on Syria.

Since confronting Hezbollah face-face was no longer an option, Syria became the next target in the campaign to isolate Iran, as President Bush declared. The motives behind the war in Syria have been erroneously described by many researchers and analysts around the globe, who have depicted the war as the outcome of an "Arab Spring" against a dictatorial regime. Yet Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and other Gulf countries have been ruled by [dictatorships](#) and the same family members for decades and indeed are considered by the west as its closest- oil-rich- partners!

Actually, the war on Syria started just after the al-Qaeda 9/11 attack on the US. Four-star US general **Wesley Clark** [disclosed](#) Washington's plan as he learned of it in the days after 9/11: "occupy Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and finish with Iran." Just a few months after the US invasion of Iraq, US **Secretary of State Colin Powell** visited **President Bashar al-Assad** and warned him that the US would [invade Syria](#) if he refused to interrupt his support for the anti-Israel organisations, Hezbollah and the Palestinian groups: the Syrian president would share the same fate as the Iraqi **President Saddam Hussein**.

The 2003 invasion of Iraq was far from being a piece of cake. The US occupation generated new resistance among both Sunni and the Shia. This encouraged President Assad to rebuff the US threat, unaware of what the future held for Syria. [Dozens of states](#), including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, Turkey, the Emirates, Europe and the US all supported a regime change operation via Takfiri proxies. But the consequences of destabilising Syria gave a unique opportunity for al-Qaeda to blossom in Syria and a more lethal group emerged, the "Islamic State" ISIS. President Assad called upon his few allies, Iran, Russia and Hezbollah, to stand against the massive coalition gathered to create this failed state in Syria. The Syrian war which ensued offered unprecedented experience to the Syrian army, gave birth to a new Syrian resistance and offered unique warfare knowledge to Hezbollah, with a [base](#) for Iran that Tehran could never before have dreamed of having in the Levant.

Hezbollah had forced unconditional Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in the year 2000 and challenged all those Israeli-US plans for a "new Middle East" after the second Israeli war on Lebanon in 2006. And the long nine years of war in Syria Hezbollah forced Hezbollah to refine its tactics and armaments and provided Hezbollah with an unprecedented victory. Just as Israel had boosted the creation of Hezbollah, it taught this quasi-state actor all [manner of skills](#) and forced it to acquire more training and weapons to repel wars and dismantle the enemy's objectives. Israel's former Chief of Staff and Prime Ministerial candidate Benny Gantz believed that Hezbollah had become one of the strongest irregular-organised armies in the Middle East, capable of imposing its rules of engagement and its "balance of

deterrence” on the strongest classical army in the Middle East.

## Syria, South Homs: A Warehouse Explosion's (1 May 2020) Aftermath



“Show me four or five states with more firepower than Hezbollah: they are the US, China, Russia, Israel, France, & the UK,” Gantz [said](#) when speaking at the 2014 Herzliya Conference.

That was Israel’s assessment in 2014. Six years later, last February, Israel’s minister of defence **Naftali Bennet** [said](#):

“For every convoy you hit, you miss five convoys and slowly Hezbollah accumulates the critical mass of rockets [missiles] that threaten us.”

Hezbollah has become stronger than many armies in the Middle East. Hezbollah is no longer the organisation that clashes with the Israelis on a hill or site or ambushes a patrol behind an alley. Rather, in Syria and Iraq, it has successfully experienced different warfare scenarios. It has acquired many advanced weapons and became a strategic threat to Israel if it ever contemplated waging outright war on Lebanon and Syria.

Israel set as [its goal](#) bringing down Assad in Syria and separating Syria from the “Axis of Resistance.” Israeli defence minister Moshe Ya’alon [said](#) that “Israel prefers ISIS on its borders over Assad.” But Israel, America, Europe, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the Emirates have lost the war. Israel has now chosen to maintain the conflict because it fears that America would let go. This is why Israel is hitting hundreds of targets in Syria, -most of the time without no strategic value whatsoever.

Sources in the “Axis of Resistance” in Syria say that

“Israel targeted the Iranian HQ at Damascus airport (a building with green glass where Israel destroyed two floors). The following day, Iran restored it and it is back in operation. Israel has repeatedly targeted warehouses with Iranian weapons but also an abandoned training centre in the Kiswa area that has

been empty for years. Their aim is to signal to the US that Israel is threatened and that the departure of the US forces would constitute a threat to Israel's national security. It is indeed too late for Israeli jets to make any difference to Syria's capabilities. Iran is not exporting weapons but manufacturing them. If it took Israel 9 years and 300 bombing raids to destroy Iranian warehouses in Syria, it took Iran only one year to refill and equip the Syrian army with much more sophisticated precision missiles- and all strategic missiles are in underground warehouses."

Iran has only a few hundred advisers and officers in Syria, but it leads some tens of thousands of allies from Lebanon, Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and auxiliary Syrian forces that resemble irregular-organised military formations.

In Syria, Hezbollah was able to operate in an area ten times the size of Lebanon, which gave it a unique experience any army in the world would have wished to have. It was also subjected to [attacks by a NATO member](#), Turkey, which used armed drones on the battlefield. That provided Hezbollah with a wealth of experience and taught them lessons that have become integrated into curricula at military schools and colleges in Iran with Hezbollah and their allies.

President Assad does not say that it is time for his allies (especially Hezbollah) to leave Syria. Rather, he says - according to this source - that **"Syria has a debt to Hezbollah. Wherever Hezbollah wants to be, it will be also Syria's wishes."** America and Israel created an unbreakable alliance between Syria, Iran and Hezbollah.

In Lebanon, Hezbollah has started to harvest its gains. Hezbollah was able to impose the name of the President of the Republic, General Michel Aoun, despite repeated opposition from Saudi Arabia and the US, the losers in the Syrian war. Lebanon remained without a president for several months until General Aoun assumed the presidency.

Hezbollah rejected multiple offers from different countries by giving the Presidency of the Parliament to anyone other than President Nabih Berri, leader of the Amal movement, who has been on this throne for decades. Hezbollah holds the real power - though not all of it - in Lebanon to call for the appointment of the President of the Republic and the Speaker of the Parliament.



As for the premiership, it cannot be assumed without Hezbollah's approval of the candidate. Hezbollah has sufficient political weight within the House of Representatives and the Presidency of the Republic to nominate or accept the nomination or direct the appointing of a prime minister. Former prime minister Saad Hariri is making sure his daily friendly



contacts with Hezbollah are maintained because he would very much like to return to power. Hariri knows that the door to the premiership goes through one gate: Hezbollah.

This does not mean that Hezbollah wants to take control of Lebanon as a whole. Hezbollah leaders are aware that the Druse leader Kamal Jumblatt, Sunni leader Rafic Hariri, the Maronite Christian leader Bashir Gemayel and the Palestinians have all failed in controlling Lebanon and seizing the country. Hezbollah does not want to succumb to the same mistakes and doesn't wish to control all of Lebanon. This means that the counter influence of other countries exists and is well-rooted in Lebanon. For example, the US ambassador in Beirut is threatening the Lebanese government with a warning not to remove the Central Bank Governor Riad Salama. Also, the US removed a Lebanese-Israeli agent, Amer Al-Fakhouri, via a plane which landed him at the US embassy [without taking into consideration](#) Lebanese sovereignty. The US supports the Lebanese army and internal security forces to maintain its dominance over certain key figures.

Syria has given the Secretary-General of Hezbollah, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, powers in Lebanon that he would not have obtained without the intervention of Israel and the allies in Syria. Hezbollah has managed to preserve its military pipeline via Syria by defeating the Takfiris (al-Qaeda and ISIS) and has prevented them from establishing an "Islamic emirate" in Lebanon and Syria.

Hezbollah's victory comes at a price: thousands of martyrs and thousands of wounded. However, the resulting harvest is so abundant and strategic that the Lebanese Shiites now enjoy more power in Lebanon and Bilad al-Sham than they have since the year 661 when the fourth caliphate's Imam Ali bin Abi Talib was killed.

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