



Iran's Strategic Approach towards the Israel-Hezbollah Conflict

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Abstract

The Middle East, a Muslim majority region in the Asian continent, has remained a centre for territorial and extraterritorial powers to secure their strategic interests significantly to access oil reserves in the region. Israel and the United States are two examples respectively. In the wake of securing strategic interests, these states tried to interfere the polity of the Muslim states that infuriated most of the Muslim leaders to such an extent that they had to go for aggressive measures to negate the influence of these interest-seekers. Iran has been leading the Muslim states in the region and has strived hard for integrating Muslim leadership. During this process of regional integration, a special focus has been paid to deal Israel-an important strategic ally of the US in the region and permanent threat for the neighbouring Muslim states. The current circumstances, causes and effects are the product of Arab-Israel wars and most of these have been cashed in by Iran for the security of its interests in the region. Iran has facilitated the Muslim states, particularly Lebanon, to counter the Israeli strategies. It has erected *Hezbollah*-the party of God- in Lebanon whose effective presence has always restricted Israel from advancing to the region. Since its inception in 1985, Iranian backed *Hezbollah* has opposed the Israeli motives in the Middle East. Ideological similarities between Iran and *Hezbollah* have never allowed Israel to manipulate the region. *Hezbollah* has been in a war-like situation with Israel and has fought a couple of wars which have not only guaranteed a

guard for *Hezbollah*'s campaign against Israel but also have paved the way for Iran to maintain hegemony in the region. This research has been conducted with a primary objective to analyse the Israel-*Hezbollah* conflict and the strategic approach of Iran towards the particular conflict.

Keywords: Israel, *Hezbollah*, Iran, the Middle East, Strategic Approach and *Jihad*.

Historical Perspective of the Conflict

The period of the late 1970 and the early 1980s is marked with great foment, enthusiasm and transition among the Shia community of southern Lebanon. After the disappearance of Sayyid Musa al-Sadar of Libya in August 1978, Amal-a Lebanon based 'movement of the deprived', began to expand into a political reform movement under the leadership of well-known lawyer Nabih Berri. At the same time, popular leaders of the Amal were highly influenced by the Iranian intellectuals such as Ali Shariati-a Paris trained modernist who urged the Muslims to avoid becoming 'humanoids' uncertainly emulating the West. As a true follower of Hazrat Imam Hussain (RA), the grandson of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Shariati became the model for the Iranian Revolution (Norton, 2007, p. 30). Accordingly, the Amal enjoyed cordial relations with Iraq as well. The summary execution of Iraq's Ayatollah Muhammad Baqir al- Sadar in April 1980 witnessed the young Lebanese holding the posters of Baqir featuring for outnumbered images of Ayatollah Khomeini. Anyhow, the Iranian revolutionaries had long been familiar with the Lebanese leaders including Mohsen Rafiqdost who was trained in Beqa'a Valley of Lebanon with the leaders of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). He had also served as a head of *Psadaran* or 'Revolutionary Guard'. That kind of familiarity among the Muslim leadership earned extraordinary enthusiasm for Yasser Arafat. But a tension began in 1981-82 between Arafat and the Syrian trained young Amalists forced the Amal even to ally with Israel to fight against the Palestinian guerrillas (Norton, 2007, p. 32).

The overall political scenario of the Middle East got changed when Israel invaded Lebanon on June 06, 1982. The purpose behind the invasion was to destroy PLO in the region as it had attempted the assassination of the Israeli ambassador to the United Kingdom,

Shlomo Argov, to break an eleven-month ceasefire. Secondly, Israel wanted to put in place a pliant government in Beirut that would enter into formal peace deals with the Jews. The Israeli government and the American policymakers ignored all the developments among the Shia Muslims of Lebanon and did not analyse the impact of this invasion on them that created conditions for the establishment and flourishing of Hezbollah (Norton, 2007, p. 33). After the particular invasion, the Hezbollah leadership strived for fracturing the ‘terrorist myth’. It capitalized the situation to devise policies for continuing and developing *Jihad*¹ against Israel.

Hezbollah emerged in this tense and precarious atmosphere and Iran helped found it in 1985 to fight the Israeli army (*The Economist*, August 29, 2019) Yet its leadership did never show an inclination to replace the government in Lebanon with an ‘Islamic Republic’. But, in the 1980s, the founding members of the organization started propagating Islam to resist the inroads of secularism. Instead, the top priority of Hezbollah was to conduct *Jihad* against the usurpers of Muslim territories-the Israelis and for that struggle it needed national backing which was thought to be more important ‘to soft-pedal the idea of the republic ruled by the Muslim religious law’. In this way, southern Lebanon began a campaign against Israel in 1985 “that would not be jeopardised by raising undue apprehension about the party’s radical ideology and the ultimate goal for Lebanon” (Harik, 2004, p. 19).

In the 1980s, Hezbollah was ferociously dangerous for the westerners in general and Israel in particular. Hezbollah officially disclosed the document of its establishment in 1985 and diverted all attention to the destruction of Israel and its western allies. Officials as well as the civilians were being haunted and kidnapped by the organization. State Department of the USA prohibited the use of passports for travelling to Lebanon until 1997 (Norton, 2007, p. 74) as Hezbollah’s kidnapping spree had made the country so dangerous for the west. The kidnapping of William Buckley-a CIA’s Beirut station chief, in 1984 and hijacking of TWA flight 847 from Athens to Rome in 1985 are two significant examples of aggression of Hezbollah towards the westerners. Later on, the

group was charged with killing and wounding of hundreds in Buenos Aires with a bombing at the Israeli Embassy and a centre for the Jewish culture. All these strategies were devised to force Israel to leave Lebanon. Norton has analysed that prevailing atmosphere in Lebanon and has suggested that “the hostage seizures were fully consistent with Hezbollah’ declared goal of expunging America from Lebanon, its citizens as well as its diplomatic presence” (Norton, 2007, p. 74).

“Israel is our enemy. This is an aggressive, illegal, and illegitimate entity, which has no future in our land. Its destiny is manifested in our motto: “Death to Israel”” (Totten, 2011, p. 38).

In the early 1990s, Hezbollah fighters received sophisticated training in Lebanon and Iran from Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS). In the late 1990s, and into 2000, Hezbollah entered many countries using visa-waiver, a process that was once suspended in the US. Through such tactics, Hezbollah fighters were accumulating wealth to get themselves ready to fight a full-fledged war against Israel in the days to come. And the later days witnessed a war in 2006. The war between Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) and the Lebanese organization Hezbollah did not allow them to sign peace agreements or to initiate a diplomatic process to avoid the conflicts in future. Instead, forces from both sides have been making preparations for the next war; the IDF planned a high-intensity military campaign to target southern Lebanon and the strategic locations inside Beirut. On the other hand, Hezbollah not only rearmed its forces but also raised the level of lethality of its weaponry and sent its militiamen for training in neighbouring Arab states to form quality ‘Special Forces’. Specifically, its rocket-strike force was trained enough to target the major urban areas in Israel (Samaan, 2014, p. 01).

In 2008, Hezbollah got involved in a conflict in Lebanon with its Sunni competitors that pushed the country into a civil war. A few months later, Israel’s southern front was challenged by rocket salvos that forced Israel to conduct “Operation CAST LEAD” in the Gaza Strip to destroy the military threat ‘emanating from

Hamas and other Palestinian factions'. Later on, Israel and Hezbollah both were confronted with major changes during 'Arab Spring' as far as distribution of power in the Middle East was concerned. The revolution in Egypt and the civil war in Syria changed the game plan for both competitors who kept on testing the endurance of respective regional strategies and alliances (Samaan, 2014, p. 02).

The western academia and media opine that Hezbollah's international terrorism campaign against Israel began with the assassination of its most senior commander Imad Mughaniyah in February 2008 in Damascus. Mughaniyah, with the Iranian support, served for Hezbollah for over two decades and directed the campaign of terror in Lebanon and all over the world just to target the Israelis, attributed his death to Israel. His assassination infuriated Nasrallah who swore publically to avenge the death of his right-hand man and warned Israel that it had to pay a heavy price for the killing (Scheitzer, 2012, p. 01). And indeed, though unsuccessful, Hezbollah traced and attacked the Israeli nationals in various states such as Bulgaria, Thailand, Turkey, Egypt, Azerbaijan and Cyprus. Iran stood with Hezbollah in this campaign and used its agents and local proxies in different states. In 2012, Iran attempted several attacks in Azerbaijan, Turkey, India, Thailand and Kenya. All the attacks were intercepted except one attack in New Delhi in which the wife of an Israeli diplomat was wounded (Scheitzer, 2012, p. 02). Now, Hezbollah and Israel have found a new playground in the shape of Syria. Each of them is trying to inflict defeat upon the other. With the beginning of the civil war in Syria, Hezbollah has sided with the government while Israel is sponsoring the rebel groups. The former is being supported by Iran and the latter is backed by the United States.

Iran's Strategic Approach

The recent theatre of war between Israel and Hezbollah is being driven by multiple identities that Hezbollah finds itself in. Two prime identities are worth mentioning here; first, Hezbollah is identified as a patriotic Shia Lebanese organization, second, it is a popular Shia organization aligned with the revolutionaries in Iran that supports Iran and vice versa. Akin to that, Hezbollah is a

pivotal component of Shia Islamist resistance axis across the Middle East that includes Iran, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon (Schweitzer & Orna, 2019, p. 02). For the particular integration of the Shia Muslims in the region, Hezbollah has become a multi-faceted and autonomous organization as well as a political movement which has deepened its influence in the Lebanese government system. At the same time, Hezbollah has shown some aggressive tactics to deal with Israel-an unbearable enemy in the region, to avoid a cultural invasion that has tagged it as a religious and cultural movement too. The spectrum of the slew of identities helps assessing the statements of its leader and activities of its *Jihadis*; sometimes Hezbollah seems standing with Iran to demonstrate loyalty and the organization is found to preserve its identity as “defender of Lebanon” on some other occasions. In any case, Hezbollah remains careful to preserve its independence, “even when dealing with Iran” (Schweitzer & Orna, 2019, p. 02). Arguably, since the Islamic Revolution (1979), Iran’s foreign policy has been driven by the revolutionaries who have aimed at reshaping the Middle East according to their ideological Image. Tehran has always been promoting the concept of Islamic Governance, opposed the state of Israel and asserted the regional hegemony while displacing the United States as the ‘dominant regional power’. For the past 40 years, Iran has strived for approaching these objectives through various clandestine operations despite of possessing conventional military power. It has efficiently utilized its “Resistance Network” of the partners, proxies and so-called terrorist factions including Hezbollah of Lebanon. In addition to that, Iran has employed a suite of deterrent capabilities ranging from ballistic missiles to the asymmetric naval platforms (McInnis, 2015, p. 02). Both Iran and Hezbollah are on the same page to counter Israel. These mutual concerns led them to create tension with Israel

When Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982, the tensions between Iran and Israel deepened. Strategic Iran dispatched 1500 IRGC advisers to Bekka Valley-Lebanon who mobilized, trained and equipped an underground militia that would evolve into Hezbollah until 1985 and it issued its first manifesto in the same year. The manifesto had

precisely echoed the language out of the Islamic Republic -Iran in the following words.

“Our primary assumption in our fight against Israel states that the Zionist entity is aggressive from its inception, and built on lands wrested from their owners, at the expense of the rights of the Muslim people. Therefore, our struggle will end only when this entity is obliterated. We recognize no treaty with it, no cease-fire, and no peace agreements, whether separate or consolidated” (Nada, 2020).

Hezbollah had increased its presence in Lebanon as a political party with Iranian aid and funding in 1992. It participated in the national elections and won 8 seats. This success of Hezbollah earned an important influence and access on the Mediterranean and far from its borders. With this encouragement, Hezbollah continued low-intensity war against Israel throughout 1990s. Resultantly, Israel voluntarily withdrew from southern Lebanon in May 2000 that demonstrated the first glorious victory for Hezbollah. The supreme leader of Iran-Ali Khomeini congratulated Hezbollah for being at the “frontline of the struggle of the Muslim world with the Zionists” (Nada, 2020)..

USIP Blog-January 21, 2020



Qods Force commander Qassem Soleimani, Hassan Nasrallah and Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in Tehran in 2000

In 2006, Israel and Hezbollah fought a 34-day war that cost destruction for both sides. Almost 1200 Lebanese and 170 Israelis

were killed until the war ended in a military draw. From 2011 to 2019, Iran provided Hezbollah with military and economic assistance to counter Israel in Syria (Nada, 2020). Particularly, the year 2018 experienced many developments concerning the Iranian interests in the Middle East when the civil war in Syria was touching the climax. Iran, accompanied by its regional and religious allies, caused an irreversible loss to the security of Israel and ensured the security of its interests. The involvement of the Iranian backed Hezbollah in the Syrian war and growing tension with Israel demonstrated that the organization would eventually cause a conflict that could spill over into Lebanon. It directly earned the criticism for Hezbollah for preferring the Syrian and Iranian interests over those of Lebanon (Schweitzer & David, 2018, p. 02). Iran launched military operations in Syria against the rebel forces that led to a direct conflict between Israel and the proxies of Iran. Even before that, Israeli attacks on the weapon shipments of Hezbollah in Syria had contributed to the conflict to a larger extent. This escalating conflict among Iran, Hezbollah and Israel on the Syrian theatre directed Hezbollah to adopt cognitive efforts to legitimize its presence in support of Assad regime and to counter the Israeli campaign to “uproot Iran”, Hezbollah and Shia bloc in Syria. Hassan Nasrallah did make a speech in June 2018 on International Jerusalem Day in which he showed an intention to further strengthen the Shia axis in Syria. He said that "even if the entire world unites to oust us from Syria, we will not leave before the Syrian leadership tells us we should" (Schweitzer & David, 2018, p. 02).

Furthermore, there are some Iranian strategic considerations which are supposed to upset the ‘balance of terror’ in the Middle East. They may include:

- (1) Iran’ entrenchment in Western Iraq and Syria and erecting a new military front in southwest Syria that has given a tough time to Israel along the line near Golan Heights. In response, Israel has attacked Hezbollah, Iranian targets and linked assets many times to escalate the pressure, but all in vain.

- (2) Since the beginning of the Khomeini rule in Iran, it has been advancing towards nuclear breakout capabilities that have restrained the US and the Israeli influence in the region to a greater extent. Iran has established some proxies to fight the ulterior motives of the Americans and the Israelis. Hezbollah is a prominent one among these; in case the US attacks Iran, Hezbollah will be ready to scarify and will be able to deter against such an action (Blanford & Assaf, 2020, p. 07).
- (3) The campaign of 'maximum pressure' against Iran has almost lost its importance since Trump's withdrawal from the nuclear deal of 2015. As an effect, Iran and its proxies, especially Hezbollah, are under extensive economic sanctions. Covid-19 has added fuel to the fire; Iran, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon are experiencing economic turmoil.
- (4) Newly emerged tensions between Iran and the US usually provide a pace to the soaring issues which adorn the stage for Lebanon-Syria-Israel war front in the region. Seizer of oil tankers, Hezbollah's attack on the US base in Iraq, the downing of the US unmanned aerial Vehicle, destruction of oil and gas infrastructure in Saudi Arab and prominently the assassination of the Iranian general Qasem Suleimani in January 2020 are all the principal factors to escalate the already existing tension in the region.
- (5) Promotion in the cooperation between Iran and Hezbollah, regarding an improvement in the missile system, is another threat to the national security of Israel and it has vowed to prevent it. "Iran's precision-guided missile programme which involves fitting of Hezbollah's existing unguided rockets with the guidance system that extends their range and improves their accuracy" (Blanford & Assaf, 2020, p. 07).

Recent Developments and the Iranian Concerns

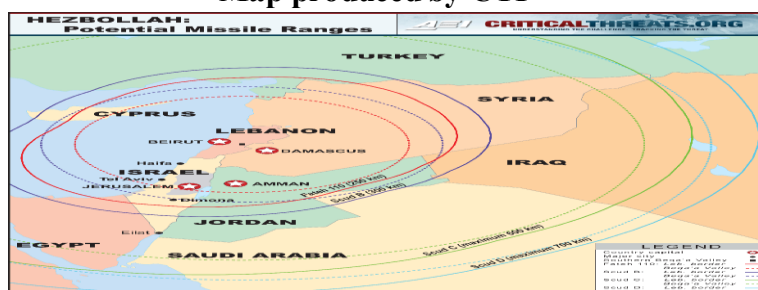
Iran has developed cordial relations with many substantial groups in the Middle East. All these groups fall on a spectrum in terms of the control that Tehran wielded over them. Hezbollah, a proxy group, is a prime example in this regard. Its leadership always exhibits the higher degrees of Iranian control and none of the other

affiliated groups can match this loyalty. Since its foundation, Hezbollah has shown unbelievable performance for achieving Iranian political and military objectives. It has intimidated or eliminated the opposition to increase Tehran's influence in the region (Smyth, Tim & Owen, 2017, p. 08). Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, Hezbollah-Iran alliance has become stronger. Iran has facilitated Hezbollah in its conflict with Israel and in return, Hezbollah has not allowed the opposite forces like Israel to pose a threat to the Iranian interests. During the Lebanon-Israel war of 2006, Iran stood with Hezbollah, assured its military and financial support for its fighters. The purpose behind the support was to curb the growing Israeli involvement in the regional affairs. The war once again pushed the whole region into political instability.

Almost four years later, the Syria-Iran-Hezbollah axis had completely threatened the security of Israel. With the changing global political environment, the Jewish state was under frustration because of the activities of the Syrian and Iranian backed Hezbollah in the Middle East. On April 13, 2010, the President of Israel, Shimon Peres, accused Syria of providing Hezbollah with Scud missiles. Syria denied the allegations and Hezbollah refused to comment on its arsenal, but acknowledged the capabilities and intentions to attack Israel's major cities like Tel Aviv.² The Critical Threat Project produced a map in 2010 that depicts the potential missile ranges launched by Hezbollah to hit these cities. Maximum ranges were determined from the Lebanon border and Hezbollah was supposed to fire missiles from its strongholds in case of conflict with Israel. The map also depicts a projects missile range from the South Beqa'a Valley.

Map produced by CTP

3



The whole drama of the transfer of Scud missiles to Hezbollah suggested that the political alignment in the region had shifted more definitely towards the stronger Syria-Iran-Hezbollah axis. Meanwhile, statements of the US and Israeli officials, condemning the arming of Hezbollah, indicated potential support for such strikes and Iran was the major suspect- the statements reflected. In a broader context:

“Hezbollah’s threat to Israel through its possession of Scuds pales next to the threat that a nuclear Iran poses; however, an increasingly well-armed Iranian proxy in Hezbollah raises the stakes for Israel if it is forced to act against the perceived existential threat of a nuclear weapons-capable Iran”.⁴

The size and impact of the Israel-Hezbollah conflict have traditionally been determined by the range of rockets and missiles that were limited to South Lebanon and northern Israel until the Lebanon-Israel war of 2006. Today, the case is different as Hezbollah has acquired a broader and larger rocket and missile system through which it can encompass the entire territories of both Israel and South Lebanon. Now, the Hezbollah fighters are capable enough to launch missiles deep into Israel from different points including South Lebanon, northern Bekaa Valley and the southwest Syria (Blanford & Assaf (02), 2020, p. 04).

Today Israel has involved in the civil war in Syria and has been trapped by a blend of challenges. The most worsening challenge for Israel is Iran’s close ties with Hezbollah and Iran’s supply of advanced weaponry to the Lebanon based organization. Some official and analysts from Israel have assessed the situation and claimed that Iran has spent another \$ 500 million to equip Hezbollah with the modern weapons (Kaye, 2016, p. 09). Additionally, the growing presence of Iranian forces on Israel’s border in the Syrian Golan region has become a matter of special concern for the Israelis as this presence increases the potential for escalation, even if unintended. Israeli officials also claim that Basharul Asad has allowed Iran and Hezbollah to be part of any post-conflict settlement in Syria. Further, Israelis argue that the

presence of Hezbollah or Iran on Golan border is unacceptable for them because the essential purpose behind the presence is to create a new redline that has little to do with Iran's nuclear programme. Given these threats, Israel has acknowledged that it has launched multiple airstrikes within Syria to destroy weapon shipments to Hezbollah, including the strikes in which an Iranian general was killed in January 2015 (Kaye, 2016, p. 09).

Since 2011, Israel has targeted the Syrian government, allied Iranians and Hezbollah while conducting hundreds of airstrikes and is optimistic to end the Iranian presence in Syria (*Al-Jazeera*. August 04, 2020) Various reports of the western intelligence sources enunciate that Israel's random attacks on Syria are part of a "shadow war", endorsed by the United States and a most important part of its anti-Iran policy (*Al-Jazeera*. July 23, 2020) Resultantly, the civil war in Syria has made the political situation more complicated in the Middle East. The United States and Israel smell threats to their interests in the region as Iran-Hezbollah nexus has eclipsed these strategic interests. Iran is a major challenge to the US and same is the case of Hezbollah for Israel. According to the western experts, Iran wants Hezbollah to maintain an effective presence in the Middle East to provide its operational ally Syria with the line of defence. On the other, if the Americans pose any threat to Iran or show an inclination to conduct a pre-emptive strike, Nasrallah wing will hit Tel Aviv which is within a rocket range (Blannin, 2012, p. 18). At the same time, Israel is concerned with the escalating regional dynamics and Hezbollah's intentions; a plausible threat from Hezbollah's chemical weapons attack in which it will be a likely perpetrator. Overall, the chaotic situation suggests that the civil war in Syria has posed a significant threat to the strategic alliance of Syria, Iran and Hezbollah in the Middle East. Bashar al-Assad, who has been a vital conduit between Iran and Hezbollah, is facing the danger of being overthrown. Iran does not want to lose its foothold in the Levant neither Hezbollah is pessimistic about its Iranian and Syrian support. Assad regime has been facilitating the training camps of Hezbollah and provided a safe-haven for its weapons storage (Sullivan, 2014, p. 04).

Israeli Defence Forces launched “Operation Northern Shield” in 2019 to destroy Hezbollah’s tunnels penetrating Israeli territory. Hezbollah’s failure in this episode indicated a lack of interest in a conflict in the near future as the operation caused a setback to the economic domain of the organization and legitimized Israel’s actions. Under the newly emerged financial issues, Hezbollah was not in a position to invest for building military and deployment towards another war with Israel (Schweitzer (02), 2019, p. 04). But, the western and Israeli analysts perceived something else about the conflict. Strategic experts like Yoram Schweitzer were of the view that Hezbollah possessed diverse financial resources and the larger assets accumulated by the *Jihadis* over the years. They could easily use all these resources to fight against Israel and could inflict a defeat. Moreover, to serve for the Iranian interests in the region was the top priority of Hezbollah and this service of the Iranian interests could not be ruled out in the wake of a short-term fiscal set up within the organization. Yoram clearly warned Israel and advised it to be preparing for in advance for the possible military campaign in the north because of escalation into the conflict that could counter the interests of both Iran and Hezbollah (Schweitzer (02), 2019, p. 04).

Recent airstrikes by the Israeli forces in Syria have brought the prevailing conditions on the brink of destruction. The killing of Ali Kemal Mohsen-a Hezbollah fighter, in an Israeli attack (*Reuters*. July 22, 2020) at Damascus airport, has frustrated Nasrallah to go for retaliation. In the last two months, Israel has perpetrated almost eight strikes in Syria, more recently in June (*Middle East Monitor*. July 22, 2020). All these circumstances have caused a change in the motto of the Iranian-backed Hezbollah; the statements of Nasrallah reflect that soon Hezbollah will launch strikes against Israel to take the revenge of Kemal’s death. On one occasion, he emitted that:

"Our response to the martyrdom of the *mujahid* brother Ali Kamel Mohsen - who was martyred in the Zionist aggression on the outskirts of Damascus International Airport - is definitely coming and the Zionists only

have to wait for the punishment for their crimes," (*Al-Jazeera*. July 28, 2020).

The tension between Israel and Hezbollah now has made both competitors even more furious with each other. Israel attacked Beirut-the capital of Lebanon on August 04, 2020. More than 70 Lebanese lost their lives and the deadly blast left 4000 wounded (*The New York Times*. August 04, 2020). Israeli and the western media are trying to demonstrate that it was an accident, caused by volatile explosive material in a warehouse, as Israel was not in a position to commit such an attack. Israel denies any involvement in these attacks. The Lebanon government and Hezbollah leadership, as usual, don't shy about blaming their arch-enemy for this misfortune. The experts on the politics of the Middle East are viewing if Israel is found responsible for the specific blast; the result will push Israel into a war with Hezbollah and its patron Iran that can even embroil the United States and other nations in a vast Middle East conflagration (*Forbes*. August 04, 2020).

Conclusion

As a whole, Iran has been a successful party in the Middle East to secure its strategic interests while using its partners and proxies efficiently. History reveals that Iran's presence in the Middle East, especially after the Islamic revolution, has been a great challenge both for the US and Israel. The revolutionaries of Iran started a campaign to unite all the Shia Muslims of the Middle and inculcate a conscious among them to avoid the western cultural invasion and aggression. Meanwhile, Iran needed to restrict the American advance to the oil reserves of the region that could halt the economic development of the particular region as the US had intended to exploit the economic resources there. To achieve that particular goal, Iran needed to contain the US facilitator-Israel at first that had played an impressive role in strengthening the footprints of the US in the region. For that purpose, Iran inclined to join hands with the Shia leadership and organizations in the Middle East, including Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and most importantly Hezbollah-that emerged as a right hand of Iran and a permanent preventer to the heinous and ulterior motives of Israel. Hezbollah, which is called an Iranian proxy in the Middle East by the western

analysts, has fought wars and still, the practice is on. In return, the US-backed Israel, as a usurper of the Muslim lands, has caused colossal damage to the territorial integrity of Iran and its reliable ally-the Lebanese-Hezbollah. Currently, the US and its allies in the Middle East are in a war-like situation with Iran and its allies. It is openly supporting Israel to launch airstrikes against the Assad regime in Syria, to infiltrate in the Iranian borders and to curb Hezbollah in Lebanon. The most recent Israeli attack on Lebanon in August 2020 is the core example in this regard and many more can be quoted which have disturbed the social, political and economic strata in the region. No doubt, individually, Iran has capitalized the atmosphere produced by the Israel-Hezbollah conflict to end the US hegemony in the region, but overall, the region has witnessed a lower economic growth, political chaos, religious extremism and social unrest. Iran itself is facing economic sanctions and the US and Israel have interfered in the political affairs of most of the states in the Middle East and resultantly these states have fallen prey to the civil wars-a total mess of the social life and economic activity. International platforms like United Nations Security Council are direly needed to play a critical role to elevate the development of the region which has been restrained by the conflicts of the severer complexity e.g. Israel-Hezbollah conflict.

Notes:

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- ¹ ‘Jihad’, from the Arabic verb *Jahada* (to strive), is used herein its familiar military connotation – holy war.
- ² Retrieved from: <https://www.criticalthreats.org/locations/lebanon>
- ³ The map is downloaded from: <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/hezbollah-potential-missile-ranges-map>
- ⁴ accessed from: <https://www.criticalthreats.org/locations/lebanon>