

## Targeting Hezbollah and the future directions of the resistance axis.



Since the onset of the Al-Aqsa flood on October 7, 2023, the Arab region has experienced significant political, security, military, economic, social, and intellectual changes. These have set the stage for major strategic transformations that will affect the region and its key actors. These interactions involve various parties, including countries, organizations, movements, companies, and individuals.

Amidst these changes, various sub-axes have emerged in the regional system, among which the "resistance axis" stands out as a significant and influential force within the Iranian sphere. This axis is associated with armed factions and movements in Iraq and Syria, Lebanese Hezbollah, Palestinian resistance movements (particularly Hamas and Islamic Jihad), and the Houthi movement in Yemen.

These parties have formed a coalition to provide direct and indirect support for the Palestinian movements in their confrontation with the Zionist entity. This support is in defense of the holy Al-Aqsa Mosque, in support of the freedom of the Palestinian people, and to lift the unjust siege on the Gaza Strip that has been in place since 2006.

The operations carried out by this axis with its various components were numerous, and in the context of this operation, the Iranian direct targeting of the occupied territories was for the first time in the history of the conflict

with the Zionist entity in an operation that Iran called "The Honest Promise" on April 14, 2024.

The Zionist entity has launched multiple operations targeting various groups, including Iran. In response, a number of significant events have occurred. One of the most notable incidents was the assassination of Saleh al-Aroui, the deputy head of the Hamas movement, at his headquarters in the southern suburb of Beirut, Lebanon. This area is under the protection of Lebanese Hezbollah. The goal of this assassination was to send a message to Hezbollah that its leaders, symbols, and affiliates are not beyond reach.

On April 1, 2024, the Iranian consulate in Damascus was bombed. Then, on July 27, 2024, the Majdal Shams operation took place in the occupied Syrian Golan. Israel accused the Lebanese Hezbollah of being behind the operation. In response, Israel assassinated the party leader, Fouad Shukur, on July 30.

On July 31, Israel assassinated the leader of the political bureau of the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas, Ismail Haniyeh, in the Iranian capital, Tehran. This happened after he participated in the inauguration ceremony of the new Iranian president, Masoud Pezeshkian. As a result, both Hezbollah and Iran threatened to respond to Israel because of these assassinations.

The conflict between the party and the entity intensified, culminating in the "Pager Bombings" operation carried out by Israel on September 18, 2024, targeting five thousand party members. This was followed by the bombing of wireless devices belonging to a number of party members on September 19. Subsequently, a series of assassinations of party leaders took place, culminating in the assassination of the party's Secretary-General, Hassan Nasrallah, on September 27. This was followed by a ground incursion into Lebanon, aimed at eliminating the party's infrastructure and destroying its bases and military capabilities.

On October 1, 2024, Iran targeted the entity with about two hundred ballistic missiles directed at military facilities and bases inside the occupied Palestinian territories.

In light of these circumstances, and the significant blow suffered by Hezbollah, it was seen as a major loss for the axis of resistance. Hezbollah is regarded as Iran's most powerful ally in the region, relied upon for numerous operations, including support for the Palestinian resistance and the backing of the Bashar Al-Assad regime during the uprising in Syria that began in March 2011.

Here is the crucial question: How much can these changes impact the future of the party and the future of the axis of resistance in the region?

This question can be answered in two ways: the first relates to the factors governing these transformations, and the second concerns the future paths of these transformations.

In considering the main factors at play, we need to take into account the current political situation in light of the ongoing conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine, the expanding scope of conflict in the region, the extent of American support for Israel, the Israeli government's continued expansionist policies without facing consequences, and the extent of Iran's response to Israeli attacks and American provocations.

Regarding the future paths of the transformations, several scenarios emerge. Firstly, there is the possibility of continued Israeli escalation against Hezbollah, including ground incursions and the imposition of a security zone at the expense of Lebanese territory. This could lead to ongoing human and material losses for Hezbollah, similar to what happened in the Gaza Strip in the face of Palestinian resistance movements. There is also ongoing talk about reshaping the Middle East, with the Israeli government believing that the time is right to achieve its ambitions and goals in the region.

The second scenario involves an Israeli escalation against Iran in response to Iran's attack on Israel on October 1. This could lead to a comprehensive regional war targeting energy facilities, oil and gas on both sides, as well as targeting nuclear facilities and vital sectors on both sides. The United States, United Kingdom, and France may intervene to support Israel in this confrontation. Some Arab political systems may remain silent or even collude in seeking to eliminate the axis of resistance and strike the regime in Iran, regardless of the potential repercussions on the national security of these countries or on security and stability in the fundamentally unstable region since the establishment of Israel.

Scenario three involves a limited response from the United States to Iran within specific rules of engagement. This would be followed by a limited Iranian response, leading to a controlled continuation of tension. The United States would then await the end of the US elections scheduled for November 5, 2024. If Republican Party candidate Donald Trump wins, the potential repercussions would be a threat to expand Israel's geographical area and target the Iranian nuclear program.

In the fourth scenario, Hezbollah regains its military strength, forces the opposing entity to retreat, and inflicts a military defeat similar to the one in July 2006. This leads the government of the opposing entity to accept a

temporary settlement, allowing all parties to prepare for the next stage of the conflict.

In these scenarios, all possibilities are considered. The likelihood of any of them happening depends on the factors and determinants that influence the actions of the involved parties. The Russian Federation could also get involved to support Iran, potentially dragging the United States into the region's conflicts, similar to how it got involved in Ukraine conflict.

Based on the current situation, it can be said that the next five years will be marked by instability at various levels due to ongoing conflicts. There are multiple parties involved, various tools being used, overlapping issues, and the growing influence of non-state entities. The region seems to be heading into a difficult period from which its countries may struggle to recover. Given these circumstances, it is possible that this stage will mark the beginning of the end for the Zionist entity itself, as societal challenges worsen, reverse migration increases, and the myths on which it was founded are dispelled.