

The Hariri Assassination Verdict. The Geopolitical Implications

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On February 14, 2005, an explosion rocked Beirut killing and injuring hundred of people chief among them the former Prime Minister of Lebanon, Rafik al-Hariri. The West was quick to blame Hezbollah and Syria. In 2006, Israel and its tanks rolled into Lebanon.

15 years later, on August 4th, another explosion rocked Lebanon. This time, the fingers were again pointed at Hezbollah and its 'Iran backers'. And once again, Israeli tanks [crossed into Lebanon](#).

After years of investigating the first incident, on Tuesday, August 18, 2020, Syria and Hezbollah were acquitted of involvement in the 2005 explosion. Judges at a U.N.-backed tribunal said Tuesday that there [was no evidence](#) the leadership of the Hezbollah militant group and Syria were involved in the 2005 suicide truck bomb assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri."

Yet reading the Western media headlines, one would think that the judge had found Hezbollah guilty. Just as the most recent explosion was blamed on Hezbollah. But what would Hezbollah gain from such horrific acts? If not Hezbollah, 'cui bono'? The answer is simple. Proving it is not.

The 1967 war resulted in the exponential expansion of Israeli water sources including the control of the Golan "Heights" (also referred to as the [Syrian Golan](#)). For decades, Syrian Golan and the return of its control to Syria had posed a major obstacle to the Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations. Israel's water demands make it virtually impossible to accommodate this process. In fact, even with full control of the Golan, Israel's water crisis in 2000 were so acute that it prompted Israel to turn to Turkey for water purchase.

Importantly, Syria's presence in Lebanon since the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war in 1975 played a crucial role in hindering Israel's never-ending water demands. Although the 1955 Johnston Plan (under the auspices of the Eisenhower administration) proposed diverting water from Lebanon's Litani River into Lake Kinneret, it was not officially formulated, though it remained an attractive prospect. In 1982, Israeli forces established the frontline of their security zone in Lebanon along the Litani. Numerous reports alleged that Israel was diverting large quantities of Litani water.

On June 6, 1982, Israel advanced into Lebanon. However, the Syrian army halted the Israeli army advance in the battle of Sultan Yakub and the battle of Ain Zahalta. Sharon's plan to conquer all of Lebanon and destroy Syria as a military power was thwarted. In reviewing the book and the battles, the famous scholar and activist, Israel Shahak, opined that "the principal purpose of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon was destruction of the Syrian Army"[i].

A 1987 book by Col. Emmanuel Wald of the Israeli General Staff entitled “The Ruse of the Broken Vessels: The Twilight of Israeli Military Might (1967-1982) reveals the aims of the 1982 invasion of Lebanon and the month of pre-planning that had gone into it. Wald writes that Ariel Sharon’s master plan codenamed “Oranim” was to defeat the Syrian troops deployed in the Bekaa Valley all the way to the district of Baalbek in North of Lebanon. According to Wald, “during the first days, it was quietly approved by the U.S.”.

Sharon’s plans were put in the backburner. Though the urgency of the successful implantation of the plan was not lost on Israelis; perhaps made even more urgent in the face of the 1991 [Lebanese-Syrian Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination](#). The treaty was a challenge to Israel and its diversion of water and annexation. When Syria replaced Israel as the dominant power in southern Lebanon in May 2000, Israeli fears grew that Syrian success in controlling the Golan and by extension, Lake Kinneret, would have a devastating effect on Israel.

Washington, always ready to serve Israel, passed the [Syrian Accountability Act and the Lebanon Sovereignty Restoration Act](#). Without any hesitation to investigate the explosion, Washington and the West did not hesitate to place the blame on Syria and Hezbollah. [Much to the delight of The Washington Institute](#), the pro-Israel think tank, the United States implemented the Act which in addition to sanctions, called for the withdrawal of Syrian troops from Lebanon. In 2006, the deck was cleared for Israel to attack Lebanon.

Although the Tribunal found no ties to Syria or Hezbollah leadership, it did convict Salim Ayyash – a Hezbollah member. The question is, was Ayyash a rogue member acting on his own or was he a member of Israel’s “Arab Platoon” (Ronen Bergman, 2018)[ii].

The Arab Platoon a clandestine commando unit whose members operated disguised as Arabs, were trained fighters who could operate inside ‘enemy’ lines, gather information, and carry out sabotage and targeted killings. Their training included commando tactics and explosives, but also intensive study of Islam and Arab customs. Nicknamed the “Mistaravim” (the name by which the Jews went in some Arab countries), they practiced Judaism but in all other aspects were Arabs.

It is not clear to this writer if Ayyash was a Hezbollah member or a Mistaravim. However, it is evident that neither Syria, Lebanon, nor Hezbollah benefited from the attack.

Curiously, the initial tribunal date coincided with the Lebanon port explosion which devastated the country, even making it appear as if the explosion and the delay in the hearing would benefit Hezbollah. Undoubtedly, the findings of the Tribunal must have been very disappointing for Israel and its backers who had placed the blame on Hezbollah and Syrian leadership. It may be reassuring for some and worrying for others that the FBI is in Beirut investigating. FBI has managed to build quite a reputation for [cover ups](#).

Beirut has been devastated. And as with 2006, every foe is out to grab a part of this beautiful country. During the 2006 war, while Israel bombed Lebanon, Carlyle profited greatly – as did the Saudis, the U.S., and of course, Israeli. The systematic destruction of Lebanon translated into significant opportunity for the Carlyle Group and with the ‘crisis, they announced a \$1.3 billion fund for investment in the region. They were not alone. The rush was on. The big investment banks — Morgan Stanley, Goldman Sachs and Lehman Brothers – all increased their presence in the region. Israel, the perpetrator as the benefactor, received an increase of USD 500 million additional in aid package from the U.S.

in September of the same year (Ynet news).

With [millions of funds from CIA/NED](#) spent in Lebanon over the past few years ([NED 2018, etc.](#)), the country is ripe for its enemies to bend it to their will. Clearly, this would not benefit Hezbollah, Iran, or Lebanon. Fingers have also been pointed at Israel for being the culprit. It may take several years for the truth to come out – and be proven. At the end of the day though, cui bono?

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Notes

[i] Sahak, Israel. *Israel Considers War With Syria as It Ponders 1982 Invasion of Lebanon*, The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs (September 30, 1992).

[ii] Ronen Bergman. *Rise And Kill First; The Secret History of Israel's Targeted Assassinations*. P. 24. Random House 2018

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