

Commander's legacy

Gen. Soleimani was assassinated, yet his legacy remains unobstructed



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"Was America's assassination of Qassem Soleimani justified?" this was a question raised by the renowned magazine "The Economist" on January 7, 2020, four days after the assassination of Qassem Soleimani,

the commander of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), in Baghdad airport by the US military under the direct order of then president Donald Trump. Now, on the fourth anniversary of the assassination, this question remains still relevant if the assassination was justified.

The US government and Trump, at the time, had found several justifi-

cations for the assassination, which faced criticism even among Americans. However, it appears that behind these justifications, which portrayed Soleimani as a threat to the US interests, a larger strategic goal was concealed - influencing Iran's policy in guiding and supporting the Resistance Front.

The Resistance Front comprises states, organizations, and military

or militia groups in the West Asia region, united against foreign intervention, particularly by the US, and opposing the occupation policies of Israel. The Resistance Front also has a track record of combating and defeating the ISIS terrorist group. Iran, Iraq, and Syria, along with the Ansarullah movement (Houthis) in Yemen, Hezbollah in Lebanon, militia groups in Iraq (Hashd al-Shaabi, Kata'ib Hizbal-

ah, etc.), and Palestinian resistance groups (Hamas and the Islamic Jihad), form various components of the Resistance Front.

The US, Israel, along with some regional states allied with Washington, see Iran, the Quds Force of the IRGC, and the assassinated Gen. Soleimani as the key factor in the formation and strengthening of the Resistance Front.

Honored enemy

Gen. Soleimani, a respected figure and a commander of the eight-year Iran-Iraq war in the 1980s, was appointed as the commander of the Quds Force of the IRGC in 1997. Until his assassination on January 3, 2020, outside the Baghdad airport, he played a crucial role in various regional events, such as developments

in Afghanistan, providing support to Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, establishing the Popular Mobilization Forces in Iraq, and participating in the fight against ISIS in Syria. His capabilities and accomplishments were acknowledged even by his adversaries. Former US president Barack Obama

had told ex-Iraqi prime minister Haider al-Abadi in 2014 that "he is my enemy but I have a special respect for him."

In an interview on CBS News "Face the Nation" on Jan. 6, 2020, David Petraeus, a former American army general and director of the CIA General Petraeus, considered Soleimani a "very capable" ad-

versary during his time commanding troops in Iraq.

For four years now, the commander is no longer alive, but the desired goal of the United States and Israel, which is to change Iran's policies, has failed and even made the Resistance Front more powerful than before.

Fulfilled promise

Following the assassination of Gen. Soleimani, the leaders of the Resistance Front pledged an increase in both power and popularity for the front. Despite this assurance, the misguided officials in the White House overlooked it in their evaluations.

On the occasion of Gen. Soleimani's assassination, Iran's Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei stated in a message that with his martyrdom, his work and path will not stop; it will continue with even greater motivation. All friends, as well as all enemies, should know that the line of resistance will continue with doubled enthusiasm.

Adel Abdul-Mahdi, the former prime minister of Iraq, whom Soleimani was heading to meet from Syria before being targeted, stated in an interview with Fars News Agency, "They anticipated that by eliminating him, they would resolve his matters, but, in reality, they only fueled his cause and strengthened the influence he held."

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad also stated in part of his condolence message: "We have no doubt that the path of Gen. Soleimani and his comrades will become more rooted in the minds of the youth of the resistance after his martyrdom."

Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, the leader

of Lebanon's Hezbollah, had also said, "We will continue his path and strive day and night for the realization of his goals, waving his flag in all arenas and fronts."

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, addressing the funeral ceremony for Gen. Soleimani in Tehran, stated, "I declare that the path of resistance in the land of Palestine will continue, will not weaken, and will not retreat. These assassinations and martyrdoms will add to our will, stability, and perseverance."

Previous US administrations under Obama and Bush seem to have taken into account the potential consequences of the assassination of Gen.

Soleimani. Reports in the US media following Soleimani's targeted killing indicated that the plan to assassinate him had been discussed earlier but had never been put into action.

In a January 2020 report by The Associated Press, Elissa Blair Slotkin, an American politician and Democratic representative, along with a Middle East analyst at the CIA, stated that both the Bush and Obama administrations had determined that assassinating Soleimani was not a suitable means to accomplish US ultimate objectives.

Iran's policy remains unchanged

Under the presidency of Donald Trump and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, hardliners in the US administration seemed incapable of grasping such consequences. Although, at the same time, there were analysts and diplomats who did not see this terrorist act as conducive to achieving the US' goals.

Nabeel Khoury, with 25 years in the US Foreign Service, including roles as Deputy Chief of Mission in Sana'a and Director of Analysis for the Middle East, responded to Thomas Friedman, a foreign policy writer and analyst, on January 15, 2019, stating that they targeted a high-ranking official for assassination, believing that eliminating him would improve the situation.

The first issue is that Qassem Soleimani was a very important figure, but even removing someone of his importance does not really bring about a change in the situation, he said. Iran is highly organized. Immediately after Soleimani's death, they introduced his successor: Iran has a good number of individuals capable of managing this organization [Quds Force of the IRGC]. The main question is, what was your goal? If your goal was to change and reform Iran's behavior, by killing Soleimani, you've exactly done the opposite.

The Economist, on January 7, 2020, a few days after Soleimani's assassination, addressed the policy of killing opponents by the US in an extensive article, empha-

sizing that the US follows Israel in this matter. A section of the article, raising the question of whether "America's assassination of Soleimani was justified", stated that the reality is that many assassinations ultimately bring about unpredictable and dire consequences.

The article on Soleimani's assassination stated that his actions in the region have led to the creation of networks of resistance that will not dissolve with the removal of Soleimani. This network continues its work with the same former capacity even after his death.

This article considered the assassination of General Soleimani at an international airport in a third country (Iraq) as a violation of that country's sovereignty,

stating that as a result, if the Iraqi people also expel Americans, the assassination of General Soleimani has indeed yielded the exact results he anticipated.

The author's prediction about the expulsion of Americans from Iraq had indeed materialized shortly before the publication of this issue of The Economist. On January 5, two days after the martyrdom of Soleimani and Abu Mahdi, the Iraqi Parliament held an emergency session to investigate the violation of Iraq's sovereignty in the US drone attack at Baghdad International Airport. In this session, the resolution for the immediate withdrawal of US forces from Iraq was passed.

Resistance: A strengthened tree

Today, the promises of the leaders of the Resistance Front and the predictions of many analysts and diplomats, who remained distant from the views of the former US officials, have come true. The Resistance Front is more powerful than ever on the scene.

Israel, backed by the United States, has been targeting Gaza with ground and aerial attacks for over three months, yet it has been unsuccessful in destroying Hamas, which is just one of the organizations within the

Resistance Front.

The direct entry of Lebanon's Hezbollah into a war with Israel has been a cause for concern for Israel and the United States for several months. Yemen's Ansarullah has disrupted the transit route of goods to Israel in the Red Sea and has become a serious challenge to the United States.

A bit further from the battlefield, also in the diplomatic arena, the resistance stands tall. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has stood strong against the desires of Israel, the Unit-

ed States and its regional allies. The Arab League, with embarrassment for its previous hostile policies, has welcomed Syria. The Arab coalition led by Saudi Arabia and supported by the United States, after seven years of war with Houthis in Yemen without achieving success, is preparing for peace talks with the resistance group.

Riyadh has also revived diplomatic relations with Tehran by changing its regional policies. Iraq is gradually moving away from US influence

and control, and ultimately, the Islamic Republic of Iran's policy in supporting the resistance front has not changed. The resistance was a sapling that turned into a sturdy tree with Qassem Soleimani and has now become even more robust after his martyrdom. The path of the commander was not blocked after his martyrdom. Now, perhaps it is easier to answer the question "Was the assassination of Soleimani beneficial for the United States?"

