

# The legacy of Soleimani

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## ***Abstract***

*The enemy thought that the murder of Soleimani would help further divide and weaken the independent peoples of the region. Yet while they caused brief and pain, the killing generated unprecedented resolve and coherence amongst resistance forces. The legend of Soleimani is now a force driving liberation of the region from Washington's 'New Middle East' schemes.*

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The enemy of the free and independent peoples of the world imagined that the treacherous murder of Qassem Soleimani would revive their failing plans to dominate the Middle East region. By that murder the enemy hoped to decapitate the regional resistance, further divide the peoples and present a trophy to the would-be emperor of the world.

They certainly caused pain and grief; they are well experienced at that. But the aim of derailing and dividing the resistance failed badly. Instead of despair and confusion they ensured a reaction which has been bringing together diverse elements of resistance and which threatens to drive the enemy from the region. The Soleimani legend remains central to this.

## **1. What the enemy wanted**

The enemy might have imagined that by removing Soleimani, the unique regional commander, the regional coalition would despair and lose direction. But Soleimani was not just a commander, he was a trainer. Even at the start of Saddam's US-backed war against Iran he was a trainer. His 40-year training legacy was the creation of many commanders, across the region.

The great fear of Washington and its regional office in Tel Aviv was that the resistance would rally together, after the defeat of the NATO-backed sectarian gangs in Syria and Iraq. Their nightmare is to see a battle-hardened coalition of Hezbollah, the Syrian Arab Army, Iraqi PMUs and Iran's Quds Force appear at the border of Occupied Palestine, ready to liberate the Syrian Golan and apply pressure for the liberation of Palestine from the zionist apartheid regime.

This is why Washington - after the invasions of Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon - seized the opportunity in 2011 to back Muslim Brotherhood and Wahhabi terrorism in Libya and Syria, culminating in the destruction of the Libyan state and the declaration by DAESH of an 'Islamic

State' in eastern Syria. A weak and divided Syria would remove an independent state from the picture and also help protect the Zionist colony.

We know from the leaked US intel memo of August 2012 that the US foresaw and welcomed the DAESH 'caliphate', saying that the "possibility of establishing a declared or undeclared Salafist principality ... [was] exactly what the supporting powers to the opposition want, in order to isolate the Syrian regime, which is considered the strategic depth of the Shia expansion (Iraq and Iran)".

That is, the DAESH 'caliphate' would weaken and divide Syria, just as its predecessor al Qaeda in Iraq (ISI) was designed to weaken Baghdad and create divisions with Tehran.

Despite their deceptive 'anti-terrorist' rhetoric, in late 2014 the head of the US military General Martin Dempsey and US Vice President Joe Biden separately admitted that their key allies, notably Turkey, the Saudis, Qatar and the UAE, were funding and arming all the sectarian terrorist groups in Syria, so as to overthrow the Syrian Government. The *raison d'être* of all these groups was 'divide and rule'.

In face of this proxy war, Iran's resistance hero Qassem Soleimani facilitated the September 2015 entry of Russia into a more direct defence of Syria, as he led the ground wars against Jabhat al Nusra and DAESH in both Syria and Iraq. This unification of resistance forces was a central and necessary condition for survival of the independent peoples of the region.

Soleimani had played a key role in the defence of Gaza, from murderous Zionist attacks, and in the defence of Lebanon, especially during the 2006 Zionist invasion. The Hamas representative in Lebanon, Ahmad Abdu Hadi, revealed that Hezbollah commander Imad Mughniyeh and Iran's Qassem Soleimani visited Gaza repeatedly, leading plans to construct literally hundreds of kilometres of tunnels, as a defence against Zionist siege and repeated bombing.

In an important interview in 2019, Soleimani spoke of his role during the 2006 invasion of Lebanon. Tel Aviv was encouraged in its aggression by the fact that "over sixty percent of the US Army ... were deployed to our region ... in Iraq alone there were more than 150,000 troops, and over 30,000 US military were present in Afghanistan." The Zionists tried to take advantage of this apparently favourable situation.

However, Hezbollah, with the overwhelming support of the people of south Lebanon, managed to stop the invasion in its tracks, within 33 days. Despite advanced Tel Aviv's weaponry and the complicity of many Arab regimes, the Israelis were demoralised by mounting casualties and retreated. Soleimani provided the logistical and moral support of Iran in Lebanon, at that time.

After that the resistance commander assumed a leading role in counter-terrorist operations across Syria (from the Qalamoun mountains to Aleppo to Deir Ezzor) and in Iraq, leading up to his November 2017 announcement of victory over DAESH. Ever humble, the Quds Force leader thanked Ayatollah Khamenei's wise leadership and the sacrifices of the Iraqi and Syrian people and their governments, for their courageous fight against the terrorist group. He also thanked Lebanon's Hezbollah and Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units, for their "decisive role" in the fight against DAESH.

DAESH had committed horrific crimes, he said, "including beheading children, skinning men alive before their families, enslaving innocent girls and women and raping them, burning people alive and killing hundreds of young people en masse." The US-backed, Saudi-inspired terror group had also displaced millions and inflicted enormous property damage, including on mosques and World Heritage sites. In all these atrocities, DAESH served as a tool of the enemy.

US occupation forces were by this time well entrenched in both Iraq and Syria, under the pretext of fighting DAESH. Were their stated aims genuine, they should have hailed Soleimani as a hero. However, since they themselves were tools of a deceptive regime, they really saw him as their key enemy.

The peoples of the region knew better. Soleimani and his colleagues like Iraq's Abu Mahdi Muhandis, Syrian Army leaders like General Issam Zahreddine and the leaders of Lebanon's Hezbollah, in particular Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, alongside the leaders of Palestine's resistance movement, were emerging as the genuine anti-terror, anti-zionist and anti-imperial heroes of the region.

In that context President Trump, likely enraged with jealousy and frustration, decided to suddenly murder both Qassem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi Muhandis, the leading anti-terrorist heroes of Iraq and Iran, and the leading symbols of fraternity and cooperation between those two neighbouring countries.

The hero's daughter, Zeinab Soleimani, would later say that her father "did his job so well" he upset the enemy. Her father "saved people ... not just in his own country .. he did this for all countries ... he destroyed ISIS because he doesn't want innocent people in Europe to get killed by such a dangerous virus ... he fought for everyone."

The western media reflected the schizoid view of their governments. Many recognised that Soleimani was indeed the region's leading anti-ISIS commander, but they also observed that Washington was angry at his role.

So, while Trump's political cronies and Tel Aviv spoke of the murder as "self-defence", British state media (the BBC) reported the killing of Qassem Soleimani as "good news for IS [DAESH] jihadists", while the American PBS channel spoke of "Soleimani's Complex Legacy in Iraq". Meanwhile India's Economic Times recognised that "Soleimani was the face of armed resistance against ISIS in Iraq and Syria and contributed in a big way in defeating ISIS."

## **2. What the enemy got**

The mourning for Muhandis and Soleimani and their Iraqi colleagues was tremendous. If President Trump wanted to hurt the Iranian and Iraqi people, he succeeded. Huge rallies began in Baghdad and spread through Iraq and Iran. Both countries declared national days of mourning. The public grief was plain to the world. The US colonial media tried to downplay the numbers, but most recognised that many millions came out to mourn.

In subsequent political analysis, some western sources pointed out that the murder of Soleimani was "a huge blow to Hezbollah", as the Lebanese Resistance group (branded 'terrorist' by Washington and Tel Aviv) openly relies on support from Iran. Other US media were concerned about likely Iranian retaliation against US occupation forces in the region.

However, reaction within the region was striking, especially in Iraq. Warring factions came together, for the first time in many years. Iraqi Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi said that: "the assassination of an Iraqi military commander who holds an official position is considered aggression on Iraq ... and the liquidation of leading Iraqi figures or those from a brotherly country on Iraqi soil is a massive breach of sovereignty."

Within days Iraq's Parliament voted to expel all U.S. forces from the country. Important figures in Iraqi politics also called for closure of the U.S. Embassy, as the Iran Revolution had done back in 1979. Some US political commentators called this “Iran's True Victory”, albeit orchestrated by Washington. All the effort made, over decades, to divide Iraq from Iran, had been placed at risk. Resistance groups called for revenge and repeated the Iraqi call, demanding expulsion of US forces from the entire region. This was a new level of public debate.

On 8 January in ‘Operation Martyr Soleimani’ Iran’s military launched a largely symbolic missile strike on the US airbase at Ayn al Assad airbase, in Iraq. This was the first direct Iranian attack on US forces. Warning had been given and there were no deaths, but 110 US servicemen were later reported as having received concussive ‘traumatic brain injuries’. Presumably because of the controlled nature of the strike, and despite high tensions, the Trump administration did not launch a counter strike.

In the wake of its failing wars in Afghanistan, Syria and Yemen, and having united Iraq against them, Washington under the Trump administration sought to maintain its “maximum pressure” campaign against Iran. That had grown to include an economic siege against much of the region, and renegeing on the nuclear agreement finalised by the Obama administration back in 2015. That act alienated Washington from its European allies, even if they showed themselves incapable acting independently from the US.

Russia and China, formerly allies in the nuclear campaign against Iran, were now themselves subject to Washington’s unilateral coercive measures. Further, the progressive failure of Washington’s ‘New Middle East’ wars, had helped expand the role of both in the region.

In December 2019, just prior to the murder of Soleimani and Muhandis, Russia, China and Iran held joint naval exercises in the Persian Gulf. This was a response to false US claims about Iranian threats to shipping. In mid-2020 China and Iran revealed a \$400 billion 25-year economic agreement, focussed on energy, infrastructure and manufacturing. China and Russia were developing parallel economic agreements with Syria. This was not what the enemy wanted.

A number of analysts concluded that Trump’s murder of Soleimani backfired. Far from dividing the resistance, the assassinations helped them unify. With US media stressing the increased potential for direct US-Iran conflict (which both sides want to avoid), more thoughtful analysts pointed to the further frustration of US ambitions in the Middle East.

British-Syrian analyst Danny Makki said that Soleimani’s legacy in Syria would endure, as “there are still tens of thousands of fighters and any number of commanders in Syria who he helped train that may yet carry on his work to expand Iran’s influence and hegemony across the Middle East.” Iranian-Australian Mohsen Solhdoost wrote that, with the rise of new resistance groups attacking US forces in Iraq, the killing of Soleimani “has strengthened Iran’s hand” in the region.

In fact, the enemy has created, in martyred Soleimani, a much-loved legend which will outlive all current enemy leaders. As Zeinab Soleimani said, they thought that after killing Soleimani “everything will stop, but they are so wrong. They didn’t see the anger in the eyes of the Iranian people, they didn’t see their eyes, they didn’t see their sadness ... They are so wrong thinking this will be the end of General Soleimani. This is the beginning.”