

Laith Marouf: Iran's Resistance SHIFTS Power | The New Middle East

What really changed after March 2 in Lebanon—and why does it matter globally? Laith Marouf breaks down the shifting balance of power after Iran's resistance against US and Israeli aggression. In this in-depth conversation, Laith Marouf unpacks the rapidly evolving situation in Lebanon, the role of Hezbollah, and the broader geopolitical implications of the US-Iran confrontation. We explore: What has unfolded in Lebanon since March 2 The reality of Israeli occupation and continued aggression The complex relationship between the Beirut government and Hezbollah How Iran's resistance is reshaping the Axis of Resistance What this means for Palestine and regional liberation movements The future of US-backed regimes in West Asia The emerging political and media order in a post-unipolar world As tensions escalate, this discussion offers a critical perspective on imperialism, resistance, and the future of the region. Support Independent media to remain bold:

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#Mudiar

Hello and welcome to another episode of India and Global Left. If you are new to the show, please hit that subscribe button. Also, consider becoming a YouTube member, a patron, or donating a small amount using the link in the description box. Without further ado, let me welcome our guest tonight, Laith Marouf. Laith is a Beirut-based journalist who is covering the Israeli assault and occupation of parts of Lebanon and also Palestine. Laith, welcome back to India and Global Left.

#Laith

Great to be with you. Thank you very much for the invitation.

#Mudiar

If you could begin with your analysis of the situation in Lebanon, particularly since March 2. There are reports about the Zionist entity killing 2,400 people in Lebanon, with an additional million people displaced. One report today says that 62,000 buildings have been destroyed. If you can describe what has happened since March 2 in particular.

#Laith

Yes, obviously the Zionists have the ability to massacre civilians and destroy civilian infrastructure. But as we see, they have zero ability to have military victories on the ground when they are fighting Hezbollah. And this is why they were lashing out at civilians throughout the war, those 45 days. And as we see right now, because they weren't able to achieve any military victories during the fighting, they're trying to have some permanent positions, total destruction of areas that they're occupying during the ceasefire. And this is why Hezbollah has already begun retaliating over the last two days openly. Today there have been at least four Hezbollah operations attacking Zionist occupation positions inside Lebanon, as well as the gathering positions of those troops inside occupied Palestine, in the north of occupied Palestine.

Those numbers you mentioned, 2,400 killed in Lebanon in those 45 days, at least 100 of them were medical staff. As happened in Gaza, the Zionists decided to target the easiest things to target, which in this situation are medical staff in their hospitals, or the paramedics in the paramedic stations and in their ambulances. Just an hour ago, in the town of Khaibin in the south of Lebanon, there was a convoy of journalists and observers that were passing, and the Israelis attacked the convoy, killing people in one car, and then began bombarding the area where there are multiple journalists that are now stuck. The Red Cross and the ambulances can't reach them. There's a clear threat to their lives. These journalists are some of the most prominent here in Lebanon, including one journalist.

Her name is Amal Al-Khalil from Al-Akhbar newspaper. So overall, what we can see is the Zionists can kill people, can target journalists, can target medical workers, but they cannot have any military victories. And about the mass destruction, you know, 62,000 housing units, you know, over the last few days, our teams at Free Palestine TV have been going south, even behind the imaginary yellow line that the Israelis drew, and we've seen tens of unexploded ordnances in houses, in fields. With further inspection of these unexploded ordnances, we discovered that the Zionists are using very old munitions, some of them going back to the 1970s from stockpiles that they had gathered for a possible war with Egypt in the 1970s. And a lot of missiles that were supposedly targeting the roads actually hit beside the roads.

So clearly they don't have enough even guiding systems that are modern left to use. So, you know, all of these things indicate that the Zionists are running out of munitions. That's happening also for the United States, of course. Looking at the tanks that they have in the fields here in Lebanon, there's a lot of older generation Merkavas. They lost at least 200 tanks in Lebanon just now in this battle, and they've already lost 1,000 tanks in the battles in Gaza and Lebanon in 2024–2025. So they are running out of their most modern tanks, and they can't keep up in terms of their production. Their situation is very hard on the battlefield, but as we said, they can still continue to kill civilians. That's what they are good at.

#Mudiar

I'll come to the ceasefire and the possible talks about an extension of the ceasefire. And there I'd like to understand from you a little bit about the divisions or the differences within Lebanon. But where I wanted to start actually is on the core issues, like the occupation of Lebanese land by Israeli forces, the Israeli assault and attack on the people of Lebanon, and the need to delineate the borders. There seems to be a unanimous consensus in Lebanon, from the Druze leaders to the Beirut-based government of Najib Salam and President Aoun, and of course Hezbollah. At least my reading has been that on this core set of issues there is a consensus, and it represents the popular will of the people of Lebanon. So before we try to understand some of the differences and the complexities within Lebanon, if you could tell us a little bit about this core set of issues that Lebanon faces vis-à-vis the Zionist colonial entity.

#Laith

Yeah, yeah, look, you know, right now in the south of Lebanon, the areas that the Zionists drew in their imagination with this yellow line include a lot of Christian, Druze, and Sunni villages. In fact, some of the areas that the Zionists are drawing as behind this yellow line that they want to depopulate include some of the most holy sites for the Druze sect. So this is not something that is going to be acceptable to any of the populations in Lebanon. And this is why the government of Lebanon, which was appointed by the American embassy, has really no legitimacy in terms of their negotiations with the Zionists directly in Washington, D.C. You know, popular opinion in the country is against the occupation, and the vast majority of the leaderships of the religious sects have spoken against that.

The desecration of Christian sites has galvanized the Christian population even more. Though they are probably the most propagandized to in terms of Western imperialist media or Saudi media to be against the resistance, they, of course, saw what happened to their villages once the Israelis occupied them. So I don't think there is any way the Zionists can maintain this occupation. And in their best days, when there was a huge imbalance of power in the 1970s and 80s, they were unable to hold territory. So you can imagine, with this new sophisticated resistance that has access to all these guided missiles and guided drones and what have you, what damage it can do to Zionist forces attempting to hold territory in Lebanon.

#Mudiar

Israel wants to break down the state of Lebanon, as it wants to do the same thing in many parts of West Asia. And one of the strategies is to create division and civil war in Lebanon, and Lebanon has had a history of that. You mentioned the influence, or you were more categorical in saying the U.S. embassy in Lebanon appoints the government in Beirut. If you can tell us a little bit about the kind of relationship between the government in Beirut and Hezbollah, because some of the analysis is

very crude and flat, which says that it's one of pure antagonism. Others say that there is an element of cooperation and competition. So if you can break down some of that complexity and put the ceasefire in perspective of that.

#Laith

Well, look, the difference between Lebanon and the rest of the region that the Zionists want to fragment is that really there is no such thing as Lebanon as a state. It never existed. The government of Lebanon or its military forces, since 1942, since the creation of Lebanon by chopping it off from Syria, never controlled the borders, never had a monopoly over the use of force on its territory. And that's what defines a state. So, you know, Lebanon is always in a state of anarchy, and every sect and every neighborhood and every region and every village takes care of itself. So to try to fragment what doesn't exist is a fool's errand.

And this is partially why Hezbollah, as a liberationist movement in the year 2000, when it liberated Lebanon, chose not to take control of the government and thus became the only liberationist movement in the history of humanity that liberated a country and didn't take control of the government. And so it was a choice that Hezbollah made, not only because it didn't want a civil war right after liberation, but because there is no such thing that the state of Lebanon can offer. And right now it's the same thing. If Hezbollah and its allies, that represent the vast majority of Lebanese people, want to, they can do a coup and in five minutes take over every government office and round up the government of Nawaf Salam and put them on trial.

But the next day, the Israelis will bomb every government office, every ministry, every palace, every police station, because they will say Hezbollah is the state of Lebanon, right? So what Hezbollah has chosen right now is to let these house slaves, the Prime Minister and the President of Lebanon, who answer to the United States and the Zionists, run wild, sign ink on paper that's worthless if they want to, because this government cannot face off with Hezbollah. This government wants to serve the Israelis and the Americans and cannot offer those services that it may want to.

The military of Lebanon is too weak. It cannot attack Hezbollah. And if it does, there will be a mutiny inside the military because 60% of the soldiers and officers are from the Shia sect. The fascist Christian supremacist militias are a shadow of what they were in the 1970s when the civil war was active. There are probably just a few hundred—let's be very generous and say a couple of thousand—armed Christian supremacist militiamen. And the Wahhabi death squads, which are the final thing that the Americans and the Israelis may depend on, are across the border inside Syria, and they are too scared to attack Lebanon.

They tried to attack Hezbollah twice over the last 15 or 16 months, and they lost on the border battles. And if HTS al-Julani moves his troops to attack Lebanon, Syria will fall apart. There are in total 60,000 HTS fighters that are barely controlling the checkpoints across Syria. And if they withdraw them to attack Lebanon, the country will fall apart and every region will secede. So there's

no real challenge internally or externally to Hezbollah, except direct Israeli intervention and American intervention. And that's what they're already doing. So adding a signature on a paper by the Prime Minister or President of Lebanon will not change the reality on the ground in Lebanon.

#Mudiar

I wanted to ask you a little bit about the axis of resistance, as we are in the middle of these negotiations and also the blockade—I mean, however you'd like to define it—between Iran and the United States negotiations. And that issue is linked up with Lebanon. Of course, Israel wants to de-link that in many ways. How would you describe the impact of the Iranian resistance against the U. S. bombing on the axis of resistance overall in the region?

#Laith

Yeah, like we saw a statement from Ayatollah Mujtaba Khamenei saying that they consider every member of the Axis of Resistance as a sovereign part of Iran, and they will defend it as such. So I think the fact that Iran just repelled the American regime invasion and repelled the attack and destroyed the American base of power in Western Asia has uplifted the resistance across the region. Any doubts that people had in their minds after the fall of Syria or that depressing moment are gone. That high that the Zionists felt after the Wahhabi death squads captured Damascus, and their troops entered Syria and reached almost the doors of Damascus—the Israelis—that high is now gone. You know, the Zionists know that they cannot defeat the Axis of Resistance without American direct involvement. And now American direct involvement has shown its limits.

And clearly, the United States cannot defeat Iran without the use of nuclear weapons. Therefore, there's nothing that the U.S. can do today different from what it did during those 45 days of war on Iran. Thus, you know, the Axis of Resistance is on ascension. Yemen is most probably going to become a regional superpower by itself if we consider that there's a big possibility that Yemen will follow suit in terms of how Iran extended its sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz. Even if the United States doesn't reactivate a war where Yemen closes up the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, you know, why not Yemen extending its sovereignty over Bab al-Mandeb, which will make it a superpower in itself and bring it revenues to uplift the country from poverty. So, you know, the future outlook is very bright for the Axis of Resistance members because of the successes on the battlefield in Iran, in Yemen, in Lebanon.

#Mudiar

So Iran is becoming a massive power in the region because of its performance during this war. And obviously, as you said, the Beirut-based government cannot disarm Hezbollah, and the occupying forces, of course, cannot defeat any nationalist and anti-colonial forces. So the overall impact on the resistance in Lebanon is positive, and you added the element of that in Yemen and in the Red Sea. So the follow-up that comes to my mind is, what would be the impact of that strengthened Axis of

Resistance on Lebanon? We've been discussing Palestine for a while, so I'm very curious about your analysis on that.

#Laith

Well, everything we're talking about is really about Palestine. And the existence of resistance in Lebanon, for instance, wouldn't happen if there was no Zionist occupation of Palestine and expulsion of Palestinians from their homeland. And therefore, similarly, the only thing that differentiates Iran from any other state in the region is that it champions the liberation of Palestine. That's the only reason it's being punished and blockaded and besieged and sanctioned for the last 30-some-odd years. So every win that the Axis of Resistance has right now will play into the liberation of Palestine. And as the United States exits the region eventually, and the Zionist colony finds itself without an imperialist sponsor.

At that point, even the barefoot children of Gaza would be able to liberate Palestine by themselves. Okay, and now the only thing that we see, you know, if we want to be ultra positive and just play this game of, let's say, the United States is going to exit West Asia, and then the Zionist colony is left alone, and the West abandons its supply of weapons and, what have you, financial, economic, and political sponsorship, while Israel still has nuclear weapons. And we're already seeing the Axis of Resistance leadership think about that possibility. What's going to happen once the Zionists are abandoned? And clearly, somebody needs to come and pick up those nuclear weapons before these Zionist crazies drag all of humanity into a nuclear winter against our will.

Therefore, we have to begin looking at the South African apartheid model, when the world came together and dismantled the nuclear weapons of apartheid South Africa before the collapse of that regime. And yesterday, the Iranians, I think, began this process of trying to put this in people's minds in the West, with their application at the International Atomic Energy Agency, asking for it to come into occupied Palestine and put all the nuclear weapons and nuclear program of the colony under its supervision. That's the first step, to get people on the ground that can see where those weapons are, so we can work towards dismantling them. So when the moment of collapse for the Zionist colony comes, we all can breathe easily and not worry about a nuclear winter.

#Mudiar

And how do you see the future path of the client states going forward as the empire gets weakened and takes a beating, and there are no talks about it? Probably the slow death of the empire, but definitely a decline of the empire in the region. There have been client states. What is your assessment about the future of these client states? Definitely in the Gulf, but I'm thinking about Jordan, parts of Lebanon, of course Africa. And Syria now — they're not just fundamentalists, but they are also a client state of the United States. What is their future?

#Laith

Look, much of the political structures in the region are artificial and naturally unsustainable, including these borders that the imperial powers put in at the end of World War I. And so what do I mean by that? Look at what's happening right now to the UAE. They just announced that they're basically bankrupt and they're asking for a loan, financial aid from the United States. This is a country that has only 1 million citizens with some of the richest oil and gas fields on the globe. Where did this money go? Clearly, their money is in the banks of the U.S. and the West, and it's already been confiscated. It used to be that these vassals would get enough money from the looting of their resources, maybe around a 10% cut from their own gas and oil.

They got like a little tiny part of it that allows them to have these parties in the middle of the desert and glass towers, unnatural growth of populations in areas that shouldn't have high populations, and to manufacture new cultural hubs for the Arabic people, while the destruction of the natural, you know, cultural hubs of the Arabic world like Syria and Iraq and, you know, Yemen is happening. So as soon as these vassals that are unnatural begin collapsing, things will return to their natural order. Sana'a, Baghdad, Damascus, Cairo will re-rise back to their natural place as capitals of Arabic culture and trade and population centers. Even Jordan, which didn't exist — like, you know, Amman as the capital was a little hamlet before World War I, before the borders were forced.

You know, North Jordan is just like the suburbs of Damascus, basically, okay? And so these unnatural borders and these forced political formations of these vassal states, vassal leaders, will collapse as soon as the United States leaves. And this is the natural order of things. When we talk about the liberation of Palestine, people think, well, there will be a liberation of Palestine and then a Palestinian state. But no, in reality, if there's a liberation of Palestine, the Sykes-Picot borders collapse, there will be millions of Palestinian refugees from inside Syria, Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon just marching in, and with them will be other millions that just want to go and visit Jerusalem for the first time in a century, and they're not going to return. It's the end of those borders.

There will be no Palestine as a state. There will be liberation of Palestine, but that will lead to the collapse of all the fabricated borders and the fabricated states that shouldn't exist anyway. And there will be an emergence of new political formations in the region. This is how dramatic these moments that we're living are. You know, the liberation of Palestine, the exit of European military power from Western Asia are going to shift all these borders. And this is all because of the success of Iran, by the way. I think people haven't yet recognized how, you know, crucial and globally history-changing the moment is of Iran expanding its sovereignty over the Hormuz Strait.

It is as, you know, time-shifting as Gamal Abdel Nasser and Egypt extending their sovereignty over the Suez Canal and nationalizing it. And the war that came as a response to that by the tripartite attack in 1956—the British, French, and Israeli attack on Egypt—which they were defeated in, which led to their, you know, France and the U.K., being demoted from global superpowers to secondary powers under the coattails of the United States, which rose as the new superpower because of the 1956 Suez crisis. Today, the United States is ceasing to be the superpower because of the Strait of

Hormuz crisis that it lost. And there is no European power that can replace it as the hegemon within the European hierarchy.

And therefore, the effect of the demotion of the United States from being a superpower because of the Strait of Hormuz is even more historical in terms of how it's changing, because it's ending not only American power, it's ending Western European power that was built over 600 years. And another indication of this—and I know I rambled a little bit here—is when you look at Yemen and Iran being able to destroy the ability of the United States and the West to project power through naval blockades and naval invasions. This has been the core part of European power for those 600 years since the beginning of the Columbus invasion of the Americas. And that era now is ending because of the successes of Yemen and Iran.

#Mudiar

Indeed, we've been discussing some of the significance of the rise of Iran, particularly by regaining control over Hormuz. It reminds me of the moment of the breakdown of the Safavid Empire in 1732 or 1726, I guess. And since then, the advent of European colonialism that broke down Asian free trade in the region. We've been talking about the integration of Iran into rising Asia and its prospects in trade and the impact of that. Also, the impact on the petrodollar system, as the client states would rethink their relationship with the United States, and that might accelerate the process of a UN-led order—or maybe, if not UN-led, given that the financial system within China is not as liberalized to become the single hegemonic world currency—but we can definitely see a multi-layered global currency.

I was curious to ask you about, as you spoke about some of these big alternatives and the breakdown of the political formations and redrawing—I wouldn't say redrawing of maps, but the re-emergence of what is more organic to the region. I was curious about what could be some of the binding forces of these different movements. I'm thinking about some of the conversations in the 1930s and the 1940s, as visionaries at that time were seeing the end of at least a particular type of colonial world order. Of course, they never wanted the U.S. order to take over the French and the British order.

But they were talking about secular nationalism. Many were talking or discussing the role of religion. There was language emerging as one of those organic bases for people to come together. Of course, in your part of the region, we have religion as a key big factor. In other parts, there was communism. Looking forward, it seems, of course, very vague, but if you could spell out some of your thoughts about possible ways of binding what could otherwise appear as discrete and incoherent movements.

#Laith

Yeah, yeah. When we go back to this idea that in 1956 the Suez Canal crisis collapsed these empires into secondary power ranks, it also propelled Gamal Abdel Nasser and Egypt into the forefront of the decolonization struggle. And you know, Gamal Abdel Nasser reached out to all these other leaders in the world who were fighting their own liberation struggles and formed the Third World movement, or the Non-Aligned Movement. And Gamal Abdel Nasser helped liberate half of Africa, basically, and you know, was close friends with Lumumba and saved his wife and children when he was being assassinated in the Congo. These are all results of that ability of Egypt to win that moment.

Well, today it's going to be the same thing, on a different and bigger scale, in a reality where there is no First and Second World, where there isn't a capitalist camp and a communist camp that are fighting over who's going to control the emerging decolonizing peoples, right? Today, there is no such thing other than an American empire with all these components that are NATO, the EU, and the GCC, and new emerging superpowers like China and Russia that don't have an ideological motive for their relationships with the rest of the world, and they have no intention of being colonial or competing with peoples that are seeking liberation. So I think Iran right now is positioned to be the galvanizer of liberation movements around the world.

And I think we will start seeing, because of how different this moment is in scale and this lack of dual polarity that existed after World War II, there will be the emergence of a multipolar world, different than even what BRICS was envisioning, because BRICS was shackled with two members that are really, you know, vassals or very close to the United States, like India and Brazil, or the government of Modi and the government of Lula, who stood in the way of integration of other members that are more opponents of the United States, like Iran. So now Iran is emerging as the Muslim superpower. And there will be others that are emerging and aligning with it, such as, let's say, the Sahel Confederacy.

We may see things happen in the Horn of Africa if Yemen is involved — you know, Yemen and Somalia and Djibouti and Eritrea. Those are all peoples that are intermarried. They have huge histories together. And as the Emirates and the Israelis exit the Horn of Africa, Yemen will most probably be playing a role in the liberation of that region. Similarly, South Africa is in a prime position to begin looking at the region of Southern Africa, not only the country, and seeing how to mitigate the harm of colonialism — that fracturing of Zimbabwe, Zambia, Namibia, and so on — which are really just the same and one people as South Africa. Look, the sky is the limit.

And Iran and the Axis of Resistance know and can see the effects of what they are doing and the ramifications of it globally that could be there. But it is up to other nations at this moment to grab the bull by the horns and ride it. In fact, if any other nation on this planet starts a war with the United States right now — and I'm not talking about big ones like China or Russia — if some country in Latin America decides right now that it's going to go to war with the U.S. or be more assertive militarily, the U.S. is not in shape to fight any battles. It's abused its own munitions. It's down to like 25% of its stockpiles for its most advanced weapons, and it's bleeding economically.

#Mudiar

I have one final question. What kind of media do you—given both you and I are in media, whatever way we define it, but we do consume, produce, we are part of that whether we like it or not—and going forward, given these movements are so big and transnational in many ways, it's not just about a country standing up to imperialism, but also people within countries, even if their governments have not stood up against imperialism and Zionism, there are people across the world who have done that. And with that, there is an element of media, alternative or in whatever ways you define it. My final question: what kind of media would emerge out of this new order that you just described?

#Laith

Yeah, we've already, over the last decade, been seeing the emergence of this new media in different forms. As this new multipolar world was emerging, we couldn't define its details—and we still don't. But over the last two and a half years, since the genocide in Gaza began and the Aqsa Flood, it's clear that citizen journalism, on the one hand—the citizens who are not trained or are not doing this because they want to be journalists, but are documenting their own lives and, you know, the crimes against them and so forth—has emerged as a dominant way of communicating facts, okay?

There's no filter. There's an instant moment of people, you know, broadcasting this reality, and there's no way for mass media, right, that has billions of dollars, to compete with it—not because of that one act of a citizen putting out a video, but because of the tsunami of citizens interacting with this citizen media, amplifying it. And so, you know, even algorithms couldn't keep up with the flood—for instance, of people sharing content from Gaza, you know, citizen journalists' content from Gaza—that all the, you know, censorship couldn't keep up with that reality. So we have seen how important citizen journalism is.

The second part that we saw of change, of course, is the military journalism—the military media of Hamas, or of Hezbollah, or now Iran—have been producing very detailed and very well-produced content from the battlefields that is more powerful than, let's say, those videos that ran in World War II in the cinemas. This is war propaganda that is high art. So that's another form of journalism that we've seen now that is innovative and different and a change. And finally, I would say, when we look at projects like your channel, India and the Global Left, or Free Palestine TV, we can't define it as citizen journalism, but we can define it as alternative journalism—viewer-funded and viewer-supported content where we don't have to wait for some big funding agency or beg from a political party or a government to give money.

The viewers are the ones that are funding it. They're like, they like this, they're going to fund it. Therefore, again, this is another way of us seeing how the older forms of media and media control are collapsing. And I don't think the imperialists have found solutions to control the narrative anymore, given these realities. You know, demonetizing somebody or deplatforming somebody

doesn't take them out of existence. They just find ways to go around that, and the media reaches the people. And they cannot keep up with this tsunami if all of us are producing these shows, if all of us are documenting our life and broadcasting it. This is an unlimited number of participants in media production and media consumption that the traditional media, no matter how big the budget is, cannot compete with.

#Mudiar

Absolutely. We'll leave it there, Laith. Thank you so much for your answers and your time. Appreciate it, and I hope to see you again soon.

#Laith

Thank you very much, Jyotishman. See you soon.

#Ayushman

Hi, my name is Ayushman. I, along with Jyotishman, have started this platform. Over the last two years, we have tried to build content for the left and progressive forces. We have interviewed economists, historians, political commentators, and activists so far. If you have liked our content and want us to build an archive for the left, I have two requests for you. Please do consider donating for the cause—the link is in the description below. Also, if you are not able to do so, don't feel sad. You can always like our videos and share our videos with your comrades. Finally, don't forget to hit the subscribe button.