What Would A Real Renewable Energy Transition Look Like?

Richard Heinberg

10-07-2024 ~ *The seven steps that could help build a social movement and ensure a sustainable future.*

The transition from relying overwhelmingly on fossil fuels to using alternative low-carbon energy sources could be "unstoppable and exponential," according to some experts. A boosterish attitude by many renewable energy advocates is understandable; overcoming people's climate despair and sowing confidence could help muster the groundswell of motivation needed to end our collective fossil fuel dependency. But occasionally, a reality check is required.

In reality, energy transitions are a big deal and typically take centuries to unfold. Historically, they've been transformative for societies—whether we're speaking of humanity's taming of fire hundreds of thousands of years ago, the agricultural revolution 10,000 years ago, or our adoption of fossil fuels starting roughly 200 years ago. Given 1) the current size of the human population—there are eight times as many of us alive today compared to 1820 when the fossil fuel energy transition was underway, 2) the vast scale of the global economy, and 3) the unprecedented speed with which the transition will have to be made to avert catastrophic climate change. A rapid renewable energy transition is easily the most ambitious enterprise our species has ever undertaken.

The evidence shows that the transition is still in its earliest stages, and at the current rate, it will fail to avert a climate catastrophe. This will result in the death of an unimaginable number of people or forced migration, with most ecosystems transformed beyond recognition.

We'll unpack why the transition is such an uphill slog. Then, crucially, we'll explore what a real energy transition would look like and how to make it happen.

Why This Is (So Far) Not a Real Transition

Despite trillions of dollars being spent on renewable energy infrastructure, carbon emissions are still increasing, not decreasing, and the share of world energy coming from fossil fuels is only slightly less today than 20 years ago. In 2024, the world will use more oil, coal, and natural gas than it did in 2023.

While the U.S. and many European nations have seen a declining share of their electricity production coming from coal, the continuing global growth in fossil fuel usage and CO2 emissions overshadows any cause for celebration.

Why is the rapid deployment of renewable energy not resulting in declining fossil fuel usage? The main culprit is economic growth, which consumes more energy and materials. So far, the annual increase in the world's energy usage has exceeded the energy added each year from new solar panels and wind turbines. Fossil fuels have supplied the difference.

So, for now, we are not experiencing a real energy transition. All that humanity is doing is adding energy from renewable sources to the growing amount of energy it derives from fossil fuels. The much-touted energy transition could, if somewhat cynically, be described as just an aspirational grail.

How long would it take for humanity to fully replace fossil fuels with renewable energy sources, accounting for both the growth trajectory of solar and wind power and the continued expansion of the global economy at 3 percent per year? Economic models suggest the world could obtain most of its electricity from renewables by 2060 (though many nations are not on a path to reach even this modest marker). However, electricity represents only about 20 percent of the world's final energy usage; transitioning the other 80 percent of energy usage would take longer—likely many decades.

However, to avert catastrophic climate change, the global scientific community says we must achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050—in just 25 years. Since it seems physically impossible to get all of our energy from renewables that soon while still growing the economy at 3 percent, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the international agency tasked with studying climate change and its possible remedies, assumes that humanity will somehow adopt

carbon capture and sequestration technologies at scale—including technologies that have shown to be ineffective—even though there is no existing way of paying for this vast industrial build-out. This wishful thinking on the part of the IPCC is surely proof that the energy transition is not happening at sufficient speed.

The energy transition is not happening at the required pace because governments, businesses, and many advocates have set unrealistic goals of reducing emissions while still pursuing economic growth. Also, the tactical and strategic global management of the effort is insufficient. We will address these problems and provide answers concerning how we can support a true energy transition.

The Core of the Transition is Using Less Energy

At the heart of most discussions about the energy transition lie two enormous assumptions: that the transition will leave us with a global industrial economy similar to today's in terms of its scale and services, and that this future renewable energy economy will continue to grow, as the fossil-fueled economy has done in recent decades. But both of these assumptions are unrealistic. They flow from irrational expectations: we want the energy transition to be completely painless, with no sacrifice of profit or convenience. That goal is understandable since it would presumably be easier to enlist the public, governments, and businesses in an enormous new task if no extra cost is incurred (though the history of overwhelming societal effort and sacrifice during wartime might lead us to question that presumption).

But, the energy transition will undoubtedly entail costs. Aside from tens of trillions of dollars in required monetary investment, the energy transition will require energy—lots of it. It will take energy to build solar panels, wind turbines, heat pumps, electric vehicles, electric farm machinery, zero-carbon aircraft, batteries, and the rest of the vast panoply of devices that would be required to operate an electrified global industrial economy at the current scale.

In the early stages of the transition, most of that energy for building new low-carbon infrastructure will have to come from fossil fuels, since those fuels still supply more than 80 percent of world energy, and using only renewable energy to build transition-related machinery would take far too long. So, the transition itself, especially if undertaken quickly, will entail a large pulse of carbon emissions.

Several teams of scientists have been seeking to estimate the size of that pulse; according to a study published in the journal Nature in November 2022, transition-related emissions will be substantial, ranging from 70 to 395 billion metric tons of CO2 "with a cross-scenario average of 195 GtCO2"—the equivalent of more than five years' worth of global carbon CO2 emissions at current rates. The only ways to minimize these transition-related emissions would be, first, to aim to build a substantially smaller global energy system than the one we are trying to replace, and second, to significantly reduce energy usage for non-transition-related purposes—including transportation and manufacturing, cornerstones of our current economy.

In addition to energy, the transition will require materials. While our current fossil fuel energy regime extracts billions of tons of coal, oil, and gas, plus much smaller amounts of iron, bauxite, and other ores for making drills, pipelines, pumps, and other related equipment, the construction of renewable energy infrastructure at commensurate scale would require far larger quantities of non-fuel raw materials—including copper, iron, aluminum, lithium, iridium, gallium, sand, and rare earth elements.

While some estimates suggest that global reserves of these elements are sufficient for the initial build-out of renewable energy infrastructure at scale, there are still two big challenges. First, obtaining these materials will require greatly expanding extractive industries along with their supply chains. These industries are inherently polluting and inevitably degrade the land. For example, more than 125 tons of rock and soil must be displaced to produce one ton of copper ore. The rock-to-metal ratio is even worse for some other ores. According to the World Economic Forum, "As the push for clean energy technologies continues, demand for certain critical minerals is forecasted to rise by up to 500 percent."

Mining operations often take place on Indigenous peoples' lands, and the tailings from those operations pollute rivers and streams. Nonhuman species and communities in the Global South are already traumatized by land degradation and toxification; greatly expanding resource extraction—including deep-sea mining—would only multiply the wounds.

The second material challenge is that renewable energy infrastructure must be replaced periodically—every 20 to 30 years. Even if Earth's minerals are sufficient

for the first full-scale build-out of panels, turbines, and batteries, will limited mineral abundance permit continual replacements?

Transition advocates say that we can avoid depleting the planet's ores by recycling minerals and metals after constructing the first iteration of solar and wind technology. However, recycling is never complete, with some materials degraded in the process. One analysis, published in the Emergent Scientist in 2022, suggests recycling would only buy a couple of centuries worth of time before depletion would lead to the end of replaceable renewable energy machines—and that's assuming a widespread, coordinated implementation of recycling on an unprecedented scale. Again, the only real long-term solution is to aim for a much smaller global energy system.

A societal transition from fossil fuel dependency to reliance on low-carbon energy sources will be impossible without substantially reducing overall energy usage and maintaining this lower rate of energy usage indefinitely. This transition isn't just about building lots of solar panels, wind turbines, and batteries. It is about organizing society differently so that it uses much less energy *and* gets the energy it uses from sources that are sustainable over the long run.

How We Could Achieve This in Seven Concurrent Steps

We need to act now to turn the tide on the climate crisis. By taking these seven steps, we can ensure that we end the cycle of destruction and move toward a more sustainable way of living:

Cap global fossil fuel extraction through international treaties and annually lower the cap

We will not be able to reduce carbon emissions until we reduce fossil fuel usage—it's just that simple. Rather than trying to achieve this by expanding on the existing renewable energy sources (which haven't resulted in lower emissions), it makes far more sense to limit fossil fuel extraction. In 2007, I wrote up the basics of a treaty in my book, *The Oil Depletion Protocol*, explaining how nations could cooperate to reduce their dependence on oil and move toward a global rationing system.

Manage energy demand fairly

Reducing fossil fuel extraction presents a problem. Where will we get the energy required for transition purposes? Realistically, it can only be obtained by

repurposing the energy we use. That means most people, especially in highly industrialized countries, would have to use significantly less energy directly and indirectly (in terms of energy embedded in products and services provided by society, like road building). Social means of managing energy demand will be required to accomplish this with minimum societal stress.

The fairest and most direct way to manage energy demand is via quota rationing. Tradable Energy Quotas (TEQs) is a system designed by British economist David Fleming; it rewards energy savers and gently punishes energy guzzlers while ensuring everyone gets the energy they need. Every adult would be given an equal free entitlement to TEQ units each week. If you use less than your entitlement of units, you can sell your surplus. If you need more, you can buy them. All trading takes place at a single national price, which will rise and fall in line with demand.

Manage the public's material expectations

Persuading people to accept using less energy will be hard if everyone still wants to use more. Therefore, it will be necessary to manage the public's expectations. This may sound technocratic and scary, but society has already been managing the public's expectations for more than a century via advertising—which constantly delivers messages encouraging everyone to consume as much as possible. Now, we need different messages to set different expectations.

What's our objective in life? Is it to have as much stuff as possible or to be happy and secure? Our current economic system assumes the former, and we have instituted an economic goal (constant growth) and an indicator (gross domestic product, or GDP) to help us achieve that goal. But more people using more products and energy leads to increased rates of depletion, pollution, and degradation, thereby imperiling the survival of humanity and the rest of the biosphere. In addition, the goal of happiness and security is more in line with cultural traditions and human psychology.

If happiness and security are to be our goals, we should adopt indicators that help us achieve them. Instead of GDP, which measures the amount of money changing hands in a country annually, we should measure societal success by monitoring human well-being. The tiny nation of Bhutan has been doing this for decades with its gross national happiness (GNH) indicator, which it has offered as a model for the rest of the world.

Aim for population decline

If the population is constantly growing while available energy is capped, that means ever less energy will be available per capita. Even if societies ditch GDP and adopt GNH, the prospect of continually declining energy availability will present adaptive challenges. How can energy scarcity impacts be minimized? The obvious solution is to welcome population decline and plan accordingly.

The global population will start to decline sometime during this century. Fertility rates are falling worldwide, and China, Japan, Germany, and many other nations are already seeing population shrinkage. Rather than viewing this as a problem, we should see it as an opportunity. With fewer people, energy decline will be less of a burden per capita.

There are also side benefits: a smaller population puts less pressure on wild nature and often raises wages. We should stop pushing a pronatalist agenda; ensure that women have the educational opportunities, social standing, security, and access to birth control to make their own childbearing choices; incentivize small families, and aim for the long-term goal of ensuring a stable global population closer to the number of people who were alive at the start of the fossil fuel revolution (voluntary population shrinkage, however, will only help us to a small extent in reaching immediate emissions reduction targets).

Target technological research and development to the transition

Today, the main test of any new technology is its profitability. However, the transition will require new technologies to meet a different set of criteria, including low-energy operation and minimization of exotic and toxic materials. Fortunately, a subculture of engineers is already developing low-energy and intermediate technologies that could help run a right-sized circular economy.

Institute technological triage

Many existing technologies don't meet these new criteria. So, during the transition, we will be letting go of familiar but ultimately destructive and unsustainable machines.

Some machines will be easier to live without than others. For instance, gasoline-powered leaf blowers will be easy to say goodbye to. Commercial aircraft will be harder. Artificial intelligence is an energy guzzler we managed to live without until very recently and might be something we use only sparingly in the future.

Weapons industries offer plenty of examples of machines we could live without. For guidance along these lines, consult the literature of technology criticism.

Help nature absorb excess carbon

The IPCC is right: if we are to avert catastrophic climate change, we must capture carbon from the air and sequester it for a long time. But not with machines. Nature already removes and stores enormous amounts of carbon; we just need to help it do more (rather than reducing its carbon-capturing capabilities, which is what humanity is doing now). Reform agriculture to build soil rather than destroy it. Restore ecosystems, including grasslands, wetlands, forests, and coral reefs.

Implementing these seven steps will change everything. The result will be a world that's less crowded, where nature is recovering rather than retreating, and where people are healthier (because they're not soaked in pollution) and happier.

Granted, this seven-step program appears politically unachievable today, but that's largely because humanity hasn't yet fully faced the failure of our current path of prioritizing immediate profits and comfort above long-term survival—and the consequences of that failure. Given better knowledge of where we're currently headed and the alternatives, what is politically impossible today could quickly become inevitable.

Social philosopher Roman Krznaric writes that profound social transformations are often tied to wars, natural disasters, or revolutions. But crisis alone is not positively transformative. There must also be ideas for different ways to organize society, and social movements energized by those ideas must also exist. We have a crisis and (as we have just seen) some good ideas for how to do things differently. Now we need a movement.

Building a movement takes political and social organizing skills, time, and hard work. Even if you don't have the skills for organizing, you can help the cause by learning about what a real energy transition requires and educating people you know about it, advocating for degrowth or related policies, and reducing your own energy and materials consumption.

Even with a new social movement advocating for a real energy transition, there is no guarantee that civilization will emerge from this century of unraveling in a recognizable form. But we all need to understand this is a fight for survival in which cooperation and sacrifices are required, just as in war. Until we feel that

level of shared urgency, there will be no real energy transition and little prospect for a desirable human future.

By Richard Heinberg

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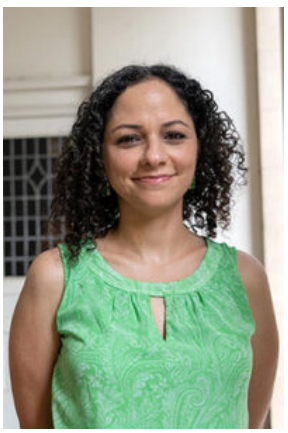
Israel Has Successfully Provoked Iran To Enter War



Mireille Rebeiz – Dickinson College

10-06-24 ~ *An interview with Lebanon expert Mireille Rebeiz, who says that "I would like to believe that Lebanon will not turn into a second Gaza," but now finds itself "in the middle of a major storm."*

After nearly a year since the Hamas-led terror attack on southern Israel that resulted in the deaths of close to 1200 people (roughly 800 civilians and nearly 400 security forces though some Israeli civilians and soldiers may have been killed by friendly fire as the controversial "Hannibal Directive" was deployed on that date, according to reported testimonies of soldiers and officers), Israel's destruction of Gaza continues unabated.

Israel has rejected calls from the international community for a ceasefire/prisoner swap deal and blatantly ignored an International Court of Justice ruling not to engage in any military offensive in Rafah where the situation in the southern Gaza city was already "disastrous." Now, however, after having killed more than 41,000 Palestinians (though the toll could reach up to 186,000 dead according to a study published in early July in the prestigious medical journal Lancet) and making Gaza practically unlivable, Netanyahu's neo-fascist government that makes Europe's right-wing extremists seem like little farceurs has turned its focus to Lebanon. A joint operation between the IDF and Mossad spread terror by exploding walkie-talkies and pagers that people in Lebanon used, killing many and severely wounding thousands, while the Israeli military carried out massive airstrikes across southern Lebanon that have already killed more than 1,000 people, including many children, and wounded thousands.

Airstrikes have killed scores of senior Hezbollah figures, including its long-time leader, Hassan Nasrallah. But the airstrikes on Lebanon did not stop even after Nasrallah's death despite calls for de-escalation, raising fears of a regional war between Israel and Iran. The Israeli military has even targeted central Beirut, and up to one million people may have been displaced. And as even further evidence that Israel is seeking to provoke a regional war, it launched a ground offensive in the south of Lebanon where heavy fighting is apparently taking place between Israeli forces and Hezbollah fighters. Indeed, Iran seems now to have been dragged into a regional war by launching a major missile attack on Israel.

What is Israel after in Lebanon? Has Nasrallah's death altered the direction of the conflict? Are we on the brink of a full-blown war in the Middle East? In the interview that follows, Mireille Rebeiz, a Lebanon and Hezbollah expert tackles these and other related questions. Rebeiz is Chair of Middle East Studies and Associate Professor of Francophone Studies & Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies at Dickinson College (Pennsylvania).

C. J. Polychroniou: Almost a year after launching its devastating attack on Gaza, which the International Court of Justice, scores of international human rights organizations and leading international law scholars and historians have called a genocide, Israel has turned its focus on Lebanon. It blew up communication devices that the armed group Hezbollah had ordered months before the explosions, killing dozens and wounding thousands, and the Israeli military launched a wave of deadly attacks on Lebanon's capital, one of which struck Hezbollah's headquarters killing its long-time leader, Hassan Nasrallah. Israel's war objectives in the Gaza Strip are to wipe Hamas off the earth and make Gaza unlivable. What is Israel trying to accomplish with its attacks on Hezbollah and Lebanon?

Mireille Rebeiz: From Israel's point of view, the on-going war on Lebanon falls under its right to self-defense against terrorism.

Last week, we saw a series of attacks on Hezbollah fighters including the explosions of pagers and other wireless devices and the assassinations of several leaders. Although Israel has not officially commented on the attacks, evidence suggests that it has been planning this action for some time now.

Escalation continued with the assassination of Hezbollah's Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah and several other commanders. Israel dropped at least fifteen-times, American – manufactured, 2,000-pound bombs on south Beirut. Dubbed the "bunker busters" for their ability to pierce the ground before detonating, these bombs leveled several concrete buildings.

More recently, Israel started a ground invasion on south Lebanon and bombed Damascus by air.

The announced goals are clear: eliminate Hezbollah at all costs and send a message to Iran and Syria that Israel will no longer tolerate Iranian-backed militias in the region.

On the surface, one may look at these facts and consider that Israel is justified in its actions. However, international law tells a different story for Israel is piling violations of several rules and regulations related to armed conflicts. Furthermore, the war on terrorism is never innocent and always carries other motives.

Article 7 of Amended Protocol II on the Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices, to which Lebanon, Israel, and the United States are parties, explicitly bans these types of weapons and methods of warfare. Article 2(4) of Amended Protocol II defines "booby-trap" as "any device or material which is designed, constructed, or adapted to kill or injure, and which functions unexpectedly when a person disturbs or approaches an apparently harmless object or performs an apparently safe act."

Clearly, the pagers and other wireless devices have been tampered with to cause harm irrespective of its holder. As a result, at least 32 people, including two children were killed and thousands more were injured, and it is impossible to argue that every single person killed or injured is a Hezbollah fighter.

Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions specifically states that persons not taking part in the hostilities and those placed "hors de combat" should not be targeted and shall be treated humanely. The wireless communication device explosions and the intense bombing of south Beirut cannot guarantee any protection to civilians and those unrelated to Hezbollah. Many civilians — Lebanese citizens, Palestinians and Syrian refugees — live in south Beirut for its affordable housing.

Beirut itself ranks as the 6th most expensive city in the Arab world, coming after Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha, Riyadh, and Jeddah. Globally, it ranks as the 113th most expensive city out of 178.

According to the World Bank 2023 report, inflation rate in Lebanon is in the triple-digit. There is serious decline in income as the Lebanese pound lost over 90% of its value. This led to the erosion of the middle class, and half of the population plunged under poverty line with unemployment nearing 30%.

Major events aggravated the financial crisis in Lebanon: the collapse of the infrastructure, the severe shortage of fuel, the pandemic that put a lot of stress on medical care, and finally the Beirut port explosion of 2020.

These factors pushed many Lebanese and others to rent apartments in south Beirut, and Israel cannot guarantee that every resident of this part of town is a Hezbollah fighter.

There is no doubt that these tactics imply a major escalation and a serious violation of international law. Former CIA director Leon Panetta labelled these attacks in Lebanon as terrorism: "I don't think there's any question that it's a form of terrorism."

Since the United States of America is the one providing many of these weapons, there might be criminal implications under U.S Law as the violation of Article 7 (2) could amount to federal offense. This prompted Secretary of State Anthony Blinken to quickly dissociate the US from the attacks and call for restraints. This comes at a time when the Biden Administration is under investigation for the export of billions of dollars in arms to Israel in assistance of a foreign government accused of committing gross human rights violations including blocking humanitarian aid.

Furthermore, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has a strategy that goes beyond the Israel – Hezbollah war. His political survival is dependent on him staying in power.

Before the October 7 attacks, Netanyahu was on trial for corruption. After winning the election, he aligned himself with extremists, forming a far-right government, one that sought to transform Israel into an autocratic theocracy. For instance, his government proposed a contentious law to reduce minority rights, make it harder to file complaints against corruption, and legalize the annexation of the West Bank. His plans triggered massive protests around the country.

The October 7 attacks were heinous, and they provided Netanyahu with the perfect excuse that would allow him to stay in power: he shifted the narrative to Palestinian rights – including the right to self-determination – as an existential threat to all Jews, justifying thus the need for a long war in Gaza.

In other words, it is in Netanyahu's interest to keep Israel in a permanent state of war. To do so, he must reject all diplomatic negotiations and place the blame of their failure on the other party.

At this point, Netanyahu is buying time to present the messianic radicals, on whom he relies on to stay in power, with concrete results, ones that would save his image and political career. His undeclared goals would be the annexation of Gaza, the West Bank, and possibly south Lebanon. The hostages are not among his primary concerns.

Under international law, annexation of territory is illegal. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) said Israel's occupation of the West Bank is illegal and ordered Israel to stop its illegal settlements in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza strip. The United Nations even declared these settlements as "settler-colonialism." Netanyahu's response was that the ICJ's decision is based on lies.

The occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights is equally illegal, and the on-going ground invasion in Lebanon is not only a violation of Lebanon's sovereignty and an act of war, but also may be the excuse to occupy south Lebanon and annex it.

C. J. Polychroniou: Hezbollah emerged in Lebanon largely in response to the Israeli invasion of that country in 1982. It is an Iran-backed Shiite Islamist militant group and political party with lawmakers in the Lebanese parliament and is seen in fact as something like "a state within a state." What does Hezbollah do in Lebanon and how much support does it have?

Mireille Rebeiz: Over time, Hezbollah's popularity shifted inside Lebanon. Hezbollah itself was born in 1982 when Israel invaded Lebanon and imposed a brutal two-months siege on Beirut killing an estimated number of 17,000 to 19,000 people. While Israel retreated from Beirut, it kept south Lebanon under occupation till 2000. During this period, it illegally detained thousands of Lebanese resisting the occupation. Over 200 were detained and tortured in the Khiam Detention Center.

From 1982 till early 2000, many Lebanese supported Hezbollah and saw it as the guardian of Lebanon's sovereignty and its liberator. The shift began in 2000 when Israel withdrew from the south. Many Lebanese started speaking up against Hezbollah's armed presence in Lebanon, its alliance to the Syrian regime, and its commitment to Iranian ideology.

As a matter of fact, Hezbollah explicitly supported the Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad despite the numerous reports of severe human rights violations in Syria. As to Iran, in its 1985 Manifesto, Hezbollah vowed its allegiance to Iran's Supreme Leader Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini and made explicit its wish to create an Islamic state in Lebanon.

And many paid a heavy price for speaking out. Former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri was assassinated on February 14, 2005, and fingers pointed at Hezbollah and Syria. Many Lebanese journalists and political figures were also assassinated: a

blast killed the anti-Syrian journalist, Samir Kassir. The former Communist party leader George Hawi and the journalist and lawmaker Gibran Tueni were also killed in car bombs.

This wave of killings sparked the Cedar Revolution, which clearly expressed the Lebanese's opposition to Hezbollah and Syria.

In the past two decades, this opposition continued and took different forms.

In 2005, the anti-Hezbollah and anti-Syria bloc won the parliamentary elections.

In 2015, the environmental movement "You Stink" was born. It criticized the State's inability to sustainably manage waste, and it opposed all political parties, including Hezbollah. In 2019, massive protests erupted all over the country under the slogan of "All Means All" to denounce the corrupt elites.

There is no doubt that Hezbollah operates as "a state within a state." In light of the weakness of the State of Lebanon, Hezbollah offers its own healthcare, education system and other social services to the Shiite community. It functions inside and outside the governmental structure and unilaterally holds the decision for peace/war.

In 1992, Hezbollah participated in parliamentary elections and won several seats in the Parliament. In 2005, it entered the government. Alone, they were never a majority. However, their presence was strong enough to oppose any parliamentary or governmental decision that would go against their own interests.

C. J. Polychroniou: Nasrallah was being considered as something of a pragmatist rather than an ideologue. It is now quite conceivable that the next Hezbollah leadership might be more driven by revenge than Nasrallah was. At any rate, what does Nasrallah's death mean for Hezbollah, Lebanon, and the Middle East? Will Iran become directly involved in the conflict?

Mireille Rebeiz: Nasrallah's death is a definite blow to the group, and it did not take long for Iran to respond. In fact, Iran launched several missiles into Israel to avenge the killing of three of its top leaders: Hamas Chairman Ismail Haniyeh, Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah, and Deputy Commander in the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Abbas Nilforushan. Iran made it clear that this is a

self-defense attack and that it will respond further should Israel attack Iran.

Ironically, Hezbollah started this war to support Hamas and the Palestinian cause. Now, the attention has completely shifted from Gaza and the West Bank to Iran, Israel, and the United States.

C. J. Polychroniou: Under president Joe Biden, US foreign policy in the Middle East has been a complete failure. Over the past several months, Biden has said on countless occasions that "we are closer than ever" to a Gaza ceasefire only to see Netanyahu turn Gaza into a graveyard. Biden called for a 21-day ceasefire along the Israel-Lebanon border only to see Netanyahu make him look again like a bumbling idiot. How do you explain the US-Israel relationship?

Mireille Rebeiz: The US is Israel's closest and proudest ally. However, the failure of US foreign policy in the Middle East is in large part to blame for the recent events. At no point in the past two decades did the US lead any serious diplomatic dialogue on Israel – Palestine.

President Biden continues to support a far-right government in Israel irrespective of the consequences in the region and the major escalation we are witnessing. Many Americans are horrified by this support and the US' potential complicity in atrocities in Gaza.

Netanyahu's' visit to the United Nations, his rejection of the 21-day cease-fire, and the immediate attacks that followed in Lebanon indicate a clear separation between what the US would like to see and what Israel wants.

Stephen Collinson speaks of a humiliating pattern indicating American impotency in curtailing Israel's defiance, and the results are obvious: Gaza is leveled with over 41,000 civilians killed, of which 17,000 are children. Lebanon is under attack with a ground invasion in progress, and violence is escalating in the West Bank.

C. J. Polychroniou: Gaza is gone, and there are fears that Israel could turn Lebanon into a second Gaza. In your view, what does the future hold for Lebanon?

Mireille Rebeiz: So far, the rhetoric is that Israel will only bomb areas where Hezbollah fighters are located or areas suspected of storing Hezbollah's weapons.

The level of destruction is massive, and the number of casualties is on the rise. I would like to believe that Lebanon will not turn into a second Gaza. However, the

situation is fluid, and it depends on on-going diplomatic negotiations and the arrival of other actors on the scene such as the Houthis in Yemen or Kata'ib Hizballah in Iraq or even Iran.

In any case, I pray that Lebanon will be spared. Lebanon is in the middle of a major storm. As US-backed Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah militants are exchanging fires and settling debts, the Lebanese people are caught in the middle of the crossfire.

Source: https://www.commondreams.org/opinion/iran-lebanon-israel-war

C.J. Polychroniou is a political economist/political scientist who has taught and worked in numerous universities and research centers in Europe and the United States. His latest books are The Precipice: Neoliberalism, the Pandemic and the Urgent Need for Social Change (A collection of interviews with Noam Chomsky; Haymarket Books, 2021), and Economics and the Left: Interviews with Progressive Economists (Verso, 2021).