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A 'Genocidal Maniac': What is Netanyahu's Ultimate Goal in the Middle East?



This article was written shortly before Israel assassinated the Deputy Head of Hamas Political Bureau Saleh al-Aroui in Beirut on January 2. The assassination is a further illustration of the Israeli government's desire to escape the consequences of its disastrous war in Gaza, by igniting a regional conflict.

The clashes between Hezbollah and Israel are the closest to an actual war that the Lebanon-Israel border has seen since the war of 2006, which resulted in a rushed Israeli retreat, if not outright defeat.

We often refer to the ongoing conflict between Lebanon and Israel as 'controlled' clashes, simply because both sides are keen not to instigate or engage in an all-out war.

Obviously, Hezbollah wants to preserve Lebanese lives and civilian infrastructure, which would surely be seriously damaged, if not destroyed, should Israel decide to launch a war.

But Israel, too, understands that this is a different Hezbollah than that of the 1980s, 2000 and even 2006.

Compared to Israel's behavior in the war of 2006, the Israeli response to Hezbollah's military action – compelled by its solidarity with the Palestinian Resistance in Gaza – is greatly tamed.

For example, the 2006 war was presumably provoked by a Hezbollah attack on Israeli soldiers, which killed three. (Hezbollah says that the soldiers violated Lebanese sovereignty, as the Israeli army has indeed done numerous times before and since then.)

That single event led to a major war that wreaked havoc on Lebanon, but also resulted in the retreat and defeat of the Israeli army.

Imagine what Israel would have done by the standards of the 2006 war if Hezbollah had killed and wounded hundreds of Israeli soldiers, bombed scores of military bases, installations and even settlements, as it has done, on a daily basis, since early October.

A Different Hezbollah

Despite numerous threats, Israel is yet to go to war with the main objective of pushing Hezbollah forces past the Litani River, thus supposedly securing the border Jewish settlements. But why the hesitation?

First, Hezbollah fighters are much stronger than before.

For years, Hezbollah has fought in traditional warfare settings, namely in Syria, thus producing a generation of battle-hardened fighters and commanders, who are no longer bound to the rules of guerilla warfare, as was the case in the past.

Second, Hezbollah's missile capabilities have exponentially grown since 2006, not only in terms of numbers – up to 150,000 according to some estimates – but also in terms of precision, explosive capabilities and range.

Moreover, Hezbollah has excelled in the development of its own rockets and missiles, which include the powerful Burkan, a short-range rocket, which can carry a heavy warhead, between 100 to 500 kilograms. This makes Hezbollah, in some ways, self-sufficient in terms of weapons, if not munitions.

Third, Hezbollah's sophisticated Radwan Elite Units and an elaborate tunnel system that goes deep inside northern Israel, would force Israel to contend with a whole different military reality than that of the last war, should a major military conflict break out.

Fourth, the Israeli army itself is in tatters, demoralized, greatly exhausted and weakened by ongoing daily losses on the Gaza front. It is hardly in a state of preparedness to fight a long and more difficult war against a better prepared enemy.

That in mind, one must not take such comments as that of Israel's Defense Minister Yoav Gallant too seriously when he says that his country is fighting a war on seven different fronts. In actuality, the Israeli army is still fighting a single war in Gaza, a difficult war that it is not winning.

Provoking Iran

To distract from its Gaza losses, and its inability to launch a major war against Lebanon, Tel Aviv wants to drag Tehran into the war.

But why would Israel escalate against the strongest of its enemies in the region, if it is not able to beat the smaller ones?

The short answer is that, by engaging Iran directly, Israel would force the US into a major regional war.

We all remember the seemingly odd decision by the Biden Administration to dispatch an aircraft carrier to the Israeli shores of the Mediterranean, immediately after the start of the Gaza war on October 7. (The Gerald R. Ford was ultimately withdrawn on December 31) Washington wanted to send a message to Iran that an attack on Israel would be considered an attack on the United States. But when it became clear that Iran had no interest in an actual war, Washington realized, or must have realized, that the danger of a regional war does not stem from Tehran, but from Tel Aviv itself.

That is when official US intelligence and political estimates began telling us, and repeatedly so, that Iran had nothing to do with the Hamas military operation of October 7, and that Iran was not interested in war.

The target audience for that message was Israel and its US-western allies who have been angling for a US-Iran war for years. Biden's lack of interest in war, of course, has little to do with his propensity for peace, and everything to do with the lack of any serious geostrategic objectives in the Middle East now, his administration's disastrous failure in Ukraine and the rapid depletion of armaments and munitions.

Israel persisted, however. It continued to accuse Iran of being the orchestrator of the Hamas attack, and the main 'existential threat' to the 'Jewish state'. In Israel's understanding, the collective action of Hamas and other Palestinian Resistance groups, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Ansarallah in Yemen and the Islamic Resistance of Iraq, are all fragments of a larger Iranian scheme to destroy Israel.

To defeat that imaginary threat, Israel carried out numerous acts of provocations against Iran, focused mostly on the bombing of Iran's military positions in Syria, leading to

the assassination of a top Iranian commander, General Sayyed Ravi Mousavi, near Damascus on December 25.

Biden the Enabler

For Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a US-Iran war would constitute a lifeline for a desperate politician who fully, and rightly, understands, that a no-victory in Gaza would equal a defeat for the Israeli army. Such a defeat would not only be a disgraceful end for Netanyahu's political career, but also an end of a long-sustained myth that Israel, and the US, can impose their political will on the Middle East through military superiority and firepower.

The Biden Administration must be fully aware of Netanyahu's intentions, that of dragging the region into the abyss of possibly one of the most devastating wars in recent memory.

Reported disagreements and, in fact, a rift between Biden and Netanyahu are not related to a US moral objection to the Israeli genocide in Gaza, but to a real American fear that another Middle Eastern war could precipitate the breaking down of US power in the energy-rich region – in fact, beyond.

Thus, the current standstill: Washington's inability to free itself from its blind commitment to Israel and its violent Zionist ideology, and Netanyahu's inability to distinguish between the goal of sustaining his personal career and that of destroying the whole of the Middle East.

Unable to place US interests above those of Israel, Biden continues to feed the Israeli military machine, which is mostly used to kill Palestinian civilians in Gaza. This is allowing Netanyahu to champion a perpetual war in Gaza, while working to expand the conflict so that it reaches Beirut, Tehran and other regional capitals.

Needless to say, Netanyahu, described by US Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib as a 'genocidal maniac', must be restrained. If not, the Israeli genocide in Gaza will multiply into other genocides throughout the Middle East.

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