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14.06.2024



Tipping point: Israel's military peak has come and gone

Facing internal resignations and significant military setbacks, Israel is at a crucial tipping point: it must choose between stopping its war on Gaza and cutting its losses, or escalating conflict in Gaza and Lebanon and risking further strategic defeat.

On the evening of 9 June, Israeli war cabinet ministers Benny Gantz and Gadi Eisenkot **announced** their resignation from the emergency government. This is not a step two war ministers in a government heading for victory would take. On the contrary. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, they say, is “preventing us from advancing toward true victory.”

By resigning, Gantz and Eisenkot aim at two main objectives. First, they want to alleviate the pressure on Netanyahu to accept a deal to stop the war, a strategy likely coordinated with Washington.

Second, being among the most informed Israeli officials on the state of the war, they chose to jump ship, anticipating that Netanyahu’s continued insistence on prolonging the war would only lead to further disaster. In military terms, this means they have assessed that Israel’s Gaza operations have “peaked.”

Israel has reached its peak

In 1992, the College of Advanced Military Studies of the US Army College of Command and General Staff published a paper titled “**Peak Point and Tactical Doctrine of the US Army.**” It

argues that the art of attacking at all levels is to achieve critical objectives before reaching the peak. Conversely, the art of defense is to hasten the attack's peak and prepare to move on to the attack when it arrives. So, what is the peak point?

The war theorist Carl von Clausewitz defined the [culmination point](#) as the line after which military progress becomes politically destructive, having achieved all it can. Beyond this point, any further offensive action jeopardizes previous gains. Clausewitz explains in *On War* that exceeding the peak point not only fails to add to success but is harmful and triggers disproportionate reactions.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's recent statements reflect Israel's arrival at this peak point in Gaza. In a mid-May interview, Blinken [said](#) of the Israeli military: "Even if it goes in and takes heavy action in Rafah, there will still be thousands of armed Hamas left," noting that "we've seen, in areas that Israel has cleared in the north, even in Khan Younis, Hamas coming back."

Blinken's assessment is that Israel's ongoing military effort in Gaza will not achieve more goals, indicating that it has reached its peak point and must stop the war to avoid eroding its tactical achievements.

With Israel reaching its peak point, it has two options: either end the war with the least possible damage, which Washington is advocating through a roadmap that offers Israel normalization with Saudi Arabia and a softer approach to eliminating resistance in Gaza, or continue its military effort, which will likely deepen its [strategic defeat](#).

Where Israel is heading

As Netanyahu continues the war, indicators of Israel heading toward strategic defeat are rising. The resignation of Gantz and Eisenkot reflects the growing internal division spurred by the failure to achieve military goals.

On the [northern front](#) of occupied Palestine, on Israel's border with Lebanon, the situation is fast deteriorating. In March, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Galant [warned](#) that the truce in Gaza would not affect Israel's goal of keeping Hezbollah away from its northern border. By February, Galant had [announced](#) that even with a Gaza ceasefire, Israel would continue to target Hezbollah. But Lebanese Resistance operations only increased after Galant's remarks, demonstrating Hezbollah's growing boldness.

According to a [report](#) by the Alma Center for Israeli Research, May 2024 saw the most intense Hezbollah attacks on Israel since October 2023, with 325 attacks, an average of 10 per day. There was also a significant increase in anti-tank missiles and drones used that month.

The use of anti-tank weapons rose to 95 cases, up from 50 in April, while drone incidents increased to 85 cases from 42 the month before. Over the past four months, there has been a more than 12-fold increase in the number of drone attacks against Israel. The number of rocket attacks also showed a slight upward trend, with Hezbollah carrying out 139 shootings compared to 128 a month ago.

If anything, those numbers look set to spike. On 12 June, Hebrew media reported a massive 200-missile attack from Lebanon, which included a 100-barrage missile salvo in one big show of force at [Israeli targets](#) in the Golan Heights and occupied Safad. This was by all accounts considered to be Hezbollah's largest missile attack to date. The next day, 13 June, Hezbollah once again launched a massive combined attack of at least 150 assault drones, ATGMs, and rockets at Israeli military targets in the occupied Golan and Galilee – in under 30 minutes, according to Hebrew newspaper *Maariv*. A source in Hezbollah told *Al Jazeera* that the Lebanese resistance attacked at least 15 military at once.

On 10 June, the Lebanese resistance also launched its biggest drone operation since the war's onset, followed just days later with a second record-breaking drone event.

While Hezbollah's escalation this week appears to be directly connected to Israel's assassination of its top commander 'Abu Talib,' the group has shown that it will not shy away from escalating as necessary and has rhetoric of its own to match. At the funeral, Hashem Safieddine, head of Hezbollah's Executive Council, railed against the assassins:

If the Israeli enemy is screaming and moaning from what it's suffering in northern Palestine, let it prepare to cry and wail. The enemy is still in its foolishness, and has not learned from all the past experiences when it believes that assassinating leaders weakens the resistance, but experience has proven that the more leaders are martyred, the more steadfast and entrenched the resistance becomes.

These kinds of effective resistance operations have changed the attitude of Israelis, who, despite their belligerent public rhetoric, have become convinced that a ceasefire is urgently needed on their northern border. But that would also necessitate a complete cessation of Tel Aviv's war on Gaza, something their right-wing government coalition still seems reluctant to accept.

The Israelis have made many prior attempts to separate events in southern Lebanon from the Gaza war, but many now recognize that the Palestinian–Lebanese Resistance fronts are unified and have finally begun to recognize the impact of Hezbollah's strikes on Israel's Gaza operations.

Strategic implications

Former head of Mossad, Haim Tomer, has [openly admitted](#) that Hezbollah's launching of the Lebanon front prevented Israel from achieving a fundamental advantage in the fighting in the Gaza Strip.

Israeli officials, quoted by the [Israel Broadcasting Corporation](#), have also signaled that Tel Aviv cannot secure a settlement in the north without first reaching an agreement in Gaza. Even Tel Aviv's allies are falling into line: Washington has started to include the cessation of military activities in northern occupied Palestine as part of its broader strategy to persuade Israel to halt the war in Gaza.

The steadfastness of the resistance in Gaza, coupled with effective strike operations from its allied support fronts, were part of the efforts of the Axis of Resistance to accelerate Israel's arrival at a military peak – followed by decline. Tel Aviv's options for escalation in Gaza or Lebanon are dwindling, which explains the Biden administration's relentless pursuit to force a ceasefire on the Netanyahu government.

Having peaked militarily, Israel has two choices: continue waging war on Gaza and thus expand its strategic defeat, or stop the war and limit the level of defeat. After eight months of unconditional military support for Israel, the Biden administration has finally acknowledged what its ally does not – doubling down will only accelerate Israel's decline and defeat.

JUN 13, 2024