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RAMZY BAROUD

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Israel's Biblical Wars of 'Self Defense': The Myth of the 'Seven War Fronts'

Israeli officials keep repeating that Israel is fighting on multiple fronts. The truth is that Israel chooses to fight on multiple fronts. The two claims are fundamentally different.

Recently, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu went as far as saying that his country is fighting on seven different war fronts, all driven by the objective of “defending ourselves against ... barbarism.”

These supposedly defensive wars are also carried out in the name of protecting “civilization against those who seek to impose a dark age of fanaticism on all of us,” Netanyahu said in a speech in early October.

There will be no need to counter Netanyahu's diatribes. It should be obvious that neither genocide is classified as self-defense, nor does preserving human civilization include burning people alive, as was the case with Sha'ban Al-Dalou, who was horrifically killed alongside his family in the recent Israeli shelling of the al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir al-Balah.

But is Israel being forced to fight on seven fronts?

According to Netanyahu, but also other top political and military officials, the fronts are Iran, Gaza, Lebanon, Yemen and groups in Syria, Iraq and the West Bank.

Though the major fighting is only taking place in Gaza and Lebanon, the official Israeli line is keen on exaggerating the number of war fronts to continue capitalizing on the generous US and western military and political support. More wars for Israel also translate into more money.

Of course, Israel is fighting actual wars too; a war of extermination and genocide against the Palestinian people in Gaza, which has killed and wounded more than 150,000 people in the course of one year.

There is also a war in the West Bank, carried out with the precise aim of subduing all forms of resistance, so that Israel may accelerate its settler-colonial project in the occupied territories.

The above is not an inference, but a statement of fact, based on Netanyahu's own declared policies. "Israel must have security control over all the territory west of the Jordan," he said during a news conference last January. To be more precise, "between the Sea and the Jordan there will only be Israeli sovereignty," he said. "Security control" is an Israeli euphemism for territorial expansion.

In an interview with the European public service channel, Arte, Israeli Minister of Finance Bezalel Smotrich said Israel would expand "little by little" to eventually encompass the whole of the Palestinian territories, in addition to Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt and other Arab countries.

"It is written that the future of Jerusalem is to expand to Damascus," he said.

Religious prophecies are particularly dangerous when they are embraced by unhinged extremist politicians who wield the political clout and military power to put them into action. Netanyahu is a leading member of the same group. He has already justified his genocide in Gaza and wars everywhere according to religious texts, where he sees his army as the Israelites fighting the Amalekites.

These religious sentiments are common in Israel's political discourses throughout history. However, they have taken center stage in recent years under a succession of far-right governments, mostly formed by Netanyahu. They see in the Gaza war an opportunity to bring about what Smotrich, then the vice-chairman of the Knesset called in 2017 as "Israel's decisive plan".

Ironically named 'One Hope', Smotrich's plan is primarily centered on the annexation of the whole of the West Bank, which he, like Netanyahu and others, refers to as 'Judea and Samaria'. The plan entails "imposing sovereignty on all of Judea and Samaria", with the "concurrent acts of settlements", as in "the establishing of cities and towns", with the aim of "creating a clear and irreversible reality on the ground".

Smotrich's plan, which is being implemented, now that he is one of the two kingmakers in Netanyahu's government – the other is Itamar Ben-Gvir – was prepared years before the

ongoing war on Gaza, and is being implemented, per his own admission, “little by little” ever since.

Israel may claim that it is fighting a war on seven or seventy fronts. It may also assign itself the role of the savior of civilizations. But the truth cannot be hidden, especially when the Israelis themselves are the ones who are disclosing their sinister intentions.

Even the ongoing war on Lebanon, which Israeli leaders, along with their US backers, have dubbed a defensive war, is now being promoted by some Israeli politicians and their rightwing supporters as another expansionist war, or more accurately a quest for “Greater Israel”

There is a difference between a country fighting a defensive war on multiple fronts and another fighting for colonial expansion, for regional hegemony and for military dominance driven by religious prophecies. Those who have chosen the latter path, as Israel has, cannot claim to be in a state of self-defense.

“Self-defense in international law refers to the inherent right of a State to use of force in response to an armed attack,” the International Red Cross states on its website. This definition does not apply to a state that is itself a military occupier, thus is in an active state of hostility and unlawful use of violence.

Netanyahu and Smotrich, however, are hardly concerned about international or humanitarian laws. They are driven by ominous, expansionist agendas. If they succeed, more deadly wars are sure to follow. The international community must do everything in its power to ensure their failure.

Ramzy Baroud is a journalist and the Editor of The Palestine Chronicle. He is the author of five books. His latest is “These Chains Will Be Broken: Palestinian Stories of Struggle and Defiance in Israeli Prisons” (Clarity Press, Atlanta). Dr. Baroud is a Non-resident Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Islam and Global Affairs (CIGA), Istanbul Zaim University (IZU). His website is www.ramzybaroud.net

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