



US President Joe Biden holds a press conference in Tel Aviv during a solidarity visit to Israel on October 18, 2023, days after Hamas's October 7 attack on the occupied territories.

● BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI/GETTY IMAGES

# Actual war or psychological war?



The lack of strategic calculations about Israel's engagement in a war with Lebanon and the absence of a clear vision thus far have pushed the US towards freezing the status quo on Israel's northern front.

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## OPINION EXCLUSIVE

*As the flames of war rage more and more fiercely with each passing day in the north of the occupied territories, the United States seeks to prevent not only the escalation of tensions but also the risk of a full-blown regional war, even if it would be for the briefest of moments. This is due to the shifting regional balance in favor of the resistance and the evolving security dynamics in West Asia.*

*The White House, the "ironclad" ally of the Zionist regime, has employed its full diplomatic, military, and financial might to bolster Israel in the Gaza conflict. Yet, they find themselves deadlocked in devising an overarching strategy for the war, with no clear path to extricate Israel from its self-made quagmire. Even the recent cease-fire proposal — riddled with criticisms from Hamas and ambiguities about whether it halts hostilities and whether its conditions for making the truce permanent can be fulfilled — has failed to gain traction among the disputing parties. Consequently, the frenzied efforts of the White House have portrayed the US as ineffective in its support for Israel on the global stage. This indicates that the US lacks a well-defined plan with a clear vision to navigate itself and Israel out of the escalating tensions in the region.*

*Adding to this failure, the Zionist regime has fallen short of achieving any of its proclaimed objectives, such as destroying Hamas or securing the release of captives, despite wielding its full political and military might against the besieged people of Gaza and the Palestinian resistance. This bitter realization along with the humiliating defeat of its armed-to-the-teeth army against a modestly equipped military group, which is under stringent siege, cast serious doubts on the prospect of engaging in another battle with the formidable and seasoned Hezbollah group.*

### Challenges for US

In the prevailing circumstances, a large-scale war with far-reaching dimensions against the Lebanese resistance would not only exacerbate Israel's predicament but also heighten threats to American bases and interests in the region, ultimately challenging America's influence.

Hence, the US has repeatedly underscored its determination to prevent an all-out war between Israel and Hezbollah fighters stationed in southern Lebanon, advocating for a negotiated end to the conflict. Following Operation Al-Aqsa Storm and the anxious deployment of Western and American forces to the occupied territories to bolster Israel's shaky security, a challenging path was laid for the West. After the onset of attacks by the Lebanese resistance, France and the US dispatched envoys to Lebanon, aiming to pressure Hezbollah into retreating from the border and ceasing hostilities through internal channels. However, these attempts not only fell flat but also backfired as Hezbollah intensified its heavy attacks on northern regions, thwarting the plot.

A significant source of the US's primary fear, by their own admission, is the unpredictable nature of the resistance ring's assistance to Hezbollah in Lebanon. From the outset of the Zionist regime's recent threats against Lebanon, resistance groups in Iraq and Yemen vowed to fight side by side with Hezbollah should Israel invade Lebanese soil. Presently, it is not just Hezbollah but a united front of resistance that stands against the Israeli army. Resistance groups from Yemen and Iraq have already executed several coordinated operations within the occupied territories, targeting strategic locations such as the port of Eilat.

Of notable importance is the strengthening of Hezbollah's deterrence capability through its sustained heavy and precise attacks in recent weeks, inflicting substantial losses on the Zionists. While the Lebanese resistance was incrementally advancing its operational capabilities as per its strategy, the assassination of its commanders

prompted a shift in tactics, leading to the deployment of advanced weaponry. This has imposed substantial and ongoing costs on the Israeli army and cabinet.

It is worth mentioning that Iran's stern warning to the Zionist regime regarding any fantasies of direct confrontation with Lebanon tops the list of Tel Aviv's concerns. Iran has unequivocally stated that, in the event of an all-out military offensive, all options are on the table, including the full mobilization of all resistance fronts. This threat was gravely perceived in both Tel Aviv and the White House. The punitive response of Iran's Operation True Promise, with its extensive and precise missile strikes on the occupied territories, altered the offensive plans against Israel and marked a turning point in the nature of the threat posed to the Zionists and their allies. It also augmented the resistance's deterrence against them. Another Israeli concern is the inability to accurately gauge Hezbollah's military and weaponry capabilities in Lebanon, impeding Tel Aviv's tactical planning for attacks. What has become evident to the occupiers is that Hezbollah is more than just an armed group; they possess a formidable arsenal of 150,000 missiles, including precision-guided ones, as well as vital intelligence about Israel's missile defense systems. Some of these missiles have not only penetrated the Iron Dome but also successfully targeted the regime's alleged defense system, along with its spying apparatus.

Therefore, any miscalculation about waging war on Lebanon will have region-wide repercussions, and its escalation will by no means benefit the US or, secondarily, the Zionist regime. While Israel may initiate the conflict, they will not control its outcome. This reality is evident in the protracted nine-month-long war with the Palestinian resistance in Gaza, which remains under a complete siege and has not culminated in a decisively advantageous position for Israel.

Consequently, the lack of strategic calculations about engaging in a war with Lebanon and the absence of a

clear vision thus far have pushed the US towards freezing the status quo on Israel's northern front. Previously, the White House endeavored to prevent Hezbollah's attacks on Israel through negotiations and diplomatic pressures exerted by its envoys, aiming to neutralize the threats posed by the resistance movement in Israel's north. For Israel, victory entails pushing Hezbollah back from the border by 7 to 10 kilometers and significantly degrading its military capabilities to facilitate the return of war refugees to their homes in the north. However, Hezbollah's resolute response, both on the battlefield and in diplomacy, which underscored their steadfastness in following their strategy in the Gaza war and their readiness to confront any aggression, has prompted significant shifts in Israel's decision-making circles. Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, secretary-general of the Hezbollah movement, has repeatedly warned that Hezbollah is fully prepared and does not have any constraints for engaging in a war with Israel. He has emphasized the movement's unwavering determination to stand with Gaza and the Palestinian people until victory is achieved.



Smoke billows behind a house following over-border attacks from Lebanon, amid ongoing cross-border hostilities between Hezbollah and Israeli forces, in Katzrin, the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, on June 13, 2024.

● AYAL MARGOLIN/REUTERS