

office issued a statement indicating that their representatives would be heading to Cairo to participate in discussions aimed at finalizing the details and implementing a “framework agreement”.

However, Iran’s stance on the cease-fire put an end to this American maneuver. The Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations stressed that the recent terrorist act by the Israeli regime violated Iran’s security and sovereignty and that the right to self-defense is reserved for Iran. This, the mission added, is unrelated to the Gaza cease-fire, and Tehran’s response will be carried out in a way and at a time that does not undermine the potential cease-fire.

Failure of US strategies in West Asia

One of the roots of the current psychological warfare, strongly pursued by the United States, is its failure to implement its strategies in West Asia and the systematic decline of its influence in one of the world’s most strategic regions. This decline has been evident, both overtly and covertly, for decades, with prominent examples including the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and the defeat of the global war against Syria. Operation Al-Aqsa Storm also marked a significant turning point in this downward trajectory, followed by the Resistance’s rise to establish security and stability in West Asia and to curb the Zionist regime.

Moreover, the growing public disgust in Arab and other regional countries toward US policies in support of Israel has impacted the effectiveness of US policies in the region. The US support for the crimes of the Zionist regime has clearly demonstrated to people and leaders alike the stark contradiction between America’s professed human values and its interventionist and warmongering approaches. This is evident in the repeated US vetoes of cease-fire resolutions in the UN Security Council, and the prolonged and fruitless cease-fire proposals put forth by the US government, which have only served to buy time for the Zionist regime to carry out massacres and genocide. Many experts believe that the US, as a supporter and even overseer, has the ability to pressure Tel Aviv into accepting a cease-fire, but in practice, it does not wish to do so.

Meanwhile, the extensive attacks by the Resistance on US bases and interests in West Asia, which pose a serious threat to Washington, have further diminished American influence. Overall, the United States, currently in disarray regarding its presence in West Asia, is now facing the rejection of public opinion and, consequently, psychological pressure from the people, the Resistance, and some regional leaders.

Yahya Sinwar’s leadership intensifying pressure on Israel

One of the key elements that have put psychological pressure on the Zionist regime has been the surprising selection of Yahya Sinwar as the political leader of Hamas and the integration of the political and military branches of the movement in order to confront the occupiers. Now that the Zionist regime has failed to achieve its declared objectives, such as eliminating Hamas or even more modestly, containing Hamas, this news — indicating a more military-heavy approach by Hamas — has sent a terrifying message to them. Sinwar has seriously challenged all of Tel Aviv’s policies over the past 10 months, and his astuteness has kept the Hamas Resistance Front alive. Therefore, Yahya Sinwar is not only a heroic figure for Palestinians but also for all supporters of Palestine. He is the one whom Palestinians believe gives true promises; Sinwar stated in 2023 that he would soon confront the Israelis and lead Palestine toward liberation.

Fear in occupied territories result of psychological warfare

In conclusion, the impact of psychological warfare can now be seen in the occupied territories, where fear of Resistance attacks has become widespread. According to Zionist sources, all residents are anticipating an attack from Iran. In a document sent to the mayors of northern cities, officials have been asked to prepare for potential disruptions to water and electricity supplies, as well as for emergency rescue operations. The Shin Bet security agency has also opened underground bunkers for commanders and senior officials.

Is US willing to pay price of Iran-Israel escalation?



By Hannan Hussain
International
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OPINION

As the world waits to see how Iran responds to two recent assassinations of key leaders by Israel, the United States must carefully weigh its role in what happens next.

US President Joe Biden’s administration has been preparing for “a significant set of attacks” from Iran and its backed groups following the murder of Ismail Haniyeh, a former top Hamas politburo leader assassinated in Tehran last month, as well as the death of senior Hezbollah military commander Fuad Shukur in Beirut. Increased US military support for Israel suggests rising alarm. Biden has sent warships and a submarine to the Middle East in preparation for an Iranian response, and also sanctioned billions of dollars in arms sales to support what it justifies as “Israel’s capability to meet current and future enemy threats”. But further arming Israel is unlikely to dial down threat perceptions among Iran and its backed groups.



Activists protest against war in Gaza as Secretary of State Antony Blinken (front-R) testifies during a Senate Appropriations Committee hearing about the United States sending aid to Israel and Ukraine on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, on October 31, 2023.

● JABIN BOTSFORD/WASHINGTON POST

At the same time, in apparent hopes of warding off any sort of retaliation, Biden has renewed his push for a Gaza cease-fire, which Iran has said could delay its actions. However, Israel has consistently stonewalled the Gaza cease-fire process. And the message from Tehran has been loud and clear: it will not bow down to Western pressure. “Such demands (to avoid retaliation) lack political logic, are entirely contrary to the principles and rules of international law, and represent an excessive request,” Iran’s foreign ministry spokesperson Nasser Kanani said this week. So, is Washington willing to pay the price of an Israel-Iranian escalation in the Middle East?

Indefinite engagement

To Tehran, an attack is necessary because Haniyeh’s assassination took place on its soil. Meanwhile, Israel is likely to try to justify its response to this potential attack as necessary “self-defense”. An attack and counter-attack could ignite a cycle of aggression that drags Washington deeper into an escalating regional war.

The US says it doesn’t want this. After Israel killed two Iranian generals in Syria in April, the US pressured Israel to avoid an all-out attack on Hezbollah — Iran’s chief ally — and determined Israel wouldn’t prevail in a long-term confrontation. Indeed, a conflict on multiple fronts between Israel and Iranian-backed groups, chiefly Hezbollah, could test the limits of unconditional US support to Israel and its own crisis diplomacy in the region. Consider the ambiguous nature of Iranian attacks and their timing as well. Iranian-backed armed groups could take part in any attack of Tehran’s choosing, making it difficult for Washington to predict and preempt possible attacks from Lebanon, Iran, Syria, Iraq, or Yemen against Israel. There are also diplomatic costs. The Biden administration is putting its weight behind an “urgent”

diplomatic solution between Israel and Hezbollah and considers the deal as critical to avoiding a larger regional war.

However, it risks losing hard-won diplomatic momentum if Israel pursues a disproportionate military response against Iran, or implements “multi-front battle plans” to justify offensive attacks “anywhere and in any region”.

Souring public sentiment

Another factor to consider is public sentiment. There is very little appetite among Americans for the US to get involved in another war. Polls show most Americans are against sending US troops to defend Israel. Public support for such a move has steadily declined since Israel’s onslaught on Gaza began last year.

Thus, any Iran-Israel escalation could raise the stakes in Washington when considering whether to participate in an unpopular war and risk alienating scores of young voters ahead of the November presidential polls.

Taxpayer dollars are an additional limiting factor. Congress and the US public have been increasingly at odds over Washington’s spending on “endless wars” — a reference to years of US invasion in Afghanistan and Iraq that has yielded little tangible benefit.

US-Iranian escalation could prompt Washington to beef up its military finances for Israel and use up hard-earned taxpayer money to fight another war. Israel’s war on Gaza has prompted thousands of Americans to protest US funding for the war, with many refusing to pay their taxes. All these factors could make it difficult for Washington in the event of Israeli-Iranian escalation.

Endangering US troops

Iran-Israel escalation could also endanger US military assets in the region. This includes scores of US

troops stationed across small-scale military bases in the region.

Regional escalation and a widening of Israel’s 10-month war could inject significant intensity into future attacks. After all, Iran-aligned armed groups attacked US forces dozens of times in Iraq throughout the opening months of Israel’s war on Gaza.

The widening of Israel’s war with Iran could signal the entry of more powerful actors, such as Hezbollah, raising serious questions about Washington’s strategic interests in the Middle East.

Can it stop Israel from attacking Hezbollah, the same group that the US seeks to engage diplomatically? And what is Washington’s own endgame amid Israel’s raging war on Gaza and beyond?

Alternative options

Rather than continuing to generously arm Israel, the Biden administration has some immediate response options at its disposal. It can use weapons sales as leverage to pressure Israel towards a cease-fire.

For months, billions of dollars in unrestricted military aid have hardened Israeli attitudes towards a Gaza truce and spurred a significant trust deficit between Israel and Hamas. Now, that trust deficit risks upending high-stakes mediation efforts in Doha.

Thus, holding back Israeli weapon supplies could send a powerful signal to far-right Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s leadership that the US now wants the raging war to end on its own terms.

The US should also impose long-overdue penalties on Israel for its systemic violations of international law and torture committed by military units in Gaza. All these are gross violations of the Leahy Law, which requires the US by law to end assistance for military units involved in rights abuses.

Time running out

Time is running out. Washington joined Egypt and Qatar for a new round of cease-fire talks this week to end the war in Gaza, an outcome Biden claims could prevent an Iranian attack on Israel.

But much of the optimism over a US-brokered cease-fire is overblown. Tehran has refused to take part in direct talks toward a cease-fire, and officials close to Hezbollah confirmed to Reuters that an Iranian retaliation was incoming.

This is important because Washington is pushing for more lines of communication with Tehran to limit or prevent an Iranian strike at all costs. But it is counting on a cease-fire process that lacks credibility and has been used by Israel to pursue assassinations and stonewall mediation progress.

Today, the US failure to rein in its major ally Israel is putting its own interests on the line. The threat of a wider regional war is undermining Washington’s crisis diplomacy, risks long-term damage to US military assets in the region, and has left little leverage to prevent Iran’s imminent attack on Israel. Washington shoulders blame for the same escalation it seeks to avoid.

The article first appeared on TRT World.



US President Joe Biden (C) and the first lady, Jill, watch as the body of Sgt Kennedy Sanders, one of three US personnel killed in a drone strike in Jordan in January 2024, is brought home.

● MICHAEL REYNOLDS/EPA