

reconstructing damaged areas, resettling the displaced, and politically organizing its internal situation. Moreover, it did not demonstrate any direct military response to Zionist regime attacks during this time — a fact that reinforced the perception that Hezbollah would not engage in future confrontations.

### Wisdom of Shia movement in Lebanon and its challenges

The strategic wisdom of the Shia movement in Lebanon enabled Hezbollah to pursue military operations. In this regard, the proposal to suspend Lebanese parliamentary elections for one year — initially put forward by France and Saudi Arabia — was transformed, through the wisdom of Nabih Berri, into a two-year suspension. This decision freed Hezbollah from focusing on electoral competition and internal matters, allowing it to redirect its energy toward other domains.

The suspension of elections also alleviated Hezbollah's concerns regarding the participation of southern displaced persons in voting as Lebanon's law requires citizens to vote in their place of birth. On the other hand, Hezbollah endeavored

to avoid internal political confrontations and even adopted a conciliatory approach in the face of hostile media and political actions by certain factions. Furthermore, domestic opponents have not yet reached a level of audacity that would enable them to undertake military or security actions against this group.

As a result, Hezbollah is currently concentrating its capabilities and capacities in two domains: social and military-security. In the social sphere, managing the displaced — particularly following the loss of Syria's geographical support — has become one of its serious challenges.

Additionally, the high number of martyrs and wounded among supporters of the Resistance has exerted significant pressure on this movement. Approximately 1,500 Lebanese citizens who are supporters of the Resistance have been martyred in Lebanon over a 40-day period recently, with over 4,000 wounded, and millions displaced alongside them. Considering that approximately 60 percent of Lebanon's population supports the Resistance, with Shias constituting 30 percent of this base, social pressure remains extremely high.

Despite these conditions, Hezbollah

continued to conduct military operations in Lebanon — operations that, within a geography under constant surveillance and attacks by the Zionist regime, have been exceedingly difficult, yet were being carried out daily, extensively, and with special initiatives.

A significant portion of Lebanese society views this war not as a sign of weakness but as an indication of Hezbollah's resurgence and demonstration of power; despite certain attacks and damages, public perception of this group has not turned negative.

### Lebanon's political condition favor Hezbollah

If we examine Lebanon's government through the framework of its army, presidency, and prime ministership, it cannot be said that the dominant approach is anti-Hezbollah. Although some factions seek to constrain this group, conditions do not permit practical action against it.

Anti-Hezbollah actions are primarily undertaken by factions such as the Lebanese Forces band led by Samir Geagea and certain ministers; these actions are often framed as national initiatives since, otherwise, they would not dare to implement them as a di-



Lebanon's President Joseph Aoun (R) meets with Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri to address the Israeli escalation along the Blue Line, at the presidential palace in Baabda on March 23, 2026.  
● L'ORIENT-LE JOUR

rect confrontation with Hezbollah.

Hezbollah is currently part of the Lebanese governmental structure. Together with the Amal Movement, it holds five ministerial portfolios in the government and maintains influence within the army and security apparatuses. Therefore, the Lebanese government cannot be considered absolutely anti-Hezbollah.

Regarding the presidency as well, given the moderate and rational approach of Joseph Aoun, Hezbollah is not regarded as an enemy. Indeed, in certain instances, the hardline positions of the likes of

Youssef Raji are moderated. Furthermore, reports indicate that the Prime Minister has, in some cases, sought to avoid provocative actions by Raji against Hezbollah.

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The proposal to suspend Lebanese parliamentary elections for one year — initially put forward by France and Saudi Arabia — was transformed, through the wisdom of Nabih Berri, into a two-year suspension. This decision freed Hezbollah from focusing on electoral competition and internal matters, allowing it to redirect its energy toward the military domain.

## Collapse is real

# Lebanon cease-fire marks a historic strategic defeat



By Ramzy Baroud  
Author, journalist

### OPINION

A cease-fire in Lebanon was announced on Thursday by US President Donald Trump, but its reality tells a very different story. The cease-fire was not the product of American diplomacy, nor Israeli strategic calculation. It was imposed — largely as a result of sustained Iranian pressure.

Washington, Tel Aviv, and their allies — including some within Lebanon itself — will continue to deny this reality. Acknowledging Iran's role would mean admitting that a historic precedent has been set: for the first time, forces opposing the United States and Israel have succeeded in imposing conditions on both.

This is not a minor development. It is a strategic rupture. But it is not the only fundamental shift now underway: Israel's very approach to war and diplomacy is itself changing.

After failing to secure victory through overwhelming violence, Israel is increasingly relying on coercive diplomacy to impose political outcomes.

Over the past two to three decades, this Israeli strategy has become unmistakably clear: achieving through diplomacy what it has failed to impose on the battlefield.

### 'Diplomacy' as war

Israeli "diplomacy" does not conform to the conventional meaning of the term. It is not negotiation between equals, nor a genuine pursuit of peace. Rather, it is diplomacy fused with violence: assassinations, sieges, blockades, political coercion, and the systematic manipulation of internal divisions within opposing societies. It is diplomacy as an extension of war by other means.

Likewise, Israel's conception of the "battlefield" is fundamentally different. The deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure is not incidental, nor merely "collateral damage";



From left: Israeli Ambassador to the US Yechiel Leiter, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, US Ambassador to Lebanon Michel Issa, and Lebanese Ambassador to the US Nada Hamadeh Moawad pose for a photo before engaging in cease-fire talks in Washington, on April 14, 2026.  
● SHMULIK ALMANY/ISRAELI EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON

it is central to the strategy itself. Nowhere is this clearer than in Gaza. Following the ongoing genocide, vast swathes of Gaza have been reduced to rubble, with estimates indicating that around 90 percent of the whole of Gaza has been destroyed. According to the Gaza Ministry of Health, women and children consistently account for roughly 70 percent of all of Gaza's casualties.

This is not collateral damage. It is the deliberate destruction of a civilian population, an act of genocide that is designed to force mass displacement and remake the political and demographic reality in Israel's favor.

The same logic extends beyond Gaza. It shapes Israel's wars in Lebanon against Hezbollah and its broader confrontation with Iran. The United States, Israel's principal ally, has historically operated within a similar paradigm. From Vietnam to Iraq, civilian populations, infrastructure, and even the environment itself have borne the brunt of American warfare.

### A faltering model

It is often argued that Israel turned to "diplomacy" following its forced withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000 under resistance pressure. While this moment was pivotal, it was not

the beginning. Earlier precedents exist. The First Intifada (1987–1993) demonstrated that a sustained popular uprising could not be crushed through brute force alone. Despite Israel's extensive repression, the revolt endured.

It was in this context that the Oslo Accords emerged — not as a genuine peace process, but as a strategic lifeline. Through Oslo, Israel achieved politically what it could not impose militarily: the pacification of the uprising, the institutionalization of Palestinian political fragmentation, and the transformation of the Palestinian Authority into a mechanism for internal control.

Meanwhile, settlement expansion accelerated, and Israel reaped the global legitimacy of appearing as a "peace-seeking" entity. Yet the last two decades have exposed the limits of this model. From Lebanon in 2006 to repeated wars on Gaza (2008–09, 2012, 2014, 2021, and the ongoing genocide since 2023), Israel has failed to secure decisive strategic victories. Its ongoing confrontations with Hezbollah and Iran further underscore this failure.

Not only has Israel been unable to achieve its stated military objectives, but it has also failed to translate overwhelming fire-

power — even genocide — into lasting political gains. Some interpret this as a shift toward perpetual war under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. But this reading is incomplete.

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### Perpetual war?

Netanyahu understands that these wars cannot be sustained indefinitely. Yet ending them without victory would carry even greater consequences: the collapse of Israel's deterrence doctrine and, potentially, the unraveling of its broader project of regional dominance. This dilemma strikes at the heart of Zionist ideology, particularly Ze'ev Jabotinsky's concept of the "Iron Wall" — the belief that overwhelming, unrelenting force would eventually compel indigenous resistance to surrender. Today, that premise is being tested — and found wanting. Netanyahu has repeatedly framed

current wars as existential, comparable in significance to 1948 — the war that resulted in the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians during the Nakba and the establishment of Israel.

Indeed, the parallels are unmistakable: mass displacement, civilian terror, systematic destruction, and unwavering Western backing — once from Britain, now from the United States.

But there is a critical difference: The 1948 war led to the creation of Israel; the current wars are about its survival as an exclusivist settler colonial project.

And herein lies the paradox: the longer these wars continue, the more they expose Israel's inability to secure decisive outcomes. Yet ending them without victory risks a historic defeat — not only for Netanyahu, but for the ideological foundations of the Israel itself.

Israeli society appears to recognize the stakes. Polls throughout 2024 and 2025 have shown overwhelming support among Israeli Jews for continued military campaigns in Gaza and confrontations with Iran and Lebanon.

Public discourse frames this support in terms of "security" and "deterrence". But the underlying reality is deeper: a collective recognition that the long-standing project of military supremacy is faltering.

Having failed to subdue Gaza despite the genocide, Israel is now attempting to achieve through diplomatic maneuvering what it could not secure through war. Proposals for international oversight, stabilization forces, and externally imposed governance structures are all variations of this approach.

But these efforts are unlikely to succeed.

Gaza is no longer isolated. The regional dimension of the conflict has expanded, linking Lebanon, Iran, and other actors into a broader, interconnected front.

### Balance is shifting

In Lebanon, Israel has been repeatedly forced toward cease-fire

arrangements not out of choice, but because it failed to defeat Hezbollah or break the will of the Lebanese people.

This dynamic extends to Iran. Following the joint aggression on Iran starting February 28, both the United States and Israel were compelled to accept de-escalation frameworks after failing to achieve rapid or decisive outcomes.

The expectation that Iran could be quickly destabilized — replicating the models of Iraq or Libya — proved illusory. Instead, the confrontation revealed the limits of military escalation and forced a return to negotiations.

This is the essence of Israel's current predicament.

Diplomacy, in this model, is not an alternative to war — it is a pause within it. A temporary tool used to regroup before the next phase of confrontation.

But in Israel's case, this aggressive "diplomacy" is increasingly becoming the only available tool, precisely because its military strategy has failed to deliver victory.

Lebanon was meant to be the exception — a theater where Israel could isolate and defeat Hezbollah. Instead, it became further evidence of strategic failure.

Efforts to separate the fronts — Gaza, Lebanon, Yemen, Iran — have collapsed. Iran has explicitly linked its diplomatic engagement to developments on other fronts, forcing Israel into a broader strategic entanglement it cannot control. This marks a profound shift.

The foundational pillars of Israeli strategy — overwhelming force, fragmentation of adversaries, narrative control, and political engineering — are no longer functioning as they once did.

Yet Netanyahu continues to project victory, declaring success at regular intervals, invoking deterrence, and framing ongoing wars as strategic achievements.

But these narratives ring hollow.

The article first appeared on The Palestine Chronicle.