

Israel Prepares to Open a Second Front in the North

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For technical, social, and morale reasons, Israel will not win another war. At every level, it has become far weaker. It can inflict frightful damage on its enemies but it cannot change the fundamental balance of all forces that leads to victory. —[Gabriel Kolko](#), 2007

Towering brushfires raged across northern Israel on Tuesday following drone and rocket attacks by Hezbollah on Israeli settlements and military bases. The fires represent the latest escalation in the ongoing cross-border war that has persisted for the last 8 months. According to the *Times of Israel*, roughly "60,000 residents of towns and villages along Israel's northern border have been displaced from their homes since October due to the near-daily cross-border rocket and anti-tank missile attacks by Hezbollah..." The recent uptick in violence has prompted an angry response from Israel's political leaders who are now threatening to invade Lebanon if the attacks don't stop immediately. This is from an article at *CNN*:

On Wednesday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited the northern city of Kiryat Shmona near the Lebanese border, saying that **Israel is prepared for "very intense action" in the north.**

"Whoever thinks that they can hurt us and that we will sit idly by is making a big mistake," the prime minister said. **"One way or another, we will restore security to the north."**

Netanyahu's comments come after Israel Defense Forces (IDF) **Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi said the Israeli military is ready to attack targets in the north.**

"We are prepared after a very good process of training - up to the level of a military exercise - **to move to an attack in the north.** Strong defense, readiness to attack, we are approaching a decision point," Halevi said on Tuesday. [Tensions ramp up on](#)

Netanyahu is feeling pressure from the far-right members of his war cabinet who want to invade Lebanon and eliminate the threat at its source. **But that course of action would open a second front and likely divert resources from the operation in Gaza. It could also turn into a bloody killing fields like Israel's invasion of Lebanon in July 2006 that backfired badly and left the IDF running for cover.** Here's a short recap of the debacle by historian Gabriel Kolko:

The 34-day war, starting July 12, Israel fought in Lebanon in 2006 was a disastrous turning point. The Israelis did not lose the war because of orders given or not given to various officers. It was a war of choice, and it was planned as an air war with very limited ground incursions in the expectation that Israeli casualties would be very low. (Chief of Staff) Halutz wanted to "shock and awe" the Hezbollah and their allies with Israeli power and establish a marker-all within a few days. It was to be a very short war based on the application of power. ... Halutz wanted to make a critical point. Instead, he made the opposite and **revealed Israel's vulnerability based, in large part, on the fact the enemy was far better prepared, motivated, and equipped. It was the end of a crucial myth**, the harbinger of yet more bloody but equal armed conflicts or a balance of power conducive to negotiations. Olmert and his generals very likely expected to have a great victory within five days, thereby increasing his popularity with the hawkish Jewish population that is a growing majority of the voters, to reverse his abysmally low poll ratings—he received three percent popularity in a TV poll in early March—thereby saving his political career....

There are many reasons the Israelis lost the war in Lebanon, but there is general agreement within Israel that the war ended in disaster and the deterrent value of the once unbeatable, super-armed IDF gravely diminished in the entire Arab world for the first time...

The Lebanon War is only a harbinger of Israeli defeats to come. For the first time there is a rough equivalence in military power ... Technology is now moving far faster than the diplomatic and political resources or will to control its inevitable consequences—not to mention traditional strategic theories. This is true everywhere and the Middle East is no exception. Hezbollah has far better and more rockets—over 10,000 short-range rockets is one figure given—than it had a few years ago, and Israel's military intelligence believes it has more firepower than it had last spring, before it was attacked...

In the past, wars produced victories and more territory for the Jews; now they will only produce disasters for everybody. The Lebanon War proved that.... [Israel's Last Chance](#), Gabriel Kolko, *Counterpunch*

Today's political leaders in Israel—greatly emboldened by their perceived triumph over the civilian population of Gaza—are pushing for an invasion of Lebanon and a confrontation with their arch-enemy, Hezbollah. Most of these politicians either don't know what transpired in 2006 or think that today's "stronger and more capable" IDF will prevail with relative ease. **They appear to discount the idea that Israel could face a humiliating defeat that would undermine their future security and deterrents.** They are so convinced of their own invincibility; the prospect of defeat has never entered their minds. This is from the *BBC*:

On Tuesday, Israel's far-right security minister, Itamar Ben-Gvir, visiting firefighters in the nearby town of Kiryat Shmona, said **the government's response to Hezbollah's rockets should be war.**

"No peace in Lebanon while our land is being targeted," he said (*BBC*)

Not surprisingly, Ben-Gvir's support for an invasion is shared by fellow-traveler Bezalel Smotrich who offered these remarks in a speech at the Western Wall at the end of the Jerusalem Day Flag March:

"Prime Minister, give the order, go to war with Hezbollah, destroy them," he bellowed. "Take strength from the multitudes gathered here and give the order. Go to war with Hezbollah, subdue, destroy, move the security zone from the Galilee into southern Lebanon."

Not to be outdone by the firebrands in Netanyahu's war-cabinet, Israel's President Isaac Herzog delivered the following ominous statement:

I call from here to the international community and its leaders and stress — it is impossible to remain indifferent to this terrorism, from Lebanon and in general. Israel has been attacked daily, for many months, by Iranian proxies in Lebanon, in flagrant violation of all international agreements and resolutions.

The world needs to wake up and realize that Israel has no choice but to protect its citizens and you shouldn't be surprised when it does so with greater and greater strength and resolve, and don't come to us with complaints when the situation gets out of control," Herzog warned. "This is not the time to stand by and let the region escalate. This evil terrorist aggression needs to be curbed and stopped," [*Times of Israel*](#)

Aside from the predictable bluster of pompous politicians and their allies, there are a few notable realists who understand that the outcome of any confrontation with Hezbollah is far from certain. Check out this excerpt from an article at the Jerusalem Post by retired Israeli Major General Yitzhak Brik who said "that any attack by the Israeli army on Hezbollah could bring terrible destruction to all of Israel":

I warned that due to the gloomy situation in the army, **it is only a matter of time before disaster strikes.** And indeed, it has, with Hamas attacking communities in the Gaza border area. **Fortunately, we had a miracle this time as Hezbollah did not attack us from the North, as it would have brought a disaster far worse than the one suffered by the Gaza border communities.** It is doubtful if we could have recovered from it and continued living in our beloved country.

In the past, I warned, and I continue to warn now, that **the army and the military are not prepared for regional warfare. If the IDF goes to war against Hezbollah and launches a significant attack** - as recommended by some, including senior officials in the North and even the defense minister, with absolute ignorance of their situation and readiness of the army and the military for regional war - **this could bring disaster upon the country. It is a gamble on the continuation of our lives in the State of Israel.**

I warned of this when the war broke out in the Gaza Strip and the people cheered for the army, which at the end of the day did not achieve the desired result....

Those responsible for the disgrace, disaster, and terrible shame that occurred on October 7, may lead us into the next regional war, a war that will destroy our country because in the last 20 years we have not prepared the home front and the army for that war. Today, both the political and military leadership do not lift a finger to prepare the home front and the army for the next regional war. This war is the most severe threat to the country since its establishment, **the security situation continues to deteriorate every day, and no one seems to care....**

Prime Minister **Benjamin Netanyahu, former defense minister Benny Gantz, and former chief of staff Aviv Kohavi are leading us nowhere!** To a path with no way back.

They are the ones who brought upon us the most severe hell in the history of the people of Israel since the Holocaust, **they are the ones who are leading our way to the next hell without strategic thinking and rationality,** but mainly out of emotions and gambling with the security of the country. They continue the fighting more and more because in their opinion it works in their favor. Despite the goals they have defined, the minimization of Hamas and the release of the hostages alive, are moving further away from us every day. And **we are descending further and further in the security of the country, in the economy, in society, and in international relations. Where else will we fall? God save us.** [IDF general: Military, political leaders are leading Israel to disaster - opinion](#), Retired Israeli Major General Yitzhak Brik, *Jerusalem Post*

It's an extraordinary statement and right on the money. Israelis may feel emboldened by the devastation they have inflicted on Gaza at little cost to themselves, but Hezbollah is 'a different kind of animal' altogether. Any invasion of Lebanon will come at a high price in terms of destruction, casualties and overall security. **Are the Israeli people really prepared to make the sacrifices a war with Hezbollah require?** Are they really ready to see their sons and daughters returned home in body bags?

Perhaps, Netanyahu is merely bluffing when he threatens to engage Hezbollah on the battlefield. Maybe, he's just trying to project the image of a strong wartime leader. We don't know. But what we do know, is that if he launches a cross-border offensive into Lebanon, he'll get more than he bargained for. And—like Sharon and Olmert before him—he'll live to regret it.

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Israel targets land in southern Lebanon with White Phosphorus artillery munitions, deliberately setting fires

According to Human Rights Watch the incendiary munitions have been used on 17 Lebanese municipalities and in violation of international law against 5 civilian populated municipal areas.



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Hezbollah strikes a key Israeli military base in the occupied Galilee

The Lebanese resistance force responded to Netanyahu's threats today by striking the Hurfesh military base in western Galilee. The drone strike killed two Israeli soldiers and injured 20 others, leaving at least four in critical condition.



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Speaking to Channel 13, Colonel Kobi Marom asserted that the Israeli War Cabinet has been defeated in the north of occupied Palestine, citing the difficulty in bringing back the 70,000 "displaced" Israelis in the region due to Hezbollah's ongoing operations.

"Hezbollah is a learning organisation," the Israeli Reserve continued, "and the price of a comprehensive war with Lebanon will be very harsh."



**"NASRALLAH DOES NOT FEAR
AN ISRAELI ATTACK AND HAS
HIGH SELF-CONFIDENCE."**

COLONEL KOBI MAROM

ISRAELI RESERVE & NATIONAL SECURITY EXPERT



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IDF Chief of Staff, Herzi Halevi, in a visit to Northern Command: 'Hezbollah has increased its fire in recent days and we are ready to start attacking in the north. We are approaching the point of the decision.

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