

Ceasefire in Lebanon, and the future of resistance to Israel

The ceasefire agreement between Hezbollah and Israel has accomplished Israel's goal of decoupling Gaza from Lebanon. But while the future of the Axis of Resistance remains unclear, so does Israel's own strategic path forward.

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The ceasefire agreement between Lebanon and Israel can be approached through several lenses. The most significant is the cumulative blows that Israel has dealt to the Lebanese resistance, systematically targeting its cadre, leadership, and operational capabilities since September. These operations have raised the cost of Hezbollah's "unity of fields" strategy, signaling that maintaining an active military posture across multiple fronts comes with a greater toll than anticipated. Signs had already begun to surface suggesting that Hezbollah was prepared to entertain a ceasefire, provided it allowed them to preserve their operational standing, safeguard the integrity of southern Lebanon, and uphold their ontological narrative of resistance.

The Israeli military apparatus, its intelligence services, and its security network will likely view this campaign as a success. They have effectively ended the reign of several first-generation Hezbollah cadres, demonstrated their ability to infiltrate and assassinate key leaders, and inflicted widespread punishment on the "social world" from which Hezbollah draws its strength. Looking ahead, Israel will closely monitor who assumes leadership within Hezbollah, hoping for a shift toward figures akin to those of the past who might advocate restraint.

Yet, over the past several weeks, the limits of Israeli military strategy—typically structured around short, sharp, and decisive engagements—have become increasingly apparent. Hezbollah did not crumble under the pressure of the ground invasion. Instead, it managed to recover much of its operational capacity, retaining its position as a formidable military actor while successfully preventing any agreement that would disarm it or establish a buffer zone in southern Lebanon.

The ceasefire agreement offers Israel one notable achievement: the decoupling of Gaza from Lebanon. However, on all other fronts, it failed to deliver the decisive outcomes that Israel sought.

This agreement also carries significant implications for the Israeli settlements near the border with Lebanon. The rhetoric of total victory has been replaced by a pragmatic willingness to withdraw, restoring a status quo ante similar to the pre-war period. Despite tactical successes, residents of these settlements remain acutely aware that Hezbollah's presence and capabilities persist. Convincing thousands to return will be challenging, likely requiring substantial financial incentives and investments to rebuild confidence and security.

On the other side, the war exposed vulnerabilities within Hezbollah, which will undoubtedly shape its internal reconstruction and lead to a reassessment of its operational assumptions. These

vulnerabilities include the organization's exposure to Israeli and Western intelligence, the inability or unwillingness to employ more of its firepower, and the cost of deferring the confrontation with Israel for more than seventeen years.

However, a critical question and fight will follow this round: does Hezbollah risk retreating into isolationist ideologies tethered solely to the Lebanese state, especially after losing much of its central leadership? Such a shift could undermine its broader regional ambitions and weaken its strategic effectiveness in future confrontations with Israel or transform it into yet another sectarian party in the fraught Lebanese political scene. It might also embolden internal voices advocating for a status quo of non-confrontation with Israel, fundamentally altering its role in the resistance axis.

Gaza is left isolated, but Israel is fatigued and splintering

Israel has successfully decoupled the Lebanese front from Gaza, effectively ending the attrition along its northern border. This maneuver has left Gaza and its resistance isolated, facing the full weight of Israeli military and political pressure. While support may still emerge from other fronts, particularly Yemen, Gaza's leverage in negotiations has been significantly diminished, reducing its bargaining power.

This decoupling also allows Israel to advance its war plans in Gaza, albeit with several caveats. The first challenge lies in Israel's broader strategic intention: reasserting control over Gaza for the foreseeable future. Israel's military return to the strip raises questions about the sustainability of such a move, the costs of governance, and the long-term implications for its domestic and international standing. The logistical, political, and social complexities of maintaining control in such a contested territory present formidable obstacles, specifically when it has failed to defeat Hamas or end its influence in the Strip.

Secondly, Israel's plans for settlement expansion in Gaza, annexation of land, redrawing the border, and a continued presence in the Philadelphi Corridor and other strategic areas reflect a deeper settler-colonial ambition. These plans aim to consolidate territorial dominance but come with significant risks. Sustained Palestinian resistance, combined with the logistical and ethical complexities of imposing settler-colonial structures, makes such objectives precarious. The transfer of settlers into Gaza demands a degree of stability and acquiescence from the local population that seems improbable under the current conditions. Furthermore, these plans complicate Israel's position regarding the return of captives, presenting a critical contradiction in its strategic calculus.

These contradictions are now poised to dominate Israel's political landscape. After more than a year of war, fatigue, and weariness are settling in, challenging the narrative of total victory. Signs of pragmatism are emerging, with growing segments of Israeli society—particularly over recent months—expressing a desire to end the wars in Gaza and Lebanon. This sentiment underscores a tension between the state's expansive military ambitions and the public's increasing demand for stability and resolution, a return to life without war.

However, these dynamics unfold against the backdrop of a right-wing government fixated on ethnic cleansing and settlement expansion. The sacrifice of the captives, a central concern for Israel's left-leaning factions, will exacerbate the internal struggles over Netanyahu's corruption and intersect with the controversial legal reforms championed by the Religious Zionist bloc. This broader project to redefine the state's identity could deepen societal fractures, polarize the political arena, and intensify the ongoing battle over the future trajectory of Israel.

Unity of Fields

The “unity of fields” strategy, as practiced by the axis of resistance, rests on a delicate balance of ambiguity and flexibility. It binds its constituent forces to a shared strategic narrative and overarching goal while allowing each geographic context to define the scope and nature of its engagement. This dual approach—unified in vision yet localized in execution—has enabled the resistance to adapt to diverse terrains and leverage specific dynamics without compromising the coherence of its broader framework.

The current war has illuminated this strategy's strengths and vulnerabilities. Among its successes is the synchronization of various fronts, which has created multiple dilemmas for Israel across different theaters of operation. This prolonged conflict has not only drained Israel's resources but has also deepened its dependence on Western powers, exposing the fragility of its hegemonic ambitions. The resistance's ability to sustain pressure on Israel from various directions has demonstrated the efficacy of a decentralized yet interconnected model of struggle.

However, this strategy is not without its challenges. It reveals tensions inherent in the differing geographies, ideologies, and social contexts of the resistance's constituent forces. These contradictions strain the cohesion of the “unity of fields” approach, highlighting the difficulty of maintaining a unified front when local realities diverge from the collective narrative. The balancing act between shared objectives and localized constraints remains a persistent test for the long-term viability of this strategy.

Had the Lebanese front been isolated from the year-long war in Gaza, the outcomes for Hezbollah might have been markedly different. In many ways, Hezbollah has borne the cost of the “unity of fields” strategy, enduring significant losses in cadre, leadership, and operational capacity. Yet, it has also benefited from this interconnected framework. The decapitation strikes, targeted assassinations, and intelligence-driven operations conducted by Israel—relying on tools such as pagers and intercepted communications—occurred within the broader context of Gaza's resistance. This context, coupled with the fatigue of Israeli forces after extended operations in Gaza, diluted the impact of Israel's offensive on Hezbollah.

Without the backdrop of Gaza's ongoing resistance, these operations might have inflicted far greater damage on Hezbollah. The alignment with Gaza, therefore, not only diffused Israel's military focus but also provided Hezbollah with critical breathing space to recalibrate its strategies. The prolonged conflict in Gaza has stretched Israel's resources, strained its military capacities, and undermined the morale of its reserve forces. These conditions, combined with the strategic coherence provided by the “unity of fields,” allowed Hezbollah to maintain its resilience and maneuver politically and militarily.

Looking ahead, the trajectory of the “unity of fields” strategy remains uncertain. Will the constituent forces retreat into an isolationist posture, tethered to localized concerns, or will they sustain their broader anti-hegemonic stance in the region? The answers to these questions will shape the future of the axis of resistance and its ability to navigate the complex interplay of regional and global power dynamics.

Total victory, or sufficient success?

The ceasefire agreement with Lebanon fractures the Israeli drive for total victory. It also signals the beginning of its own implosion under the weight of reality.

Israel now faces a host of challenges: pending warrants in the ICC, fractures in its historic narrative, and the strategic paradox of pursuing a decisive resolution to the Palestinian issue without actually resolving it, with the possibility of only changing the terms and conditions of the struggle.

This, in itself, is one of the successes of the “unity of fields.” It forced Israel into a prolonged war—a war Israel initially embraced and sought—but one that ultimately has the potential to reshape its own understanding of what military power can and cannot achieve. The enduring conflict has tested the limits of its strategy and exposed the contradictions inherent in its reliance on force as a means of sustaining Jewish supremacy in Palestine.

The Israeli narrative will inevitably undergo a subtle mutation—from proclamations of total victory to the more modest concession of sufficient victory. Yet even this sufficiency, this precarious resting place, will give way to the persistent, unyielding antagonisms that underpin its contemporary social fabric. These antagonisms will define not only its relationship to the Palestinians—those inconvenient reminders of an unresolved history—but also its internal reckoning, the fractures and fault lines it cannot escape within itself.