

Opinion | The Solution to Israel's Entanglement in the North Lies in Ending the War in Gaza

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Displaced residents of northern Israel at a protest encampment near route 90, last month. Credit: Gil Eliahu

There's no arguing with success, certainly not in Israel. After the stunning success in the Gaza Strip, we will adopt the same model in Lebanon: a big war, total victory. We've said this so many times before: We haven't forgotten anything and we haven't learned anything. But we have never before applied this tattered platitude to such a short stretch of time.

Lessons learned from wars are always forgotten at some point, but are we to forget the lesson of the war in Gaza even before it has ended, only to repeat the same mistake twice? Israel's folly is shaming it, like the arrogance of assuming victory is in our pocket.

Let us state this straightaway: Like its predecessor in Gaza, the war that is [about to develop in the north](#) will be categorized as yet another war of choice. If Israel should not have invaded Gaza with all its forces only to kill, destroy and punish mainly for the purpose of slaking the thirst for revenge – a clear war of choice – then the war in Lebanon will, too, be numbered among all of Israel's wars of choice.

The Third Lebanon War that is at the gates will be depicted of course like its predecessors, the first of which was called Operation Peace in Galilee and broke out, incidentally, on June 6, 1982, and the second of which broke out in July 2006, as a war that was forced upon us: What can you do when the Galilee is abandoned and [going up in flames](#)? Just sit there and keep quiet? Bow our heads? The discussion of a war in the north is a one-sided discussion. No one is presenting the alternative (and there is an alternative). The only question is about timing.

Israeli first response unit put out flames after rockets were launched from Lebanon into northern Israel, close to the city of Kiryat Shmona, on Tuesday. Credit: Jalaa Marey / AFP

We must exempt the north from Hezbollah's punishment, and this, it is said, can only be achieved by war. Like in Gaza. Once again, the Israel Defense Forces will invade, occupy, kill and be killed; the home front will be battered like it has never been before, and so, likely, will the army.

The terrible verb "to intensify" has been transferred northward. To intensify the war. The chief of staff has already announced that we have reached the point where it is necessary to make a decision. He meant the only decision he knows: another war. There is no alternative, absolutely no alternative.

Of course there is an alternative. In the midst of all the noise and fire and suffering by the inhabitants of the north, the reason Hezbollah is attacking has been forgotten, and has been made to

be forgotten: the war in Gaza. Now there are two alternatives: The one, towards which we are heading, is to replicate the fiasco of Gaza all the way to the outskirts of Beirut. The second, which is too good – is [to stop the war in Gaza](#). Peace in the Galilee will be achieved only that way. An agreement will always ensure more than another war, which is liable to be the worst of Israel's wars.

It is impossible to believe the serenity with which Israel is gliding towards the worst of its wars without public debate, without opposition, even without presentation of the alternative: a cease-fire agreement to end the war with Hamas.

The placard "No To War in the North" has not yet been written. The demonstrations against a war in Lebanon have not yet taken to the streets. Hezbollah has declared that ending the war in Gaza will bring about the end to the war in the north, and a promise from Hezbollah can usually be trusted a lot more than a promise from Benjamin Netanyahu.

Hezbollah will not be eradicated and will not withdraw to beyond the Chouf Mountains, but what would a war achieve, apart from victims? A war in the north will achieve only more horrifying bloodshed, after which an agreement will be signed exactly like one that could be signed right now without a war. Hezbollah cannot continue if Gaza goes quiet – and Gaza will go quiet only with an agreement.

Israel will embark on a [major war in the north](#) when its international standing is at its lowest point of all times and the IDF is bruised by its failures in Gaza.

A reminder: Israel's two declared (not real) goals in Gaza have not been achieved. Far from it. In the war in Gaza, from the very beginning to its distant end, Israel is only losing. And if it is working so well against Hamas, war is sure to work even better facing its elder and better-armed brother, Hezbollah. We shall strike and be stricken. And go back to the negotiating table.

It is impossible to remain silent in the face of what's happening in the north. Israel owes tens of thousands of its citizens a solution to their distress, something else about which not enough has been said. The solution to their distress can be found in Gaza, only in Gaza. Or, shall we say, at the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem.

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P.S.

• Haaretz. Jun 5, 2024:
<https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/2024-06-05/ty-article-opinion/.premium/the-solution-to-israels-entanglement-in-the-north-lies-in-ending-the-war-in-gaza/0000018f-e97e-dba5-afdf-fbfee6a10000>