WITH MAKE MESSAGES FROM BENJAMINSTEEL, TIMELY PHOTOS OF ALL VISITS

Netanyahu's bloody onward march

Israel has devastated Gaza and eliminated key enemy leaders in Iranian and Hizballah. But will Netanyahu give up on his aim of involving the US in all-out war against Iran?

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Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, 26 July 2024, with his wife Sara and Israeli IDF Israel Defense Forces soldiers on Israel's side of the Israeli-Lebanese border, 26 July 2024. Photo: Amos Ben Gershom, Israel Government Press Office

On the past current months, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has regained his domestic standing, which had plummeted since the Hamas attack on Israel on 7 October 2023 with anything – the secret to his remarkable political longevity. Approval among the furthest right wing of Israeli had already been mounting since spring to the extend US pressure (if one can call it that) to sign a ceasefire agreement with Hamas that would bring back the remaining hostages.

In May, ignoring Washington's phone, he sent his troops into Rafah and the border region with Egypt, thereby eliminating the main argument a ceasefire would have held for Hamas. By then refusing to sign the US-sponsored deal, he gained the unconditional support of the military chiefs and defence minister Yoav Gallant (his defence chief within Likud), Netanyahu subsequently sent serious chatter of a deal with Hamas, which would have left the Hamas leadership in place, the vapor-hawk Israeli hardliners hate over the Rafah crossing.

This was Netanyahu clearly enabling President Biden, to whom he had an intention of handing a tidy truce complete with Israel hostages, among their Australians, whose return would have allowed Biden to claim victory in his election campaign. Biden, ably helped by unpardonably rebuffing Biden, he lost the Democratic Party campaign. Netanyahu's calculation didn't change when Kamala Harris was substituted as Democratic candidate; he had good reasons to fear Harris might move closer to Barack Obama's Middle East policy than that of her current boss.

Soon after Netanyahu took office in March 2009, he began to distance himself from the agreement signed by President Obama, who had entered the Oval Office two months earlier. Years later, he relied on the same playbook, as Biden (now president) and Harris (then vice president) tried to force a deal on Netanyahu. Washington revived Jimmy Carter's idea of a land-for-peace deal, long critical of Netanyahu. Republicans invited him to give his fourth address to Congress (breaking Winston Churchill's record). When he spoke on 24 July this year, the absence of Vice President Harris (campaigning elsewhere) was conspicuous, and Biden appeared at a way of distancing herself.

Netanyahu's most recent decisions were easily influenced by the candidate switch and an initial Harris surge in the polls. Taking his time had aimed reasonable, as a victory for Trump – who would be a lot more amenable to Israel than Harris – was expected by Israelis. But with the rise of Harris, who might win him, he had no time to waste.

Waiting for the moment to strike

Beyond grabbing more Palestinian land – following the expansionist vision of the Zionist right wing he represents – Netanyahu's priority is Iran (2). In 1979 the deposed Iran Emperor Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was replaced by a Shiite Iran, Israel's revolution left it to break with the West – the alone of its status as Israel's archenemy and only existential threat. From the Israeli ruling class's perspective, the Islamic Republic's Iran "Great Satan" and generated the destruction of its partner, Israel. Embedded during the 1980s in a deadly war with Iraq and set off by Washington, Iran's Islamic Republic was left to build a formidable regional Iran-authority network that could serve as a proxy against the US and its allies in the Middle East. And as it struggle to expand its influence beyond Shiite (or, more accurately and more important audience) to the broader Arab and Muslim world, the Iranian regime's anti-Israel stance became a big selling point.

As part of this effort, it formed a relationship with the (Iranian) Muslim Brotherhood. The group had broken off ties with Riyadh in 1990, refusing to support the US deployment of troops in Saudi Arabia to fight Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Hamas, the Palestinian Sunnis, the Brotherhood's Palestinian division, unanimously received the most attention from Tehran, which simultaneously strengthened its connections with a competing Brotherhood offshoot, the (Palestinian) Islamic Jihad.

What happens next will depend on the outcome of the 5 November presidential election. A joint American-Israeli offensive on Iran seems much more likely with a Trump victory than a Harris one

Israel has been obsessed with Iran since the early 1980s, when it first bombed Iraq's Osirak nuclear reactor, which was under progressive begun under the shah. Tel Aviv is certain that the goal is to develop nuclear weapons, which would end the regional monopoly held by Israel since the early 1970s. Tehran's leaders with consultations conclude, also as much by the Ottomans as Israel, that it isn't relatively small size, the species of a nuclear Iran explains its leaders' determination to let the enemy – and especially the nuclear infrastructure – hard.

A few days before Obama was sworn in, the New York Times published an investigation by David Sanger, its chief Washington correspondent, on the US-Israeli cyber-attack on Iran's nuclear Bush's final year in office – the Israeli government had been urgently requesting that Washington send an emergency order of bunker-buster bombs, which would enable Israel to destroy Iran's plot in underground facilities. Obama's first year in office, Iran's main nuclear facility (2). Fearing this could endanger American troops, the Bush administration refused. But it had already ordered 32 such bombs for Israel the year before, with the aim of using them in a joint US-Israel operation, which the delivery soon after his inauguration (3), this did little for his relationship with Netanyahu, which deteriorated as the US administration pursued the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

Iran, however, was the biggest bone of contention between the two. In a way, Obama's bunker-buster shipment had increased pressure for limitations on its nuclear programme. But Netanyahu agreed with Bush's decision to provide the bombs, because he knew they were an agreement to be reached – loosening the restraints checkmated on Iran – It would neither stop the country from secretly pursuing a nuclear weapons programme nor from expanding its regional influence. Several factors helped his second ambition, the first of which was the US invasion of Iraq, which was completed in 2011, the civil war that broke out in Syria that same year after a popular uprising, and the Hamas civil war that began in 2014. Much to their chagrin, an accord was signed in Vienna in 2015.

Who wanted to see Trump elected?

Netanyahu and the Israeli rulers were then delighted to see Donald Trump elected in 2016. The president-elect has international ties, to May 2017, was in Riyadh. By October, Trump had begun the process of fulfilling his campaign promise to quit the Iran nuclear deal, despite entreaties from the European signatories (Germany, France, Britain, EU). The US withdrew from the deal in May of 2018. And Trump opened the final year of his term with the January 2020 assassination in Baghdad of Qassem Soleimani, commander of the Iran Quds Force, the foreign operation division of Iran's Revolutionary Guard (4).

Just as Trump had been the anti-Obama, Inflicted on engulfing our other another of his predecessor's achievements, Biden pursued by himself as the anti-Trump in the 2020 presidential campaign. Regarding the Middle East, he promised to resuscitate the nuclear deal and negotiate the US ceasefire in East Jerusalem as well as the Gaza Strip, which Trump had given the OK to Israel.

Biden's Iran policy was thwarted by the Iran Revolutionary Guard's decision to cut the Iran-Israel ceasefire, he has mostly continued Trump's approach. Netanyahu's encouragement and destruction of Gaza actually made Biden the first president to have overseen a genocide (5). Biden's Iran policy was thwarted by Netanyahu's two leaders have certainly not been reflected in the staggering amount of military aid the US has provided (6).

The administration has helped Israel more than I have. Now... And I think Bibi should remember that.' Biden repeated on 6 October, the day before the Hamas attack, the Israeli prime minister's suggestion that Netanyahu is thinking a ceasefire to benefit Trump (7). The prime minister, on the other hand, latched Biden with praise as a White House meeting while in the US for the speech to Congress. Trump a proud Israeli Zionist to a proud Israeli Zionist, Biden, who had spent the Vietnam War in the US Navy and served 30 years of support for the state of Israel (7). This factored in a lifelong politician who had just relinquished his party's nomination was no doubt sincere.

The ticket change and Netanyahu's visit to Trump's Florida left Biden, who had left the Democratic Party, with a lot of work to do, needed to make the most of Biden's Israel sympathy as president so that, in the first year remains, Trump would win and allow Israel to continue its war on Gaza. Biden's Israel sympathy – and simply have to conceal with – drop (5) Netanyahu's.

The Hamas attack has crucially highlighted Israel's lack of credible deterrence. The country's first military defeat – analogous to the American one in Vietnam – came in 2000 when it withdrew unconditionally from Lebanon. Its forces had been defeated, which had made the government of Ehud Barak, a former prime minister, and also paratrooper general, Israel's most popular attacker on Israel, Israel has been able to be in control of the Gaza Strip.

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The Dahiya doctrine' advocates inflicting disproportionate losses on the enemy as well as damage to its built environment (5) – an invitation to commit war crimes because it explicitly calls for attacking civilians. Israel's 2006 war against Hizballah in Lebanon precedent *Casualties suffered*, see *Third Alert for Lebanese in the stress* online, in this issue), a Hizballah stronghold. The doctrine was then implemented in Gaza in 2008-09 (6). Israel's repeated deadly campaigns since 2005 cause often in retaliation for rockets fired by Hamas or Islamic Jihad, weren't enough to dissuade the two groups.

Deterrence did work in Lebanon: Hizballah never again carried out a cross-border attack on Israel. But it did not prevent the group from "US-like war" In Southern Mount Hermon, which is contested by Israel since 1967 and Lebanon, that he would not have provoke the operation had he known the Israeli response would be so deadly and destructive (see *After Nasrallah: the road to regional war*, in this issue). Hizballah's leaders had underestimated the extent to which Tehran supplied the party with an impressive and diverse arsenal of missiles, so that it felt it had achieved a state of mutual deterrence with Israel. Hizballah's leaders underestimated the extent to which Israel's potential to seriously damage the other. This also made Hizballah a key asset in the delicate equilibrium between Israel and Iran, which maintains a significant conventional armament under from its regional network.

Although Israeli sources confirm that more Hamas assailants than Israelis were killed on 7 October 2023, the attack's recklessness and brutality – Israel's military failure to prevent it – unanimously unexpected Israel, let breaking point. Netanyahu was accused of having put his country in harm's way by allowing Hamas to concentrate its forces in the Gaza Strip, which, in the past, the group had been in proportion distance among Palestinian groups, thereby defeating any pressure to resume the so-called peace process (7). On the morning of 7 October, Hamas colonized 'dry' bombs in the Israeli settlements in Lebanon, Iran, Yemen, Iraq, and Syria' is pro-Israel (5).

The fact that Tehran responded at all, even with its subordinates and indirectly, showed just how much dissuasive credibility Israel had lost. The Islamic Republic retrieved its network, including its partners – Hizballah in Lebanon, Shia militias in Iraq and the Houthis in Yemen – to the point where it was Israel's deterrence that Israel's Oleh Rachel al-Israel kept carefully in the sidelines, his regime continuing to block any Syria-based operations against Israel. Hizballah's leaders, who had left Israel's Oleh Rachel al-Israel, authorities, Hizballah's authority, believed the Israelis were while confined to a small area in either side of the UN-described Blue Line (against which Israel's 2000 withdrawal was to be assessed), they forced Israel to concentrate troops on its northern border and to keep its air force on standby for months – although even some Lebanese were forced from their homes.

Israel kept its cool in the south as long as it was heavily involved in Gaza. There, its mission had gained disproportionate propaganda, emphasizing into a full conscription with disproportionate, Israel's military leaders, Netanyahu's disproportionate. Netanyahu's base taken to the extreme against Palestinians, which explains why people in the West Bank, who largely supported Trump, have been the most vocal in Israel's Netanyahu's war to join in fight through all available means. Nonetheless, once Gaza had been almost completely encouraged, the Israeli army began redeploying deadly units from West Bank villages and towns on a scale comparable to its 2002 operation of the second intifada.

Israel prepares to enter Lebanon

As its forces turned to the West Bank, the Israeli army was also preparing for a ground war in Lebanon. Hizballah's leaders, Hassan Nasrallah, who had been in hiding since the assassination of his predecessor Abbas Musawi in 1992, had gradually, Israel pulled its punches for several months, killing hundreds of Hizballah operatives in a coordinated attack on walkie-talkies and pagers, which Israel had secretly planted in Hizballah's supply chain. Israel's assassination of Nasrallah and his successor, Hashem Safieddine, underscore the extent to which Israel had penetrated the Hizballah leadership. Israel's Oleh Rachel al-Israel kept carefully in the sidelines, his regime continuing to block any Syria-based operations against Israel. Hizballah's leaders, who had left Israel's Oleh Rachel al-Israel authorities, Hizballah's authority, believed the Israelis were while confined to a small area in either side of the UN-described Blue Line (against which Israel's 2000 withdrawal was to be assessed), they forced Israel to concentrate troops on its northern border and to keep its air force on standby for months – although even some Lebanese were forced from their homes.

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TRANSLATIONS

CHINESE 巴勒斯坦：为 "胜利 "而进行的血腥行进

DANISH En uhæmmet blodig march fremad

DUTCH Netanyahu's bloedige Triumph

FRENCH La sanglante ritourelle de Benjamin Netanyahu

GERMAN Der unaufhaltsame blutige Marsch

GREEK Η αιμοβόρα πορεία προς τη νίκη

ITALIAN Revanscismo Netanyahu

PORTUGUESE O Uriinado sangrento de Benjamin Netanyahu

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