Israel must not trade concrete gains for empty political promises

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 31.08.2025

A day after the official confirmation of the death of Prime Minister Ahmad al-Rahawi and several of his ministers in the Israeli Air Force strike in Yemen, Mohammad al-Bukhaiti, a senior member of the Houthis' political bureau, accused that "Israel has crossed all the red lines in this campaign" – and he was not wrong.

In this war, the State of Israel has indeed crossed what, in the eyes of Iran and the terror organizations, were supposed to be "red lines" in its policy. After the "decapitation operations" of Hezbollah's leadership and the heads of Iran's security system, the day of the Houthi leaders has also come.

But the struggle with the Houthis is far from over. In the same interview with *Al-Mayadeen*, the Lebanese channel identified with Hezbollah, al-Bukhaiti boasted that his movement "succeeded in imposing discipline on Britain and the US," and promised that "it will do the same to the Zionist enemy."

If, before the Israeli strike, the war in Gaza was the main stated reason for the continuation of the struggle, now the motivation for revenge over the elimination of the leadership and the severe humiliation of the Zaidi movement has been added to it. This in no way raises doubts about the course of action Israel chose – on the contrary, this is the way to demonstrate, and not only to the Houthis, the change that has occurred in Israel's approach following the October 7 attack, and this is the line that should characterize its policy in the other arenas where it is contending as well.

The common denominator for all of them is the instability that allows rapid fluctuation between extreme states. Israel's dramatic achievements have indeed created a new reality, but it is still in formation. Discussing the need for a "political act" to complement the "military act" is premature, if it is even equally applicable to all arenas. Attempting to cut corners through questionable arrangements or premature agreements could prove too costly.

Maintaining freedom of action

Under no circumstances should tangible achievements be traded for political ideas that may stir the imagination, but their chances of materializing are doubtful. Thus, one can welcome the Lebanese government's decision to task the Lebanese army with formulating a plan to disarm Hezbollah, but also assume – with a sober look – that the likelihood of this happening is slim.

Hezbollah leader Naim Qassem made clear that the weapons issue is a red line and that his organization will never agree to disarm, and therefore one should not be tempted by the "discourse of gestures" – it is not right to reduce IDF strikes in Lebanon or reduce the Israeli military presence in order to "give President Aoun a chance and encourage him in his policy."

Israel needs to maintain its hold on all five points in Lebanon where the IDF controls, not allow the reconstruction of Shiite villages that threaten our communities in the north, enforce decisively, and act firmly against any attempt to arm and strengthen. If and when Hezbollah is disarmed, then it will be possible to show openness to other ideas as well.

The same applies to Syria: we need to wake up from the dreams about hummus in Damascus. The refined jihadist ruler indeed spoke positively about the possibility of peace relations with Israel, and this should not be dismissed, but meanwhile, these are just words. The barbaric attacks by regime supporters against the Druze illustrated the complex internal challenges in this divided country. They reminded us and the rest of the world what the base of the new president looks like, who, next month, will stand on the UN General Assembly podium.

Even those who believe that Ahmed al-Sharaa has exhausted the jihad chapter in his life and seen the light on the path of statesmanship now understand what his power base looks like. It is hard to assume that the gang of jihadists surrounding him has abandoned the vision of establishing an extreme Sunni religious state in Greater Syria, and that it will allow action in complete opposition to this vision. Therefore, we must maintain our military presence on Mount Hermon's peak and in the buffer zone in Syria, forcefully prevent empowerment moves that will challenge the freedom of action of our forces, and assist the Druze.

And for those who claim that Israel's actions could undermine political opportunities: first, past experience teaches that the opposite is true – military

moves may actually help clarify red lines, and, by themselves, serve as leverage for advancing political arrangements. Second, and more importantly, security without political arrangements is preferable to arrangements without security. These lessons must be remembered, especially ahead of a political month, full of initiatives and ideas.

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