

Patrick Lawrence

## **The long war Israel wages for America's neoconservatives**

The notion of a distant ally serving as “an unsinkable aircraft carrier” seems to be nearly as old as aircraft carriers. It means a usefully located landmass, typically but not always an island, that cannot be sunk and can serve as a forward base for the projection of force. Over the decades, various hegemonic powers have been especially fond of the term. British and American war planners used Midway and Malta as aircraft carriers during World War II. After the Chinese Revolution in 1949, Cold Warriors in Washington thought of Taiwan in the same way.

Closer to our time, Yasuhiro Nakasone, Japan's nationalist premier during the Reagan years, famously pledged to make his country America's “unsinkable aircraft carrier in the Pacific.” This was in 1983, just as President Reagan was purposefully re-escalating tensions with the Soviet Union after a period of *détente*. Reagan and his national-security people were especially fond of aircraft carriers that did not float. While serving as Reagan's secretary of state, Alexander Haig called Israel “the largest American aircraft carrier in the world that cannot be sunk.”

There is a useful lesson in this history. Haig, a four-star general who had also served as chief of staff in the Nixon White House, understood: The Zionist state exercises extraordinary influence in Washington by way of what we call the Israel lobby, but it is at bottom an instrument of American power, just as Japan has been

since its 1945 defeat: It is peripheral, not metropolitan, the machine, not the operator.

There has been a running debate on this topic in the year that has passed since the events of 7 October 2023. The Biden regime's [limitless supply of lethal weapons](#) to the Zionists' military machine as it prosecutes its genocidal campaign against Palestinians has revived an argument that Israel, rather than serving as a client state in West Asia, is in fact the dictator of U.S. policy in the region. As [I have commented elsewhere](#), appearances once again deceive. The thought that “the Jewish state” tells America what to do is no more true in Israel's case than it is in Japan's.

Israel displays to the world a daring indifference to international law and any idea of humane norms as it continues to escalate its barbarities. The most recent of its numerous assassinations —of Ismail Haniyeh, head of Hamas's Politburo; Hassan Nasrallah, the Hezbollah leader, and just lately Yahyah Sinwar, Hamas's military commander—prompted many calls for Israel to step back, to de-escalate, to move toward settlements with the Palestinians and the Lebanese. The Zionist regime has done exactly the opposite. In apparent defiance of its Western sponsors, Israel has now begun to prosecute, well beyond Gaza, what Prime Minister Netanyahu calls, honestly enough in this case, Israel's “seven-front war.”

It is difficult to say when this new phase of Israeli terrorism began, although the assassinations just noted can be read now as harbingers of what we now witness. In late August the Israel Defense Forces began a series of new assaults in the West Bank that suggests its intent is—over time, with less air power and ostentation—to

duplicate there what it has done in Gaza. On 1 October the IDF launched its ground-and-air invasion of Lebanon. This now extends to bombing sorties as far north as Beirut.

After the murder of Yahyah Sinwar 16 October, the Biden White House urged Netanyahu, conspicuously as ever, to declare the IDF's savagery in Gaza a success. "Take the win!" was Biden's advice as quoted in corporate media. But the brutalities against Palestinians struggling to survive in the Strip have but worsened. [Shaaban al-Dalou](#), a malnourished 19-year old, was burned alive while on an intravenous drip the day before Sinwar's assassination. And in death he, al-Dalou, now bears a message worldwide: As Jonathan Cook puts it in the best commentary I have read on the crisis that began a year ago 7 October, "The humanitarian catastrophe Israel has engineered in Gaza has no precedent in the modern era."

The world has wondered for years whether the Israelis will attack Iran, which the Zionist regime has long considered its archenemy in the region. Since the Islamic Republic's 1 October missile attack on Israel in response to Hassan Nasrallah's assassination, this seems to be no longer a question of whether but of when. Last week [two electronic documents leaked from the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency](#), which gathers and interprets data from American spy satellites, reveal the IDF's air and ground preparations for an apparently planned attack on the Islamic Republic.

Any such aggression against Iran would bear implications so extensive as instantly to transform the regional war Israel is obviously intent on waging into a global conflict. We have, nonetheless, had no official comment on the leaked documents.

The Biden regime has for months, and always quite publicly, urged the Israelis to moderate its conduct, to seek negotiations, to avoid civilian casualties, to avoid open conflict with Hezbollah, not to invade Lebanon, and so on. It has shed what we Americans call “crocodile tears” when media report the deaths of children. On Monday, as the IDF continued its indiscriminate bombing campaign in Lebanon, a U.S. envoy, in Beirut for talks, stated that the front the Israelis have opened in Lebanon has “escalated out of control.” Amos Hochstein serves the Biden White House as a special emissary in West Asia; preposterously enough, he is Israeli-born and holds dual Israeli and American citizenship.

We should brush quickly past a superficial reading of Hochstein’s remark to find its deeper meaning. It is not at all a protest, the exclamatory complaint of an observer who is critical of Israel for igniting and expanding a dangerous conflict. It is the assertion of a figure not trained as a diplomat but serving as one that, as this conflict proceeds, the power he serves proposes to manage it carefully to achieve the desired result.

Over the weekend, just before Hochstein flew to Beirut to meet senior Lebanese officials, *Axios*, a digital publication in the U.S., reported on [a plan for a settlement with Lebanon](#), and by extension the international community, that the Israelis submitted to the Biden regime last week. Among its demands, *Axios* reported, two are of the highest significance. One, the IDF would remain on the ground in southern Lebanon to disarm Hezbollah permanently. The document terms this “active enforcement.” Two, the Israeli Air Force would operate freely in Lebanese airspace.

The Israelis have named this document Plan 1701, which puts it in the needed context. The United Nations Security Council passed [Resolution 1701](#) in August 2006, wherein it authorized the Lebanese army and Blue Helmets personnel, the U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon, to enforce a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah. “We are talking about 1701 with increased enforcement,” an Israeli official told *Axios*.

Among the infinite number of preposterous statements the Israelis impose upon the world, this ranks high among them. Plan 1701 is nothing less than a frontal attack on the U.N.’s authority and, in the bargain, Lebanese sovereignty. Alert readers will note that [the IDF has been attacking UNIFIL force and facilities](#) on the ground in southern Lebanon for some days. Let us not feign surprise. As Netanyahu made clear during his offensive speech to the U.N. General Assembly last month—“a swamp of anti-Semitic bile” was among his choicer insults—Israel’s hatred of the U.N. and all it stands for, international law above all, is visceral, without limit, and by all appearances incurable.

While the Biden regime has said nothing publicly in response to Plan 1701, the timing of the Hochstein visit to Beirut is notable in this connection. *Axios* reported that Hochstein’s purpose was to “discuss the Israeli demands” with Najib Mikati, Lebanon’s acting premier, and other senior officials. If this is so, and even if negotiations produce modifications to Plan 1701, it will make the U.S. complicit as Israel seeks to destroy Lebanese sovereignty, the U.N.’s authority, and the legitimacy of international law.

A caveat here. *Axios* was founded eight years ago by professional journalists who

came out of mainstream media, and it has since earned a very mixed reputation. The “journalist” who wrote the Plan 1701 piece, Barack David, requires the quotation marks: David is an Israeli who has previously served in the IDF and in Unit 8200, a powerful Israeli intelligence agency. David’s current associations with both are not clear. He has proven, while at *Axios*, to be a reliable apologist for even the worst of Zionist Israel’s brutalities. Alan MacLeod, an excellent investigative journalist at *MintPress News*, brought David’s identity to light in [a very well-reported piece published](#) last week.

■

The headline atop *The New York Times*’s report on the Hochstein talks in Beirut is “U.S. Tries to End War in Lebanon That Biden Envoy Calls ‘Out of Control.’”

This is nothing close to accurate, as I have suggested. It is merely an example of how mainstream American media, *The Times* well in the lead, dedicate themselves to obscuring Washington’s true view of the crisis that now spreads through West Asia and its true relations with its unsinkable carrier in the region.

Official Washington, the media that serve it, and the think tanks that do a great deal of its thinking will continue to show us the perspiration that breaks out on their brows as the Israelis proceed with their savage war against its neighbors. The reality is very different and not at all difficult to explain: It may look as if Israel acts in defiance of Washington’s wishes—just as it is supposed to look—but there is no such defiance. The Zionist regime is simply doing “the wet work,” as those in the intelligence trade put it, in behalf of U.S. policy across West Asia. Its indifference to international law and humanity’s accepted norms is a local reflection of America’s.

Context and some history are necessary to an understanding of this reality. We find both as we consider the role of neoconservatives in the formation and execution of U.S. foreign policy in West Asia. This influence has been especially pronounced during the post–Cold War decades and, certainly, since the events of 11 September 2001.

Neoconservatism has its roots in the 1940s, when figures such as Irving Kristol were students at City College, where neoconservative thinking can be said to have congealed into a sort of informal movement. As a matter of cultural history, City College, located in Upper Manhattan, was where a large number of New York Jews received their higher education during and subsequent to Kristol's time. I note this detail not as a matter of anti–Semitic thematization but as a matter of fact, one that is significant for its bearing on the present crisis: As neoconservatives began, in later years, to assume positions of power and influence, Zionists or Zionist fellow travelers with unreserved sympathies for Israel were prominent among them.

A singular moment in the evolution of the neoconservative movement came in 1997, with the formation of the Project for a New American Century. Dick Cheney, the future vice-president, William Kristol, Irving's son and an influential voice in Washington media, and Robert Kagan, another neocon commentator and an advocate of a vigorously interventionist foreign policy, were among its founders. PNAC's power grew quickly to astonishing proportions. Nearly a dozen PNAC members held senior foreign policy positions in the administration of George W. Bush.

The events of 11 September proved a considerable boost for PNAC and the broader neoconservative movement. Both advocated, strenuously and with obvious success, invading Iraq and deposing Saddam Hussein. The ambition here was exceptionally large: The neocons, who had by this time put a lasting stamp on U.S. policy, saw Operation Iraqi Freedom as America's move to implant democracy in the region and, as the phrase still has it, "remake the Middle East."

The notion of remaking West Asia in the American image has over the years acquired various critics, some in organizations that once favored such aspirations. This is due to the policy framework's many failures and messes. *Foreign Policy*, the quarterly journal, published "The U.S. Needs a New Purpose in the Middle East" last June. *Foreign Affairs*, the august quarterly of the Council on Foreign Relations, put out "It's Time to Renew America's Purpose in the Middle East" on the same day—celebrating the thinking of the same scholar, Steven Cook. The post-Cold War decades were "marked by costly and unrealistic efforts," Cook argues. "It's time to ditch romantic ideals of remaking the region." The project is to settle on "a set of achievable goals" determined more strictly according to American interests.

You get this kind of thing routinely out of Washington: sweeping rhetoric urging profound change but amounting to calls for adjustments in the grand plan to preserve American hegemony in whatever region may be at issue. Let us nonetheless find use in the critiques of these organizations and their publications by making of them a mirror: In it we see the full, unfortunate extent to which the neoconservative project continues to define America's ambitions in the region and so the fundamentals of American policy.

The Biden regime has not once condemned Israel's invasion of Lebanon, or its attacks on the U.N. presence there, or the Israelis' flouting again and again of international law. Two weeks ago the Biden White House authorized the Pentagon to send Israel an advanced missile-defense system, known as Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, along with 100 troops trained to operate it. This cannot be read as other than tacit approval of the Israelis' apparent plans to attack Iran—and a signal that the U.S. will support such a reckless campaign.

Neither is there any alternative way to read Israel's role as the executor, for now and for who knows how long, of American policy. All that it is doing—setting aside the brutality of its conduct—is in keeping with America's established objectives. Israel proposes to make itself a sort of regional hegemon, just as the U.S. wants it to be. The Zionist regime's indifference to international law and humanity's accepted norms is a local reflection of America's.

We witness, to make this point another way, a West Asian version of “the international rules-based order” the U.S. will continue to impose upon the world until it is forced, one or another way, to stop. Zionist extremism is useful in this cause, just as al-Qaeda was once useful and the Islamic State after it. Bibi Netanyahu is effectively a surfer, riding the wave neoconservatives and their allies set in motion decades ago.

Bazenheid, 23 October 2024