

# TOP ISRAELI SECURITY EXPERTS REJECT NETANYAHU'S FOREVER WAR DOCTRINE

Avraham Spraragen, Policy and Research Coordinator | APRIL 24, 2026

**Israel under the Netanyahu government has been waging a years-long war across seven fronts:** Iran, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Gaza, and the West Bank. Israeli leadership has [determined](#) that the country is in a forever war, necessitating preemptive military action throughout the region and the creation of “buffer zones” in Gaza, Lebanon, and Syria. This state of permanent war is both unsustainable and self-defeating. While Israel does face genuine security threats, Israelis cannot spend their entire lives in bomb shelters and Israel cannot bomb itself to peace.

Before the ceasefire, support for the Iran war among the Israeli public appeared to be [waning](#). Leading Israeli national security experts have also criticized Netanyahu’s forever war doctrine. This column examines those alternative perspectives within the Israeli national security community regarding three major active warfronts – **Iran, Lebanon, and the West Bank** – demonstrating support for a national security doctrine that focuses on diplomacy.

**1) The Iran Front:** *Netanyahu has failed to achieve his objectives for the Iran war and instead wrought death and destruction across the region while imperiling the global economy*

Netanyahu has been advocating for military action against Iran for his whole career. He sought to derail the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, including by delivering a speech to Congress behind President Obama’s back, and has [reportedly](#) lobbied successive US presidents to take joint military action against Iran. Trump was the only president to side with Netanyahu – withdrawing the US from the nuclear deal in 2018, bombing Iranian nuclear sites last summer, and finally launching a full-scale war on February 28.

Trump and Netanyahu vacillated between various objectives for the latest war: from regime change to liberating the Iranian people, to preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, to eliminating Iran’s naval threat, to destroying Iran’s missile and drone capability, to degrading Iran’s broader military capacity, to weakening Iran’s regional proxies, to protecting global energy markets, to reopening the Strait of Hormuz, and more. The two heads of state promised everything from “[unconditional surrender](#)” to “[total victory](#),” culminating in Trump’s apocalyptic [threat](#) to destroy Iranian civilization.

These ever-moving targets reveal that despite preparing for this moment his entire public life, Netanyahu has achieved essentially none of his objectives. Instead, the war wrought havoc across the region, devastated the global economy, and killed [at least 15](#) US service members, 20 [Israelis](#), and over 3,000 [Iranians](#). Former IDF Deputy Chief of Staff **Yair Golan**, who leads the Democrats party, [called](#) this outcome “one of the most severe strategic failures Israel has ever known.”

Netanyahu thought that he and Trump could bomb the Iran threat away. However, as IDF Brigadier General (Res.) **Eran Ortal** [put it](#), “there is no such thing as the war to end all wars.” Indeed, the Iranian regime survived the war and the threat from Iran remains. One Ayatollah Khamenei has been replaced by

another; Ali Khamenei was succeeded by his son, Mojtaba, who is not only a much younger supreme leader but also may be [more extreme](#) than his late father. The regime has been motivated to produce a nuclear weapon. Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium, regional proxy network, missile and drone programs, and military infrastructure are intact, albeit degraded. Iran continues to disrupt global shipping via the Strait of Hormuz and is now charging a new postwar toll on ships. In other words, the Islamic Republic can still wage war, threaten Israel, and destabilize the Middle East.

Despite this catastrophic outcome, Netanyahu [declared](#) victory after the ceasefire, boasting that Israel emerged from the war "stronger than ever," Iran is now "weaker than ever," and Israel "is ready to return to fighting at any time." **Amos Harel**, senior military correspondent at Haaretz, [wrote](#) that "this is now the fourth time in a row – once in Gaza, once in Lebanon and twice in Iran – that [Netanyahu's] boasts of total victory and the removal of existential threats have been exposed as empty promises." For his part, Yair Golan [decried](#) the "two and a half years of wars and failures" overseen by Netanyahu and explained that "true security doesn't start with a tank." Golan [echoed](#) the frustration of many Israelis who are "worn down to the bone" after endless rounds of fighting, deployment, and rocket sirens.

To be sure, much of the Israeli national security community, political class, and society agree that Iran poses a threat. A growing number of Israeli experts, however, emphasize that forever war is not the solution. According to **Eran Lerman**, a former deputy director at the Israeli National Security Council, Israel has a "[tendency](#) to overemphasize kinetic means," and without corresponding diplomatic engagement, will not achieve its long-term strategic goals. As **Danny Citrinowicz**, who formerly headed the Iran desk in Israeli military intelligence, recently [explained](#), "this war has reinforced a difficult but necessary conclusion: There is no kinetic solution to the Iranian challenge." Furthermore, Israeli experts [warn](#) that the status quo of an entire population in shelters, prolonged school and business closures, and government neglect of the homefront is unsustainable.

## **2) The Lebanon Front: Netanyahu has failed to defeat Hezbollah, illegally occupied Lebanese territory, and devastated southern Lebanon, undermining the historic opportunity for peace**

The first direct talks between Israel and Lebanon since 1993 were held this month and the parties agreed to a [10-day ceasefire](#), which was subsequently extended. These positive developments followed over 40 days of fighting between Israel and Hezbollah that [included](#) mass displacement of Lebanese civilians, IDF [targeting](#) of Lebanese civilian infrastructure and [medical services](#), and Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon. Given this destruction, Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam was forced to [cancel](#) his trip to Washington, where he had planned to meet with Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and Lebanese President Joseph Aoun has thus far [refused](#) to speak on the phone with Netanyahu.

As Israel looks set to occupy territory in Lebanon for the fourth time since 1982, many national security leaders are warning against repeating the mistakes of the past. Former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has [insisted](#) that the Israeli military operation in Lebanon was "not going to solve any strategic problems." Olmert [argued](#) that disarming Hezbollah, which continues to pose a threat to Israeli security, "can be done not by a ground operation but only by effective co-operation between Israel and the Lebanese

government.” Former Israeli Air Force Chief **Nimrod Sheffer** also questioned the efficacy of Israel’s prolonged military presence in southern Lebanon, [arguing](#) that “a security zone guarantees that there will be constant fighting there.” Netanyahu has [confirmed](#) that despite the temporary ceasefire, the Israeli military will remain in Lebanese territory. This IDF occupation and repeated ceasefire violations undermine the historic opportunity for Israel-Lebanon peace presented by a Lebanese government that is willing to cooperate with Israel and the US in disarming Hezbollah.

### **3) The West Bank Front:** *Netanyahu has emboldened violent Israeli settlers and entrenched Israel’s military occupation of the West Bank, rather than pursue peace with the Palestinians*

On the West Bank, national security experts warn that the Netanyahu government’s approach has further degraded Israel’s security and added unnecessary strain to its military, while also risking the outbreak of a full-scale war similar to the two Intifadas. Last month, as Israel’s security cabinet approved 30 new settlements in the West Bank, IDF Chief of Staff **Eyal Zamir** [warned](#) he was “raising 10 red flags,” as the military does not have the personnel to protect settlements while fighting across seven fronts.

Netanyahu’s cabinet still approved the settlements. “[Their] governing doctrine is simple and cynical: keep all fronts burning,” [explained](#) **Tamir Pardo**, former Mossad director, and **Nimrod Novik**, a former senior advisor to the late **Shimon Peres**. The West Bank front is literally burning from Israeli settler terrorists who set fire to Palestinian homes, olive groves, livestock, and other property. This violence, which has seen a [massive spike](#) in the last several weeks, is a core component of a wider strategy of clearing the West Bank of Palestinians in order for Israel to annex it. Since the start of 2026, more than 1,500 Palestinians have already been [displaced](#), and 11 have been killed by Israeli settlers.

[Commanders for Israel’s Security](#) (CIS), a movement of over 550 former senior Israeli security officials, has [identified](#) the West Bank front as the most existential for Israel’s future as a Jewish and democratic state. They have condemned direct participation by the Israeli government and military in violent attacks against Palestinians, further arguing that settler violence radicalizes Palestinian youth and harms Israel’s morality, justice system, global standing, and relationship with the Jewish diaspora. CIS experts warn that the settler campaign to drag Israel into a full-scale war in the West Bank “would be a devastating blow to our national security.” Israel’s actions in the West Bank also undermine prospects for Israeli regional integration and threaten the very future of the state of Israel. On the West Bank front too, “force alone cannot give Israelis the peace and security they deserve,” as IDF Brigadier General (Res.) **Jonathan Shimshoni** [put it](#). Instead, Israel must end its violent military occupation of the West Bank, counter settler violence, and pursue a peace agreement with the Palestinians.