



BRIEFING

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HASSAN NASRALLAH CHOOSES TO MAINTAIN "STRATEGIC UNCERTAINTY"

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In an hour-long speech marked by the **ambiguity typical of Hezbollah**, its leader Hassan Nasrallah threatened Israel and the United States, but without formally announcing that his movement was going to go to war.

In short, **it maintains a strategic ambiguity that forces the Hebrew state to maintain significant resources** on its northern border.

A/ Main points of the speech

- **On 7 October:** This offensive was launched "100%" by the Palestinians. *"They kept it secret, we weren't warned"* ;
- **On the justification for the attack on 7 October:** *"There was and is no other option" than to attack the Jewish state... The other option is silence, waiting for more oppression, more deaths, more killings... The decision was wise, courageous, prudent and worthy of every sacrifice.*
- **On Hezbollah's current and future involvement:** *"Some people say that we are going to engage in war, but we have been engaged in this battle since 8 October... What is happening on our front may seem modest, but it is very important. It is unprecedented since 1948"*. Hassan Nasrallah went on to point out **that Hezbollah's action is forcing Israel to immobilise troops and military resources on its northern border** that it

cannot commit to Gaza in the south, and that **the evacuation of entire towns and villages is** placing an unbearable economic and psychological burden on Israel;

- He denounced **the international community's "blindness" to the suffering of the Palestinians.**
- **On the Arab world,** Hassan Nasrallah called on Arab and Muslim states to *"immediately stop their exports of oil, goods and food"* to Israel;
- **On Iran's involvement:** Hassan Nasrallah stressed that Iran had nothing to do with the current war and had not been involved in its conception and preparation, but he congratulated *"the Iraqi and Yemeni factions"* for having joined in this *"glorious operation" which has revealed Israel's "weakness"*. As a reminder, the Yemeni **Houthis** and **pro-Iranian Iraqi groups** (financed, armed, trained and supported by Tehran) have launched drone and missile attacks against Israel (the Houthis) and American bases in Iraq and Syria;
- **On the United States:** *"They are 'entirely responsible' for the war in Gaza;*
- **On what happens next:** it will depend on how the war in Gaza develops and on any *"aggression"* by Israel and the United States against *"Lebanon"* or other parties: *"Israel would be making the biggest mistake in its history if it carried out a pre-emptive operation against Lebanon"*. In conclusion: *"All scenarios are open on our Lebanese front, I repeat, all scenarios are open... We are ready for all possibilities. The prospect of all-out war is realistic"*.

B/ Quick analysis

Hassan Nasrallah's speech came as no real surprise.

In the eyes of many observers, there is no **doubt that Iran was directly involved in the attack on 7 October**. Not only has Tehran been arming, financing and advising Hamas for years, but there are various indications that its ideological armed wing, the **Revolutionary Guards Corps**, played a key role in the conception and preparation of the attack. It was even Tehran that decided on the exact timing of the attack and gave Hamas the green light at a meeting in Beirut three days before 07.10.

Strategically, **only Iran benefits from the current crisis**: at the very least, it could hope to slow down or block the process of rapprochement between Israel and the conservative Sunni countries of the Gulf, which Teheran perceives as an existential threat. This objective has been partially achieved, but probably not in any lasting way. A second aim of this proxy war was probably to trigger a regional conflict. For the moment, this objective has not been achieved.

However, **Iran does not wish to become directly involved in the war**: despite the regime's rodomontades, it cannot hope to resist an Israeli military counter-offensive and would certainly be unable to cope with American attacks.

Moreover, as we saw forty years ago in Lebanon and more recently in Iraq, **Tehran is reluctant to engage in direct offensive action and always favours indirect action via "proxy" organisations**. This is what it has done in the current conflict, by using pro-Iranian militias in

Iraq and Syria to attack American bases and the Houthis in Yemen, who have fired (unsuccessfully) missiles and launched drones towards Israel over the Red Sea.

But **engaging Hezbollah directly in the war would be an entirely different matter**. This organisation can certainly do a great deal of harm to Israel, but it cannot hope to win, especially as it would almost certainly be retaliated against by the United States, which has positioned two naval battle groups in the region.

Yet **Hezbollah is a vital element in Iran's regional strategy**: it enables Tehran to **exert a strong influence on Lebanese politics, supports the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad and maintains a permanent threat on Israel's northern border**, a threat which, as a last resort, could be activated if, in the years to come, Jerusalem were to attack Iran to prevent it from acquiring nuclear weapons. Such a pre-emptive attack is more than a certainty. It is **therefore out of the question to waste such a precious resource to help Hamas, which will be crushed in any case**.

This explains why, until now, **Hezbollah's intervention has amounted to a form of minimum service**: a few rocket or missile attacks, limited incursions (of the level of a patrol) but nothing more. All of which goes to **show that the organisation supports Hamas, but without really endangering it, as the Israeli response remained perfectly proportionate**.

C/ Provisional conclusion

In his speech on Friday, **Hassan Nasrallah confined himself to maintaining "strategic uncertainty"** (we are already at war, and we will continue, but without escalating. But be careful, if you attack us, you will pay a high price).

This has **the advantage of maintaining strong military, economic and psychological pressure on Israel**, which is obliged to maintain heavy firepower on its northern border and to bear the brunt of the evacuations, but at a **limited cost**. Neither Israel nor the United States want to widen the conflict, so the Hebrew State's response will remain proportional and limited.

That said, the situation is extremely volatile, and it would be unreasonable, not to say dangerous, to assume that it cannot escalate in the coming weeks.

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