



[Tensions in Lebanon Prompt Fear of a Potential Widescale Conflict Involving the U.S., Russia, and Others](#)

Several nations stand on the precipice of ever-expanding conflict due to ongoing tensions between Israel and Hezbollah. Technological developments of the preceding decades and the evolution of a more globalized world that has tied countries together in intricate ways suggest that a larger-scale war such as this would be particularly devastating. Even without the use of nuclear armaments, a conflict of this nature could be catastrophic. The possible domino that is the Israel-Lebanon situation threatens to bring about a cascade of further escalation. As has been the case with many of the world's major conflicts, one slight misstep or miscalculation might be all it takes. With Hezbollah making threats to lob missiles at Cyprus, an island nation in Europe's backyard, Russian mercenaries and their rebel trainees in Syria, and an increase in U.S. naval activity in the area, the circumstances are very close to devolving for the worse.

Iran appears to be caught in the middle of these tensions, much like the U.S., and the outbreak of a full-scale war in southern Lebanon could strain its regional position. Additionally, the increased pressure on the U.S. and its allies that this conflict would cause may benefit Iran's short-term political goals. Still, the complex network of relationships that Tehran has built up with these proxies would be at much greater risk of being dismantled and could undermine Iran's own security. Should Hezbollah or Israel escalate their attacks, Russia too would have more interest in the conflict. It has so far been a patient observer content to let this pull U.S. interests and resources away, but this position has the potential to change dramatically. Russia and Hezbollah have reportedly been able to forge some form of a working relationship in Syria. They may have reason to become more overt in their aid to the group in order to oppose the United States' position in the region.

According to experts and observers, what Israel is defining as "total victory" in Gaza is both unattainable and dangerous. The pursuit of this has been the basis for much of the suffering caused by Israeli forces, and the dire humanitarian circumstances facing so many Palestinian civilians in Gaza. Israeli officials exhibit no desire to halt their operations against Hamas, while at the same time, moving more and more troops to the northern border with Lebanon in preparation for a war with Hezbollah. These troop movements, coupled with Netanyahu's unfounded claim that the Biden administration is withholding weapons and munitions, make it appear as though Israel is all but daring Hezbollah to confront it so as to fulfill its desire to continue its belligerent and destructive actions in Gaza. As Hezbollah engages in its rocket strikes as a pressure device to try and stop the ongoing Israeli assault on Gaza and reach a lasting ceasefire, continued escalations might lead to the largest expansion in conflict in recent decades. Should this happen, it would likely pull Iran and all of the militant groups that it backs into a loosely united coalition against Israel and, possibly by extension, the United States.

All of this comes at a pivotal moment in global affairs. With upcoming elections happening in both Iran and the United States, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu facing a mountain of legal and criminal woes in addition to civil discord, the situation could tumble out of control very quickly. Should the U.S. be pulled into a wider conflict, whether through a surge of material and economic support or going so far as to deploy combat units in the area, there is an inherent risk of yet another foreign policy failure. Furthermore, North Korea has recently signed a defense pact with Russia. This comes as no surprise, considering their crucial role in supplying the invading nation with the munitions that have been raining down on the Ukrainian countryside for well over two

years now. This new pact seems to have emboldened North Korean Dictator Kim Jong Un, as he has issued warnings of “a new world war” over U.S. involvement in Ukraine. This type of saber-rattling is nothing new, and is certainly expected after the new defense agreement between North Korea and Russia, however, new troop movements appear to show North Korean soldiers acting with a new boldness and working in and around the DMZ to lay mines. This development has raised concerns with many South Korean observers, and North Korea’s lack of fear of retaliation, combined with their historical agenda of ‘retaking’ the South, is certainly cause enough for those concerns.

Should the United States become stretched with one or multiple of these many competing agendas, the chances that China will pursue the militaristic capture of Taiwan will increase dramatically. China has been preparing for just such an endeavor for a long time. Between the constant air and sea harassment and the development of three island bases nearby, it has the potential to devastate the island nation in very little time. Even with the support of American naval personnel and the training provided by American special forces, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) dwarfs the Taiwanese military. With all of this, the world is at a tipping point – one that looks all too familiar to the previous ones that led to the world wars of the 20th century. Only this time, the stakes are higher, the weapons are deadlier, and the existential threats of climate change and nuclear war hang over it all. It is not too late to pull it back, but it will take significant commitments to peace and compromise. The United States and its allies must work hard to bridge the divisions that run through today’s quagmire of political unrest and establish a lasting peace that will allow the nations of the world to overcome the many challenges faced without the escalation of the current conflicts.