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Commentary

Will new developments
deepen the U.S. involvement
in the Middle East?

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Incident. On April 1, 2024, Israeli airstrike on Iranian targets in Damascus allegedly killed General Mohammad Reza Zahedi, commanding the elite IRGC Quds forces in Syria and Lebanon. At first glance, the Israel's move resembles mere retaliation against Iran's incessant [support for Hamas](#) whereas, the complexity of events suggests otherwise. Hence, another general's assassination possibly triggers even greater conflicts in Middle East.

Isolated Netanyahu. Israel war in Gaza, which began in October 2023, is seemingly different from the previous ones. Since 1948, the West has been highly supportive of Israel. However, the current campaigns of Tel Aviv have not enjoyed much needed support from the West. Interestingly, despite the United States' call on Israel for a ceasefire received a backfire from B. Netanyahu, the international community was able to convince Israel to starting peace talks began [in Doha](#) this February.

US's Shifting focus. Stalling Ukraine support and increasing need for focusing on the Indo-Pacific region have eclipsed the Israel's needless war in the Gaza Strip. Secretary E.Blinken's "shuttle diplomacy" aiming ceasefire has again proven the Washington's unwavering commitment to reaching negotiations between warring parties. Washington further [abstained from vetoing the UN Security Council](#) resolution on a ceasefire in Gaza during the month of Ramadan without an obligation to release the hostages on the Palestinian side. All these developments might potentially have pushed Tel Aviv to take countermeasures.

Countermeasures. The US's reluctance to support Israel for its war in Gaza has frustrated B. Netanyahu, who is deeply committed to rejecting any ceasefire until the victory. The consequent elimination of the Iranian general appears to be Netanyahu government's response to the series of events both in Middle East and New York which undoubtedly increases tensions around Gaza. At the same time, mass protests condemning Israel and its allies [erupted in Iran](#). All these set of events likely worsen the peace processes in Doha and eventually lead to the intensification of the conflict. Tehran's possible retaliatory move could lead to the consolidation of the Western support for Israel which is exactly in Tel Aviv's interest.

Interestingly, the more the US pushes for two state solution, the more Israel likely strengthens countermeasures in Syria, Lebanon and Iraq. On the contrary, the regional players' response to such development, might unintentionally consolidate the Western support for Israel.

Conclusion. The incident eliminating General Zahedi likely to exceed the Irani-Israeli intelligence and military rivalry in the region and rather it seems to have to do with the obvious declining US-Israeli relations, notably,

with current administration is concerned. Unlike previous conflicts, the US's marked abstinence from exclusive support for Israel is likely to continue, considering even greater concerns the USA faces in Taiwan strait, South China Sea and Ukraine.

In addition, the United States' demonstratively refrain from vetoing a UN resolution favouring a ceasefire in Palestine has likely induced Israel to take countermeasures. These developments might further push Iran to retaliate against Israel which in turn might harm the American positions in the region. The aftermath of which, at least B. Netanyahu hopes, likely to consolidate the Western support to Israel.