

The *Muqawama* Doctrine

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Articles & Testimony

The second Lebanon war has put wind in the sails of the rejectionists across our borders, increasing numbers of whom believe that finally, they have hit upon an effective plan of action against Israel. Predictably, declarations about the inevitable demise of the Jewish state are back in fashion. More than 30 years after the Arab states and their army commanders came to the conclusion that they had no viable means of removing Israel from the map and stopped talking openly of their desire to annihilate it, the discourse in the Arab world is changing. Following the cue of Iranian President Ahmadinejad, the leaders of Hamas and Hizballah have broken out in spontaneous hoorahs about the Zionist clock ticking toward its final hour.

It must be stressed that this mood is prevalent primarily among sectors of the Arab public who have always rejected the vision of peace. Now, however, they are drawing strength from the second Lebanon war and are using it to justify their positions, hawking their wares more aggressively and more blatantly than they have dared in the recent past. And so the question of Israel's fate, which was supposed to be off the agenda, has again become the subject of acceptable debate, along with endless discussions forecasting whether it will take one generation, or two or three, for the wish to come true.

I suggest calling this worrying phenomenon the Muqawama Doctrine. The literal translation of the Arabic word muqawama is "resistance," but that does not reflect the full meaning of the term. A more correct translation would be "the doctrine of constant combat," or "persistent warfare," which is how Hizballah's Hassan Nasrallah and Hamas's Khaled Mashal define it. They argue that the last war proved the doctrine, showing they could survive even an all-out confrontation with a vastly superior military force such as the IDF.

Israel will be facing the challenge of this doctrine in the years to come. It is a different challenge from the one posed by a coalition of conventional Arab armies, and a more complicated challenge by far. Israel found an answer to the conventional threat — see the 1967 and 1973 wars — but so far it has not come up with an appropriate response to the dangers embedded in the Muqawama, not least because our politicians and generals tend to diminish their importance.

Following is a rough guide highlighting the essential points of the doctrine:

- **Peace is not an option:** The Arab world must not, because of temporary hardship, be dragged into recognizing Israel and accepting its existence through peace agreements. When in need of a respite, it is permitted to reach hudna (armistice) agreements, valid for a limited period only, with the "Zionist regime." Usually, the rejectionists speak of annulling the Jewish state rather than extermination, though there are also plenty of calls to expel the Jews from Palestine. The hudna idea is nicely illustrated by Hamas's proposal for a cease-fire in return for an Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders, and by Hizballah's apparent support for the revival of the 1949 armistice agreement between Israel and Lebanon.
- **It is not necessary to wait for there to be a balance of forces:** Unlike president Nasser, who aimed to build up enough military might to beat Israel, or president Hafiz al-Asad, who sought what he called "strategic parity," the disciples of

the Muqawama Doctrine reject any delay in the fighting unless a hudna is in force. On the contrary, even when the balance of forces is clearly in the enemy's favor, they perform the imperative of continual warfare, if only on a small scale. The military disadvantage can be narrowed through innovative tactics. For example, both Hamas and Hizballah made a point of kidnapping IDF soldiers from armored vehicles. Camouflage is an effective defense against aircraft, and old Katyusha rockets or home-made Qassams can provide a response to Israel's superior fire-power.

- Do not fight over territory: The goal of the Muqawama is the methodical erosion of the enemy's resolve. There is no need to defend territory against Israeli occupation, or to try to conquer land. The essence is to spill blood, and since that is the case, it is better to focus on the civilian population as the primary target. The motto is blood, not land, and the effort is directed at denying victory to the enemy, not at achieving a quick result.
- Jihad is not a national struggle: In effect, Iran and its associates in Lebanon and Palestine have requisitioned the old formula of the "Popular War of Liberation" fashioned by nationalists such as Arafat and the leaders of the Algerian revolution, and have injected it with exclusively Islamic content. Fighting is undertaken for the sake of Allah, and not out of patriotic sentiment.
- The Arab state is not a suitable vehicle: The Muqawama is not merely a military system, but a comprehensive, alternative regime. The Arab states constitute a flawed and inefficient apparatus, unfit to conduct a historic battle. The task must be shouldered instead by the Islamic movements that, alongside their military activity, engage in societal reform through educational, health and business institutions. Hamas and Hizballah are headed by shura (consultation) councils composed of senior clerics. The "Shurocracy" is key to rehabilitating the community as well as defeating the enemy, offering an alternative hierarchical structure to dictatorships, monarchies and democracies.

In accordance with this doctrine, Hizballah is reorganizing in South Lebanon, chiefly in the nature reserves outside the villages. Hamas is currently building a paramilitary force similar to Hizballah's, in Gaza and in the West Bank. The next confrontation is coming. It is only a matter of time.

Ehud Yaari is an Israel-based associate of The Washington Institute and associate editor of Jerusalem Report. He is the author of *Toward Israeli-Palestinian Disengagement and Peace by Piece: A Decade of Egyptian Policy*. ❖

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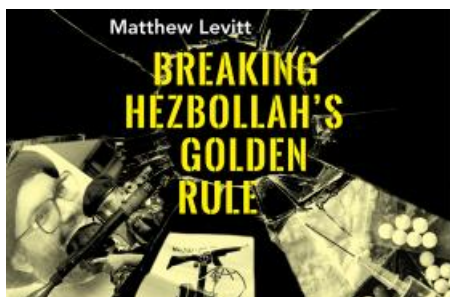
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