

Our leaders must rally the public for continuation of war

written by Meir Ben Shabbat | 08.06.2024

Eight months into the war, a paramount challenge confronts the nation's leadership – galvanizing public resolve for the grueling campaign's continuance. The adversaries' conduct in Gaza and Lebanon could facilitate this endeavor. Hamas persists in obstructing the prisoner issue while launching rockets and attempting infiltrations, underscoring the imperative to sustain operations against it. Concurrently, Hezbollah's escalating assaults on the IDF and northern localities compel Israel to reevaluate its approach.

A considerable segment of the populace appears to identify with the Gaza objectives, deeming them achievable, while seeking transformative change in the north. There is an understanding that this will demand sacrifice, fortitude, and patience. To re-enlist public backing and fortify trust, the political echelon must minimize ambiguity, elucidate Israel's stance on pivotal matters like the Biden framework and exchange deal, forge broad consensus, dispel doubts surrounding the conflict's prospects, and present a unified front alongside political allies and security establishments.

Last week's events signified a further intensification of Hezbollah's war of attrition against Israel, with an unprecedented scale of attacks. Beyond the casualties and damage inflicted on communities and assets, the psychological toll has been substantial. While the IDF exacts costs on Hezbollah, this does not counterbalance the deleterious domestic impact.

Hezbollah will persist in hostilities as long as Gaza operations continue – Nasrallah's postulated formula since the war's onset. This conceptually relegates the northern arena to secondary status, preempting Israeli designations. This formula affords Nasrallah command over escalation while providing an exit strategy: upon Israel's cessation of Gaza operations, per his assessment, he could unilaterally halt hostilities, denying Israel legitimacy for a broader confrontation.

On May 19, Nasrallah expounded to his audience that in the "resistance axis" versus Israel, the side exhibiting tenacity, patience, and resilience would prevail. Victory, he contended, would manifest gradually through attrition rather than a

decisive blow. Naturally, Israel's leadership need not acquiesce to Nasrallah's paradigm.

His formulations are not binding. Nasrallah must recognize that Israel will dictate the decisive juncture, irrespective of Gaza's status. Moreover, Israel need not mirror Hezbollah's attritional strategy, instead completing military preparedness for a strategic decision while imposing substantial costs on Lebanon. Nasrallah, having previously acknowledged misjudging Israeli intentions, must account for potential miscalculations - if indeed broader conflagration is undesired, he risks being inadvertently ensnared.

While the northern front dominated headlines this week, myriad challenges persist: Gaza, the West Bank, Iran's proxies, diplomatic and legal arenas, and domestic societal fissures.

Given the grave ramifications, the political leadership must bolster national resilience alongside operational endeavors. Minimizing public uncertainty, clarifying positions when not advantaging the enemy, assuaging doubts over the campaign's trajectory stemming from feared concessions enabling Hamas's recovery, shoring up home front support, deferring divisive issues, and projecting a cohesive united stance - these prerequisites are imperative.

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