

The logic behind Hezbollah's concealment of its losses

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In the strategic confrontation between Israel and Hezbollah, the number of fatalities is not merely a statistical measure of bereavement, but a strategic asset in the battle to control the narrative.

While Israel issues evacuation warnings before strikes in civilian areas in an effort to minimize civilian casualties, Hezbollah is also adopting a policy of systematic ambiguity in the current war regarding the scope of its losses. This policy is a survival mechanism, designed to bridge the widening gap between the organization's promises and the bloody reality on the ground.

Myth of "divine victory"

The core of Hezbollah's narrative rests on the ethos of "muqawama," or resistance, an undefeated force operating under religious patronage. Revealing the true scale of its losses could crack the image of "divine victory" that the organization has worked to market. Hezbollah has also concealed the scale of the losses it sustained in the past, including during the Second Lebanon War in 2006, among them the number of dead and wounded. Today, however, the organization is more sensitive to criticism than ever. After dragging Lebanon into a third devastating war before the country had even managed to recover from the ruins of war and economic collapse, Hezbollah fears a wave of criticism from the Lebanese state and society, and especially from the Shiite public. Although the organization maintains its grip on its Shiite base through economic and social dependence, unrest can also be identified in southern Lebanon. Concealing the scale of its losses is the organization's way of preventing this criticism from becoming a real threat to its stability.

On the operational level, publishing lists of the dead would be an intelligence "gift" to the Israel Defense Forces. Ambiguity allows Hezbollah to preserve the fog of war surrounding the effectiveness of Israeli strikes. Every disclosure of a fatality among the command ranks or in elite units, such as the Radwan Force, enables Israel to verify the accuracy of strikes against the command structure and identify weak points in the organization's operational makeup. For Hezbollah, the

enemy's lack of knowledge is a force multiplier meant to conceal the depth of the damage to its capabilities.

A central layer of this strategy, as also emerges from analyses by the Alma Research and Education Center, is the embedding of the organization's operatives who were killed in lists of civilian casualties. Hezbollah is carrying out a double manipulation here: It is concealing the erosion of its military force while at the same time inflating reports of civilian losses. The goal is to generate international and legal pressure on Israel, using cognitive warfare to force a ceasefire that would save the organization from a significant challenge.

Lack of accountability as an expression of the organization's character

Ultimately, this policy reflects Hezbollah's essential character as a totalitarian organization that is accountable to no one in Lebanon, neither the state nor the Shiite community. Its only obligation to report the truth is to its patron in Tehran. Internally, the organization continues to operate as a closed body that suppresses transparency, understanding that the truth is the greatest enemy of the narrative it seeks to instill.

In conclusion, Hezbollah's ambiguity is not a sign of strength, but evidence of its vulnerability. It is an attempt to preserve an artificial image of victory in the face of a reality of attrition and destruction, with the organization knowing that exposing the truth could lead to the collapse of the myth on which it depends. In this reality, Israel would do well to devote efforts to exposing the scope of the damage inflicted on Hezbollah and to embedding this awareness among the Lebanese public, in order to weaken the organization and further undermine its standing.

Such exposure would also benefit Israel in the face of voices in the West protesting the scale of Israeli harm to Lebanese civilians. The growing calls from various circles in Lebanon for advancing a peace agreement with Israel reflect the potential "partner" that exists in Lebanon, which Israel must work hard to strengthen. Revealing the depth of the blow to Hezbollah will help serve this clear Israeli interest.

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