

The Challenge of *al-Muqawama* (Resistance) to Israel

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The Concept of “Resistance”

In recent decades a new-old concept has been sweeping the hearts and minds of the Middle East. The Arab term *muqawama* may be translated literally as “resistance,” but this translation fails to transmit the broad, varied conceptual and practical contents of the term. *Al-Muqawama* is much more than a military method of action or a political concept; it is a comprehensive view of the world and a way of life.

Though the use of the term “resistance” is quite common in today’s Middle East, perhaps more so than in any other part of the world, its roots lie outside the region. The term “resistance” first appeared in World War II to describe underground movements in occupied Europe (especially in France) fighting against the Germans, particularly by means of guerilla and popular uprisings. This historical background lends the term “resistance” a fundamentally positive resonance in international public opinion and helps embed its image as a legitimate, even heroic, move of an occupied people or of freedom fighters operating against a foreign force.

After the war, various national liberation movements acting against colonial forces in the Third World adopted the term, and from there the term made its way to the Middle East. In regional political and public discourse, entrenchment of the term may be attributed to the Palestinian

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national movement. The Palestinians played a central role in fashioning the idea of resistance in the region, and used it to present their armed struggle as a legitimate step by a stateless force against a powerful foreign enemy.

In the last two decades the idea of resistance in the region received unprecedented attention, though under new auspices – that of Islamic fundamentalist organizations and states belonging to the radical axis (especially Iran) that have redefined the term, both conceptually and practically. Under the influence of these elements, the current objectives of resistance are a yearning for an alternate world order in the spirit of radical Islam, eradication of Western influence in the region, and most importantly, an unrelenting struggle against Israel until it is annihilated. Furthermore, the elements of resistance have scored some significant achievements in recent decades, conquering territorial strongholds, enhancing military systems in several locations, and implanting their ideas in the region's consciousness. As a result, the resistance has become one of the most severe threats facing Israel.

At the same time, this challenge also entails many fundamental difficulties. Perhaps the most prominent is the conceptual challenge,

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given the vague nature of resistance and the heterogeneity characterizing the elements identified with it. Indeed, "resistance" is represented by a wide range of elements: non-state organizations (such as Palestinian Islamic Jihad and armed resistance elements in Iraq); non-state organizations with a national dimension (such as Hamas in the Gaza Strip) or a semi-state dimension (such as Hizbollah); and states (Iran and Syria). All of these represent different religious, ethnic, and ideological identities, at times even diametrically opposed to one another. Moreover, the various elements do not subscribe to one uniform philosophy, and in fact ascribe different interpretations to the concept of resistance. They

define their objectives differently, in accordance with their particular circumstances and interests. Therefore, it is difficult on the one hand to define resistance as a camp or axis, and on the other hand to describe it as

a movement or a phenomenon. In practice, it is a combination of all these definitions and terms.

The practical, mainly military, foundation of the idea of resistance reflects a fundamental difference towards a conflict on the part of different non-state strains of resistance and on the part of states. The difference lies in radically diverse conceptions of the time and geographical scope of the conflict, as well as in the definition of fundamental terms of the struggle and relations to the enemy, in particular Israel, which is accorded a unique position in the resistance concept as a central target for attack. To the resistance, struggle is based on several fundamental principles: continuous efforts to exhaust the enemy; pretensions of having great capacity for sacrifice (greater than the enemy's); determination stemming from ideological purity; willingness to engage in a long term struggle destined ultimately to result in victory; complete and total negation of the enemy, taking the form of long term efforts to annihilate it and complete rejection of the possibility of recognizing it; refusal to sanctify territory or pursue an insistent struggle for land; relatively limited weight on the notion of sovereignty or statehood; use of simple though powerful methods and weapons; efforts to cause as many casualties as possible to the enemy's military and civilian population, given the West's high sensitivity to loss of life; and redirection of the struggle into the civilian dimension, stemming in part from a desire to arouse moral dilemmas within the enemy camp and acquire human shields. The resistance elements in the region also stress their clear preference for close relations with the public and the street, along with their contempt for the governments in the region, considered by the resistance to be weak, ideologically corrupt, and subservient to the West.

The resistance has no intention of trying to achieve military parity, let alone decision in its struggle against Israel. The elements of resistance understand their military inferiority. Nonetheless, they claim that mental strengths enable them to offset the enemy's military-technological superiority, in particular their stamina and capacity for self-sacrifice. According to the concept of resistance, victory lies in denying the enemy decision and in the very ability to survive and act over the long run, even after sustaining severe blows, in other words, realizing victory through a non-defeat. By means of these methods, the resistance is attempting to achieve "dual containment": preventing the Western enemy, especially

Israel, from achieving a military decision, and at the same time foiling regional state steps to create stability, advance a compromise between Israel and its neighbors, and establish a pro-Western base (e.g., Hamas' efforts to undermine the effort to effect a political settlement, or the struggle by resistance elements in Iraq against the effort to stabilize the central government in Baghdad). Resistance elements view the Second Lebanon War as a formative event where the efficacy and impact of their methods received full expression. In their view, moving the war to Israel represents one of Israel's most difficult defeats and confronts Israel with a complex challenge it has been hard pressed to overcome.

However, while resistance elements are eager to demonstrate unquestioned power, determination, and stamina, they at times are saddled with constraints, fears, and even defeats that force them to demonstrate flexibility and restraint. Resistance elements in the region that have developed state-like characteristics provide particularly salient examples. Their new status imposes serious constraints on these organizations and gradually makes them more careful, restrained, and vulnerable than in the past. The change in their behavior is especially noticeable after high intensity confrontations with Israel. These have demonstrated to them the difficulty in conducting battles of attrition given their new status and the risk to their acquired governmental assets. However, the new status has so far not affected the ideological core of these elements, and more importantly, has not curbed their accelerated preparations for a future battle with Israel, reflected in their ongoing efforts to equip themselves with improved weaponry (especially long range rockets). Conversely, when states such as Iran and Syria embrace the concept of resistance, they adopt asymmetrical patterns of warfare that are the basis for resistance organizations. As a result, Israel is gradually coming face to face with a convoluted, essentially hybrid complex of challenges: states adopting modes of struggle of non-state entities, and non-state organizations or quasi-state entities gradually acquiring the capabilities and patterns of action of regular armies.

The rise of the resistance reflects a fundamental shift in the nature of the threats Israel faces, to the extent that Israel is obligated to undertake changes in its use of military force and in its definition of national security. The evolution of this challenge is taking place at the same time that there is a gradual decrease in state threats in the form of conventional military

forces, which constituted Israel's primary challenge during the first decades of its existence. At first glance, this would seem to augur well for Israel given the lesser force ostensibly confronting it. However, such a conclusion would be deceiving. The resistance may be characterized by less military might than the state-sponsored challenge, but its basic objective is not to achieve a quick decision against Israel. The risk inherent in the resistance lies precisely in the fact that it grows stronger slowly and gradually, and this is liable at times to deceive the outside observer. Overall, it presents a long term threat of attrition aimed at Israeli society's stamina. The challenge of the resistance makes it difficult to maximize the full potential of military force and realize unequivocal decisions, such as were achieved in most of the past wars conducted against state enemies.

Understanding the Threat

Coping with the challenge of the resistance emerges as a complex undertaking, primarily because of its multi-faceted nature and its multi-dimensional expressions that surface on the military-defense, political, cultural-ideological, social, and economic levels. Effective tackling of this challenge requires an incisive understanding of the unique nature of the resistance, identification of the weaknesses of the different elements comprising the specific challenge, steps coordinated according to the nature of each of the different resistance elements, and finally, understanding the region at large and the objectives that realistically may be realized when tackling the various elements of the resistance.

A profound understanding of the challenge posed by the resistance among Israel's national leadership is a critical, fundamental prerequisite for an in-depth understanding of the region's developing geo-strategic reality and determination of objectives and *modus operandi* appropriate to the current situation. As a first stage, the national leadership must recognize that what is at stake is not simply another "tactical-ongoing" threat on the part of radical groups that is maintaining constant force and scope. Rather, they must internalize that a creeping threat is lurking: it is constantly (though relatively slowly) developing and spreading to locus after locus in the Middle East.

The nation's leadership is required to shed several past assumptions that were partly valid for confrontations with states but are largely

irrelevant when confronting resistance organizations. The first assumption is that it is possible to attain a clear or absolute “decision” against the enemy; the term has lost its validity in the conceptual world of coping with elements of the resistance. The second assumption is that as the enemy makes the transition to statehood status it undergoes gradual moderation on practical and even ideological levels. In practice, even when some of the elements of resistance graduate into governmental entities, they do not hail the concepts of government or territory as glorious victories, and the new reality created does not in fact bode a change in their final objectives and ideological principles.

At the same time, the burden of government does force changes in their patterns of action. The new situation imposes constraints the resistance did not experience in the past, and requires the elements of resistance to demonstrate responsibility and statesman-like behavior and show restraint when it comes to taking military action. These lessons have been ingrained in resistance consciousness with particular force as the result of extensive military confrontations with Israel. At the same time, these events do not have absolute deterring power. Indeed, since the Second Lebanon War and Operation Cast Lead, Hizbollah and Hamas have found themselves mired in a serious internal contradiction. While both organizations demonstrate a great deal of caution when it comes to using military force, they have greatly accelerated the process of force buildup, equipping themselves with improved weapons so as to be able in the next battle to inflict greater damage on Israel than in the past. Thus despite the ongoing calm on both fronts, a sensitive and highly volatile situation has developed. This explosive potential is liable to burst under certain conditions: lapses of time since those difficult confrontations, which will erase the traumatic memory from the consciousness of the resistance elements and slowly weaken the impact of Israeli deterrence; growing internal pressure in the resistance organizations, especially from hawkish wings, to carry out military operations despite their inherent risks; and a challenge to the organizations as governing entities in a way that will temper the restraints limiting them today.

The third assumption the leadership would do well to abandon is that it is possible to undermine the image of the resistance organizations in the eyes of the public in which they operate if they are presented as responsible for the distress and destruction resulting from the violent

confrontations. Three decades of bitter struggle involving the resistance movements have yet to generate widespread popular protest against them. On the contrary: they are almost invariably pictured in an heroic light, especially when engaged in battle against Israel, and public sympathy for them remains stable and at times even increases. This stems from the deep relationship most of the resistance elements have with the population at large: they operate extensive networks of social assistance that supply basic needs of the population, and this serves to preserve and even strengthen their public standing.

Tackling the Core Challenges

Once it has shed these basic assumptions, the national leadership must have a great deal of patience – the very quality underlying the resistance program. In addition, the leadership must define realistic objectives to confront the resistance elements and avoid overblown expectations, especially regarding a military operation.

First, the leadership ought to shun solutions in the form of full and long term conquest of the territory where the resistance organization is active. Resistance elements do not look forward to an occupation scenario, but once created they find it very useful to advance their struggle against the enemy while drawing it into warfare among civilians. This is what happened in southern Lebanon, is happening today in Iraq, and is liable to happen in the future in the Gaza Strip should there be an extended conquest of the area. In such a situation, the resistance organization suffers serious blows in the early stages of the battle and its activity is limited at all levels, but from the moment the conquest becomes the new reality over a lengthy period of time it succeeds in rebuilding its capabilities and renewing its military activity.

The preferred policy (or more precisely, the lesser of the evils) is that of a relatively extensive military campaign once every few years. The scope of the campaign and its frequency are dictated by the intensity of the threat posed by the elements of resistance, the nature of the battlefield, and the regional and international circumstances prevailing at the time. However, in every scenario it is crucial that Israel's military response be disproportionate, so as to demonstrate to the enemy the heavy cost inherent in every attempt to undermine the security of Israel's regional sphere. Such a step must not last long, but must focus on causing

extensive damage to the leaderships of the resistance organizations (both at the military and the political echelons) and the various infrastructures under their auspices (including civilian). Such a step may well be accompanied by extensive damage to the Israeli home front, and also by extensive damage – unintentional, of course – to the enemy’s civilian sphere. Therefore, Israel’s leadership must conduct a public diplomacy campaign on two fronts: one at home, where it will have to clarify the cost Israel’s citizens must pay for confrontations with resistance elements and stress that one must not expect a quick victory or decision by the IDF; and the other for international audiences, where it will be necessary to explain the complexity of tackling resistance elements and describe the constraints the enemy imposes on Israel, first and foremost the necessity to fight in the densely populated civilian sphere.

None of the steps described is likely to cause the complete surrender of resistance elements or convince them to enter into direct talks with Israel or recognize its existence (at least not in the foreseeable future). However, military moves, particularly extensive ones accompanied by serious damage to the resistance elements, are likely to create long term deterrence with regard to undertaking violent operations against Israel. Indeed, resistance elements developing sovereign or semi-sovereign status have also developed a sensitivity and vulnerability they lacked in the past. The assets of a governing entity, such as those of Hamas in the Gaza Strip, give Israel more targets to damage and spell out loss considerations to the resistance organizations, especially at a time when governmental stability hangs in the balance.

The ongoing struggle against the resistance challenge also obliges Israel to strive to maintain the stability of regional state entities. This is true particularly with regard to states with which Israel has a political settlement, but also with regard to hostile nations that may be supplying aid to the resistance, such as Syria. The American campaign in Iraq has proven that the destabilization of a Middle Eastern state does not generate a more stable or liberal entity, rather – and on the contrary – chaos liable to serve as a breeding ground for resistance elements and elements even more radical than they (especially those identified with global jihad). This strategic lesson is valid not just with regard to regimes in the region but also with regard to national entities ruled by resistance elements. Here, Hamas’ rule of the Gaza Strip is the most prominent example.

Undermining this regime to the point of its collapse is liable to present Israel with a series of difficult problems, among them: a governmental vacuum should the Hamas regime fall, which can attract Islamic elements even more radical than Hamas, including those identified with al-Qaeda; creation of a lasting terrorist threat against the forces operating in the Gaza Strip (an “Iraqization”) or a widespread civil uprising; and a heavy burden inherent in the ongoing supply of the needs of the local impoverished population.

Implementation of the recommendations described above may help establish periods of relative calm. Such an outcome is a strategic asset for the State of Israel, which alongside conducting long military campaign also strives to support a flourishing civilian sphere and grant security to its citizens. To a large extent, this brings us back to David Ben-Gurion’s philosophy of defense, in which he defined the objective of the military campaign as creating the longest possible window of calm until the next campaign.

The Next Circle of Challenges

The lessons and recommendations discussed thus far relate primarily to the most extreme threats posed by resistance elements to Israel in recent years. In this context, resistance elements in a relatively advanced stage of development are of special prominence: elements that have taken control of large regions abutting Israel continue to conduct an armed struggle out of these regions, but at the same time are taking on sovereign or semi-sovereign status – e.g., Hamas and Hizbollah.

However, the challenge posed to Israel or other Western entities (especially the United States) by other resistance elements in the Middle East, including states, demands different initiatives. Here resistance elements in a relatively early stage of development are especially relevant. These operate in arenas in which Israel and the United States have significant influence though not total control, and there is an attempt to nurture a local governmental element of power that provides a counterweight to the resistance elements. Israel’s confrontations with Hamas in the West Bank and America’s encounters with resistance groups in Iraq are especially notable in this regard.

In both cases, recent years have witnessed a certain degree of success in the West’s attempt to cope with resistance. This success is the

result of a multi-year process similar in both arenas. At the first stage, the Western forces were obliged to make use of high intensity force accompanied by the conquest of most of the territory, including the large cities that are the central loci of resistance activity, while in effect ignoring the weak local regime, which was nominally in charge of these areas. At the end of this stage, Israel and the United States were gradually able to withdraw some or even most of their forces from the occupied territory (mainly from the urban areas) and transfer responsibility to the local government security apparatuses, while continuing with targeted assassinations in the evacuated region to neutralize the military force of the resistance elements and their influence on the political and public spheres. At the same time, vigorous efforts were made to nurture the local government and encourage it to operate independently against the resistance elements. In both cases – the government of Abu Mazen and the government of Nouri al-Maliki – one may see steady improvements in recent years, but there are ongoing serious doubts about the ability of these governments to uproot the resistance (or even their ability to survive) without a Western presence and security support.

A comparison between the two situations also reveals an essential difference in ways of tackling the resistance, stemming from the different resistance elements in the respective arenas. In the West Bank, the challenge of the resistance comes primarily from Hamas, a movement with extensive popular support that has established its status as a ruling party and presents an alternative to the veteran national leadership headed by Fatah. Therefore, Israel views the struggle against Hamas on the West Bank as a central strategic objective lest the movement take over this territory, and the Abu Mazen government, despite its fundamental weakness, understands the need to conduct a determined campaign against Hamas. In Iraq, however, the resistance is represented primarily by Sunni militias and some of the armed Shiite splinter groups. These harbor deep seated hostility towards the United States as well as fierce hatred for al-Qaeda, considered a primary rival just like the Americans and the Iraqi government. Given this situation, the Americans have succeeded in developing some particular strategies for tackling the resistance in Iraq. Chief among them is the organizing of some Sunni militias into armed defensive frameworks in different areas of the state (the “Awakening Councils”) in order to promote the struggle against

al-Qaeda. The Americans have also integrated some of the activists of the resistance organizations into the Iraqi government and defense establishment, thus curbing their violent activity against the Americans and the Iraqi government.

Dealing with states identified with the idea of resistance requires substantially different tactics from those used against non-state organizations, because at stake are elements with vast geographical and demographical dimensions, a usually stable centralized government, and extensive national infrastructures. In this context, Iran's case is of particular prominence. Tehran's involvement in entrenching the power of the resistance camp is only one aspect of the threat it poses to Israel in particular and to the Arab world and the West in general; the core of this threat is the development of its nuclear program. Dealing with Iran requires coordination between many regional and international players and a multitude of steps that include: preventing Iran from attaining independent nuclear fuel cycle capabilities, a scenario that is liable to help it establish its status as a regional superpower and strengthen its deterrence with regard to external elements; promoting strong international economic sanctions and an extensive public opinion campaign against Iran's Islamic government (especially with regard to its involvement in undermining regional stability by supporting terrorists and subversive organizations); and coordinating moves to curb Iran's influence in the Middle East, especially through the financial and military aid Iran extends to terrorists in the region, notably Hizbollah and Hamas.

Unlike Iran, where only offensive plans – whether military or political – are discussed, Syria's unusual status in the resistance camp may prompt other ideas to neutralize the threat it poses. The possibility of advancing a political settlement with Syria seems most promising, a step that invites the prospect of damage to the traditional relationship between Damascus and other resistance elements, among them Iran, Hizbollah, and Palestinian terrorist organizations, and in certain scenarios even its disengagement from this camp.

Operation Cast Lead: Successfully Refuting the Resistance Doctrine?

Operation Cast Lead in the Gaza Strip (December 2008-January 2009) ended with a notable feeling of success in Israel. In the period immediately

after, the operation was considered a national achievement by most of the senior political and military echelons in Israel as well as the Israeli public. Moreover, the operation gradually took on the nature of being a corrective to the Second Lebanon War by proving the application of the lessons learned through the previous confrontation between Israel and a central component of the resistance camp.

By contrast, a picture emerges from the enemy camp that is strange, at least for the Western, and especially the Israeli, observer. While there is the clear understanding of the severe damage sustained by the Palestinians in general and Hamas in particular, this understanding has not translated – at least openly – into acknowledgment of fundamental problems, let alone a declaration of defeat. In Hamas' version, there was no loss or defeat because the movement fulfilled the principles of the concept of resistance, led by preventing Israel from obtaining a classical military decision and by demonstrating operational capabilities (albeit fairly limited) throughout all the stages of the campaign, especially towards the end.

It seems that in the course of the operation, Hamas successfully applied the gamut of resistance principles: demonstrating firm resolve and avoiding waving the white flag; attempting to exhaust the Israeli home front; showing operational survival (especially rocket launching capabilities) at all stages of the campaign; expanding the circle of population centers and number of Israelis under the Hamas rocket threat; entrenching itself in the dense urban space to offset the advantage of a regular military force; intentionally merging the civilian and military spheres during the battles so as to cause many civilian casualties and thereby create international pressure on Israel; exhibiting a highly developed capacity for sustaining severe blows, especially in terms of loss of life; attempting to cause a great deal of bloodshed in the ranks of the enemy (especially its military); and attempting to foment the Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim streets.

However, despite implementation of all these ideas of the resistance concept, it seems that something fundamental in the operation still went wrong from Hamas' perspective. Objectively speaking, Operation Cast Lead is viewed as a Hamas non-success, if not an antithesis to the management and ending of the Second Lebanon War. There are several central reasons for this practical and perceptual gap:

1. The difference in Israel's conduct: All the elements in Israel acted fundamentally differently than they did in the Second Lebanon War, and thereby to a large extent rebuffed the asymmetrical logic and objectives Hamas had set for itself in this confrontation. The senior political echelon in Israel set relatively limited and attainable goals for the operation (no use was made of terms like victory, decision, or ending rocket launches); the IDF showed fighting capabilities and modus operandi different than those learned by the resistance in the summer of 2006, and therefore its losses were also relatively few; and the Israeli public demonstrated stamina and forbearance in face of the ongoing damage, as well as a not insignificant understanding that rocket launches cannot be completely eradicated.
2. Limitations of Palestinian force: Hamas found it difficult to play the role of Hizbollah in the Second Lebanon War, both because of the fundamental nature of the movement and because of the unique circumstances in which the operation took place. Militarily, Hamas did not have the capability of duplicating the scope of rocket launches carried out by Hizbollah and the massive damage to the Israeli civilian front in 2006; Hamas did not spring any military surprises on the IDF, such as the sophisticated anti-aircraft, anti-tank, or anti-ship systems that were at the heart of the success story Hizbollah formulated in the Second Lebanon War; and the movement demonstrated fairly limited military capabilities in the frontal confrontation with IDF forces during the operation's ground maneuvers (which resulted in fewer Israeli fatalities). In the background, there were also the problematic circumstances of the Gaza Strip arena: a small, level territorial unit, hemmed in on all sides and lacking logistical depth, as compared with the mountainous, wooded terrain of southern Lebanon, and the extensive and readily available logistical assistance provided by Iran and Syria to Hizbollah. Also, the Palestinian population was much more exposed to damage than Hamas had imagined, and even though no great wave of protest rose against the movement it is clear that the public in the Gaza Strip is not in a position to sustain damages endlessly and desires a quick end to the fighting.
3. The limited capacity for assistance by the resistance camp: Despite the fervent declarations of recent years, Hamas at the end of the day was alone in its confrontation with Israel, without any other player in

the camp coming forward to help it militarily. This found especially prominent expression in Hizbollah's lack of intervention, despite its tendency over the past decade to take advantage of confrontations between Israel and the Palestinians to engage in military actions against Israel.

4. The regional and international arenas: The conduct of the Arab, Muslim, and Western streets during the operation apparently disappointed Hamas somewhat, but is hardly a new phenomenon. In other cases too, as in the outbreak of the al-Aqsa intifada or the Second Lebanon War, the street was in a furor but did not generate any dramatic changes in government stances. By contrast, the West Bank street (as well as the Israeli Arab sector) was expected to create a national rear on behalf of Hamas, but seems to have failed to live up to Hamas' hopes and expectations. The conduct of Arab and Western governments during the operation added to frustrating Hamas' desire to fulfill the public opinion and political tools of the resistance, because of the understanding showed by most of them for Israel's steps, the relatively moderate amount of pressure exerted on it, and the critical approach taken by most of them with regard to Hamas.

Operation Cast Lead proved that Israel has a few methods at its disposal to counter the principles driving the resistance. Counteraction requires the integration of several components: a precise operational understanding of the enemy's moves and objectives; the determination not to play according to the enemy's rationale; the leadership's consolidation of clear, realistic objectives for such a confrontation in a way that particularly undermines enemy attempts to control public opinion; heightened public awareness with regard to these objectives; and enlistment of regional and international elements in a way designed to ease outside pressure.

It is true that the last confrontation was conducted against one of the weakest links in the resistance camp and in the unique context of the Palestinian arena. Looking to the future, it is critical to formulate some strict starting assumptions, whereby the outcome of the operation under discussion cannot be entirely replicated in confrontations with other elements of the resistance. In future campaigns it will be imperative to advance neutralizing moves similar to the ones taken during Operation

Cast Lead. However, it is also necessary to prepare for an encounter with an enemy with higher military readiness and better fighting spirit than that of Hamas, an enemy that will therefore also have an improved capability of rendering more severe damage to Israel's military and civilian spheres.

Conclusion

The overall balance of the resistance challenge in the Middle East may be described as mixed, somewhat favoring the elements identified with the concept. These elements have already changed the face of the region, as seen by far reaching transformations that have occurred in the Palestinian and Lebanese arenas, and they have established the status of the resistance concept as the dominant ideology among many regional groups. However, the idea has not yet succeeded in becoming the alternate world order of the region, in part because of steps to curb it taken by the West, including Israel, and also because of the moderate states in the Arab world. While these states suffer from intrinsic weakness and find it difficult to present a cohesive and attractive ideological alternative to the resistance, they have succeeded in obstructing its path, thereby preventing the resistance from achieving a quick decision in the struggle over the character of the region.

However, the resistance idea is hardly a passing ideological fad. Its close links to deep processes – cultural, political, and social – give it power and vitality, making it a long term threat from Israel's perspective. In order to tackle this threat, it is useless to hope for a crushing military victory such as the one that brought about the demise of the pan-Arab vision in 1967. Instead, a patient, exhausting campaign lasting many years is required, a campaign that will not focus merely on the military force of the elements of the resistance but will also strive to undermine the places where the concept is fashioned and distributed to the public at large. Within such an approach, the media, the educational systems, and the religious establishment of the region's nations play a prominent role. Only after a lasting fundamental change emerges in schools, universities, state-sponsored and independent media, and mosques and other religious institutions in the Islamic sphere will it be possible to see if there is a parallel ideological transformation in the Middle East, including the way in which the idea of the resistance is viewed by different regional communities.