

Order vs. Disorder (Part 1)

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There was a small item in The Jerusalem Post the other day that caught my eye. It said that the Israeli telephone company, Bezeq, was installing high-speed Internet lines in bomb shelters in northern Israel so Israelis could surf the Web while waiting out Hezbollah rocket attacks.

I read that story two ways. One, as symbol of Israeli resilience, a boundless ability to adapt to any kind of warfare. But, two, as an unconscious expression of what I sense people here are just starting to feel: **this is no ordinary war, and it probably won't end soon.** At a time when most Arab states have reconciled to Israel and their dispute is now about where the borders should be, the Iranian-backed Hezbollah Shiite militia, armed with 12,000 rockets, says borders are irrelevant; it is Israel that should be erased.

That's why I find in talking to Israeli friends a near total support for their government's actions -- and almost a relief at the clarity of this confrontation and Israel's right to defend itself. Yet, at the same time, I find a gnawing sense of anxiety that Israel is facing in **Hezbollah an enemy that is unabashedly determined to transform this conflict into a religious war -- from a war over territory -- and wants to do it in a way that threatens not only Israel but the foundations of global stability.**

How so? Even though it had members in the national cabinet, Hezbollah built up a state-within-a-state in Lebanon, and then insisted on the right to launch its own attack on Israel that exposed the entire Lebanese nation to retaliation. Moreover, unprovoked, it violated an international border with Israel that was sanctified by the United Nations.

So this is not just another Arab-Israeli war. It is about some of the most basic foundations of the international order -- borders and sovereignty -- and the erosion of those foundations would spell disaster for the quality of life all across the globe.

Lebanon, alas, has not been able to produce the internal coherence to control Hezbollah, and is not likely to soon. The only way this war is going to come to some stable conclusion any time soon is if **The World of Order -- and I don't just mean "the West," but countries like Russia, China, India, Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia too -- puts together an international force that can escort the Lebanese Army to the Israeli border and remain on hand to protect it against Hezbollah.**

I am **not talking about a U.N. peacekeeping force. I am talking about an international force**, like the one that liberated Kosovo, with robust rules of engagement, heavy weapons and troops from countries like France, Russia, India and China that Iran and its proxies will not want to fight.

Israel does not like international forces on its borders and worries they will not be effective. But it will be better than a war of attrition, and **nothing would set back the forces of disorder in Lebanon more than The World of Order helping to extend the power of the democratically elected Lebanese government to its border with Israel.**

Too often, assaults like Hezbollah's, which have global implications, have been met with only "a local response," said Gidi Grinstein, who heads Reut, an Israeli defense think tank. **"But the only way that these networks can be defeated is if their global assault is met by a global response."**

Unfortunately, partly because of China, Russia and Europe's traditional resentment and jealousy of the U.S. and partly because of the foolish Bush approach that said unilateral American power was more important than action legitimated by a global consensus, the global forces of order today are not at all united.

It is time that The World of Order got its act together. This is not Israel's fight alone -- and if you really want to see a "disproportional" Israeli response, just keep leaving Israel to fight this war alone. Then you will see some real craziness.

George Bush and Condi Rice need to realize that Syria on its own is not going to press Hezbollah -- in Mr. Bush's immortal words -- to just "stop doing this shit." **The Bush team needs to convene a coalition of The World of Order. If it won't, it should let others more capable do the job. We could start with the elder George Bush and Bill Clinton, whose talents could be used for more than just tsunami relief.**

The forces of disorder -- Hezbollah, Al Qaeda, Iran -- are a geopolitical tsunami that we need a united front to defeat. And that united front needs to be spearheaded by American leaders who understand that our power is most effective when it is legitimated by a global consensus and imbedded in a global coalition.