The Decline of Israeli Deterrence

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Foreword

In recent years, a worrisome phenomenon has become blatant in the domain of Israel's national security, and more specifically, in its deterrence capability. The diminishing success of Israel and the IDF in wars and violent conflicts, climaxing in this year's incidents – the IDF's dishonorable withdrawal from southern Lebanon and the half-hearted effort to quell the bloody confrontations with the Palestinians in Judea, Samaria and Gaza – indicate that there is a serious decline in Israel's deterrence. Yet, an effective deterrence capability has always been a central, even preeminent cornerstone of Israel's defense doctrine.

The aim of this paper, therefore, is to examine the status of Israeli deterrence and evaluate the validity of the estimation that it has significantly deteriorated, along with the causes and ramifications thereof.

Executive Summary

Deterrence capability along with the effective capacity to win wars decisively has supreme importance in Israel's special circumstances. This stems first and foremost from the quantitative-physical and ethical asymmetry, which places Israel in the difficult strategic situation of "the Few versus the hostile Many". A second fundamental factor in Israel's national security is its rough strategic environment in which "might makes right" rules and weakness invites aggression. A third basic factor is the international circumstances which, to say the least, are not tilted in Israel's favor. All these require it to maintain a deterrent force, which can emerge victorious quickly. Israel needs its deterrence capability even after the start of the "peace process", which is far from being worthy of that name. Without this capability, there is no chance in the world that Israel's enemies will be willing to coexist with it in any manner. This capability is also required to ensure that any signed agreement be fulfilled.

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The IDF victory in 1967 was the most impressive and decisive in the history of Israel and the most outstanding manifestation of its deterrence capability. Since then, Israel has indeed won all of the all-out wars against the Arab countries, though, recently, with diminishing results. The War of Attrition, from late 1968 until August 1970, was waged with a clear IDF edge, certainly from July 1969 and January 1970 when the Israeli Air Force was activated at the Suez Canal and deep inside Egypt (respectively), but this war left a bitter aftertaste at its end (the downing of "Phantoms" by advanced anti-aircraft missiles [SAM] and the advancement of such Egyptian batteries in violation of the cease-fire agreement).

In the Yom Kippur War in l973, the IDF impressively turned the tables in the course of just three weeks – from being surprised and suffering tactical defeats, to crossing the Suez Canal and advancing to a point approximately 100 kilometers from Cairo, and in the north, approximately 40 kilometers from Damascus. Yet despite the glorious tactical victory, the war ended unsuccessfully from the strategic perspective, i.e., Israel did not improve its position, and even suffered a setback. In this war, the Arabs evidenced for the first time that the IDF is not invincible and that war can pay them dividends. Consequently, that war can be seen as the beginning of the decline of Israeli deterrence, though not its total liquidation. After all, the Arab countries have not as yet launched a comprehensive war against Israel.

The Lebanon War in 1982 also ended with mixed results. On the one hand, the victory over the Syrian Air Force and its SAM batteries was extremely impressive. The Arabs, who relied on SAMs which "will bend the plane's tail", as was the case in l973, were astonished to discover that the IAF came up with an appropriate response. On the other hand, IDF ground maneuvers were clumsy, the expulsion of the Syrians and the PLO from Beirut and South Lebanon notwithstanding. Furthermore, the success of terrorism and guerilla warfare then against the IDF, which led to its withdrawal to the "security zone" in 1985, served as an inspiration to the Palestinians in Judea, Samaria and Gaza.

And indeed, in late 1987, they began the *intifada* which induced the Rabin government to sign the Oslo Agreements in September 1993. For the first time in the history of the Arab struggle against Israel, it was the Palestinians – through an extremely primitive struggle – who garnered success which the Arab countries never achieved in their wars against Israel – they succeeded in "twisting Israel's arm" and proving that terrorism and violence pay them dividends. Once Israel surrendered to terrorism and violence, and it does not matter whether or not the prattle that "the solution to this struggle is political and not military" is true, the Palestinians unequivocally learned that this is the way to fulfill their national aspirations. In a situation like that, deterrence capability has almost no impact.

Israeli deterrence capability took another beating in the Gulf War (1991). For the first time, Israel did not defend itself and did not respond to the Iraqi aggression pouring ground-to-ground missiles against it. The residents of Israel suffered the degradation of covering themselves with plastic sheets and gas masks due to the groundless apprehension from chemical weapons. Even if the lack of response, due to American pressure, was somehow justified during most of the duration of the war – Israel should have responded at the end of the war in order to preserve its deterrence.

A conspicuous failure of Israeli deterrence occurred in the struggle against the Hizbullah in Lebanon, especially in recent years. This failure reached its climax in the disgraceful withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000, in the abandonment of the SLA (South Lebanese Army) and the pedantic, to the point of disdain, fulfillment of United Nations Resolution 425 from 1978.

It is difficult to disassociate that withdrawal from the bloody clashes or mini-war, which the Palestinians initiated in Judea, Samaria and Gaza in late September 2000. In the "Al-Aksa *intifada*", which is ongoing still today (late January 2000), Israel has (almost) totally lost its deterrence capability over the Palestinians as well. Even the (hesitant) Israeli use of combat helicopters and tank

fire did not cause them to flinch. They were aware that despite the use of these weapons in Lebanon, the Hizbullah emerged victorious. Their success in the first *intifada* was similarly not forgotten. With Israeli deterrence practically non-existent, there is no doubt that the Palestinians view terrorism as a useful instrument in the realization of their national goals.

Bottom line: Israeli deterrence against the Palestinians and the Hizbullah is non-existent. True, in "low intensity conflicts" it is difficult to maintain deterrence capability, though it is not impossible and there are examples to prove it. On the other hand, Israel still maintains its deterrence capability against an all-out war initiated by Arab countries, which as mentioned above, have not launched a war since 1973. Similarly, nuclear deterrence is preserved versus non-conventional weapons.

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The causes of the decline of the deterrence capability can be attributed to three factors: the IDF, Israeli leadership and society, and the Arab perspective.

First, the IDF victory curve is in an unfortunate decline, as we discussed. The IDF is no longer perceived as an invincible army and therefore, its capability to deter has also diminished. There are "objective" causes such as enhancement of Arab military, drawing conclusions of war, additional distant enemies and more, and also "subjective" causes, which are dependent on us alone.

Second, the IDF has lost its monopoly in the area of attacking the enemy's rear front with air strikes deep in their territory which display superiority, exact a steep price from the aggressor, abbreviate the duration of the war, minimize casualties and of course rehabilitate the deterrence which was terminated with the start of the war. Once the Arabs were supplied with ground-to-ground missiles capable of striking Israel's sensitive home front with relative ease, Israel no longer had the monopoly in this area (as seen in the 1991 Gulf War). Israel still maintains exclusivity in nuclear potential, but its use is limited, for obvious reasons, and is to some extent neutralized by chemical and biological weapons in the arsenals of the countries in the region. A new Israeli monopoly is in the deployment of the "Arrow" missiles, which could potentially neutralize the regional ground-to-ground missile threat. Perhaps then, the state of Israel's deterrence will immeasurably be enhanced.

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More than the declining IDF victory curve and the loss of the monopoly in weapons and mode of action, the aversion of Israeli leadership and society to wield its power for a long while now, "contributes" to the deterioration of deterrence. Among the leadership and "elite" in Israel, a significant lessening in the willingness to exert force even when appropriate and essential, and the determination with which it is used has taken effect. This phenomenon plays a significant role in the decline of Israeli deterrence, especially in low intensity conflicts. This was manifest in the Yom Kippur War (1973), in the opposition to the bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor (1981), in the penetrating debate over the issue of "war by choice" (1982), in the Gulf War, and more. The aversion to use force was exacerbated by the advent of the "peace process". This process disrupted and even emasculated more than a few justified conventions in the Israeli security doctrine, including the areas of deterrence and achieving decisive victories.

No longer "conquering territory" as an axiomatic principle of war, because it is a "burden"; no longer "destruction of forces", because in the aftermath the enemy will just get stronger; no more "strategic depth", because Jordan plays that role for us now, and besides, "who needs territory in the era of ground-to-ground missiles; no more "strategic air strikes", because we will be subject to missile attacks, and more. One of the shallow slogans which suddenly started to reign was "peace is security" as if that were ever the case and experience in our region.

To the prophetic question, "Will we forever live by the sword?" – the answer unfortunately is positive. The "sword" is still the most practical commodity in the Middle East. To the claim that "the solution is

political ending in a peace treaty, not military" to the struggle with the Palestinians – the answer is threefold: a. What value does an agreement with a chronic violator of agreements have?; b. Even if there is an agreement, much depends on the existing conditions and situation when it is reached and on who comes out ahead or behind; c. Indeed, "peace is made with enemies", but only after they have been vanquished or they have changed their nature and their ways.

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An additional central cause to the deterioration of deterrence, dependent on us, is the absence of suitable "staying power". It is reasonable to assert that were it not for Israel's superior military strength, supplemented by the intangible parameters of "staying power", like motivation, unity, quality and level of the people, devotion to high values and the like, it would have been defeated long ago. To our great chagrin, dangerous fissures have appeared in most of those parameters.

Israeli society is characterized today by mental fatigue from constant struggling, the undermining of the belief in the justice of our path and purpose, materialism, hedonism and the like. When self-fulfillment is more important than the nation and society, and when the values, the beliefs and the compass of the society are subverted, it is severely weakened. It is no wonder that it displays unwillingness and lack of resolve to fight. The chinks in the national strength reflect on the IDF and its fighting spirit. If the Arabs have not yet taken advantage of this situation, that is because they prefer harassing Israel in low intensity conflicts like in Lebanon and Judea, Samaria and Gaza than engaging in an all-out war.

Israel's deterrence capability was also diminished by its transforming of its only ally – the United States, into a mediator in the conflict with the Arabs and the Palestinians. As an "honest broker", the United States is required to divide its favors equally among the rivals, which is inherently disadvantageous for Israel. The repeated prattle according to which: "Israel has the strongest army in the Middle East" is not only untrue due to the minimal relevance of its strength to low intensity conflicts, but also because there is no readiness to exert that strength even when appropriate and imperative. In addition, without the intangible parameters of "staying power", there is neither strength nor power.

A phenomenon which is commonly ignored though crucial to the understanding of the decline of deterrence, is the entrustment of our security responsibility on the Palestinians and others. In the past, something of this sort would not have even been considered, but with Israeli leadership and society lacking the will and the determination to fight, the phenomenon developed. It began when Rabin entrusted the war on terrorism to the Palestinian Authority so that they might accomplish it "without the High Court of Justice ("*Bagatz*") and without B'tselem". However, the transformation of our partner to a sub-contractor in the combat on terrorism has proven to be a flop and only added to the decline of deterrence.

This phenomenon has almost become an Israeli obsession, as in order to enable the withdrawal from Lebanon, our government pleaded with the United Nations to deploy its forces on the border, which soon turned farcical. The entreaty that the Lebanese Army deploy along the border was also pathetic. Recently we were told that with the advent of the "long-awaited" agreement marking "the end of the conflict", multi-national troops will be deployed along our border with the "Palestinian State". This was the case at the time regarding the Golan when Rabin suggested the deployment of an American force as "compensation" for the loss of the Golan Heights. Beyond the foolishness and the blow for deterrence, such steps and concepts are a pathological symptom of Diaspora thinking which still afflicts many among us.

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The Arab aspect is not insignificant in reckoning the state of Israeli deterrence. They are aware of the internal rift, our sensitivity to casualties, and the deterioration of our deterrence capability, especially in low intensity conflicts. The Sheiks, Yassin and Nasrallah, diagnosed this well. After the withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000, Nasrallah said, among other things, "Israel is as weak as cobwebs." Yassin, while still incarcerated in Israel, said that "the Jews have lost their will to fight and therefore the Arab victory is near." The severity of these statements is twofold: a. They correctly analyze the nadir which Israeli deterrence has reached; b. This is the way that we are perceived in their eyes and in the eyes of many other Arabs; additionally, the Arabs are not very agitated by the (hollow) warnings issued occasionally by Israel's present leadership to Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinians.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the dangers of the outbreak of an all-out war are minimal because that is not a vital interest of the central Arab countries – Egypt and Syria. The same is true regarding the deterioration of the conflict with the Palestinians into all-out war. President Mubarak and King Abdallah both adamantly articulated more than once, that they are not interested in being dragged into an undesired war.

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The ramifications of the decline of deterrence are, first of all, in the danger of a comprehensive war, however, as stated, the risks of that happening are minimal, for the time being. This is not only because of Mubarak's statements, but also due to the balance of power which remains in Israel's favor, and due to international circumstances which, from the Arab perspective, are not suitable for war. The same is true regarding the threat of a "limited war". Despite this, the deterioration of Israeli deterrence could eventually degenerate into a situation where it will tempt the Arabs to change the non-military strategies which they adopted.

An additional ramification of the decline of deterrence is in the internal and external diminution of Israel's image. Its image as a punching bag with whom weaklings dare to start up is (to put it mildly) not a healthy situation in the circumstances in which we find ourselves. Low national morale and a despondent image are dangerous as well. Externally too, especially in the United States, Israel more and more projects the image of a political and economic burden. An additional danger in the deterioration of deterrence is tied to Israeli Arabs: They incite riots and other menacing activities every time that their "brethren" in Judea, Samaria and Gaza initiate bloody clashes, and in doing so, endanger the fabric of coexistence in the State of Israel.

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It is incumbent on Israel to rehabilitate its deterrence capability and ability to win wars decisively – *vis-à-vis* the Palestinians, Lebanon and Syria. A precondition to this is the awareness of the leadership and the public of this necessity. Only when this awareness exists is there a chance that they will be ready and willing to take the necessary steps to rehabilitate deterrence, despite the difficulties that are liable to be involved in the process. Israel's fate and its future depend on it. "If there is an IDF, (and a deterrence capability) let it appear immediately."

Deterrence Capability – What It Is and What Is Its Extreme Indispensability for Israel

A. About Deterrence Capability

In discussing the deterioration of Israeli deterrence, one ought to begin with the basics, in other words, define what deterrence is in general and in Israel's situation, in particular.[2]

In strategic confrontations and in situations of intense conflicts of interest between nations, deterrence is ultimately the manifestation of the question whether or not it is worthwhile for one of the sides to resort to war or violent actions. In general, deterrence is effective when one of the sides concludes, despite apparent incentives or stimuli, that initiating war or violence is not in its best interests, that is, that the cost outweighs the benefit. In other words, that it will be routed or punished and pay a high price in the loss or destruction of national assets. Deterrence is, therefore, the ability to dissuade an enemy/opponent from carrying out hostile acts by conveying to him that it is not worth his while. Essentially, the purpose of deterrence is to prevent war and violence.

In any case, deterrence is not autonomous, but rather, is symbiotically tied to the alternative, that is, the ability to decisively win the war if the enemy chooses to attack. Without the ability to emerge victorious from a confrontation, or to wreak unbearable damage upon the enemy, the concept of deterrence is meaningless. This ability to win decisively, punish severely and exact a high price for aggression is at the nucleus of the aforementioned cost-benefit or loss/profit calculations. Furthermore, a change, especially for the worse, in the ability to win decisively, immediately impacts on the deterrence capability.

Another central component related to deterrence is the image and the credibility of the deterring side. If the deterred opponent perceives the deterring party as lacking credibility and that its warnings and threats are void, the deterrence capability lacks validity. If the deterred side senses that the deterring party is not determined to implement and actualize its deterrence capability through the use of its ability to win decisively, the chance that the deterrence capability will discourage anyone is nearly non-existent. The check of deterrence must not bounce.

In the realm of deterrence, in general, opponents and assessments of the situation are rational. Nevertheless, an opponent and his ability to assess the situation might be irrational or they might be accompanied by mistaken considerations such as an incorrect assessment of the balance of power on the one hand or the readiness to pay even a heavy price on the other. After all, rationalism and wisdom are not necessarily Siamese twins.

Therefore, deterrence capability is never absolute but rather relative and fluid. In conventional wars and confrontation there is not, nor can there be, perfect deterrence. Furthermore, deterrence can erode with the passage of time. At the same time, deterrence is also connected on factors beyond pure military might such as international circumstances, timing, the existing alternatives and the like. These can influence the existence of deterrence or the lack thereof.

In the international domain, deterrence can be generally divided into two areas – conventional and non-conventional – while in the Israeli context, deterrence has special relevance in yet a third area – irregular war/fighting, i.e. terrorism, guerilla warfare and violence (characterized in academia as a "Low Intensity Conflict"). If the success of deterrence is measured in its non-implementation, it can be stated that Israel's non-conventional deterrent is intact, though the situation is different in the other two areas. However, in the conventional realm – regular wars – Israeli deterrence was nevertheless existent for periods lasting years.

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[2] The following is based inter alia on A. Levran, *Desert Storm and its Interpretation: The Second Gulf War and its Strategic Ramifications for Israel*, Bar Ilan University, July 1993 (Hebrew) and A. Levran, *Israeli Strategy After Desert Storm*, Frank Cass, 1997.

Taking into consideration the fundamental factors of our conflict – the quantitative physical asymmetry between the parties and the deep-rooted Arab hostility towards Israel, it is doubtful whether the Israeli deterrence capability could have been effective at all. Essentially, a state of perpetual war should have been extant at one level of intensity or another. The fact that this is not the case and that years passed between the all-out wars, indicates that the Israeli deterrence capability is basically valid, though it is not absolute, nor could it be so, given the circumstances of the conflict. The purpose of Israeli deterrence, therefore, is to prevent its enemies from initiating existential threats against it, and if need be, to defeat those enemies, expending the lowest human and economic price possible. An inherent difficulty facing the Israeli deterrence capability is that the IDF cannot win wars in the Clausewiczian manner – i.e., by imposing for example, the end of the conflict upon its enemies or to bring about the suspension of hostility against it. In any case, the IDF proved its ability to deter the Arabs from waging frequent wars or intolerable violent actions (with or without "red lines").

In fact, the Arabs have abandoned the path of comprehensive wars, as they have not initiated a war since 1973. However, they employ other means to defeat Israel or force its hand. This they accomplish through perpetual violent pressure and political maneuvers (designed to cut Israel down to "its natural dimensions"), though not exclusively. Part of them even initiate or support terrorist activity or guerilla warfare in order to weaken Israel's national resolve and cause it to crumble from within, among other goals. The Hizbullah fighting against the IDF in Lebanon and the Palestinian conflicts during the two *intifada*s (and between them) are a manifestation of this phenomenon. In any case, Israeli deterrence has encountered grave difficulty in effectively combating terrorist and guerilla organizations in recent years, though it has remained reasonably effective against the countries who hosted and assisted them. We will address the question whether the difficulty in facing terrorism and violence is objective (i.e., the absence of effective deterrence) or subjective (lack of determination and the unwillingness to deter), or due to the fact that no deterrence exists in a "Low Intensity Conflict", as expounded upon below.

B. The Ultimate Importance of Deterrence in our Circumstances

It is impossible to address the decline of Israeli deterrence before establishing why it is extremely important in our circumstances.

Deterrence capability accompanied by effective military force is crucial to the national security of any country, certainly for those engaged in a perpetual strategic confrontation or in a significant conflict with its neighbors. And indeed, deterrence has been a cornerstone of the Israeli defense doctrine since the early days of statehood. From time immemorial, Israel has been involved in a severe conflict with its surrounding neighbors and it was understood that it needed a deterrence capability to dissuade them from constantly threatening its existence and its welfare. We could not afford to be in a perpetual state of war or in an extended bloody conflict with them. This assessment stemmed, first and foremost, from the primary, fundamental factor of the strategic equation in the region, which is – **the quantitative physical and ethical-conceptual asymmetry between them and us**.

The quantitative physical asymmetry is evident in the demographic (im)balance, the ratio of forces, the size of the countries, the existence (or non-existence) of strategic depth, economic resources, the ability to absorb losses as well as the sensitivity to these losses, and to the home front, etc. In all of these parameters, Israel is significantly inferior to its neighbors and their advantage over us is clear-cut. From the ethical-conceptual standpoint, there is a chasm between us and them, manifesting itself in the system of government (democracy and pluralism versus authoritarian regimes and societies far removed from pluralism), in the attitude towards human and universal values, in the deep-rooted Arab hatred of Israel and even of Jews, and more. In short, we are in a situation of the **Few** versus the **Hostile Many**.

The quantitative and ethical-conceptual asymmetry and the situation of the Few versus the Many have decisive ramifications. First, Israel cannot and may not allow itself to be dragged into a situation of perpetual bloodletting. This is not only because the Few cannot practically allow themselves numerous fatalities but also because of the enormous Israeli sensitivity to casualties in general. Second, the Arab physical, numerical advantage leads them to believe that, ultimately, the Many will overcome the Few. The quantitative superiority must, in a deterministic fashion, prevail. This explains after all their lack of preparedness to genuinely accept Israel and its existence in the region (as opposed to signing conditional and tactical agreements with them).

Third, the Few cannot bear, nor may they suffer, a major defeat in a war or violent conflict, as that would entail their demise or at least render them at the edge of the abyss. In the realm of conventional war or Low Intensity Conflict, even a standoff would be considered a setback. Fourth, in contrast to the Many, the Few have almost no ability to absorb losses and critical damage. Fifth, because of the ethical-conceptual (pluralist, humanist) difference which characterizes the Few, they have always opted for a status quo policy, meaning sufficing with the given situation (in terms of national assets) and attempting to maintain it. They have neither expansionist ambitions nor desire to alter the status quo as do their neighbors, and that policy requires effective deterrence. And, finally, deterrence is vital for the Few so that the Many, the enemies, will ultimately come to grips with the futility of their military attempts to uproot Israel from the cradle of its historical homeland and possibly even facilitate some reasonable form of coexistence.

The second fundamental factor in Israel's national security, which necessitates the imperative of the deterrence capability, **is its strategic environment**. Recently, even Prime Minister Ehud Barak characterized Israel's environment as a "jungle". Even if we make allowances for an inspired description, it is not that distant from reality. The regimes of the surrounding countries are, as mentioned, totalitarian and the behavior of the surrounding societies can be characterized as radical, fanatic and agitated. We are not speaking of countries in which the free exchange of diverse ideas exists, which would be able to tolerate dissimilar and different entities. Israel was and remains a "foreign implant" in the area, which must be cut down to "its natural dimensions". One who insists on grading this sort of strategic environment will, at best, reach the conclusion that it is an area in which the instability is inherent and deep-rooted. In the jungle or an environment of this sort, the weak are prey and only the strong, those resolute in protecting their existence or those who project power, survive.

It is worth mentioning some facts regarding our strategic environment apropos those countries whose deterrence capability failed them. Conspicuous among them is Kuwait which was suddenly swallowed-up by its "sister" Iraq in the summer of l990. Had the coalition of Western countries not interceded on its behalf, Kuwait would today be Iraq's 19th district. That same coalition rescued Saudi Arabia, or at least part of it (the oil rich East Coast). South Yemen was not as fortunate as Kuwait and was annexed by its neighbor – North Yemen – in the early 1990s. The fate of Lebanon, the overwhelming majority of which is ruled by Syria, is well-known.

It is clear that, certainly for small countries located in a harsh strategic environment, there is no alternative to adopting a policy of effective deterrence against those who wish to harm them. Then, strength and deterrence is the name of the game. The world in general holds weakness in contempt.

There is a third area in which the indispensability of the deterrence capability for Israel's national security is manifest and that is the **political-strategic arena**. Due to international circumstances which, to say the least, are not slanted in Israel's favor, it is clear that the diplomatic clock is not ticking in Israel's favor. In the case of war or bloody conflict, Israel has always feared that the conflict would be terminated through outside intervention before it would be able to achieve its goals or at least to appropriately punish those who attacked it and exact a heavy price from them for their actions,

thereby preserving its deterrence capability. Deterrence and a proven ability to win wars have been, and continue to be, vital for Israel in preventing frequent, extended conflicts in which the danger of the intervention of foreign powers who will strive to curtail them against Israel's best interests, is significant. A conflict in which Israel is prevented from creating a situation where the Arabs are the ones demanding the cease fire and where the end of hostilities takes place without Israel holding a clear advantage, is unacceptable in terms of its deterrence capability and foreboding for its future. On the other hand, an effective ability to win decisively, implemented resolutely by Israel can, and should prevent this type of dangerous situation and therefore constitutes another aspect of the indispensability of the deterrence capability.

An interesting and perhaps relevant question is: Is the deterrence capability which was vital for Israel during most of the years of its existence still as essential since the advent of the "peace process", first with Egypt (during the early 1980s) and thereafter with the Palestinians (1993) and Jordan (1994)? In any case, the issue of deterrence warrants a reassessment if we perceive that the strategic conditions and circumstances have really changed. As long as political agreements had not been signed with Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinians, there were no doubts in Israel concerning the necessity of a deterrence capability. The practical application of this capability was in greater readiness and greater flexibility in exercising power. However, since the "peace" agreements, Israel has limited itself in the exercise of power even when that would have been the right thing to do (in conflicts in Lebanon and with the Palestinians) to the point where there were opinions voiced which questioned the very necessity of a deterrence policy in an "era of peace", even renouncing it altogether.

Our opinion is that not only are a **deterrence capability and an mighty military force vital also in an "era of peace"** (there is doubt as to whether that is the case at all), and not only because they are vital to the durability of the peace and to prevent its collapse, but rather because at best it is a basically unstable peace and the dangers and threats to Israel have not ceased whatsoever. The indispensability of Israel's deterrence even in peace time is, therefore, not only so that the other side will be motivated to fulfill the agreements and not violate them, but because there is a real possibility that they are only tactical and temporary agreements and that the Arab sword of violence will be drawn from its scabbard at any time that they see fit. The harsh events, which Israel has experienced and continues to experience since the agreements were signed, have not brought Israel to a situation of calm and tranquility. If we assess the state of the conflict, not only has it not lessened, but it has gotten worse and deteriorated. Furthermore, the "peace" appears to be an obstacle to, and has emasculated, Israel's deterrence capability (more on that later). In any case, in the present situation, any reconsideration of the essentiality of the Israeli deterrence capability can even be termed blasphemy.

The Arab-Israeli conflict is the most difficult, bitter conflict in the world, as there are many aspects to it. It is not merely a conflict over land like most of the conflicts in the world. It is a conflict over Israel's very existence in an Arab-Muslim region. It is a conflict over historical and national rights. It is a conflict between religions and values, tradition, national honor, and more. The conflict over land is just a symptom of all the others. The synthesis of all of the many aspects of the conflict and its bitterness on the one hand, and Israel's position as the Few versus the Many, on the other, makes this conflict the most intractable of all. Therefore, with the conflict so intense, it is difficult to imagine it being resolved unless the Arab societies surrounding us change. As a result, in Israel's situation, with the profundity of the conflict, the fact that it is the Few versus the hostile Many, its dangerous, unstable strategic environment, and the diplomatic strategic conditions or the international circumstances which don't favor it – it simply has no choice other than to continue to rely on a viable deterrence capability and the ability to win wars decisively as those are crucial for its existence and its national security.

The Decline of Deterrence – In the Test of Time

Undoubtedly, the impressive victory in the **Six Day War** in 1967 constituted the zenith of the Israeli deterrence capability. It followed another clear victory – the Sinai Campaign of 1956. While the victory in the brief war in Sinai was somewhat clouded by the cooperation with outside powers, the clear victory in 1967 was even more comprehensive and a totally "blue-and-white" event.

However, despite the overwhelming victory and the display of the deterrence capability, only a short time passed before the Egyptians initiated the **War of Attrition** in late l968 and, especially, in early l969, along the Suez Canal. The Egyptians, who could not accept the closing of the Suez Canal – a central lifeline – seemed willing to pay the price of a local conflict limited to the Canal area, despite their awareness of the IDF superiority. Israel, for its part, could not accept a troublesome war of attrition and decided to utilize its military superiority, and in mid-1969, escalated the fighting through the use of its air power. This escalation reached its apex in the bombing runs deep in Egyptian territory attacking quality military and security infrastructure targets. Their purpose was to induce Cairo to call for a cease-fire and teach Egypt that the struggle was not worth the effort. In their distress, the Egyptians turned to the former Soviet Union leadership, which supplied them with advanced air defense systems (SAM 3 and 6) and even dispatched Russian air force squadrons to protect the skies of the Egyptian home front. The United States, which feared a superpower conflict, exerted pressure leading to a cease-fire which took effect in August 1970.

Despite the fact that the bombings deep in Egyptian territory clearly displayed IDF superiority, the War of Attrition ended somewhat disappointingly, in the area of deterrence as well. First, since towards the end of the war, the SAM batteries succeeded in hitting a significant number of new Israeli Air Force Phantoms, and eroded Israel's deterrence capability in that way. Second, since the Egyptians, ecstatic due to their successes against their enemy's air force, did not hesitate to violate the cease-fire and advance their missile batteries to the Canal, beyond the agreed cease-fire line, much to Israel's chagrin. Certain analysts view the beginning of the erosion of the Israeli deterrence capability already then, before the war in 1973.

In the **Yom Kippur War** of October 1973, Egypt and Syria surprised Israel with a coordinated attack in Sinai and the Golan Heights. Despite the surprise and the initial Arab military accomplishments, the war ended after three weeks, with the IDF turning the tables both in the North and South. In the South, the IDF reached a point 101 kilometers from Cairo while surrounding the third Army (though the second Army remained east of the Canal), and in the North, the IDF advanced to about 40 kilometers from the outskirts of Damascus while destroying approximately 1100 tanks (!). Ostensibly, these were outstanding victories, the likes of which few armies have accomplished, however, these victories were only on the tactical-operational level. On the strategic level we agreed to relinquish (due to lack of resolve and weariness of spirit) all of our territorial gains and more. The Egyptians and Syrians were able to gain encouragement from the initial successes of their military initiative, especially in the element of surprise, the weapons systems on which they relied – anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles – and from the heavy losses inflicted on the IDF. They could conclude that even in a comprehensive war, limited in its territorial aims, they could achieve significant strategic accomplishments including the involvement of the superpowers. And what was even worse – for the first time, the IDF was not perceived as invincible. When a war concludes with political-strategic accomplishments even though their army was vanquished, it proves to the Arabs that it was worthwhile, and thereby severely damages Israel's deterrence capability.

Therefore, one may correctly view the Yom Kippur War in l973 as the clear beginning of the deterioration of Israel's deterrence capability. We are careful to term it the beginning of the deterioration but not a total collapse, since the Arabs have not initiated a full-scale war since. "Operation Peace of Galilee" in Lebanon (1982) was initiated by Israel and not by the Arabs.

Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that the Egyptians and the Syrians understood that if they initiated a war under the most favorable conditions from their perspective (of which there is no guarantee of recurring in the future) and it ended in very close proximity to their capitals and with their armies routed, the IDF would still be strong and perilous to them.

The next step was **"Operation Peace of Galilee"**, or the Lebanon War, which began in June 1982 (its conclusion is subject to debate – September 1982 with the expulsion of the PLO and Syria from Beirut, or the summer of l985 with the IDF withdrawal to the security zone in Southern Lebanon). From the deterrence perspective, this war transmitted two conflicting messages. In terms of the war in the air, the Israel Air Force achieved an overwhelming victory not only over the Syrian Air Force (approximately 90 of whose planes were shot down with no losses incurred by the Israeli Air Force) but even more importantly – the surface-to-air missile (SAM) disposition along the Syrian-Lebanese border was destroyed. The Arabs, who since the 1973 war imagined that they had discovered the formula for neutralizing the IAF through the use of anti-aircraft missiles, were astounded to learn that an overwhelming response had been presented. No doubt, therefore, that in the air, not only was the deterrence capability maintained but it was rehabilitated and enhanced (since the setback in 1973).

In contrast, in terms of the ground war, the IDF encountered two mishaps, one of which was about to produce ominous results. The IDF ground forces ultimately did induce the Syrians to withdraw from their deployment in the Lebanon Valley and Beirut but it was not accomplished quickly and elegantly and there are those who held that the IDF did not achieve its goals appropriately. And the IDF did, in fact, display clumsiness in its ground maneuvers and fulfilled its missions with difficulties. But even worse – the difficulties encountered in confronting the terrorist and guerilla attacks staged by the Shi'ite organizations "Amal" and "Hizbullah" – provided a very negative role model, especially for the Palestinians in Judea, Samaria and Gaza. Once again, the IDF projected the image of an army which can be defeated and forced to withdraw when engaged in low intensity warfare waged with tenacity and determination. Added to the many fatalities and the schism which developed in Israeli society over the justification of the war and its conduct, Israel's deterrence capability severely eroded. No less severe – for the first time in the course of a war, divisiveness and a harsh split in the unity and the national potency of Israel society was evident. These elements conveyed to the soldiers at the front that their war is unjust and is not being waged properly (i.e., "a war by choice") which had a negative influence on their motivation, their fighting spirit and their preparedness to sacrifice, a condition which could not be clearer.

There is actually little doubt that the success of the Shi'ite organizations in the utilization of terrorist and guerilla tactics to force the IDF to withdraw from Lebanon in l985 served as inspiration to the Palestinians in Judea, Samaria and Gaza to begin the *intifada* in late l987. In its early days, the IDF was certain, declaratively so, that it could quell the uprising and there were periods during the *intifada* when that seemed to be the case. However, the IDF did not succeed in crushing the *intifada* and then the Israeli leadership changed their tune: "The solution is political and not military." The fact is that the *intifada* eventually led the Rabin government to break the taboo, i.e., to recognize the PLO and reach the Oslo Accords in l993, something which neither he, nor many others before him, ever dreamed of doing.

For the first time in the long history of the conflict with Israel, it was the Palestinians who emerged from their primitive struggle (riots, stones, Molotov cocktails, deployment of women and children, and the like) having the advantage. They succeeded in accomplishing something which the Arab armies were never able to accomplish – to force Israel's hand and to effect a quantum change in its policy. Israel which spoke loftily over the years that the Arabs would not achieve their goals with force and violence (not to mention that Israel would not speak to the PLO), surrendered to violence and proved to its perpetrators that it pays dividends. Once the Palestinians succeeded, the Israeli deterrence capability suffered a fatal blow, regardless of whether the reason for the Israeli downfall in the *intifada*

was, in fact, connected to the logic or to the prattle that "the solution to this conflict is political and not military." That poor statement ultimately indicated that the path and the model – employing violence and terrorism – had been found to continue to coerce Israel until all of the Palestinian national aspirations had been fulfilled. Under such circumstances, it is difficult to speak of deterrence capability.

Israel's deterrence capability absorbed another blow in the **Second Gulf War** (1990-91 – Operation Desert Storm). Although approximately 40 el-Husseini surface-to-surface missiles (SSM) were launched from Iraq, and despite the fact that the country was paralyzed for about 40 days and its residents were forced to shut themselves into sealed rooms, wrap themselves in plastic sheets and don gas masks or to peripatetically wander to places considered safer – Israel neither defended itself nor reacted. For the first time in the history of the State of Israel, it was attacked in a war in which it was not a party to, and did not exercise suitable power. True, there were mitigating circumstances contributing to restraint – the Western coalition led by the United States fought against and significantly weakened the Iraqi forces, so that, in practice, others did Israel's work for it. In addition, the United States repeatedly and forcefully badgered Israel into non-intervention for fear that the coalition would dissolve. Nevertheless, the Israeli restraint seemed to further weaken Israel's deterrence capability: Its neighbors saw Israel in its distress – being forced to withstand bombing and not respond. This could have served as an additional triggering precedent from their perspective. In our opinion, an Israeli reaction was mandatory, if for no other reason than to display its deterrence capability at the end of the war in the region from which the ground-to-ground missiles (H2 and H3) were launched.

The sole bright spot from a deterrence perspective can be seen in the fact that Iraq did not deploy non-conventional (especially chemical) weapons neither against Israel nor against the coalition forces. It is possible that this stemmed from the nuclear deterrence attributed to Israel, and of course that of the United States, or perhaps because from the outset Saddam Hussein never intended to cross the threshold in the direction of non-conventional warfare. When opponents who possess some non-conventional capacity let alone confront a more significant one, the critical factor of national survival becomes a supreme issue.

In any case, the distribution of gas masks to the public at large due to the fear that Iraq might employ chemical and other dangerous weapons against Israel could serve as an indication that Israel essentially forfeited its deterrence capability in favor of new "rules of the game" – the usage of non-conventional weapons against it. Briefly stated, the Gulf War was not Israel's finest moment in general, and in the area of deterrence in particular, despite the fact that polls indicated that the majority of the public supported the policy of restraint.

An additional failure of Israeli deterrence transpired in Lebanon in the **conflict with the Hizbullah**, particularly in recent years. Despite the difficulty in waging war against an enemy of that sort – evasive and reliant on the local population – the IDF had options at its disposal to overcome Hizbullah as well, if not directly, then through an "indirect approach". In other words, by exerting military pressure against the responsible authorities in Lebanon and the Syrian army which dominates it. This is precisely the way in which Israel acted in past years against Palestinian terrorism, i.e., against the countries which hosted and supported it. But at some point in time, the Israeli government and the IDF decided that there is no reason or no desire to prevail in the conflict in Lebanon, once again using the reasoning that "the solution to such a struggle is political not military". When prattle of that sort is heard and added to the fatalities (primarily the helicopter disaster and the grave operational failure in which a group of the elite Navy unit were killed) and the phenomenon of the "Four Mothers" who exerted public pressure against remaining in Lebanon – the distance to withdrawal was short. Since there was no "partner" on the other side with whom to sign a withdrawal agreement, added to the mistaken considerations of the artificial link between the Golan Heights and remaining in Lebanon and

also from the acquiescence to the public mood, Israel implemented a unilateral withdrawal from there in late May 2000. However, it was a frantic, humiliating flight of a defeated army which abandoned weapons and equipment and comrades-in-arms – the South Lebanese Army. Furthermore, the irresponsible withdrawal from Lebanon before the completion of an alternative protective deployment along the border and the exaggerated insistence of Israel to withdraw in exacting fulfillment of United Nations Resolution 425, with no authoritative or sovereign state on the other side, reflected the depths to which "strong" Israel – which flees enemy confrontation even if it is just – had sunk. There is no doubt that the Israeli deterrence capability incurred damage, whose gravity is difficult to assess, due to its withdrawal from Lebanon and from the manner in which it was accomplished. Some of the results can be seen in the abduction of three IDF soldiers in early October 2000 and the occasional Hizbullah attacks which continued against Israel and in its disdainful behavior towards it.

Therefore, it is no wonder that the Israeli deterrence capability is totally non-functional in the bloody conflict or **mini-war** (the **al-Aqsa** *intifada*, in their terminology), which erupted with the Palestinians in late September 2000. The fact that Israel was employing weapon systems (attack helicopters, advanced tanks and missiles) in this confrontation which were not previously used, does not seem to discourage the Palestinians from pursuing the path of violence and terrorism. They most certainly rely on the precedent that despite the use of such weaponry in Lebanon, Israel, nevertheless, was forced by the Hizbullah into a humiliating unilateral withdrawal due to the exclusive employment of terrorist and guerila tactics. When the Palestinians take this and add it to the success of their first *intifada*, and can be sure that they will not be pushed back, i.e., lose ground, and assets already in their possession, they are not all that fearful of Israel. This situation only reinforces the continued use of terrorism and violence as a strategic method to achieve objectives against Israel whose deterrence capability is in sheer decline.

In interim conclusion, it can be asserted that the Israeli deterrence capability versus the Palestinians in Judea, Samaria and Gaza and the Hizbullah in Lebanon is virtually non-existent. It is true that in a low intensity conflict, the implementation of a deterrence capability is not simple, but no proof exists that it is impossible. On the contrary, there are substantial examples throughout the region, the world and even in Israel in past years, where it was effective. Much depends on the willingness and determination of the party interested in deterrence to utilize its capability. However, if these do not exist, the fate of the deterrence is sealed.

At the same time, since comprehensive wars initiated by Arab countries have not occurred since 1973, it can be asserted that the deterrence capability in the non-conventional and even in the conventional areas are still existent for Israel. Having said this, it must be assumed that the decline of deterrence in low intensity conflicts is ultimately liable to negatively influence these areas as well.

Causes of the Decline of Israeli Deterrence

The reasons for the waning of the Israeli deterrence capability and ability to win wars decisively are many and variegated. Some are tied to the wearing out of the conventional deterrence, though most can be attributed to the deterioration of deterrence in low intensity conflicts. We have framed the causes of the decline of deterrence into three categories: Causes connected to the IDF, causes connected to Israeli leadership and society, and causes connected to the Arab standpoint. In any case, all of these causes pose a great and dangerous potential threat to the future and possibly even the very existence of Israel in the long-term.

A. Causes Related to the IDF

1. The Declining IDF Victory Curve

One who analyzes the results of the wars and conflicts between the Arabs and Israel will easily arrive at the sorrowful conclusion that the IDF victory curve is spiraling downward. We previously reviewed this at some length (in the chapter on the decline of the deterrence in the test of time) and it is appropriate to add some emphases here. It is reasonable to state that had the results of the wars and conflicts been sharply and clearly in Israel's favor, there would have been no need to elaborate on the deterioration of the deterrence capability.

Since the pinnacle of its victories in the Six Day War (1967) each full-scale or limited war has ended with a less convincing result in Israel's favor. This is the case in the regular wars since 1967: the War of Attrition (1969-70), the Yom Kippur War (1973), the Lebanon War (1982), and the second Gulf War (1991). This is certainly the case in the irregular wars or the violent confrontations: The first *intifada* (from late 1987 until the Gulf War), the mini-war in Southern Lebanon (from 1985 and especially recently, until May 2000), and the mini-war in Judea, Samaria and Gaza (late 2000). In each of these, the results have been, to say the least, less decisive and convincing. Even if in some of them or even most of them, there were "good" reasons for their ending without a clear and overwhelming victory of the IDF, they did not enhance its deterrence capability (this, too, is an understatement).

The IDF is no longer perceived by the Arabs as an unbeatable army or as one that could rout them the way it once could. It seems that the Arabs also attempted and acted in order to shatter the myth of the invincible IDF – an attempt which was not only crucial to their national pride but also to the balance of power. Even if the deterrent image of the IDF in the realm of regular war is still functional, one may assume that the Arab armies' fear of Israel's army has lessened or at least is not what it once was.

It is worth focusing a bit on the "objective" reasons for the downward turn of the IDF victory curve in regular wars (we will deal later with the "subjective" reasons – dependent solely on ourselves). The Arabs learned to derive lessons from their defeats. They re-arm and improve quantitatively and qualitatively making it harder to win victories like 1956 and 1967. Even if, in terms of manpower, there has been no great improvement, their progress in terms of quality weapon systems is apparent. The battlefield has become more saturated with firepower and the gap between the forces has to some extent narrowed. All of these combine to make it to some degree more difficult for the IDF to achieve a swift, decisive victory.

Another objective cause related to the IDF's difficulty in victory stems from the expansion of its circles of warfare on the one hand and the equipment of regional countries, including the distant ones, with SSMs on the other hand. The strategic difference lies in the fact that countries distant from Israel are capable of participating in a war against Israel even with firepower alone, i.e., SSMs, while in the past they could participate only by dispatching expeditionary forces to the Arab countries bordering Israel. The peripheral countries (like Iraq, Iran, etc.) enjoy a certain immunity (due to their distance from Israel) from the IDF's strategic long-arm. In the second Gulf War, the Israeli air force could have struck Iraq, but because of the long distance it is doubtful if it could have operated systematically. Such doubt also exists regarding fighting against distant Iran.

However, against distant enemies, the IDF can and must operate with all its long-arms and in parameters of sharp punishment on sensitive and painful objectives and even on population centers (if Israeli population is attacked). This is to demonstrate that Israel can confront even far-away enemies, particularly to prove that long-distance aggression shouldn't pay off.

Having said this, does that mean that the IDF cannot maintain and rehabilitate the quality of its victories? The answer depends inter alia on the arenas of battle and conflict and on their circumstances. In the Sinai Peninsula, the IDF should have no problem recapturing most, if not all, of

it and to achieve an outstanding victory. This is somewhat less true regarding urban areas and those with rough terrain such as Syria and Lebanon. The battlefield there is characterized by a dense population (i.e., Lebanon) or obstacles and fortifications covered by considerable firepower (i.e., the Golan Heights). Nevertheless, the IDF is far from impotent versus Syria and Lebanon, and has great potential, including sophisticated weapon systems, to emerge victorious from the conflict. *Vis-à-vis* distant countries, the IDF has, as mentioned, to operate decisively already from the outset, so that aggression (by firepower or otherwise) won't pay off. Israel's deterrence versus distant threats will then have a reasonable chance.

It is true that achieving victory has become more difficult for the IDF, especially because Israel has political constraints (including the time factor), but much depends on the persistence of the Israeli leadership to emerge victorious from every struggle. Otherwise, the Arab disrespect for Israel's deterrence capability will just expand and their audacity to harass it will increase, certainly in the field of irregular warfare like in Lebanon and Judea, Samaria and Gaza.

2. Loss of Certain IDF Monopolies

History and experience teach that the IDF enjoys distinct advantages over the Arab armies. However, there was a long period in which the IDF also maintained certain monopolies, to which the Arabs had no response – military or otherwise. Yet, these monopolies faded away. Until the Yom Kippur War (1973), the IDF had maintained clear superiority over Arab air forces – to which they had no equal. The IDF's monopoly was manifest in **the Israeli Air Force's ability to carry out strategic attacks deep in neighboring countries** without those countries possessing the capability to provide an adequate response. This military monopoly had, in Israel's circumstances, special importance. By exercising this advantage, it was possible to punish the aggressor, to exact a high price from him and to demonstrate that aggression does not pay. By escalating the situation through air attacks deep in enemy territory it was possible to shorten the length of the war and limit Israeli losses, both human and economic. Above all, it was possible, with these attacks, to rehabilitate the Israeli deterrence capability, which was damaged by the aggressor's very initiative.

The Arabs, whose impotence in the air was apparent, realized that there would be no remedy for them in air-to-air battles, and therefore searched for alternative answers. They rested their hopes initially on SAMs, which did indeed limit the IAF's ability in the 1973 war, but not for long. The IDF found appropriate answers, and the proof, as described above, was in the Lebanon War in the summer of 1982. In any case, the surface-to-air missiles did not fully eliminate the Israeli monopoly (regarding air raids deep in enemy territory) and the Arabs did not find a solution – in kind or otherwise.

This military monopoly ended though, when the Arabs began purchasing ground-to-ground ballistic missiles, which could relatively easily strike deep into Israel and its civilian population. Scud missiles, with a range of approximately 300 kilometers and even the shorter range "Frog" missiles which have a range of 70 kilometers, possessed by the Syrians – solved the Arab impotence in the face of Israeli strikes deep in their territory by providing a tool to retaliate against Israel in kind. While it is true that SSMs cannot win or determine the outcome of a war nor are they particularly militarily effective relative to air power, in Israel's case, with its hypersensitivity to its civilian population, this weapon is capable of satisfying Arab strategic requirements. The Scud attacks against Israel in the second Gulf War prove this. In any case, the threat of escalating the war by attacking sensitive targets deep in the Arab countries is no longer an Israeli monopoly.

There is no doubt that the solution which the Arabs found to the aforementioned IDF monopoly strengthened their confidence in their power. Furthermore, once they saw Israel's distress in the face of the Iraqi ground-to-ground missiles and their "Pavlovian" fear of the missiles and more lethal weapons, every time Saddam entered into a confrontation with the United States in the Gulf, they

could conclude that not only had they achieved strategic balance but perhaps they had a powerful military tool in their possession. In any case, there is no alternative but to view this situation as a further erosion of the Israeli deterrence capability. In strategic conflicts, the principle in the refrain "anything you can do I can do better" is applicable, and it is doubtful whether this principle, which was in the IDF's favor for many years, is still clearly and decisively in its favor.

It is worth mentioning here that today Israel, with the **Arrow (*Hetz*) Missile**, has a potential exclusivity to reasonably thwart the danger of SSMs from the confrontation states and from the peripheral states. No country in the region, and even in the world, has yet any weapons systems capable of intercepting SSMs as Israel does. If the Israeli "active defense" disposition through these anti-ballistic missiles will fulfill the expectancy when needed, this could bring about a militarily revolutionary step. This Israeli monopoly will return the countries in the region to square one, namely, their inferiority *vis-à-vis* the Israeli long-arm. Thus, Israel's deterrence capability will be promoted significantly.

When speaking of Israel's military monopolies, **another monopoly, i.e., in the nuclear realm** immediately comes to mind. No country in the region has acquired nuclear capability, though Iraq has taken steps (and perhaps continues to take steps) to acquire it, and so has Iran. More years will pass before any country in the region will possess effective nuclear weapons. However, even the present monopoly in this area is limited in at least two ways. First, it is quite difficult to imagine a clear scenario in which this nuclear deterrence would be implemented given the geo-strategic circumstances here. And even if a scenario of this sort does exist, it is certainly an apocalyptic – "let me die with the Philistines" – version. Second, most Arab countries have achieved a reasonable balance to Israeli monopoly in the nuclear realm through the possession of other non-conventional weapons systems, i.e. chemical and biological weapons. These weapons systems are considered less severe than nuclear weapons, though in the Israeli context (with its limited size and population and its extreme sensitivity to fatalities and damage) they can be viewed as neutralizing the Israeli nuclear monopoly. Consequently, even Israel's superiority in nuclear deterrence isn't necessarily fully applicable and the Arabs could be aware of it. No less important, the erosion of Israel's monopoly in this area is aggravated in no small part by the combination of ground-to-ground missiles and chemical or biological warheads. Third, the Israeli nuclear deterrence, in any case, cannot be applicable in a limited conventional war, as became evident in 1973, and is similarly ineffective against terrorist acts and guerilla warfare – as demonstrated in the *intifada*s and in South Lebanon.

The fact that Israel no longer possesses exclusive military advantages over its neighbors is a reality which necessarily impacts negatively on its deterrence capability *vis-à-vis* those neighbors. Its military superiority though, remains intact, but as we have seen and will see, this superiority is ineffective in the field of irregular warfare.

B. Causes Related to Israeli Leadership and Society

1. The Aversion to Exercise Power and the Loss of Will to Win

Together with the downward turn in the IDF victory curve and the loss of its monopoly in weapons systems and freedom of action – the aversion on the part of the Israeli public to exercise power even when circumstances call for it is conspicuous. Consequently, its determination to emerge victorious from struggles and violent conflicts in which it has been involved has significantly decreased. It seems that this phenomenon has a weighty influence on the decline of the Israeli deterrence capability in general, and in confronting low intensity conflicts in particular.

The watershed event to which the lessening in the willingness to use force and to actualize victory can be attributed is the Yom Kippur War in 1973. Despite the fact that the IDF turned the tables and ended

up with a glorious tactical victory on the ground, it did not conclude with a strategic victory, with Israel in an improved situation. On the contrary, Israel forfeited all of its impressive accomplishments on the ground, almost certainly because of its leaders' mental fatigue and lack of resolve as a result of the heavy losses incurred. Moreover, the fact that the IAF and the armored corps emerged from the war with less than a decisive victory over the anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles, contributed to the depressing picture. Harbingers of the troubling phenomenon can already be traced to the "Reservists Combatants' Table Talk", the "letters of the 12th graders" and the play "Queen of the Bathtub" – all lamenting the use of force.

Senior Israeli officials began making statements whose upshot was the loss of faith in the use of force. Rabin, for example, who was highly respected in security issues and others,[3] clearly manifested this phenomenon when expressing doubt regarding the use and purpose of wars because in their wake, Arab armies replenish their arsenals with higher quality weapons and in greater quantities. Implied in such statements was the notion that from an Israeli standpoint, wars create a boomerang effect and are counterproductive and pointless if in their aftermath there is a regression in the IDF balance of power with its enemies. Others followed in these footsteps. Shimon Peres, blessed with a fertile imagination, went even further and viewed economy and technology as a valid substitute for the very existence and use of military force. (One of his more nonsensical statements was that "ten hotels on the Kinneret are preferable to ten military outposts"!)[4] It is noteworthy that most of the leadership of the Left, adamantly opposed the bombing and destruction of the Iraqi nuclear reactor "Osirak" in the summer of 1981 – motivated by fear over what the Arabs (chief among them Egypt with whom a peace treaty was signed in l979) or the world might say or do in reaction to this preventive strike.

The Israeli aversion to exercise power was also manifest in the pointed debate in the wake of "Operation Peace of Galilee" in 1982, concerning the issue of "war by choice". While the then Prime Minister, Menachem Begin, supported the notion that "war by choice" or in other words, initiating the use of military force when just and necessary is proper, his opponents totally negated that view. In their opinion, Israel may not initiate a "war by choice, but rather only participate in one where no other alternative presents itself – to respond only after being attacked and even then, only in a limited fashion. However, in adopting the theory of "no war by choice", which became predominant in the leadership of the country and security circles, there are many shortcomings which are no less problematic than those in the "war by choice" concept. First, implementing a preemptive or first strike, or even initiating a surprise attack, are among the basic "principles of war" and of ensuring success therein, certainly in the context of a conflict between the Few versus the hostile Many. Second, total and exaggerated adoption of the "war of no alternative" concept, to a great extent, pulls the carpet out from under the vital axiom of fighting spirit, because there will always be doubt or contentions as to whether or not an alternative existed. Third, the total rejection of the possibility of a "war by choice" critically damages the Israeli deterrence capability, as the opponent has no reason to fear that Israel might surprise them or otherwise hinder their basic preparations for war. The limiting of Israel's freedom of action – leaving it solely to the enemy – is an intolerable blunder and a foretold prescription for a strategic disaster.

If "war by choice" is ruled out then the accusation that Israel is mainly relying on forcefulness, is, as claimed in various circles, "aggression for its own sake" and fundamentally unacceptable. It is strange, however, that the exercise of necessary force especially in retaliating to aggression threatening the

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[3]   See Y. Rabin, "Israel's Security Policy in the Aftermath of the Gulf War", lecture presented at a Symposium on Israel's Defense Doctrine, Bar Ilan University, August 1991; and Israel Tal, *National Security*, Dvir edition, 1996, (Hebrew).

[4]   Sayings in this spirit appear in his book *The New Middle East*, Steimatzky, 1993 as well as in *Haaretz*, January 29, 1996.

existence and well-being of Israel, is marked by the ostensibly leprous libel of aggression. It seems that those exhausted by struggling, believe or hallucinate that they reside on some other planet where life is like Scandinavia (not a jungle environment). Is Israel seeking to implement or actually implementing a policy of powerful expansionism and conquering territories for its own sake? Is it Israel which has conspired against its enemies rather than the opposite? And incidentally, if initiating the exercise of force is not within the framework of justice, then Israel has every historical right to its territory, as it is like the metaphorical "lamb of the indigent" in the face of its many enemies (let alone that it cannot essentially be termed an "occupier" in its own land – the Land of Israel).

The "peace process" just magnified the Israeli reluctance to exercise force as well as doubts regarding its effectiveness and even the validity of almost all the pillars of the defense doctrine. It might be said that this "process" not only seriously eroded traditional defense theory but actually emasculated it, and it is no wonder that the deterrence capability and the ability to win decisively were adversely affected. The results, at any rate, were less faith and less desire to exercise force, even when necessary and appropriate. This was obvious over the last decade especially in South Lebanon and against the Palestinians in Judea, Samaria and Gaza.

Subsequently, objections were raised not only apropos the basic benefits and expectations of war and the exercise of power but also against one of its most conspicuous goals, i.e., "conquering of territory". The claim was – it was "proven" in the Yom Kippur War in 1973 and in the control of Judea, Samaria and Gaza (from 1967 and especially from the end of 1987) – that "expansive" territories held by Israel are neither a guarantee against an Arab war initiative nor a formula for secure tranquility. However, "conquering of land" (together with the "destruction of enemy forces") was a central tenet of Israeli defense theory, and for good reason. This was, among other reasons, due to the imperative dictated by the lack of "strategic depth" (i.e. defensive territory), to shift the war to enemy territory and to exhibit the severe consequences of war and its price to the enemy through the IDF victory on its soil.

The principle of "conquering territory" in war is directly related to another important principle of Israeli defense theory – "taking the offense". While on the strategic level Israel opted to maintain the status quo, on the operative-tactical level, we prioritized the offensive over the defensive, because of the quantitative-physical asymmetry, and that victory, crucial for the Few versus the Many, could only be achieved in this way. It was understood that Israel's glory would not rest on the defensive as the central course of action and certainly not through restraint and reserve, and that understanding was functionally implemented. And now Israel, due to mental fatigue and weakness, as well as an overly exaggerated faith in the "peace process", abandoned the dictum of taking the offense and has almost unconditionally adopted the defensive option on the one hand, and the path of restraint and reserve on the other. Israel today is even ready to compromise with a war of attrition, something very dangerous for its deterrence posture.

The reluctance of Israeli leadership and society to exert force was evident in the Gulf War (1991) when most of the population supported restraint and preferred to wrap themselves in gas masks and plastic sheets. This became habitual as in Lebanon, instead of initiating, attacking and winning, the IDF fortified itself in bunkers and clumsy outposts, and prepared to be fired upon. We even seemed to come to terms with the katyusha fire on the Galilee in too many instances, and at any rate, made no attempt to fundamentally uproot the phenomenon. The name of the game was fortification and restraint and not deterring the enemy; exaggerated entrenchment does not bespeak confidence in one's deterrence capability.

In the struggle against the Palestinians and in the present mini-war in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, the phenomenon is reaching new heights. Instead of deterring the Palestinians, we are fortifying and digging in right and left in outposts, settlements, vehicles and more. One of the most pathetic

manifestations is in the paving of bypass roads, which led to the paving of roads to bypass the bypass roads, and the fortifications in the Gilo neighborhood in south Jerusalem. The fortification phenomenon, along with Israel's reaction/non-reaction to the blatant attacks by the members of the Palestinian Authority, is one of the most lamentable manifestations of the unwillingness to fight and go to battle and emerge conspicuously victorious.

Ultimately, we are witness to the pandemonium and confusion in the strategic defense thinking of Israel as a result of the reluctance of the leadership and society to exercise force. No more "conquering of territory" because it is a "burden"; no more "destroying the enemy's forces" because as a result the "enemy will just get stronger and replenish its arsenal with sophisticated weapons"; no more "strategic depth", as Jordan will provide us with strategic depth and "serve as a buffer" (as if Jordan has agreed to play that role…); no more "strategic air strikes" because they "will lead to missiles and perhaps non-conventional weapons aimed at our cities"; no more "one who threatens you, kill him first" (or in security language – a preventive strike or a pre-emptive one, even a "war by choice") because that would be immoral and perhaps a political mistake; and so on and so forth.

One of the pinnacles of the "post-security" (*á la* post-Zionist) cacophony is the saying adopted by Israeli security "elite circles" that "peace is security". Security is no longer security as it had been for decades, with success that created deterrence and evoked admiration at home and abroad, but suddenly "peace is security". This, at a time when there is no genuine peace among the Arabs themselves (so how can they sell merchandise which is not in their possession to Israel – the "foreign implant"); when the cold, sterile peace with Egypt is barely fit to be called peace; when the state of the conflict has never been worse; when the number of Israelis killed since the Oslo agreement (in September 1993) is four times (about 370 as of the end of December 2000) the number killed in the first long *intifada* (about 90); when "peace" according to the Arabs is no more than a formula for the displacing and shrinking Israel to its "natural dimensions", in other words, a dangling limb dependent on their beneficence.

Adopting the wretched slogan that only peace will bring security under these circumstances is conceptual bankruptcy and a pathetic attempt to hold onto illusionary temptations, especially when there is no willingness to fight and battle against those who wish us harm. The distance to another superficial slogan – "territory and geography no longer have any significance in the age of missiles" (SSMs), is slight indeed. And why do geographical territory and secure borders have no significance – because (according to Peres) "SSMs do not stop at the border but pass over them."

When our enemies hear this cacophony and witness the mental fatigue of Israeli society which puts its trust in the Moloch of peace and does not choose to exercise force even when it is justified and called for, they can only derive encouragement in their boldness to harass Israel. Regarding the question as to why Israel has lost its desire to fight and struggle and even to win, we will elaborate below (in the discussion of "staying power").

A critical distortion in the current Israeli strategic thinking which contributes to the waning of the deterrence *vis-à-vis* Palestinians is the saying, "the aim today in our struggle is to reduce the volume of violence and at the same time continue to conduct with them negotiations for a final settlement." It is not said decisively, as would be appropriate, that the violence must end before any negotiations, but compromising on the reduction of violence solely. Yet, reduction of violence is an amorphic term while its termination is a clear-cut result. It is no accident that the present Israeli leadership changed the goal to reducing violence only, as it facilitates their will to continue negotiating with the Palestinian Authority which, incidentally, it is this Authority that heightens the flames of the violence. The trend of reducing violence demonstrates weakness and disbelief in our capability to come out from the struggle with an upper-hand, let alone, that by this, there is a pre-concession regarding the rehabilitation of deterrence which dissolved with the very beginning of the bloody events. In any case,

in such a way, we are inviting in advance and with our own hands, the continuation of the circle of violence.

Conducting negotiations under fire and dispatching pleading messages for its continuation despite hollow declarations of Prime Minister Barak that there will be "no negotiations under fire" spells to the other side that our leaders' declarations are baseless, and also that initiating violence pays off with ongoing Israeli concessions. In both cases, Israeli deterrence ends up in a handful of dust.

Another blunder in Israel's strategic thinking of late is the unproportional weight that is given to constraints, both actual and potential. Correct strategic thinking and policy do take into consideration first and foremost the national goals and needs and only after that, the various other constraints, including international ones. But it has been some time since our political leaders have turned the tables even here and consider almost solely the constraints and give very little attention to our genuine interests and requirements. This conduct brings them to view certain risks as impassable obstacles rather than calculated risks in addition to the aversion from user force when needed. One should not ignore constraints and risks but these must not distort the clear vision and disrupt our freedom of action. Once dragged to the mini-war in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, it should be conducted up to victory and not falsely exploit the danger of deterioration into an all-out war on the one hand and of international risks on the other hand. Giving an exaggerated weight to constraints and supposed risks is worse, no less and possibly even more than using "exaggerated force", especially when this is even non-existent.

For the sake of intellectual honesty, it is appropriate to briefly address two additional claims sounded by those who recoil from struggle. First, is the penetrating prophetic question: "Will we forever live by the sword?", which practically means, it is incumbent upon us ("those responsible for the conflict") to end the cycle of violence regardless of the conditions or cost. But life experience, present and in general, teaches us that the answer to this penetrating question is, to our great chagrin, positive: the sword will continue to exact its price here for many more years. Second, it is entirely, or at least primarily, not dependent on us. It is even arrogance and foolishness, not to mention detachment from reality, to think that if we just lay down our sword – peace and tranquility will reign here (and "we will let the sun shine"). Unfortunately, the sword remains a very applicable tool in the Middle East and its unilateral storage is a fatal blueprint for Israel.

The second claim is that, "In any case the solution is exclusively political and ultimately we will have to reach an agreement." However, this claim has a number of inherent fallacies: First, what agreement could possibly be signed with a chronic violator of all agreements, who, in the Gulf War, betrayed even his Kuwaiti and Saudi brethren who were his benefactors? Second, on what basis did such determinism come into being – that all conflicts end exclusively in agreements? Even if it contains a modicum of logic, how is it that we were unaware of this decades ago? Is it simply because the Arabs changed the strategy (in turning the Clausewiczian dictum – that war is just a continuation of policy using other means – on its head) and began prattling about "peace". And third, even if there is an agreement, much depends on the conditions of that agreement and especially circumstances under which the agreement is reached. What agreement could possibly be in Israel's favor after a harsh conflict and violent confrontation in which Israel's deterrence capability was severely shattered? It must be remembered and emphasized that both World War II and the second Gulf War did end in agreement but it was an agreement of **unconditional cease-fire by the defeated party**.

And as to the third, repeated contention – "peace is made with enemies" and then what is the point in fighting, this claim is only partially true. Indeed, peace is made with enemies, but only after they were defeated or significantly changed their conduct and character. "Peace" which is being made with undefeated enemies, or those who have not changed their behavior has no future and is also dangerous,

since, for such a "peace", critical assets have been paid, assets which will be missing on the day of reckoning.

2. Lack of Suitable Staying Power

A country's strength can be measured by two primary parameters: First, its actual military strength and second, its "staying power". This term refers to its general potential strength, including its quantitative-physical dimensions – its geographic, demographic, economic and other data. "Staying power" also includes intangible (soft) parameters such as national morale and unity, motivation, the quality and level of the people, values and beliefs, etc. The existence of a powerful, reliable ally is another important building block of "staying power", certainly when speaking of small countries.

History has shown that in confrontations between countries possessing great military strength (striking force) and countries whose "staying power" was superior, the latter more often than not emerged victorious, for example, Napoleon's glorious army which was defeated by Czarist Russia, or the powerful armies of Nazi Germany and militarist Japan which were routed by the West and the Soviet Union in World War II. Conversely, there are other examples: the victory of Iraq possessing a superior striking force over Iran with its great "staying power" in the first Gulf War (1980-1988) or Israel's victories, with its superior military strength over the Arab countries with their great "staying power". There are, therefore, situations where it is difficult to, a priori, definitively determine who has the advantage, but it is clear that in the absence of "staying power", or a significant number of its parameters, military force alone, strong as it may be, is inadequate for a small country in existential danger.

It is reasonable to assert that if not for Israel's clear advantage in terms of military strength, together with several intangible parameters of "staying power" such as motivation, quality and level of the people and commitment to sublime Jewish and universal ideals, it would have been defeated long ago. Its military strength and its intangible parameters, along with the support and aid of the United States since Israel's inception, ensured its existence and facilitated its well-being. Furthermore, these advantages also stood behind its impressive, in regional terms, deterrence capability and ability to win wars decisively. Unfortunately, wide and dangerous cracks have become apparent over recent decades in most or all of the aforementioned parameters.

Israeli society in recent decades has been plagued by many profound weaknesses such as: mental fatigue from a struggle, especially when it was extended; a sharp weakening of the faith in the justice of the purpose and the path; a conspicuous devaluation of national ideals; materialism for its own sake and the placing of the individual "me" at the fore, and so on. When materialism and pleasure-seeking (hedonism) are ultimate goals and outweigh all else, and when self-fulfillment is immeasurably more important than nationality and the collective, a society locked in a continuing struggle is severely weakened. When these values and beliefs which constituted the compass and the conscience of Israeli society are called into question, when that society displays unwillingness and lack of resolve to fight for its national rights, and when many of its members challenge the very justice of its path and purpose, and all this in the face of serious threats and dangers from without – it is clear that its national strength is extremely deficient. Israeli society has always been sensitive to the loss of life, however, when this sensitivity is accompanied by a recoiling from struggle, even when it is forced upon it, while overly sympathizing with the justice of its enemies' position, it is then faced with a problem at the very roots of its "staying power", and it is no wonder that it projects desperate weakness.

The most conspicuous manifestation of the cracks in Israeli society is the lack of consensus regarding national goals and the methods to achieve them, resulting in internal disunity and a rift in the national-social fiber. The lack of consensus and the disunity necessarily reflect negatively on the morale and motivation of the nation and no less importantly – on the morale and fighting spirit of the IDF soldiers

as well. When IDF soldiers are on the front lines and at the same time vociferous voices are heard from home, raising doubts about the justice of their cause and the logic of their actions, it must influence them negatively and certainly confuse them. If the birth of the State was illegitimate and its subsequent years have been a crime (as the "post-Zionists" preach) and if the soldiers are given the impression that there is no point or purpose in the fulfillment of their missions and that it is preferable to back down and withdraw in the face of the enemy, and at any rate to respond with maximum restraint and "wisdom" (the present-day alternative to doing the right thing), it is no wonder that their fighting spirit will be compromised. When the leaders, captivated by a belief in empty platitudes (like "the end of the conflict") convey to soldiers contradictory orders and instructions calling for restraint, they cannot fight with all their might, a vital necessity in a country in our predicament. It is no wonder that soldiers are confused and find themselves in absurd situations in which they hand over their weapons to the enemy with no resistance (as a group of "Golani" soldiers did in November in Tulkarem). When the almost only guideline of the IDF soldiers is life-preservation, the army's paramount purpose to defend the country and its citizens is severely compromised. When an ephemeral organization such as the "Four Mothers" pushes for exit from Lebanon regardless of cost, and that coincides with the opportunistic urges of the Prime Minister, it is no wonder that the stay in Lebanon ended in flight and military humiliation, which incidentally, is continuing after the withdrawal as well.

Under such circumstances, the following penetrating doubt must also occupy one's thoughts – why fight and be prepared to sacrifice for the nation and the country? Why fight and sacrifice oneself for an area or territory which was ceded or will be ceded to the enemy anyway? Why serve in the regular army and especially in the reserves and sacrifice well-being and the personal comfort under these circumstances? Indeed, the willingness to serve in the regular army and reserves is decreasing as per the testimony of the former head of the Manpower Branch (General G. Shefer) and the reports of the State Comptroller (E. Goldberg).

And if that weren't enough, certain mothers come and declare and publish shameful articles in which they preach to their soldier sons to "blindly" disobey their commanders' orders if they lead them on missions in which their lives could be endangered. Superficial politicians immediately jump on the bandwagon and support them.

Therefore, it is no wonder that the satiated, fatigued Israeli society projects and displays terrible weakness which poses a horrible threat to it. The enemy hears and absorbs and searches for ways, among them violent, to take advantage of these significant flaws in order to undermine the very foundations of Israel's existence from within and without. The deterrence capability, which is an integral part of national strength, has been fatally damaged in these circumstances and if the Arabs have not yet utilized it (taking advantage of Israel's feebleness), it is only because they prefer (and they say this explicitly) to continue undermining Israel from within, utilizing "low intensity conflicts" instead of a comprehensive war.

We cannot avoid discussing another erosion of Israel's staying power, and that is regarding the support of its ally. Though in the past, the United States firmly stood behind Israel, this has not been the case over the last decade. True, Israel's value as a strategic "asset" has decreased since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. However, the clear and traditional support of the United States for Israel should not have lessened, as the danger of the Arab-Israeli conflict escalating into a superpower confrontation has disappeared and the "oil weapon" has diminished, but nevertheless American support, and especially political support for Israel has decreased. The periodic strategic agreements between Israel and the United States seem to be no more than bones tossed to Israel in order to prod it to continue along its path of fallback and concessions to the Arabs.

The central cause, in our opinion, for the decrease in American backing of Israel is because Israel attempted to involve the United States as an "honest broker" in the conflict. Since the Israeli leaders believed in the delusions of peace and wanted to promote that cause at all costs, they were, perhaps, unaware of the high price that they would be forced to pay for America's involvement in the resolution of the conflict. As an "honest broker", the United States was obligated to equally divide (the best case scenario for Israel) its beneficence between the two opponents. The side that suffered from this was automatically Israel, while the Arabs in general and the Palestinians in particular were the beneficiaries. The Arabs, including the Palestinians, took advantage of Israel's weakness with its ally – the United States – and hence Israel was weakened even in the ally parameter of "staying power".

The above clearly attests to Israel's lowered standing against its enemies. But its leaders and the defense establishment affiliated with the Israeli Left unceasingly prattle that "Israel is strong and has the strongest army in the Middle East" (this, primarily, to convince the nation to continue the withdrawals and surrenders of territories in our homeland). It is true that the IDF has intrinsic strengths but this is only in the realm of conventional, regular war. Against "low intensity conflicts", (like Lebanon and Judea, Samaria and Gaza) the conventional military might of the IDF has little pertinence. The difficulty in bringing that might to bear appropriately can be explained as resulting from various exigencies. However, the IDF does not even exercise a small fraction of its strength in these confrontations, not only due to outside pressure but primarily due to the lack of willingness and determination of the Israeli leadership to do so. And isn't the readiness and willingness of the leadership to exercise power an integral component of the country's "staying power"?

Once again, military strength on its own, powerful though it may be, is insufficient for a state in existential danger. Without the "soft" (intangible) parameters of "staying power" there is no strength and no power. And since Israel's "staying power" is flawed, it is impossible to speak about a powerful Israel or IDF at all, because it is incompatible with what was discussed above. Statements of that sort are dangerous, idle boasting.

3. Entrusting our Responsibility for Security with the Palestinians and Others

In the past no Israeli leader would have dreamed of entrusting the responsibility for its security with others in general, and Arabs in particular. However, with Israeli leadership and society possessing neither the will nor the determination to fight and struggle, and its "staying power" deteriorated, it has reached a situation where its leaders and a large part of society itself have placed their trust in Palestinians and others.

One of the causes of the inconsistency of the late Rabin's statement (as late as the end of l993 just before Oslo) that "he would not speak to the PLO and that there is no room for an additional country between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan" to the signing of the Oslo agreement (September 1993), was his fatigue and lack of resolve in combating terrorism and the *intifada*. This manifested itself in the unfortunate statements "Let us allow the Palestinians/PLO to fight terrorism, they'll do it better than us without the High Court of Justice ("*Bagatz*") and B'tselem (an Israeli human rights organization)." Beyond the fact that he was terribly mistaken in his assumption that the PLO or the Palestinian Authority would "do the work for us" against their brothers and compatriots, this statement conveyed a message of abandoning our security to the hands of the Palestinians. We will not battle directly and insistently against terrorism as we did in the past, arousing world admiration and marvel, but we will fight much less against terrorism because "we have difficulties and exigencies and wish to avoid inflicting any damage, heaven forbid, upon our new partner." After all, the Palestinian sub-contractor will do the work for us and ensure our safety.

But this march of folly of relinquishing our security to the hands of those devoted to our downfall conveyed to the Palestinians a simple message: Israel has neither the willingness nor the

determination, and perhaps not even the power, to fight terrorism as they are entrusting us with their security, and in brief, they are weak and pathetic. Therefore, there is no reason to fear the Israelis, especially if we handle our affairs wisely – in a way that will increase world support for our cause which is already slanted in our favor.

Something similar transpired in Southern Lebanon in recent years and continues to transpire even today. Due to the obsession of evacuation from Lebanon (for the reasons mentioned and internal pressure), Israel abruptly accepted Security Council Resolution 425 from 1978 which it refused to accept for obvious and good reasons for over two decades. Due to its distress, suddenly it seemed to Israel that the United Nations would be the source of its salvation and would be able to ensure Israel's security along the northern border against the Hizbullah. And if the UN itself cannot accomplish this then the Lebanese Army will guarantee its tranquility by deploying along the border. But that "army", which is not worthy of the name, never was a military body which was respected or obeyed by the militias and the various sects in divided Lebanon, certainly not the Shi'ites and their organizations – Amal and Hizbullah. So it is this army plus a UN force, which never had any effectiveness or value (see the ineffective functioning of UNIFIL in South Lebanon), that will ensure our security against an extreme and determined organization like Hizbullah?! And incidentally, the Lebanese army has not yet deployed along the border and, on the contrary, has "allowed" Hizbullah to maintain a presence there. In any case, the acceptance of Resolution 425 by the last two Israeli governments, and especially the humiliating unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon, expressed weakness, loss of direction and reliance on others to ensure our security on the northern border. Hizbullah comprehends the Israeli weakness very well and there are few constraints to prevent them from attacking and harassing Israel.

This phenomenon of entrusting the responsibility for our security with others has become loathsome. Interestingly, in the current discussions with the Palestinians (in Camp David in July 2000) and afterwards, we were told that the multi-national force will buffer between us and the "Palestinian state". It is indeed a Palestinian demand, but it seems that the current government stupidly believes that such a force, which will also include Americans, will also be advantageous for us and prevent the Palestinians from harassing us. But experience tells that the multi-national buffering force with its "objective" judgment will not be in our favor whatsoever.

It is worth remembering that in the past discussions of the Golan Heights, Rabin and his friends came up with the idea of stationing an American observer force there as "compensation" for abandoning the Golan and in order to pacify Israeli public opinion for its loss. Rabin defended this crooked concept saying that a multi-national force including Americans, functions on the border of the Sinai Peninsula ever since the peace agreement with Egypt. But the difference between the two arenas and their topographical and geostrategic conditions is like night and day.

With what looks like a fixation, we are clinging and beginning to be tempted to put our security responsibility in almost every sector on foreign forces. Such a concept necessarily brings not only the ingenuine conclusion of the conflict, but also a further erosion of Israeli deterrence capabilities which is in any case shrinking. Moreover, when such a phenomenon becomes an obsession, it is difficult to be relieved of the thought that many in Israel haven't recovered yet from the unpleasant scent of the Diaspora. From here to Shimon Peres' shallow idea that Israel will join the Arab League, the distance is short.

4. Causes Related to Arab Views of Israeli Deterrence

The Arab view plays a significant role in evaluating the state of Israeli deterrence. The Arabs understand that which the State of Israel and Israeli society are experiencing very well. They see the political and social schism that tears us apart here and are conscious of our extreme sensitivity to loss of life and to our vulnerable spot as far as the home front is concerned, in general. In brief, they are

well aware of our sinking deterrence capability and "staying power", especially in the realm of "low intensity conflicts".

And indeed, when they witness the IDF, "the most powerful army in the Middle East", shamefully withdrawing from Lebanon under pressure from a few hundred determined, zealous gunmen on the one hand, and from hysterical mothers and politicians on the other, it is no wonder that their leader, Sheik Nasrallah, derides us, comparing our strength to a spider web, and calls on the Arabs and especially the Palestinians to adopt Hizbullah's successful struggle as a role model and implement it against Israel. It is hard to remember any Arab leader or senior spokesman who articulated such profound derision and contempt towards Israel as did Nasrallah, and most unfortunately, there was more than a kernel of truth in his words.

Due to the sharpness of his statements, it is appropriate to cite certain quotations from those stinging words from May 2000 in Bint-Jebail in Southern Lebanon[5]:

> Israel might still have nuclear weapons and heavy weaponry, however, by God, it is weaker than cobwebs. If Israel opts for aggression, it will pay a heavy price. There was a time when we feared Israel's threats, its planes, tanks, missile boats which violated our sovereignty, but that time has passed and is gone forever.

In turning to his huge audience, he added: "Today, you are safe and happy in Bint-Jebail, while they, in their settlements along the entire northern border of Palestine, tremble in fear before an unknown future." He called on the Palestinians to emulate the struggle of his warriors: "In order to liberate your land you have no need for tanks and planes. If you model yourselves after our holy martyrs you can force your demands on the Zionist aggressors."

The gravity of his statements is twofold: First, he correctly analyzes the depths to which the power of the Israeli country and society have descended; second, that this is the way in which we are perceived by him and almost certainly by many Arabs. It is worth noting, therefore, the statement of the Syrian Foreign Minister, Farouk-a-Shara, regarding our withdrawal from Lebanon – that "it indicates the correct way to battle against Israel." It is also appropriate to recall that Sheik Ahmed Yassin preceded Nasrallah in diagnosing the weakness of Israel's "staying power". While he was still incarcerated in an Israeli jail he told his interviewers things similar to Nasrallah's. He sensed already then that "**the Jews have lost their will to fight and as a result, Arab victory is near**." He said this when he diagnosed the weak Israeli response to the first *intifada* and to the terrorism of the last few years and understood that we are a society lacking in national power and strength. After our withdrawal from Lebanon, Hamas activists led by Yassin, hurried to express pride at the Hizbullah victory and called on Palestinians to "emulate the example of the struggle and *jihad* in Lebanon, and that only that will ultimately lead to a total Israeli withdrawal from the Palestinians' territories."

It is difficult to ignore the direct connection and the proximity between the IDF withdrawal from Lebanon and the outbreak of the Palestinian mini-war against Israel in late September 2000. Incidentally, this was the case when the first *intifada* erupted in l987 in the wake of the initial, partial IDF withdrawal from Lebanon in l985. At the same time, there is no doubt that the Palestinians noted sharply Israel's pedantic (to the point of repugnancy) implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 425 calling for withdrawal from Lebanon. Abu-Mazen, Arafat's deputy, expressed this in his reaction that

> ...he expects that Israel will implement with similar strictness its withdrawal from all of "the territories" in accordance with the United Nations resolutions and the bilateral agreements just as it did in Southern Lebanon in accordance with Resolution 425.

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[5]   *Maariv*, May 28, 2000.

As previously mentioned, deterrence capability is also based on credibility (that it will be implemented) and determination (that it will be implemented appropriately). However, the Arabs have encountered the emptiness of our leaders' threats time and again. This was the case in the Gulf War (1991) when we warned and threatened Saddam that he ought not dare to launch ground-to-ground missiles upon us, "because his fate will be bitter and awful", and the war ended without our actualizing that threat at all. This was the case in many incidents in our struggle against the Hizbullah when we did not act upon our threats to respond in the most severe way – to the point of destroying Lebanon's infrastructure and severely damaging Syrian interests there. When we implemented the "Accountability" (Rabin 1994) and "Grapes of Wrath" (Peres 1996) operations in Lebanon, we hurriedly concluded the campaigns without executing our warnings and goals. So, too, we are not effecting, after the withdrawal from Lebanon, our threats to damage the Syrians and the Lebanese infrastructure if the Hizbullah continues its harassment, but it continues. So, too, we are not carrying out our warnings to the Palestinian Authority in the mini-war since October 2000. If any warnings have been actualized, it was done in sterile measures and "signals" (which have been repeated to the point of ridicule) whose value has been minimal. When Mubarak recalled his ambassador for "consultations" we even discontinued those "signals" and it was announced that the attacks of the helicopters, which were not carried out all that effectively in the first place, had "run their course". Instead of reacting in an appropriate manner to the continuation of the unceasing Palestinian violence against us, we changed our tactics to steps of appeasement and "confidence-building measures" (a wretched phrase in its own right). There is no doubt that the Palestinians read Israel's weakness from within and without and are aware of the huge political dependency of the leftist Israeli government on the votes of Israeli Arabs who identify totally and fervently with their brethren in their struggle.

On a more fundamental plane, the Arabs and Palestinians are aware of the basic difficulties of a democratic-pluralistic country in its struggle against terrorism and "low intensity conflicts" in general, and those of the State of Israel in particular. And they take advantage of this with great diligence. Israel, which once displayed resolve and determination in confronting terrorism, almost never does anymore, due to relatively new regional factors ("peace" with Egypt and Jordan, and with the "Authority") and other factors as well. The Arabs, in contradistinction to Israeli know-it-alls, know that it is not impossible to deal with terrorism and guerilla warfare, and examples are not lacking. The English liquidated the Arab rebellion (1936-39), the Greek underground in Cypress (1959), and also the rebellion in Malaysia (in the 1960s). The Germans, Italians and Japanese subdued the "red armies" which functioned in their countries; Turkey, for the most part, subdued the Kurdish rebellion. In South America – in Peru and Uruguay – local undergrounds were liquidated, and in our region as well, Syria and Jordan dealt "nicely" with uprisings in their countries. And there are, of course, other examples of successful treatment of terrorism, which prove that it is not impossible, despite the difficulties and contrary examples. But the Arabs and the Palestinians are counting on the fact that Israeli society will oppose implementing a severe (and correct) policy against terrorist acts and the authorities that support them, and certainly on the fact that Israel lacks the willingness and determination to do so, especially in this "era of the political process and peace".

The Arab viewpoint regarding a comprehensive, all-out conventional war, is quite different. In this regard, in the course of the mini-war with the Palestinians, President Mubarak of Egypt and King Abdallah of Jordan, articulated their reluctance to engage Israel in war. Mubarak repeated that he is not willing to enter into a military adventure with Israel and does not want the struggle with the Palestinians to drag him and his country into a war. He mocked the Arab countries distant from Israel, which are vociferous in their passion for war, claiming that they do not understand the meaning of war at all. Mubarak and Abdallah were less motivated by their peace treaties with Israel than ably articulating the true and vital interests of their countries. Central regional countries like Egypt and Jordan are not at all enthusiastic about entering or being dragged into a war with Israel and in this way firmly influence radical Arab counties and organizations as well.

Nevertheless, Arab countries are also aware of the fact that their "staying power" is much greater, and especially in their ability to withstand powerful and painful military strikes from Israel. Arabs do have vulnerable spots (as was displayed, for example, in the Iran-Iraq War) but bottom-line, there is no doubt that they are capable of withstanding more than Israel, whose ability to absorb a beating is deficient. It is important to understand that the ability to absorb a beating is a very crucial matter in the balance of deterrence. The might of the deterring power can cause significant losses, and pain, but if the deterred rival has the ability to absorb those losses it can significantly neutralize the might of the deterring power. Thus, the superior Arab absorption capability could lead them to presume that they can take bolder risks against Israel narrowing its deterrence impact.

As a result of their economic resources and geo-strategic advantages, the Arabs can also assume that the world will not allow them to be totally defeated in war or any other broad conflict. This is the case whether they initiate the war or are drawn into it. The Arabs can believe, and the belief is not without basis, that even if they are severely routed, the world – Europe, Russia and even the United States – will not allow their total collapse. This was the case in the 1973 war when Kissinger prevented Israel from liquidating the surrounded Egyptian third army. This was the case when the superpowers – especially the United States – did not allow the PLO or the Syrians to be completely defeated in the Peace of Galilee Operation (1982). A similar phenomenon took place in the Gulf War (1991), when the United States adamantly demanded that we dare not intervene or respond militarily to the Iraqi ground-to-ground missiles. And today as well, the United States is making sure that we do not utilize "exaggerated force" in response to the outrageous Palestinian violence and aggression, so that we should not, heaven forbid, force them to request a cease-fire.

In any case, any child knows that the only language understood in the Middle East is that of force. The Arabs learned, justifiably, that Israel understands only the language of force, that only by exercising force can they further their goals against Israel, especially when Israel does nothing to prove to them that violent conflicts do not pay. On the contrary, Israel pays quite handsomely. Incidentally and on parallel, the Israelis also know that the Arabs only understand the language of force but do very little to implement that knowledge, despite the fact that all that we have accomplished has been by force. When Arabs and Palestinians perceive that force and violence pay, and when Israel prevents itself or is somehow prevented from responding appropriately, they are only encouraged by both of those factors, and Israeli deterrence has little chance of being effective.

Finally, it is worth devoting a few words to the Arab perspective on nuclear deterrence. It is difficult to measure how much this deterrence practically limits Arab freedom of action. It was noted above that *vis-à-vis* the Palestinians and in Lebanon, nuclear deterrence has never had any significance. But even in terms of the Arab states, this deterrence is far from total, as for example, it did not prevent them from initiating a limited war. In addition, the fact that nuclear deterrence has additional limitations has not gone unnoticed by the Arabs. First, since it is a "doomsday weapon", it will not be employed unless Israel is mortally threatened, therefore, this extremely dangerous situation ultimately depends on the Arabs themselves, and it is in their ability to avoid escalating the conflict to a point where Israel is backed into a corner. Second, the Arabs do not feel totally impotent in the face of Israel's nuclear deterrent because they have unconventional weapons of their own (chemical and biological) to offset that deterrent which are not significantly inferior to nuclear weapons, certainly in the circumstances extant in Israel. In any case, it can be assumed that the Arab countries are aware of the fact, in the realm of non-conventional weapons, that its possible use would move them into a totally different sphere in which the survival of their national entity (and possibly even the personal survival of their leaders) is at stake and therefore, the principle that one should not enter into or be drawn into a dangerous conflict of that sort takes effect. In other words, the rule of self-deterrence from crossing an extremely dangerous threshold applies. It is no accident that Saddam Hussein did not deploy non-

conventional weapons against us or the coalition, and neither did Egypt (with chemical weapons) despite its humiliating defeats in 1967 and 1973 (100 kilometers from Cairo).

Ramifications of the Decline of Deterrence

It goes without saying that the decline of Israeli deterrence can only have negative and dangerous ramifications. Nothing good for Israel can emerge from it. Some of the negative aspects and dangers like the dangers of war were discussed above (in the chapters discussing the causes of the deterioration of deterrence) and here we will deal with it from additional perspectives.

The first repercussion emerging from a discussion of the deterioration of Israeli deterrence is, of course, the **danger of war in all its forms** with its neighbors. For a long time now, I have been of the opinion that the dangers of a comprehensive war between the Arab countries and Israel are not high, first and foremost because the balance of power is not in the Arabs' favor. Syria, despite its large army, does not appear to be militarily strong – primarily in terms of its air force. In the wake of the Lebanon War, they can no longer rely on their anti-aircraft missile systems either. Its unstable economy cannot serve as an impetus to war. True, it does possess an impressive ground-to-ground missile arsenal, but you don't win wars with ground-to-ground missiles, despite the fact that they constitute a significant threat to the Israeli home front. It is reasonable to assume that the ground-to-ground missiles are being preserved more in order to deter Israel from attacking Syria and to retaliate if attacked, especially if civilian targets are attacked. Reasserting Syrian sovereignty over the Golan, though it is a desirable national goal, does not seem to be at the top of Damascus' list of priorities. No less importantly, Syria, which has an extremely bad relationship with Arafat, will not hasten to go to war for Arafat and the Palestinians' sake.

Egypt, despite its military buildup, is constrained by a formal peace with Israel, which, though it is no guarantee of non-belligerence, is nevertheless, a substantial restraining factor. Egypt knows that it can gain nothing and can only lose through war, the generous American aid totaling 2.3 billion dollars annually and American sympathy as well. And even more daunting, it can assume that it will also lose the Sinai Peninsula or at least significant parts of it. Despite its qualitative military buildup, it is doubtful that the Egyptian army is capable of conducting a mobile war with appropriate support from its air force. In initiating a war, Cairo would prove that a peace treaty between Israel and an Arab country is worthless and this when Egypt was the one who first adopted the path of political struggle against Israel. Despite its sympathy and constant support for Arafat and the Authority, it is doubtful that Egypt would be willing to endanger itself in an outlandish adventure. And as we mentioned above, Mubarak recently stated in no uncertain terms, and more than once, that he does not want to be drawn into a war for the Palestinians.

Iraq, the third largest Arab country, possessor of the potential to endanger Israel in warfare, does not present a significant threat to Israel in the foreseeable future. The Iraqi army and air force was severely routed during the second Gulf War (1991) and does not seem capable of conducting serious military maneuvers 1,000 kilometers from Baghdad with no air support. Iraq as a country was also significantly weakened from that war and is still under strict economic and other sanctions which limit its freedom of action.

Regarding the balance of power, three large Arab countries are, therefore, not in a good position to launch a war against Israel. No less important – there are other good reasons for the Arab avoidance of launching a war against Israel. The present international circumstances do not encourage initiation of a comprehensive war and in addition, it does not appear that Syria or any other radical Arab country has a superpower patron who will support it politically or provide it with the weapons or spare parts crucial to the conduct of an exhausting war. Moreover, it seems that the current Arab strategy rests on the belief that they will be able to overcome Israel by means of a political struggle or pressure, or by

benefiting from the Palestinian struggle, and in both cases, through the Jewish state's implosion from within – by way of a deep political and social schism. At any rate, the informational statements and the rational reasoning for Egypt's and Jordan's aversion to enter into war were recently clearly articulated, as stated above, by President Mubarak and King Abdallah in the midst of the bloody clashes with the Palestinians.

All of the above notwithstanding, it is unreasonable to assume that Arab countries are not noticing the deterioration of Israel's deterrence capability and its winning options both due to the declining of the IDF victory curve and because of the chinks in Israel's national strength. It is hard to exclude that in a situation of this sort, a perpetual and overwhelming temptation to deliver a knockout blow to Israel when the appropriate opportunity arises and when circumstances allow it will not manifest itself. Formal peace agreements will not be an ultimate restraining factor for long. And even if they do not initiate a comprehensive war against Israel, they will apparently not refrain from supporting organizations which stage violent attacks and harassment against it.

Thus, for example, Damascus does not seem to be deterred from continuing to support Hizbullah nor Egypt from supporting the Palestinian mini-war. Wild demonstrations at home, whether spontaneous or organized, will aid the Arab governments whenever they choose to deteriorate the situation with Israel to engage in pre-war measures even to the threshold of genuine acts of hostility. Although the Arab states are certainly aware that the military option to overcome Israel is almost non-existent, the decline of Israel's deterrence capability is liable to encourage them to pester Israel in any way they can, and of course their strategic maneuverability against Israel will grow. It should be noted that it was not the eminence of peace, which led Egypt to sign a peace treaty with Israel but rather the absence of a military option. Today, there is a danger that such an option might be revitalized.

Since the Yom Kippur War in l973, the possibility has loomed that the Arabs would initiate a "limited war" which is broad in scope though limited in its territorial goals and whose aim is to put into motion a political process which would induce Israel to withdraw. Regarding such danger as well, which seems to be convenient and tempting for the Arabs and bad for Israel, my opinion is that it is not that great since whoever initiates the war, even if it begins successfully, cannot be certain how and where it will end. Not to mention that regarding a limited war, most of the extenuating factors mentioned above still apply (balance of power, the international situation, alternatives, and the like). Nevertheless, with the deterioration of Israeli deterrence, for the variety of reasons discussed, it seems that the danger of a war of this sort being launched has increased to some degree, with the Syrian and Lebanese arena being the most likely to be taken into account in this regard. It should be noted that even if the Israeli nuclear deterrent plays a role in the context of an all-out war, it has practically little if any significance in the context of a limited war.

If the Israeli deterrence capability, as we have seen, has not been totally lost in the case of an all-out war or a limited war, it has completely collapsed in the case of a low-intensity conflict. In this context, it is difficult to find additional repercussions beyond those analyzed in the course of this essay, and all that is left to say is that without rehabilitating Israel's deterrence capability, the situation will just get worse. The reference is particularly to the two arenas of the struggle – in Lebanon and Judea, Samaria and Gaza. In addition, the results of the conflicts in these areas can potentially lead to a general regional escalation.

However, the decline of Israeli deterrence is not only tied to somewhat increased dangers of war of one type or another, but also to additional domains. The reference is to **Israel's image** internally and externally. Israel's image as an infirm limb and a punching bag against whom even those much weaker dare to take action, is not an essentially healthy situation for a country existing in Israel's milieu, (Few against hostile Many, unstable strategic surroundings, etc.) and it contains, as we have seen, dangers which are not insignificant. The public morale in a threatened country has supreme

importance and when Israel's citizens are reminded of the deterioration of their country's deterrence on a daily basis, then morale is deeply despondent. When Israelis cannot enjoy personal or national security or a moment of tranquility, their anxiety and mood reaches negative nadirs. This has already resulted in deep disdain for government institutions and those heading them, which could snowball into civil disobedience, possible violence, emigration and the like. The gloomy image does not strengthen national potency and the danger of the disintegration of Israeli society is great. A country, whose citizens cannot be proud of it or its power, does not have a bright future.

Externally, the decline of Israeli deterrence also projects a situation of deep despair. Israel, which deterred the numerous Arabs and combated terrorism and violence, serving as a role model for many, is no longer perceived in that way. It is perceived as a weakling who cannot overcome almost any violence against it. The world does generally support the Arabs and Palestinians, however, it doesn't seem that they would shed any tears if we were depicted as overcoming those who threaten us, by employing decisive, quick and elegant actions. This is also true concerning the United States whose attitude towards Israel is a bit warmer; there too, we are losing our image and our status as an ally of which one could be proud. Israel is no longer perceived there as the one who routed its enemies but rather as one who is perpetually and embarrassingly in need of its mercy in the political arena, especially in its economic aspect. Politically, Israel seems to be a burden on American foreign policy and economically, a burden even on Congress, which was always the friendliest institution to Israel (not to mention on the American taxpayer as well).

If the Israeli deterrence capability remains on its present level, there is a danger that a breach will form in its new strategic treaty and cooperation even with Turkey. If Israel does not actualize its threats against Syria, which supports the Hizbullah, it is doubtful that Turkey will view Israel as a reliable ally against their common enemy. Turkey, which in 1998 demonstrated firmly that they were unwilling to accept Syrian support of the Kurdish rebels, will find it difficult to understand and accept Israel's weakness against the Hizbullah and Damascus.

Another danger in the deterioration of Israeli deterrence with all of its causes lies in the fact that it also adversely impacts **Israeli Arabs**. Almost every time that violent clashes erupted in recent years with the Palestinians in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, Israeli Arabs also staged harsh and violent riots. These are characterized not only by bloody, violent confrontations with Jewish police and citizens, but in a phenomenon many times more extreme – the blocking of central traffic arteries throughout the country and even in cities and towns (Jaffa, Jerusalem, Haifa, etc.). The severe Arab riots are only minimally related to their "discriminated" status and more to the nationalist identification of the majority of them with their Palestinian brethren in Judea, Samaria and Gaza and to their deep-rooted hatred of the Jewish state. Most of the Israeli Arabs perpetrating the riots were members of the Islamic movements or the other radical movements. Since the Labor-left-wing government in Israel is extremely dependent politically on the votes of the Arab minority, that minority has leverage with that government which culminates in the mildness of the government's reaction to their riots and the impudence of the rioters. Thus, too, we are witness, therefore, to a vicious cycle which weakens the deterrence capability even further and poses a threat to Israel on another, i.e., the very internal front. In any case, the situation in which a large segment of Israeli Arabs allow themselves time and again to stage violent riots in which they are unrestrained and are not appropriately punished, can lead to anarchy and to the disintegration of Israel from within from both a security and political perspective.

Another significance of the decline of Israel's deterrence capability lies in the recognition that it **limits the possibility of any resolution of the conflict** with the Arabs. It should be stated at the outset, that any advantageous resolution of the conflict from Israel's perspective is practically impossible. It does not seem that **real** peace could in the foreseeable future reign between Israel and the Arabs and it does not appear that any settlement could satisfy the **genuine** desires of the two sides for many years to come. Nevertheless, the world has recently learned that sworn enemies can find a path to reasonable

coexistence without peace – and examples are not difficult to provide (the end of the Cold War between the Superpowers, the warming of relations between the two Koreas, the end of the war between Iran and Iraq, and others). At any rate, if there is any choice for the thawing of the conflict in our region, it is certainly if and when Israel displays its might and is perceived justifiably as the strongest regional power. Then, perhaps, there exists a possibility that the Arabs will internalize that they will not defeat Israel by force and maybe, they will even reach a true compromise or a state of extended non-belligerence with us. If Israeli deterrence is waning or at an all-time low, there is no chance in the world that the Arabs and the Palestinians will seek a real compromise or come to terms with Israel's existence in any form. Though, as stated above, the temptation not to make true peace with Israel (as eventually the Many are bound to defeat the Few) and continue with hostility against it is too enticing.

Finally, Israel has an overriding compulsion to **rehabilitate its deterrence capability**. In order to accomplish this successfully, first and foremost, the Israeli leadership and public must be aware of the need. Only once they are aware of the necessity, does the possibility exist that they will be prepared to take the necessary steps to rehabilitate its deterrence. Only then is there a chance that they will be resolute in taking these steps despite the possible high cost involved. Without the awareness of the necessity to urgently restore the deterrence capability, there is no chance that it will be rehabilitated. In any case, the incessant prattle that "the IDF is the strongest army", adds nothing to deterrence capability. On the contrary, if we do not prove this in practice, the boasting seems ridiculous and rebounding. Concessions and withdrawals are the antithesis of rehabilitation or maintenance of the deterrence capability and a formula for the restriction of Israel's freedom of action. Ceding territory in our homeland to the Palestinians, under pressure or even not under pressure, is not only erroneous and weakens Israel but it restricts the ability of the IDF to function against terrorists who find refuge in the "Autonomy". The non-implementation of "hot pursuit", which was included in every agreement with the Palestinians as a result of anticipating the future, severely limits the IDF in fighting terrorism and violence. In addition, political concessions under pressure and violence will turn Israeli into a perpetual hostage to similar tactics, not to mention that the pressure and violence will pay for our adversaries. Concessions of this sort are made as a result of fatigue and weakness and due to alien considerations, which run counter to Israel's real interests.

Above all, rehabilitation of the deterrence capability must be accomplished in a determined and stubborn struggle and a demonstrative, clear effort to achieve victory. Any other way will not achieve the desired results. It is indeed preferable that Israel choose one "front" in which to rehabilitate and demonstrate its deterrence capability – either the Palestinians or the Hizbullah – but if there is no alternative, it must function even on both fronts. Then the rehabilitation of the deterrence capability will be even more distinct. In any case, it is always preferable to opt for what can be called "the indirect approach", that is, to act against those who sponsor the perpetrators and terrorists. In Judea, Samaria and Gaza, it is the "Authority" and its infrastructure, and in Lebanon it is the Lebanese infrastructure and the Syrian assets there. This is the way that Israel acted in the past against the "host nations" with palpable results and that is what Israel should do today and in the future.

The rehabilitation of the Israeli deterrence capability in any way is today, as mentioned above, a supreme dictum for Israel's existence and its fate in the region and much more crucial than the progress towards "peace". If there is any chance for real peace it is contingent, first and foremost, on the return of the deterrence capability to its superior level.

In Lieu of a Summary: "If There is an IDF – Let It Appear Immediately!"

Summaries are generally useful to those who prefer to sometimes skip tiresome deliberations, yet this time we chose to take a different path. Those who are anxious can still get a sense of the basic issues in this essay by perusing its structure, its content and its outline and of course its executive summary.

I preferred to exchange the scholarly summary by citing extensive quotes from the remarkable article by Professor Dan Meron which was published during the second Gulf War entitled: "If There is an IDF – Let It Appear Immediately".[6] Despite the fact that the article was published a decade ago and in a different crisis situation, it is valid and even more than on target regarding our situation these days. Even if I tried, it is doubtful that I could write a more focused and penetrating end to this paper.

> They preach to us that we should view the events of the recent weeks "in their proper dimension". Ultimately, they are no different than the terrorist attacks to which we have become accustomed…especially since to this point there has been a low number of fatalities [and we are passing the test with just a few scratches]. However, whoever says this is mistaken and misleading. He does not (even) begin to sense the depth and uniqueness of the crisis which Israeli society is now undergoing. The place in which Israeli society is being wounded now is not necessarily a place where the eye can easily discern the riven skin and the flowing blood. What is being undermined … (is) the invincible Israeli self-image, the sense of security and the proud bearing which was provided by its sovereignty. The crisis is first and foremost a crisis of identity and image – both self-image and the image in the eyes of enemies and friends alike. Only a fool will fail to sense the connection between the compliments showered on Israel and its restraint…

> Fundamentally, the crisis affects our inner world. We awaken to a reality, which compromises our prominence in our own perception. The image of Israel as a fortress ready for war is clouding and becoming more distant from us – an image without which we cannot wage war and basically cannot make peace…We begin to doubt the validity of the "reactions" which the IDF must respond to the dangers surrounding us…We ask ourselves if the 'restraint' which we imposed upon ourselves…will totally liquidate our deterrence capability…

> Beyond anything, the question tortures us whether or not the long-term ramifications and results of the decision not to exercise the power of the IDF have been considered in depth…Perhaps the decision is totally justified for the political and tactical reasons that the leaders of the country and the IDF hint at in their statements, though to this point we have yet to hear from them a clear and convincing political or military rationale for their decision. This is a decision which shrinks our stature and limits our presence in the world and in our own eyes…The majority of the public supports it (according to the polls) and the Prime Minister (then, Yitzhak Shamir, A.L.) crowns them with the title "a wise and clever people", but the wisdom and cleverness to which the Prime Minister is referring, are precisely those which Zionism has toiled over the course of several generations to remove from the heart of the Jew. This is the wisdom, which is tied to the ancient, historical feelings of weakness and being on the fringe and entrusting the labor of sovereignty, which at times admittedly is difficult and inconvenient, for others to perform in our stead. It is incumbent upon us to clarify to ourselves, that even if we have no recourse other than restraint…it is exacting from us an extremely high price…

> Nowadays we treat everything with total cynicism, even Israel's unclear threats that it will change its "policy" if Saddam replaces the conventional weapons with unconventional-chemical ones, and we ourselves don't believe those threats. It is imperative at this time that the public debate regarding the process of self-deprecation into which we have cornered ourselves…The enthusiastic participation of the

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[6]　*Haaretz*, February 4, 1991.

"peace camp" in this act of repression is particularly astounding and pathetic: Their participation apparently stems from their misunderstanding that the experience of weakness in which we find ourselves is the most severe obstacle on the road to peace. The great wretchedness of the "doves", who don't understand that only with complete self-confidence, an energetic sense of power and an unequivocal deterrence capability, can we, if at all, bring the nation closer to peace and help them overcome the fears of the great dangers which accompanies this peace…

Only one reality can come about now…a reality, which will be created by a reawakening of the IDF, late though it may be, to the type of activity to which we have become accustomed to expect. If there is an IDF, let it appear immediately!

As was mentioned above, there is nothing more appropriate than these penetrating words, from a decade ago, to describe the decline of Israeli deterrence over the years, for reasons that are mostly dependent on Israel alone, in these very days. In any event, if Israel has a true will to live and if it really possesses a valid, comprehensive, deterrent capability – let it appear immediately!