A WORST CASE SCENARIO:
A PALESTINIAN GUERILLA OFFENSIVE
ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF TEL AVIV

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I. Introduction

The influx of a Palestinian fighting force (more than 25,000 armed fighters) into Judea and Samaria would mean an excellent starting point for mobile forces to immediately advance towards the infrastructure vital to Israel's existence. 3

II. The Geographic Achilles' Heel

The conventional wisdom has it that, despite its obvious strengths, the State of Israel suffers from two chronic, strategic Achilles' heels which make defeating it militarily thinkable: its demographic inferiority, which precludes it from engaging in a prolonged military confrontation, and its mini-state size, which tempts the enemy to plot a potentially decisive lightning strike. The primary goal of Israel's defense strategy since the days when its first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, designed it, has therefore been to develop appropriate responses to these two potentially fatal deficits.

It is a well-known "secret" that Israel's minuscule population, relative to the size of the Arab world which surrounds it, together with the sensitivity of Israeli society to the loss of life, casts a giant shadow of doubt over the country's ability to withstand an extended conventional war. If its enemies could succeed in forcing on it an active military conflict lasting months or years (like the Iran-Iraq War, the Vietnam War, etc.), they could significantly improve their chances of prevailing.

I. Introduction

One of the fundamental assumptions on which the Oslo agreements are based is that the presence of lightly armed Palestinian forces in the West Bank and Gaza Strip does not pose a strategic threat to the State of Israel since such forces would be insignificant relative to both the might of the IDF and to the regular Arab armies available to the powers threatening Israel: Egypt, Syria and Iraq. 2

The purpose of this article is to criticize this assumption. An analysis of optimal courses of action will show that the recent deployment of Palestinian forces in the immediate proximity of the Israeli rear is liable to empower them as a decisive factor in a general, regional conflagration, if these forces advance quickly enough towards the nerve centers of Israel's civilian and military rear. In fact, such a scenario was once imagined by one of Israel's greatest strategists, Mr. Shimon Peres, who sounded this alarm:
Since this issue is of secondary importance to the discussion at hand, we will limit ourselves to remembering that the traditional Israeli approach to the attrition of its manpower was to force a cease-fire quickly by means of either rapidly transferring the battleground to enemy territory and establishing a ground threat to his capitals, or by attacking his infrastructure via air power. The direct threats against Cairo and Damascus, leading to cease-fires in the 1967 and 1973 wars, are examples of the first method; Israeli air strikes deep into Egypt in the years 1969-1970, which led to the end of the War of Attrition, are an example of the second.4

Of greater importance is Israel's geographic dilemma. The Jewish state's minuscule area, together with its over-reliance on military reserve forces (which partly derives from its demographic weakness) casts another giant pall of doubt over the country's ability to withstand a lightning conventional strike i.e., the enemy's rapid penetration into the heart of the country. If Arab armies could advance just a few miles past the Green Line (the cease-fire line of 1949) at the outset of a comprehensive offensive (as the Iraqis did when conquering Kuwait), they could achieve a total conventional victory over the State of Israel by preventing the mobilization and equipping of military reserves and by interrupting many of its other vital systems.

Israel's traditional response to the geographic Achilles' heel has been two-fold: 1. A system of rapid mobilization of reserve divisions intended to launch them into battle within twenty-four hours (a procedure improved in the wake of its inadequacy when exposed in 1973's Yom Kippur War). 2. Great reliance on the air force (recently with a special emphasis on attack helicopters) to track the progress of the enemy and abort its attack on the first day of battle.

However, our hypothesis is that the influx of Palestinian forces into the country's center has exacerbated the vulnerability of Israel's geographic deficit to such an extent that a total collapse of the strategic balance has become possible before our eyes.5 The traditional responses cited above (mobilization and air power) have become blatantly inadequate. The inevitable conclusion is that Israel must immediately develop a new defense concept.

In truth, Israel was always vulnerable to a strategy of the indirect approach to its rear by light forces, even before the Oslo accords, due to the proximity of a significant portion of its military installations and civilian life to the northern, central and southern fronts. Now this vulnerability has multiplied ten-fold. It is worth noting that some of those responsible for the country's security who were exposed to a different, more detailed version of this article, reacted by saying that heretofore the strategy of an indirect approach has never been employed by the Arab side (with the possible exception of the situation which developed without design in 1948). However, our response is that such a strategy remains not only possible, but more likely than ever.6

Indeed, B.H. Liddell-Hart, one of the outstanding military theorists of the 20th century, asserted that there is no more appropriate strategy for overcoming a military force which has demonstrated its staying power in direct confrontations (Israel, for example) than an indirect approach to its rear.7 And the more the rear under attack is administrative or civilian, the greater the accrued benefit from its sudden collapse during a crisis, and the increased probability of the physical and spiritual collapse of its forces battling at the front.8

III. The Prevalent Dogmas

There are three prevalent notions which enable Israel's experts to disregard the above threats: A. The exaggerated distinction between the enemy's abilities and the probability of his strategies. B. The exaggerated faith in intelligence. C. The classic mistake of an empirical over-reliance on one's personal experience.

A. Probability and Ability

The radical working distinction between the enemy's ability and the probability of his actions is a direct result of the great variety of threats directed towards Israel. The state's limited economic and human resources simply do not allow for developing rational responses to all of them. As a result, the defense establishment's concentration on the more probable threats, at the expense of the threats
deemed of low probability, is a cruel necessity. And since it is perfectly clear that the opponents’ intentions constitute a central component in the probability assessment, the security debate tends not to distinguish between intentions and ability.

The introduction of an “assessment of intentions” into the discussion is thus always more comfortable for the planners, psychologically, as it invariably serves to soften the picture, making it less dangerous and easier to deal with, since the operational intentions ascribed to various factors at any given time are no more than a fraction of the range of possibilities.

In any case, the relevant consequence for our purposes is that instead of focusing on the end result of an optimal action by the Palestinian forces in the case of a regional confrontation, the deliberation adopts, as a point of reference, the declared, and therefore moderate, defensive intentions of the Palestinians regarding the outbreak of hostilities.

However, as Winston Churchill observed, the rules of debate are supposed to change drastically when circumstances fateful to national security (e.g., the possible invasion of London after Dunkirk) arise. In that case, it is appropriate and logical to relate to the enemy’s ability in a manner detached from its ideological or operational intentions, because when ability provides concrete opportunity to achieve a tempting historic victory, its effect on intentions is liable to evolve overnight. Therefore, when discussing ability which has the potential to tip the scales in the direction of strategic decisions, one must consider all appropriate preventive measures and liberate oneself from the classic obstacle of “assessment of intentions” (even in circumstances in which it is based on “solid intelligence information”).

B. Sounding the Alarm

The second factor which facilitates avoiding a discussion of a possible attack by Palestinian guerrillas and/or additional commando forces from the neighboring countries, is the aforementioned widespread reliance on a minuscule early warning period of 12-24 hours. This space of time might allow for both rapid mobilization of reserve divisions against the regular Arab armies and the placing of obstacles in the way of Palestinian light forces. Yet this scenario relies first and foremost on the last war. In other words, it relies on the fact that in 1973 the indications of imminent war (or a “massive exercise”) were identified some twenty hours before the first shot was fired.

Here are but two reservations to this approach. The first, to be charitable, assumes that sharp Arab minds are weighing the two alternatives (A) and (B) cited below, as well as the compromise between them in terms of profit and loss, from their respective vantage points:

1. A strike with advance field preparation of 12-24 hours.

   **Advantage:** The full utilization of all forces and equipment at the outset of battle.

   **Disadvantages:** The possibility of a preemptive Israeli air strike accompanied by the placing of the Israeli rear in a defensive, attack-ready position. No less important, it would trigger an unimpeded mobilization of reserve divisions and their insertion into battle just a few hours after the outbreak of hostilities, accompanied by the imposition of a tight Israeli military blockade against Palestinian forces, for the purpose of confining them to their territory.

2. A strike with almost no advance field preparations:

   **Advantages:** Surprise, which preempts Israel from reinforcing the front lines with reserves and even affords real potential for severely disrupting their mobilization altogether. Most profitably, the enemy enhances his chances of infiltrating a greater number of Palestinian saboteurs into the small, limited areas of the Israeli rear at the start of battle.

   **Disadvantages:** The insufficient utilization of ground forces during the early hours of combat, and even more detrimentally, the insufficient preparation of the air force and surface-to-surface missile batteries, deprived of a useful briefing and preparation time.

The present Israeli deployment (as will be demonstrated in parts 3 and 4) provides a reasonable response only to scenario A, but if the enemy opts for the less conventional
scenario B, or similar plan, he could improve his chances of success.

3. The experimental method:
The third obstacle inhibiting discussion of this new threat to Israel created by the Oslo agreements is an over-reliance on the military history of the conflict. The record shows that despite dozens of separate and sporadically successful infiltrations by Palestinian guerrilla units into the heart of the Israeli rear over the years, a simultaneous and coordinated attack by dozens of such teams has never been tried. Even during 1967's Six Day War, when the pre-war order-of-battle was somewhat analogous to the situation extant in the field today (i.e. when Jordan's Arab Legion was scattered over the West Bank in immediate proximity to Israel's major cities, airports and reserve bases), the scenario of a breakthrough to the rear imagined by Shimon Peres (see endnote 3) never came about. Therefore, it is only natural that Israeli military strategists overlook this worst-case scenario or dismiss it as not serious.

Unfortunately, the analogy to the pre-1967 situation is irrelevant. First, Israel had at its disposal a weeks-long, tense waiting period which allowed for the complete mobilization of the reserves and their deployment along the Green Line in a manner which would have prevented an attack of that sort. Second, although in the Six Day War, as in the War of Independence, Jordan participated alongside Egypt, Syria and Iraq, its leaders did not aspire to the destruction of Israel or even diminishing its power. Without Israel's existence as a counterweight to the more powerful Arab nations, weak Jordan's fate would have been oblivion. Partial testimony to this is the fact that both in 1948 and 1967 the Jordanians did not attempt to attack or even to amass forces around Israel's vulnerable point in the coastal plain but concentrated the bulk of their efforts in an attempt to achieve limited ground gains in the Jerusalem district and Mount Hebron sector, which pose less of a problem in terms of their general influence on Israel's staying power.11

There are those who hold that a similar consideration might restrain Palestinian actions against Israel, if and when a similar situation develops. According to this interpretation, there exists within the rational Palestinian leadership a reluctance even to desire a decisive victory over Israel because of its fear that Egyptian and/or Syrian hegemony would undermine Palestinian independence after the destruction of Israel (as domineering Syria interferes with Lebanon's independence today). The advocates of this line of thought emphasize that the Palestinians, no less than the Israelis, are conscious of Egyptian claims to an historic ownership of Eilat and almost half the Negev, and Syria's historic claims to owning Haifa Bay and most of northern Israel. However, sweeping reliance on speculation regarding Palestinian judgment and intentions, could prove to be misguided, since Arab pressure on the weak Palestinian Authority could be massive, to the point of the latter's being unable to resist the dictates of the larger Arab nation, if and when a comprehensive Arab-Israel confrontation erupts.

IV. The Palestinian Forces
The primary factor which could make a surprise attack against the Israeli rear look tempting is the semi-trained forces of the Palestinian police. These units are organized in semi-military frameworks, which already number tens of thousands of troops (even before the inevitable establishment of a Palestinian state). Hypothesizing a comprehensive confrontation in which the Palestinians participate, a conservative estimate is that 10 percent of their armed, uniformed forces will be utilized to infiltrate Israeli territory beyond the Green Line, which translates into an invasion of 4,000 men.12 What might contribute to the success of this guerrilla attack is the total absence of any serious fence and obstacles and the access of these forces to their objectives (described below) through a labyrinthine network of roads and dirt paths well known to them.

In a word, it is incumbent on the Israeli defense apparatus to take into account the possible invasion of dozens or hundreds of small fighting forces, which could vary in size from squads to platoons; an
arbitrary division into platoons of 10-15 soldiers equals 200-400 units. Although it is reasonable to assume that some of the infiltrating forces would cross the Green Line on foot, most would probably employ pick-up trucks and hundreds of private cars, likely appropriated from the local population of the West Bank and Gaza. Today, the Palestinians are estimated to have some 30,000 automatic weapons, 0.3 mm. machine guns, grenades, LAW missiles, RPGs, land mines, explosives, dozens of jeeps and armored vehicles.\textsuperscript{13}

It should be remembered that while the IDF maintains a fortified line of defense on the northern border, while preparing the bulk of its forces for a conventional war of fronts in the north and the south against Syrian and Egyptian armies, the opening positions of the Palestinian "police" would be inside the country's center. One third of its forces are already deployed in the towns of Qalqilya, Tulkarem, Bethlehem, Ramallah and Jenin, viz on the outskirts of the coastal plain, in the suburbs of Jerusalem and on the boundary of the Jezreel Valley respectively. The remainder are deployed in the Gaza Strip and the three major non-border cities in Judea and Samaria, Nablus, Hebron and Jericho, who would need another 60 minutes (90-120 minutes on unpaved bypass roads) to reach their targets throughout Israel.

The Hamas organization must be considered as well. Hamas demonstrated its ability to dispatch, in the same week in the summer of 1997, two 2-3-man teams of suicide bombers. During a general confrontation, if Hamas receives the blessing and logistical support from the Palestinian Authority, it is liable to arm dozens of such human bombs with explosives, and on short notice, dispatch them to sensitive locations within Israel (television stations, recruitment centers, central intersections, hospitals, etc.).

The best-case, most palatable scenario for Israel is of the Palestinian force mobilized, in the event of general war, exclusively for defensive purposes, so that no real national security threat arises. This assumes that the Palestinians would mobilize their forces in order to waste them on a temporary, useless defense of the territories' cities, as the Jordanians did in 1967. But this assumption is no more than that, and does not render unreasonable the counter assumption that such forces would be deployed in a militarily correct and rational manner, that is, as a force which could be dispatched in order to disrupt the rear systems of the IDF and the state, in a variation of the strategy of the indirect approach.\textsuperscript{14}

V. Goals and Ramifications

Our assumption is that the rational goal of the Palestinian forces described above (with possible cooperation from mobile or airborne commando units from neighboring Arab countries to circumvent front lines) would be to neutralize and disrupt the activity of the military and civilian rear at its most vulnerable points, with the objective of bringing about the serial collapse of all vital systems. All this could be accomplished in a manner enabling the Arabs to avoid the dangers of attempting to achieve the same results via the use of non-conventional weapons.

It is also appropriate to emphasize that there can be no comparison between the effectiveness of ground attacks on the targets described below, versus the utility of attacking them with air-strikes, artillery shells and/or missiles armed with conventional weapons.\textsuperscript{15} Consider the RPG units, which numbered a few dozen young, untrained soldiers who operated in the hills and orchards along the Lebanese coastal highway during the Peace for Galilee War of 1982 and proved themselves much more effective in delaying traffic on that vital artery than batteries of cannon and Katyusha rockets (or, alternatively, than a number of conventional missiles) launched from a distance. If on the roads of Lebanon the effectiveness of mini-units against columns of tanks possessing significant firepower was proven, on the roads of the Sharon, Ramot-Menashe and the Lower Galilee, we are liable to find these same kinds of units taking potshots at columns of buses filled with unarmed reserve soldiers on their way to their bases and equipment depots.

Below are preliminary suggestions as to the type of rear targets the enemy might prefer in an aggression of this sort, schematically divided into
three categories: The organization of the reserves; air force bases and military headquarters; and vital targets in the civilian rear.

### A. Organization of the Reserves

As noted, a significant component of Israel's response to the difficulty stemming from its minuscule human and geographic dimensions has always been the reserve system consisting of tens of thousands of civilians who rapidly transform themselves into soldiers by equipping themselves at arsenals and weapons depots. However, as also suggested, there is a serious concern that the enormous masses of as yet unarmed, citizen-soldiers streaming through the streets on the war's first day would already be easy prey for any infantry force targeting them during the period preceding or during their mobilization. The potential damage to the Israeli reserve mechanism during an emergency mobilization is three-fold:

1. **The Reservists’ Weapons Depots:**
   The Palestinians might attempt to advance, within an hour or two of the outbreak of hostilities, to the arsenals where the mobilizing citizen-soldiers transform themselves into fighting units. In the present situation, an Israeli-Palestinian race to these centers might take place. The negative result could be the overrunning and destruction of these bases, whose day-to-day defense is very limited. The strategic significance is that the Palestinian Authority has a realistic potential of neutralizing a significant portion of the armored and infantry divisions of Israel’s reserve army (especially in the north), or to impede them even before they enter the fray.

2. **Arteries:**
   An attack on the primary arteries on which the reserve soldiers travel to the emergency equipment centers could be accomplished by forces of various sizes. Palestinian guerrilla units are liable to gain control of intersections or advantageous locations. Such units could cause dozens of deaths, traffic tie-ups and blockages on roads by employing a variety of measures: LAW and RPG launchers, machine guns, grenades, mines or simply the strewing of nails or the spraying of oil.

Sensitive areas are the coastal plain arteries such as the old Tel Aviv-Haifa road or newer Coastal Road (which are accessible by car from Qalqilya and Tulkarem in 10-15 minutes or an hour or two, on foot, through fields and orchards); the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway, the Trans-Carmel road and other passages in the valleys and the Galilee.

### 3. Assembly Points:

A concentrated attack is possible on the assembly and transportation points at which thousands of reservists gather during emergency mobilization, in a chaotic state, by small units which could reach the point of attack in private vehicles, or by Hamas suicide bombers. The mobilization centers in cities located near the Green Line (Jerusalem, Rosh Ha’Ayin, Kfar Sava, etc.) are especially vulnerable in this scenario.

In sum, the current situation presents the Palestinians and their allies with the ability to cause paralysis or at least major disruptions during the main call-up of the reserves during a surprise attack.

### B. Air Force Bases and Headquarters

1. **Air Force Bases:**
   As argued above, one pillar of Israel’s traditional defense concept against a lightning attack has been the flexible use of its air force to provide massive support to the quantitatively small forces fighting to halt the enemy’s armored columns until reinforced by the arrival of reserves. Therefore, we must not overlook the possibility that air force bases may be singled out by the strategists in Cairo and Damascus as the preferred objective of a Palestinian guerrilla attack at the outbreak of hostilities.

The fact that the Arabs have always failed to overcome the Israel Air Force through conventional measures, like bombing airfields, destroying Israeli warplanes in dogfights, or by surface-to-air missile systems,
makes an attempt to overcome the Air Force on the ground even more likely.

The vulnerability of Israel's military airfields to a Palestinian blitz is self-evident: The overwhelming majority of the airfields (with the exception of Ramon and Ovda) are already within a 20-40 kilometer range of the PA's territory; that is, from hostile paramilitary forces with access to the airfields via an intricate system of roads and dirt paths.

British SAS operations in World War II are testimony to the vulnerability of military airfields to such operations. Colonel David Starling's fighters, who functioned in teams of 3-48 soldiers, successfully destroyed 250 German warplanes parked on the tarmacs of a dozen military airfields located many kilometers behind Rommel's front lines in Africa.16 The operational pattern included penetration on foot or in jeeps and light trucks into the heart of the airfields to cripple the aircraft with light machine guns or by using the smallest of explosives.

Another possibility might be a small arms attack on aircraft taking off or landing, or fire from enemy personnel lying hidden in ambush in the foliage of orchards or crops in the fields outside an airfield's perimeter fences. Their weapons might include "Strela" and "Stinger" missiles, light mortars or anti-tank missiles. It goes without saying that the effectiveness of such harassment from outside the airfields would be considerably less than invading them, especially since, as far as is known, the quantities of weapons in Palestinian hands required for such attacks are limited. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the danger of anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles could suddenly emerge with the introduction of a significant number of them into PA territory by truck, ship or helicopter.

2. Headquarters:

All the above applies to vital installations like General Staff headquarters in Tel-Aviv, regional commands, intelligence bases, naval bases in Haifa and Ashdod, and the like.

C. The Civilian Rear

1. The Electronic Media:

Perhaps the most vulnerable, preferred targets among the civilian facilities. The obvious operational method would be the infiltration of armed units for the purpose of seizing the national television and radio stations while on air, taking hostages or, alternatively, executing suicide bombings in order to interrupt transmissions and cause further widespread demoralization.

2. Neighborhoods on the Green Line:

The most worthwhile civilian targets in terms of the damage to Israel's morale and staying power are urban neighborhoods "bordering on Palestine" in Kfar Sava, Rosh Ha'ayin, Modi'in, Jerusalem and little towns like Tzur Yigal, Kochav Yair, Re'ut, Katzir, etc. A genuine invasion into one of these neighborhoods by PA forces of platoon or squadron-size (20-80 soldiers) could cause panic and a massive flight of residents triggering a chain-reaction of flight in adjacent neighborhoods. Its goal would be: to exploit the common Israeli ownership of cars, to cause a mass flight of civilians leading to interminable traffic jams in the arteries meant to speed the reservists to their arsenals and bases.

It should be pointed out that at present, even before the completion of the withdrawal from the West Bank and the enhancement of Palestinian power which will come in its wake, the Palestinian police force has the capability of infiltrating some of the neighborhoods situated on the Green Line by walking briskly just a few minutes from their police stations. The standard response to this threat, that the IDF's attack helicopter force could provide defense for the border neighborhoods in an emergency, is unreasonable, for three reasons: 1. The short distance which the attackers must traverse; 2. The built-up, civilian nature of the areas. 3. The need for attack helicopters to halt the advance of the enemy's armed forces on the outer fronts.
At this point it is pertinent to warn against placing one’s trust in the widespread assessment that the dubious “privilege” of being targeted by the Palestinian police is reserved for the Jewish settlements in the “occupied territories”. This assessment is based on past experience (the operational pattern of the Palestinians in the Hasmonean tunnel incident of September 1996) and not on the ascription of any military logic to the planners on the other side. In order to clarify the issue, a very clear distinction must be made between two episodes: a) the tactics employed by the PA during a limited conflict b) the tactics which the PA might employ during a Syrian-Egyptian-Palestinian comprehensive war whose goal is to bring Israel to its knees. In the second case, the potential for similar assaults on towns and neighborhoods just inside the Green Line is no less reasonable for the following two reasons: 1) The probability of the Palestinian police achieving substantial gains in an invasion and occupation of the Jewish settlements is unclear, considering the preponderance of weapons in the hands of the settlers, the perimeter fences, the organized ground system, the platoons at the ready and the psychological preparedness of the settlers. 2) Even if local successes are achieved in taking control of a few Jewish settlements in the territories, it will not arouse nationwide panic and flight in thousands of cars as would a temporary takeover of a few urban neighborhoods or settlements located within the Green Line, like those mentioned above.

3. Technical Installations:
These are of regional or national importance, e.g. the Hadera power plant, Haifa’s oil refineries, the tank farms in Gelilot, and Bezek’s switchboards, transformers and distribution boxes. The desired effect would be power outages, huge blazes near Israel’s largest cities, temporary paralysis of vital telephone lines during the emergency, etc. Disrupting radio, television and telephone lines would also impact negatively on the speed at which reserve soldiers could be called up from their homes.

4. Public Figures and Government Buildings:
The Prime Minister’s office and/or residence, the President’s home, the Knesset, and the Supreme Court could easily be targeted by units which could approach these sites in innocent-looking, private vehicles.

Summary: Even if the PA cannot yet simultaneously attack and damage all of the potential targets listed above, it can attack dozens of them in a speedy operation. In other words, the planners on the other side (the heads of the PA, Egypt, Syria and their Chiefs of General Staff) are liable to calculate the benefits of a sudden, massive carrying out of the above steps during a comprehensive war. In such a case, comprehensive damage to the operational capability of the air force, the severe delay in the deployment of reinforcements, and the severe blow to morale could lead to the collapse of regular forces defending on the northern and southern fronts.17

VI. Apolitical Solutions and Responses
We have found that Israel’s unique geo-political situation encourages an attempt to overcome it with a combination of two components: 1) the light Palestinian forces inserted over the last few years into the heart of the country, a condition which will apparently worsen after the establishment of a Palestinian state. 2) The long-time existence of enormous armored “fists” at distances ranging from 70 (Syria) to 250 (Egypt) kilometers from the three urban centers, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa in which the majority of Israel’s population is located. This means that a significant one- or two-day systems failure — which could be produced by the light Palestinian forces that Israel tends to underestimate — would be sufficient to bring about the infiltration of enormous masses of armored and infantry forces into the heart of the Jewish population.

A sober solution to this post-Oslo military weakness-alignment requires Israeli society to transform itself into a community with defense and local warfare capabilities, which do not rely on the
mobilization, transport and relatively clumsy, slow deployment (24 hours) of any sort of armored forces. In other words, in certain respects, Israel must return to the status of an enlisted civilian society as it was in the state’s early decades.

Since such a change in society must include a radical change of hearts and minds, it seems well-nigh impossible. Years of numerous peace ceremonies have led Israelis to believe that the Oslo process means relief from the security burden and to its opposite. We therefore suggest two concrete steps as starting points, which over even a short period of time might lead to significant changes in minds and hearts.

First, Israel should create a sort of “reservists’ permanent response” to the Israeli rear’s Achilles’ heel, while taking into account the substantive issues concerning the diffusion of the threat and its velocity.

1) The danger is of penetration by light, mostly paramilitary forces whose activity is diffuse and fragmented by its nature (see the historical antecedents of broad guerrilla attacks by the Viet Cong, the French underground during the invasion of Normandy, etc.). In the words of B.H. Liddell-Hart, dispersal is the need for those battling against partisans, and there is no value to a concentrated force in a narrower sector against invasive forces. The chance of limiting them is largely dependent on the capability of spreading a thin, fine net along as broad an area as possible.18

2) Since we are not dealing with a long war waged continuously, but a sudden attack, there would be severe economic difficulty in providing a complete response by deploying the necessary scope of military and/or police forces on a permanent basis.

However, as opposed to the northern and southern borders, at which reserve forces have a period of 24 hours to get organized in order to defend them, while the standing army forces and air force are engaged in halting the enemy advance, the extreme proximity of Palestinian forces to their ultimate targets requires that the deployment of the main restraining force takes place with an advance warning of no more than an hour or two. Therefore, the solution for which we are searching must find expression in the establishment of small reserve teams, quick and agile, organized on a completely local basis.

Below are two preliminary suggestions:

Solution A:
Rapid Infantry Teams on the Kibbutz
The establishment of dozens of extremely flexible, lightly-armed, mobile patrol teams, each a platoon or larger in size, for immediate local intervention, drawn from reserve soldiers on the kibbutzim. Their bases would be the kibbutzim themselves, their vehicles the civilian pick-up trucks and jeeps belonging to the commune. These forces would train and prepare for action against light forces within 10-20 kilometers of their kibbutz home.

The teams on the kibbutzim in close proximity to the Green Line and the country’s borders could practice performing lookouts and blockades on the border in their sector. Teams on the other kibbutzim could provide an almost instantaneous solution to the problem of controlling rear sectors (by establishing lookouts and moving quickly in the field), as well as mobile protection of the arteries vital to the transportation of the reserves, around the arsenals, access roads to the airfields and the agricultural areas surrounding them, supply bases, power plants and other vulnerable points.19

Solution B:
Guard Militias Consisting of Veteran Soldiers
Discharging a significant number of infantry soldiers between the ages of 35 and 45 from their fighting units and their assignment, until their final discharge, to a type of light militia attached to the Civil Defense Unit in their place of residence, under the command of infantry officers in the same age group. The goal: Preliminary defense of their place of residence and the surrounding areas and of the IDF and civilian facilities nearby, against light Palestinian forces and other potentially hostile forces.20

In this way, the late Yigal Allon’s recommendation concerning a militia-like defense would be adopted and play a vital role in the protection and stabilization of areas stretching from the rear to the
approach of the border, by entrusting the task to infantry veterans, i.e. soldiers who find themselves in the throes of a long, damaging and pointless process of displacement from their combat units due to the fact that their physical conditioning is no longer adequate to the intensive exertion demanded of infantry soldiers at the front.\(^{21}\)

Three final points concerning the remedies proposed above: We are speaking of steps which would enable, first, significant minimizing of the advance of guerrilla and/or commando forces to the rear; second, stabilizing the rear and providing defense to vital locales, even after an attack of this sort meets with partial success. No less importantly, these goals can be achieved without compelling the IDF to engage in the problematic operation of removing part of the regular infantry and armored forces from the front lines to the rear to stop the advance of infiltrating forces. Such transfer, in addition to the severe demoralization which it usually causes, would mean the thinning of forces at the front during the most critical day or two of the enemy's attack.\(^{22}\)

**VII. The Double Wall of Themistocles**

Approximately 2,500 years ago, according to Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian Wars*, Themistocles succeeded in convincing the Athenians to transform their kingdom into a naval power.\(^{23}\) This enabled Athens to take advantage of its cultural-technological superiority over Persia and its economic-commercial superiority over Sparta. However, despite the fact that the state-of-the-art navy and naval superiority which the Athenians acquired provided them with the ability to defend their city by severing their enemies' supply lines, or by attacking undefended targets in the rear (in addition to their ability to acquire spheres of influence abroad), this superiority in no way protected them from a simple surprise ground attack from Sparta. In a word, their huge strategic advantage built by hard labor and with considerable budgetary investment was liable to be erased in one fell swoop. “If our country were an island, then we could stand against the whole world,” the Athenians said to themselves. However, since Athens was not an island, and in fact was even linked to Sparta by a very close land link, Themistocles decided that the Athenians had to defend their strategic advantage, that is, the advanced navy and the port facilities, by linking the port to the city with two parallel walls. These were designed to protect the components of Athens' strategic might and enable their utilization in order to overcome their enemies, even in the case of a surprise attack or a one-time ground failure. The concept which the “walls of Themistocles” expresses, therefore, is the idea that even the most impressive strategic-technological superiority may be fatally vulnerable to the lightest, most primitive forces. Hence the need exists to protect such superiority from “below”.

Like Athens, Israel enjoys strategic superiority over its neighbors, primarily in the realm of aeronautics and technology. Like Athens, Israel's strategic advantage developed, in large part, due to its educational-technological superiority and economic advantages over its Arab neighbors. With the outbreak of armed hostilities, these have enabled Israel to strike at its enemies' strategic and tactical rear in a manner which eventually leads to victory at the front. However, Israel may have its own "walls of Themistocles".

Truth be told, during the first two decades of its existence, from 1948 to 1967, Israel survived with no walls at all. Its existence depended on the "miracle" of unbelievable deficiencies in the strategic thinking of its enemies. In the three subsequent decades, running from the 1967 war through to the Oslo II agreement in 1995, the geographic expanses of Sinai, the Golan and the West Bank played the role of the double walls and in fact allowed Israel to survive the quite successful surprise attack which opened the 1973 Yom Kippur War. The attack was neither deep nor quick enough to take control of "Israel's Piraeus", that is, its airports, reserve bases and the like, before Israel's strategic superiority was brought to bear.

The trouble is that the 1995 deployment of light Palestinian forces throughout the West Bank has already "collapsed" Israel's eastern "wall" of mountains and the Jordan River since it has neutralized its most vital function, which, like Themistocles' walls, is not to defend against the armies of Iraq and Iran, who might join a battle after a week or so, but rather
to protect against a sudden lightning strike aimed at the Israeli rear. An attempt to maintain the wall, that is, the Jordan Valley and the eastern slope of Samaria, even after the Oslo agreements, is like closing the barn door after the horses have fled or, rather, after they have entered. Further deterioration is liable to occur with the anticipated establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the Gaza Strip and most of the West Bank.24

But since what is done is done — and there are those who say it is good that it has been done, for it ended the occupation and supplied Israel with significant advantages, both demographic and moral — it seems that Israel must quickly construct a new wall to replace the one that collapsed. This can be accomplished in two parallel ways: The first is an uncompromising insistence on a number of minimal security elements in the final agreement with the Palestinians; the second, even more important, whose general drift was described extensively above, is a fundamental reassessment of Israel’s regional defense policy.25

As to the ramifications of the new reality on the final status agreement, we will suffice with the comment that the analysis provided in Parts III-IV leads to two conclusions: a. Israel must rigorously prevent the Palestinian side from achieving further growth and from procuring additional arms, especially in the West Bank; b. Israel must firmly insist upon significant border modifications relative to the 1967 situation especially in northern and western Samaria, in order to maintain a minuscule security zone on the slopes adjacent to Gush Dan and the coastal plain in which the IDF should construct serious ground obstacles and establish units of light forces able to prevent, or at least delay, a swift guerrilla attack on the heart of the country — the very scenario described by Shimon Peres in his various books. It seems that the importance of these issues to the existential interest of Israel is immeasurably greater than the fate of the settlements in Gaza and the mountain ridges.

If we could consult that brilliant Athenian strategist Themistocles, he might respond that the current Israeli defense posture is simply absurd. On the one hand, the state invests billions of dollars in building a modern army possessing technical superiority, purchasing state-of-the-art warplanes and constructing modern airfields, equipping and training reserve battalions, and deploying Arrow missiles (an investment reminiscent of Athenian investments in advanced naval capabilities and port facilities). But, on the other hand, allows a situation in which these modern, expensive weapon systems are liable to be rendered irrelevant not by a conventional Arab army’s attack against them, but by light Palestinian forces armed with the most basic weapons and/or by commando forces from Syria and Egypt. If there is no need to prepare for the possibility of a comprehensive war, there is no point in maintaining a large fleet of warplanes and airfields, or need for expensive investments in training and equipping reserves. If there is a purpose in massive investments in the air force and the reserve forces, there is no sense in the widespread neglect of the country’s Achilles’ heel, a weakness which makes the neutralization of those very expensive systems plausible.

Yitzhak Rabin, of blessed memory, repeatedly spoke about taking risks for peace. It is incumbent upon all Israelis, right and left, to cease ignoring the unpleasant fact that the deployment of a light Palestinian force just a few kilometers from the center of the country brings with it a significant increase in the strategic dangers facing Israel in the event of another comprehensive Arab attempt on its life.26