Changing the Strategy to Combat Terrorism

Ron Ben-Yishai

After forty months of the violent conflict between Israel and the Palestinians the time has come for a renewed examination of the concept and strategy by which Israel conducts the struggle against Palestinian terrorism and guerilla warfare. This examination is necessary because the strategy of "foil and engrave into consciousness" has thrown us into a bloody dead end. It has not succeeded in stopping the violent Palestinian struggle, and we can say with a high level of certainty that it has also failed to create any long-term deterrence in Palestinian consciousness, such that could prevent similar outbreaks of violence in the future. Ironically, the facts on the ground that this strategy has created are the main obstacle to achieving its objectives.

The Current Strategy

The tactics and strategy used by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and the General Security Services (GSS), most designed to foil terror attacks and some intended to "exact a price" from the Palestinians, have created chaos in the territories. They have shattered the Palestinian Authority (PA) as a source of government and leadership, shredded its social and political fabric,

divided the area into small geographic units with limited movement between them, and forced the Palestinian public to be dependent on the welfare benefits of the *dawa* of Hamas and other extreme elements that receive funding from abroad. Perhaps worst of all, they have created an anarchical chaos in which local armed gangs, each with its own leader and political or criminal (or more likely both) agenda, force their will on the non-combatant population.

As a result, in spite of the suffering, the destruction, and the economic distress that more than three years of uprising have inflicted on the Palestinians, no leader has arisen who can challenge Arafat and his legacy, announce the end of the armed struggle, put an end to the attacks, and be prepared to turn over a new political leaf with Israel. Even if such a leader emerged, it is doubtful whether he could destroy the terrorism infrastructures as Israel demands and as the roadmap requires. In the current situation, where Palestinian society as well as PA leadership and security apparatuses are fragmented to the point of collapse, there is not one element or coalition that can bring

about a complete cessation of terrorism and strip the armed groups of their weapons and explosive belts. Thus even if we assume that Israel has succeeded in engraving into the consciousness of the Palestinian public the futility of a continued intifada, there is nobody in the Palestinian public at present who is able to translate this realization into actions on the ground.

On the Israeli side too, cracks are appearing in the impressive steadfast endurance that the Israeli public has demonstrated throughout the years of the intifada. Collective fortitude, boosted by reason and determination, has enabled Israel to combat terrorism without being gripped by panic. It derives from a widespread public feeling (including on the left) that we are waging a self-defensive "war of no choice," a war that is moral and just because we are using means and methods proportional to the threat. But recently the number of people who question this near-consensus has increased, and the confidence the public feels in the government and its leadership is rapidly eroding. Evidence of this is found in the multiplying complaints by reservists over the nature of the missions they

are compelled to perform in the territories, accusations made against the army by bereaved parents, the Ayalon-Nusseibeh proposal, the Geneva Accords, and public opinion polls on security that give the prime minister and the government poor performance ratings.

These symptoms reflect a sense among the public that the country is treading water, that the head of the government and his colleagues have no political plan to save us from the ongoing security and economic distress, and even worse, that the existing strategy is not significantly improving the personal and national security of Israeli citizens. This feeling is reinforced by the fact that there were more than fifty warnings of planned car bomb/suicide attacks in recent weeks. These alerts underscore that Israel has achieved the maximum possible results through clever use of high quality intelligence, military power and technology, severe restrictions on movement, and use of deterrent punishments.

This does not mean that the security forces have failed in their task. The numerous foiled attacks and the relative calm the country experiences at present prove that the opposite is true. The forces are succeeding well, beyond what has been achieved elsewhere in the world, in repulsing waves of terrorist attacks and suicide bombers. But the basic security situation has not changed. One "mega-attack" or several "standard" suicide attacks could thrust the country into an additional intensive round of fighting, a round that would be harsher than previous ones and could develop in unexpected directions, including hostilities on the northern front. But the more likely scenario, the one the army is talking about and preparing for, is to retake the Gaza Strip and establish military rule in the territories. As a result the Palestinian Authority would collapse completely and Israel would be forced to assume

> There is a sense among the public that the country is treading water, with the government having no political plan to save us from the ongoing security and economic distress.

responsibility for the welfare of the inhabitants. The light that these planners envision at the end of this dark tunnel is that the shock would give rise to a new Palestinian leadership with whom it would be possible to negotiate.

This drastic move, however, is destined to fail. First, Israel would have to invest billions that it doesn't have in the territories. Second, it is reasonable to assume that even in these conditions Israel would not be able to eradicate terrorism entirely. It failed to do so in the past when it had full control of the territories, and there is no reason to believe it would happen now. Similarly untenable is the hope that any leadership emerging in the territories would be able to deviate from the policies dictated by Arafat, particularly as the chaotic reality has only reinforced Arafat's standing as a national symbol and ruler. He is the only person who is able to control this situation, and no leader can veer from his policies. That is true now, but apparently it will also be true if and when Arafat is removed or dies a natural death.

Israel's political leaders, on the left and the right, have already reached the conclusion that a change of direction is needed, but instead of trying to draw up an alternative security strategy that could weaken terrorism, stop the anarchy in the territories, and rehabilitate the Palestinian governing system so that it may be possible to engage in political negotiations towards a permanent arrangement, those same leaders are looking for shortcuts in the form of unilateral action on the ground. The main advantage of such action is that it would pacify the public, which is fearful of the Palestinian "demographic bomb," wants a separation from the Palestinians, and longs for an end to the conflict. A further advantage is that execution of a unilateral move on the ground is relatively easy and there is no need to persuade the Palestinians to agree. The main disadvantage is that a unilateral Israeli move would be interpreted by the Palestinians as a surrender to violence, and in the absence of an agreement they would claim legitimacy for further rounds of

violence. It would also shatter the remaining power of the PA, preserve the chaos in the territories, and as a result, strengthen the armed groups, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad. A unilateral move would arouse strong international opposition, with Europe and the USA on the same side of the barricade.

Israel's political echelons are apparently aware of the limitations of any unilateral move, but they cling to this potential resort because it serves the long term political goals of the current government, which wants to annex considerable parts of Gaza and the West Bank, and because it offers a public that is desperate for change the semblance of a way out of the deadlock.

My argument is that it is possible to formulate a new security strategy that has a reasonable chance of suppressing terrorism and that will allow Israel to start negotiations with the Palestinians on a permanent status but not under fire. Such a strategy would also remove the need for any unilateral political moves such as dismantling settlements before signing a final agreement and making arbitrary decisions regarding a border that would not be recognized by anyone in the region or the world.

An Asymmetrical War

A precondition for the success of the new strategy is a resolution of the fundamental dilemma emerging from "the paradox of the asymmetrical war on terror." The paradox is that the military means and methods used to eradicate terrorism, applied in heavy doses and for long periods, usually achieve the opposite result. Military activity of all kinds and the suffering it causes reinforce the motivation of the non-combatant population to assist terrorism and to enlist in carrying out attacks. It is not only Israel that finds itself helpless against this paradox. The Americans in Iraq, the Russians in Chechnya, and the Spanish in the Basque region have also grappled with this problem.

> The military means used to eradicate terrorism, applied in heavy doses and for long periods, usually achieve the opposite result.

Statistical proof of this paradox in the territories can be found in the (generally reliable) polls conducted by Dr. Khalil Shikaki, Director of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research. In periods when Israeli military activity is not particularly intensive, over sixty percent of Palestinians support mass terrorism attacks against Israelis. When the fighting is at its height, Palestinian support for mass attacks rises to eighty percent and more. This means not only that terrorism enjoys broad support, but also that the more damage it causes, the greater the support for it. This is because the

military action and restrictions on movement are then also more intensive.

"The paradox of the asymmetrical war" derives from the fact that terrorism is not a military phenomenon but a civilian one at its core and in its manifestation. Terrorism harms civilians; terrorists and their helpers are for the most part civilians who set out on their missions from their homes and retreat to hiding places and refuges among the civilian population who support them; terrorists generally use primitive, improvised weapons, materials, and technologies, most of which are bought in the civilian market or made at home. Moreover, because terrorist organizations and gangs are not an army and do not function as an army, damage to its physical and human infrastructures has a limited, short-term effect. Among the civilian population there is always a bag of chemical fertilizer and steel pipe obtainable to make an explosive device or Qassam rocket, and there will always be motivated civilians to replace the commanders and activists who are eliminated. We should remember how many times and with what frequency the IDF has announced the liquidation of a Hamas commander in Hebron or Nablus. Yet this did not stop the organization in those same places from launching a suicide bombing within a few days or hours and declaring the deputy of the slain leader to be the new commander.

But it is even more important to recognize the fact that the engine driving terrorism is civilian. The

motivation that gives terrorism all the morale-boosting and material resources it needs is fueled mainly from civilian sources: national aspirations, religion, ideology, incitement, desperate economic and social conditions, personal suffering, desire for revenge, and personality disturbances. None of these can be dealt with by military means. Military activity also cannot cut off the financial pipeline to terrorists from their supporters abroad.

Some will argue that a determined fight against insurgency and the use of military punishments help to reduce the motivation of terrorists and to deter people from supporting them. This argument is correct but only to a limited extent. Nearly everyone who has ever been in a situation where his life and liberty were in danger knows that there is an abstract barrier beyond which fear loses its psychological effect in favor of other elements such as rage, self respect, shame, and social pressure. This is true at both personal and national levels, and that is why there has never been a case in world history where a democratic state, operating under the rule of law and according to international norms, has managed to eradicate a terrorist movement or popular guerilla warfare by the use of military force alone. Even few dictatorships have managed it. The repression by Syria in 1984 in Hama of the Muslim Brotherhood revolt – which in any case did not enjoy wide popular support – is the exception that underscores the rule.

Changing the Strategy

Therefore, in order to suppress terrorism the aim should be to separate and if possible create a sharp rift between the terrorism activists and the non-combatant civilian population that supports them. At the same time it is also necessary to chip away at the motives, both rational and emotional, that feed terrorism. When we translate this concept into practical

> The motivation that gives terrorism all the morale-boosting and material resources it needs is fueled mainly from civilian sources.

terms, we obtain a strategy that rests on four premises:

1. Creating a severe conflict of political and material interests between the terrorist groups and the non-combatant Palestinian population.
2. Changing the nature of military activity so that the fight against terrorism is targeted, mobile, and directed almost entirely by intelligence. This is to minimize the physical and mental collateral damage to the non-combatant population.
3. Reinforcing the anti-terrorism civil defense systems in Israel and the territories.

4. Eradicating the legitimacy that Palestinian public opinion accords terrorism.

Creating a Conflict of Interests

If there is one factor that can possibly force the terrorist groups to stop their actions, it is popular pressure on their leaders and militants. This, for example, is what is now happening in Lebanon. The civilian population, including the Shi'ite sector, is putting heavy pressure on Hizbollah not to reignite the active conflict with Israel or provoke Israel beyond a certain threshold that would lead to fierce retaliation. The reason is that Lebanese civilians of all ethnic groups have recently begun to enjoy a process of normalization and rehabilitation that gathered momentum after Israel withdrew from South Lebanon. Nasrallah is forced to give this pressure a central position among the considerations and constraints that govern the actions of his organization. Therefore Hizbollah is keeping its activity against Israel to the necessary minimum to ensure Iranian and Syrian support and justify its role as an armed organization on Lebanese soil.

Some will argue that it will be impossible to create a similar conflict of interests between the Palestinian population and the terrorist groups operating among them unless Israel withdraws completely from the territories captured in 1967, perhaps even to the borders of the 1947 partition plan. This argument ignores the bleak economic, social, psychological, and health conditions that

have developed in the territories during the more than three years of the intifada. This distress has created a situation where the Palestinian public is now crying out for change in the territories, and for a significant improvement to the fabric of their lives: not merely an "easing of restrictions" but tangible, sweeping, and immediate change in their quality of life and economic situation, and such that the Palestinians believe has a clear chance of continuing in the future. If such a change occurs, it is reasonable to suppose we would see the Palestinian public apply pressure on the terrorists.

In operative terms, proposed here is an intensive, comprehensive effort that can be dubbed a "normalization offensive" in the territories. This "offensive" is the backbone of the proposed strategy, and must include several types of action, implemented as a unit and with determined perseverance:

■ Massive investment in a range of rapid economic steps, some initiated and funded by Israel and most with international funding and supervision, to reduce unemployment, raise the income of inhabitants, and improve their quality of life through measures such as industrial parks on the "seam line" (where the territories meet the Israel border), electrical stations, construction and housing projects, industrialized agricultural projects, road building, development of water sources, and medical assistance to improve the public health situation. From the outset this mini "Marshall Plan" would be

carried out under any conditions, as an organic whole and with the broadest possible scope. The money for its execution would primarily be raised in the international arena and the investments in the field would be made directly by the international aid organizations, with the help of what remains of the Palestinian Authority mechanisms. It is reasonable to assume that the larger and faster the investment succeeds in raising

> Proposed here is an intensive, comprehensive effort that can be dubbed a "normalization offensive" in the territories.

employment levels and incomes in the territories, the greater the number of people leaving the circle of violence.

■ Near complete removal of restrictions on movement in the territories and dismantling of the majority of roadblocks. The few remaining permanent roadblocks at critical points would be rebuilt on the basis of experience to make them more efficient and less oppressive for those who pass through them. There will be a clear division of labor between checkers and guards. The number of checkers, who should be civilians with special training, would increase. There should also be

unequivocal instructions to avoid any humiliation or unnecessary harassment of the people passing through. In addition, on roads prone to attacks, there would be a fair division of time slots allotted to Palestinian traffic and Israeli traffic.

■ Release of Palestinian prisoners and detainees from Israeli jails, but not as one-time gestures, each time involving the simultaneous release of hundreds of security prisoners, as has been the case until now. These gestures make a brief impression and have hardly any effect on the level of violence. Rather, prisoners should be released as part of an ongoing individualized process where a kind of "release committee" reviews each case. The committee would also include representatives of the Palestinian Authority, and thus Israel would contribute to reinforcing the PA and creating shared interests. The requirements for releasing a prisoner could include, for example, an end to terrorist activities by his organization or the armed group he belongs to in his home neighborhood. Other criteria of this type could be adopted, with the same purpose: creating a positive incentive to stop attacks. If during the release process a fatal terrorist attack occurs, the process would stop completely for a fixed period. Even once the process is renewed, discussion of the cases of Palestinian prisoners from the area where the attack originated would be suspended. This is to be the only step towards improving the situation of the Palestinian population that is conditional on an end to attacks.

■ The IDF must leave the Palestinian towns and villages, lift the permanent closures, and remove the fences around Palestinian towns and villages adjacent to the Green Line.

■ No Israeli settlements will be dismantled, to prevent Palestinian violence claiming any achievement. But the IDF will enforce an absolute cessation of settler activity outside the limits of their settlements, activities designed to seize extra land, carry out revenge attacks, and damage Palestinian sources of income. In addition, all the inhabited and uninhabited outposts set up in the last two years will be dismantled. This act will signal to the Palestinians that Israel is serious about its intention to negotiate.

■ Indirect Israeli assistance to rehabilitate the status and prestige of the Palestinian Authority, con-comitant with a slow but steady undermining of Arafat's power. It is entirely preferable that the political power that Israel deals with be the Palestinian Authority, built on the security and political support of the Fatah, rather than the Islamic organizations or the local armed groups. Therefore, steps taken to implement the "offensive" must be only with PA representatives, excluding Arafat. Senior Israeli officials must avoid public remarks that damage the honor and authority of Palestinian leaders and stop threatening Arafat, which only strengthens his position.

■ Financial strangulation of the terrorism infrastructure and the *dawa* system in order to weaken the influence of Hamas and Islamic Jihad and strengthen the PA. Without financing and contributions from abroad, the *dawa* will weaken and the armed groups will be hard pressed to recruit militants and means for attacks. The Mossad, the GSS, and the Israeli police must therefore operate special units to identify and intercept financing from abroad. New legislation must be passed in the

> Terrorism's success emerges from the fact that terrorism imposes an asymmetrical war on the powerful army that confronts it.

Knesset and there must be strong cooperation with international organizations in the war on terror. At the same time, the Foreign Ministry would conduct a diplomatic campaign in Western countries to make Hamas and Islamic Jihad illegal organizations and to subvert their fundraising efforts through various Islamic funds and foundations. With the example and drive of the post-September 11 United States, the international scene is ripe for this cooperation.

Within the IDF General Staff there are several generals, including Chief-of-Staff Moshe Ya'alon, who support the approach underlying the "normalization offensive" just proposed. However, when they sought to ease the pressure on the Palestinians during the *hudna* of June-July 2003, Minister of Defense Shaul Mofaz allowed only a meager ration of relief that prevented any real cumulative effect. The respite ended because the *hudna* was a hostage both to terrorism and to a policy of targeted killings. Implementation of the truce stopped automatically as soon as there was an attack or when a targeted killing led to increased motivation to execute terrorist acts and intelligence alerts consequently increased. Thus, a change in the operative methods of the IDF is likewise needed.

Targeted Combat to Reduce Collateral Damage

Terrorism's successes, which are more cognitive than actual, emerge from the fact that terrorism imposes an asymmetrical war on the powerful army that confronts it. Activating the massive force available to the army within a civilian population leads to casualties among innocent bystanders and heightens the motivation of the non-combatant population to support terrorist activity. It also allows the Palestinians to earn cumulative propaganda credit, both in the Palestinian street and in world opinion.

To break this cycle, Israel must transform the asymmetrical war into a symmetrical one. Large scope military campaigns and a permanent IDF presence in Palestinian towns would be replaced by localized

operations tailored to each component of the threat:

■ Intelligence-guided, localized foiling of attacks, with the declared intention of avoiding collateral damage.

■ Containment, checks, and interception on the seam line based on a system of barriers (the security fence), sensors, and mobile interception forces in the air and on the ground.

■ Preemptive activity on and alongside main traffic arteries in the territories.

Therefore, there must be a complete cessation of long term closures of Palestinian towns, which imprison their inhabitants inside the isolated areas. This draconian measure, which arouses frustration, hatred, and anger among the non-combatant Palestinians, in any case fails to stop highly motivated terrorists. The foiled suicide attack in Rosh Ha'ayin this past December showed that the prospective attackers (including a mother of seven children who was wearing the explosive belt) had no trouble leaving Nablus under closure. What stopped the terrorists was a massive operation of police forces within the Green Line.

The closures and the ongoing IDF presence in the Palestinian towns do provide many benefits in terms of collecting information, preventing preparations for attacks, and impeding attackers. However, the GSS now has sufficient human resources, technological means for collecting intelligence, and operational methods that enable it to gather

good intelligence even without a permanent military presence in the towns. Its successes in the Gaza Strip, along with the security fence there, prove this. If a particular town is the point of origin for numerous attackers and would-be attackers, it is also possible to step in and impose a localized closure, but for a limited period, two or three weeks at most. This is approximately the time required by local terror activists to

> There should be a compllete halt to collective punishments, for example, the razing of orchards and house demolitions, which fuel Palestinian hostility.

adjust to the military presence and develop exit routes and operational methods to bypass the IDF.

The dozens of permanent roadblocks still in place in the West Bank and the severance of main traffic routes in the Gaza Strip are other sweeping methods used by the IDF that intensify civilian support for the terrorist organizations and world condemnation of Israel. Therefore they should be discarded and exchanged for a few permanent roadblocks at critical points, and a greater mobile array of patrols, ambushes, and surprise roadblocks to prevent terrorism on the traffic

arteries in the territories. The permanent roadblocks should be rebuilt and manned in a way that eases and speeds up the safe passage of Palestinian people and goods through them.

There should be a complete halt to collective punishments, for example, the razing of vegetation and orchards and house demolitions. Experience shows that these means have lost the deterrent effect they had at the start of the intifada, in part because the owners of damaged property receive quick and generous compensation from abroad. At present these methods act like a boomerang, fostering hostile Palestinian motivation and rousing world opinion against Israel.

The GSS and IDF would carry out targeted preventive strikes of all kinds using high quality intelligence, highly skilled units, and advanced military technology. This activity should be kept to a minimum, solely for the purpose of arresting attackers and their dispatchers or harming them physically, and only when the security establishment possesses reliable information.

Until now there have been many cases where the impetus for launching a targeted killing strike was not the prevention of a specific imminent attack, but rather the emergence of an intelligence and operational opportunity to liquidate a terror activist or an individual wanted by the GSS. When the "normalization offensive" is activated, the operational consideration and the "open fire" instructions will have to be subordinate to the general strategic

consideration, which requires restraint. For the same reason targeted prevention must be abandoned if it is likely to injure any surrounding non-combatant Palestinians. An exception to this rule is the case of a focused and reliable warning of a mass attack, where the only way of foiling it is by targeted prevention. Even here all steps must be taken to prevent or minimize any collateral injuries. Handing over towns to the control of the Palestinian Authority and a complete, official cessation of "targeted prevention" would only be discussed during the second stage of the plan, if and when there is someone on the Palestinian side who is able to take responsibility for security and the rehabilitation process.

Reinforcing Civilian Defenses against Terror

Many terror attacks were prevented by the presence of security guards or even alert ordinary citizens in the target zone. Armored vehicles have saved the lives of hundreds who could have been killed in attacks that did take place. Even the security fence has already proven itself and prevented attacks. The localized failed attacks join to create an effect of deterrence. Experience has proven that a terrorist will hesitate to attack if he apprehends that he will not be able to achieve his desired casualty effect.

The "passive deterrence" that is proposed here is no less efficacious than deterrence achieved through offensive action, as it sabotages the motivation of terrorists and multiplies

the efforts required for the attack. Therefore, the Israeli government, with American assistance, must significantly increase the funds and human resources invested in civil defense measures in Israel and the territories, including stationing more security guards, developing explosives-detecting sensors, armoring vehicles, and upgrading defensive measures in the settlements (e.g.,

> Passive deterrence is no less efficacious than deterrence achieved through offensive action, as it sabotages the motivation of terrorists.

electronic fences, concrete roofs). Central to the means for self-defense and protection is a national security fence that will prevent infiltration by armed attackers and car bombs from the West Bank into Israel. The demarcation of the fence should be determined by security considerations alone. The fence currently under construction along the route determined by the government is not a security fence but a political annexation fence. Its construction along the present route, the lack of well-organized crossing points, and in particular the enclosures it creates around Palestinian towns and villages

reinforce Palestinian motivation to take revenge on Israel in the form of deadly attacks on civilians. This demarcation is difficult to defend and requires twice the number of military units and early warning systems. This route also arouses American opposition that no doubt will intensify, and isolates Israel in the international arena. Thus, the fence that the government has approved harms the long-term security of the citizens of Israel more than it protects them at present.

Eroding Popular Legitimacy of Terrorism

The cultivation of domestic public opinion that is hostile to the aims and leaders of the terrorists is, for example, what happened in early 1996 after the large wave of attacks initiated by Hamas (in response to the killing of "the Engineer," suicide bombing mastermind Yihye Ayash). After suffering a severe reprimand from President Clinton, Arafat not only ordered the arrest of central activists in the organization and replacement of preachers in the mosques; he also made sure that the Palestinian street knew that Hamas was operating on behalf of and with funding from the Iranians in order to create chaos in the territories. Arafat and his spokesmen explained that the chaos intended to block the establishment of a modern, secular Palestinian state led by the PLO à la the Oslo Accords, and instead establish an Islamic Palestinian state that would be an Iranian satellite. This propaganda and the accompanying

means were so effective that Hamas was forced to yield to the pressure of the Palestinian street and stop the attacks immediately, renewing them only a year later when Arafat winked at Hamas leaders and gave them the green light (followed by the Apropos café attack in March 1997).

Israel does not have the same influence over the territories' inhabitants that Arafat has. But Israel would be able to wield its influence, at least as much as Egypt and Jordan, were it able to use constructively the reality of daily contact with the Palestinians, and the fact that many of us speak their language and are familiar with their religion and culture, in order to influence their attitudes. The willingness of Arab satellite television networks to broadcast interviews with Israeli figures would also contribute here. Thus, Israel must create a propaganda/public relations program that will convey its messages through every available medium, including special radio and television stations, to address Palestinians directly and attempt to alter Palestinian public opinion.

Conclusion

For this new strategy to operate properly and produce results, three basic conditions must be met. First, the political echelon must be fully coordinated with the security forces. It is imperative that the political leaders emphasize to the field commanders that the change in military strategy must take place alongside and with the same determination as the civilian normalization. This message must also be conveyed to each and every soldier.

The second condition is that the moves towards normalization must not be hostage to terrorism. It is essential not to allow any random terror attack to stop the process before it manages to bear fruit. This requirement is particularly difficult

> The change in military strategy must take place alongside and with the same determination as the civilian normalization.

for political leaders in Israel who may pay a heavy political price if the public, enraged after a murderous attack, is not appeased with a "suitable response." The best way of overcoming this difficulty is through preemptive explanation. Even before the new strategy is put into operation, the leaders must explain its objectives and rationale to the Israeli civilian population. They must also clarify the long-term damage caused by exaggerated punitive responses that lack any preventive value and serve only to give the furious Israeli public instant gratification. Instead of suppressing terrorism, they only

increase the motivation for attacks. The Israeli public, which has gained a great deal of experience during the difficult years of the intifada, is now largely ready to accept these messages. In this context it is worth recalling that Israeli public opinion swallowed the humiliating retreat from Lebanon apparently because Barak announced his intention well in advance and created a hope that the withdrawal from Lebanon would bring quiet to the northern border. At the same time, it is also clear that the new security strategy cannot be activated at a time of attack upon attack. The best time to introduce it would be when there is a relative but clear decline in the number of attacks and alerts over several weeks.

The third condition is that the strategy must be implemented without making it contingent on a reform in the Palestinian leadership and dismantling of terrorist infrastructures. The PA, even if it wished to, is unable, at least for now, to meet these demands. That is precisely why Israel needs a strategy that will bring about a de facto but stable ceasefire, through pressure on the terrorist organizations by the Palestinian street, by the existing Palestinian leadership, and by Arab countries.

Once the number of terrorist attacks and warnings decreases to a much lower level than at present, then it will be time for the leaders of the two peoples, with American and international assistance, to start negotiations towards a permanent status agreement.