

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

OCTOBER 1976



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Volume 55 • Number I

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ISRAEL: THE CASE FOR DEFENSIBLE BORDERS

By Yigal Allon



IT is impossible to plumb the depths of the Arab-Israeli conflict, not to speak of formulating proposals for its solution, if no true understanding exists of the full significance of its cardinal characteristic—the extreme asymmetry of its two sides. This asymmetry is manifest not merely in one or two, but in all, of its aspects. It is obvious in such objective data as the comparison between Arab and Israeli territories (of the Arab League states 8,500,000 square miles; of Israel, including presently administered areas, about 28,500); or of the relative population statistics (of the Arab League states 134,000,000; of Israel 3,500,000 citizens); not to mention their contrasting actual and potential wealth.

But of primary importance are the subjective asymmetric factors affecting relations between the two sides. In this respect, there is absolute polarization. Whereas the Arab states seek to isolate, strangle and erase Israel from the world's map, Israel's aim is simply to live in peace and good relations with all its neighbors.

These diverse objectives have determined the war aims of both sides. It is within this context that we should mention the chain of terrorist acts that was designed not merely to sow death and destruction in Israel but also to extend the conflict, and thus embroil the Arab states in full-scale wars. It is almost superfluous, and certainly tiresome, to quote the legion of statements of Arab leaders that represent this aim, ranging from the "Palestine Covenant" to current governmental declarations.

As opposed to this total Arab goal, Israel's war aims have been confined to repelling the offensives of the Arab armies as determined by strategic and political circumstances, whether by reactive counter-offensives such as those of 1948 and 1973 or by preemptive counter-offensives as those of 1956 and 1967. Military defeats, indeed, cost the Arab states losses in lives, destruction of equipment, political setbacks,

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and damage to national prestige—and perhaps even danger to their regimes. However, such defeats have never been, nor ever will be, a threat to their very existence as sovereign states or to the lives of their civilian populations. In contrast, a military defeat of Israel would mean the physical extinction of a large part of its population and the political elimination of the Jewish state. In highly realistic and clear terms, therefore, the Arab states can permit themselves a series of military defeats while Israel cannot afford to lose a single war. Nor does this reflect a historical trauma in any sense. To lose a single war is to lose everything, and this is a most real and stark fact.

As a consequence, as long as the Arab-Israeli conflict is not fully resolved, Israel must exploit to the utmost its military potential in all of its components and on a level that serves two objectives—to deter its enemies from waging war and, failing this, to be sufficient to repel the attackers and defeat them with the least cost in casualties for Israel. In essence, that Israel today still exists is due only to its success in maintaining such defensive strength. Without it, Israel would never have seen the light of day or would already have been eliminated in the first years of its existence. Such were the Arab intentions, and it was fortunate that the Arab states had not the strength to realize them.

Certainly not all the Arab states are cut from the same cloth; nor are their approaches to Israel identical. In the Arab camp there are more extreme elements that openly express their intention of destroying Israel. And there are other elements and people in the Arab world who, in the last two or three years, have expressed themselves toward Israel in less aggressive, and more realistic, terms than in the none too distant past, particularly when their declarations have been directed to the world at large. All things considered, it is in strengthening these latter elements to the extent that they become decisive in the Arab world that the best chance lies to achieve compromise and reconciliation between Israel and the Arab states—in short, to achieve a full settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In the meantime that day, whenever it comes, is still far distant. The antagonisms toward Israel, the desire to see its disappearance, are deeply rooted in the Arab world, and these are fed by the authorities, not merely in speeches and articles but also in school textbooks. In fact the subject of Israel is the only one that unites the Arab states today, for they are deeply riven by splits and conflicts. The elements of realism and peace are represented by a small minority of voices in the discordant Arab chorus against Israel. And even these voices are inhibited by negative preconditions.

It was primarily in order to encourage and strengthen these voices and to convert them into a process with momentum that Israel—with all the considered and inherent dangers—entered into the two Disengagement Agreements with Egypt and Syria in 1974, and the subsequent Interim Agreement with Egypt in September 1975. Because these agreements are double-edged, they may not only be a milestone on the road to a settlement and peace, but also part of a strategy designed to push Israel to the brink, to weaken it in stages, in preparation for the steps to erase it from the map. Israel hopes that the positive side of these agreements will be the valid one, but cannot ignore the possibility of the negative.

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The polarized asymmetry between the size and intentions of the Arab states and those of Israel, and the extreme contrast in the anticipated fate of each side in the event of military defeat, obliges Israel to maintain constantly that measure of strength enabling it to defend itself in every regional conflict and against any regional combination of strength confronting it, without the help of any foreign army. To our deep regret, this is the first imperative facing us, the imperative to survive. And I would venture to say every other state in our place would behave exactly as we do.

There are, of course, many elements constituting the essential strength that Israel must maintain, ranging from its social, scientific and economic standards, as well as its idealistic motivation, to the quality and quantity of its armaments. A discussion of all of these elements is not within the compass of this article; my concern here is with one of them—but one essential to them all and without which Israel might well lack the strength to defend itself. I am referring to the territorial element; to what can be defined as defensible borders that Israel must establish in any settlement, as an essential part of any effective mutual security arrangements and without any desire for territorial expansion *per se*.

The most cursory glance at the map is sufficient to ascertain how little the armistice lines of 1949—lines which were never in the first place recognized as final—could be considered defensible borders. And even the most superficial fingering of the pages of history should be enough to demonstrate how attractive these lines have been to the Arab states as an encouragement to try their strength again against us. The truth of the matter is that Resolution 242 of the United Nations Security Council has already recognized, in its original English text, the need to provide Israel with secure and recognized boundaries

—in other words, that changes must be introduced in the old lines of the armistice agreements.

It is no coincidence that this resolution does not speak about Israel's withdrawal from *all* the territories that came under its control in the war that was forced upon Israel in June 1967, nor even from *the* territories. In the original text (which was the outcome of long and exhaustive negotiation), Resolution 242 speaks only of withdrawal from territories. That the meaning was clear was demonstrated by the statement of the United States at the time, made by its U.N. Ambassador Arthur Goldberg on November 15, 1967, in the Security Council discussions that preceded the passage of Resolution 242. He stated: "Historically, there never have been secure or recognized boundaries in the area. Neither the Armistice Lines of 1949, nor the Cease-Fire Lines of 1967, have answered that description."

As is known, Israel expressed more than once its willingness to withdraw from the cease-fire lines of 1967, within the framework of a peace agreement. On the other hand, it is clear—even according to the Security Council decision—that Israel is not obliged to withdraw to the armistice lines of 1949 that preceded the 1967 war, but to revised lines. The question is what borders will provide Israel with that essential minimum of security? And without such security it is difficult to expect to pacify the area and provide a lasting solution to the conflict within it.

If the sole consideration were the purely strategic-military one, then possibly the most convenient security borders would have been those Israel maintained following the Six-Day War, or perhaps those which it maintains today. There is even a basis for the claim that the 1973 Yom Kippur War—begun as a surprise attack in concert by the armies of Egypt and Syria—proves that these lines were ideally the best. Had the Yom Kippur War commenced on the 1949 armistice lines, for example, there can be little doubt that the price Israel would have had to pay in repelling the aggressors would have been unimaginably higher than that paid so painfully in October 1973. But we are not merely talking about purely military-strategic matters, to the extent that they ever exist in isolation. Nor are we discussing the maximum security that borderlines can provide Israel. As stated, our preoccupation is only with the essential minimum.

One does not have to be a military expert to easily identify the critical defects of the armistice lines that existed until June 4, 1967. A considerable part of these lines is without any topographical security value; and, of no less importance, the lines fail to provide Israel with the essential minimum of strategic depth. The gravest problem is

on the eastern boundary, where the entire width of the coastal plain varies between 10 and 15 miles, where the main centers of Israel's population, including Tel Aviv and its suburbs, are situated, and where the situation of Jerusalem is especially perilous. Within these lines a single successful first strike by the Arab armies would be sufficient to dissect Israel at more than one point, to sever its essential living arteries, and to confront it with dangers that no other state would be prepared to face. The purpose of defensible borders is thus to correct this weakness, to provide Israel with the requisite minimal strategic depth, as well as lines which have topographical strategic significance.

Of course I do not wish to overlook the fact that there are some who would claim that in an era of modern technological development such factors are valueless. In a nutshell, their claim is that the appearance of ground-to-ground missiles, supersonic fighter-bombers, and other sophisticated instruments of modern warfare has canceled out the importance of strategic depth and topographical barriers. Personally, I do not know of a single state which is willing and ready to give up a convenient borderline for this reason. At any rate, this argument is certainly invalid regarding Israel, and within the context of the Middle East conflict, where the opposite is true. Precisely because of dramatic developments in conventional weaponry the significance of territorial barriers and strategic depth has increased.

With all the heavy damage that warheads and bombs can inflict, they alone cannot be decisive in war, as long as the other side is resolved to fight back. Recent military history demonstrates this only too clearly. The German air "blitz" did not knock England out of World War II, nor did the heavy allied air bombardments bring Germany to its knees. This happened only when the last bunker in Berlin fell. Even the massive American air bombardments did not defeat North Vietnam which, in the final analysis, proved to be the victor in the war. At least as far as conventional wars are concerned, the following basic truth remains: without an attack by ground forces that physically overrun the country involved, no war can be decisive. This is all the more so in the Middle East where the Arab side is no less vulnerable to rocket and aerial bombardment than Israel, a factor that can greatly minimize the use of this kind of weaponry, and will leave to the ground forces the role of really deciding the issue.

Since decisive attack still depends on the land forces, the innovations and sophistication in weaponry and organization of ground forces that have taken place, therefore, not only fail to weaken the

value of strategic depth and natural barriers but in fact enhance their importance. This is even more true given Israel's difficult geographic position. Moreover, masses of swift and modern armor, mechanized infantry, self-propelled artillery, modern engineering corps, marine and airborne commando units—when assisted by tactical airpower—provide ground forces with immense firepower, great mobility, and hence increased breakthrough potential. Since the Arab armies are busily equipping themselves with all of these means to a degree that Israel cannot match, the importance of strategic depth becomes still more apparent.

The danger threatening Israel, therefore, is that such reinforcement of the Arab ground troops with modern weaponry may well tempt the Arab states to act so swiftly on the ground that it will be difficult for Israel to inhibit their forces in the first stage, or to regain territory in a counterattack. In other words, the Arab states may be tempted to hit Israel with a first strike, preventing the latter from hitting back effectively. With such lines as those existing prior to the 1967 war, this would be a concrete and intolerable threat.

Another argument presented to counter Israel's claim to defensible borders is that Israel should be satisfied with guaranties from a single power or a number of powers to ensure its existence. Without detracting from the value of such guaranties, I would not suggest that any country make its very existence dependent upon guaranties of any kind in this changing world. If the reference is to diplomatic guaranties only, these are devoid of any real deterrent value; they are lacking in teeth. And should Israel's enemies be tempted to attack it anew, such guaranties would be of little value in their considerations. Military guaranties, however, can be of some value, but to rely exclusively upon them would be a critical error. Not only might the effectiveness of such a military guaranty prove to be short-lived, but the guaranty itself might hand over almost totally to the guarantor the recipient's power of independent action.

There is scarcely the need to recall the fate of Czechoslovakia after Munich; it is only too easy to draw up a long list of situations in which differences can evolve between the guarantor and the recipient that, in effect, would cancel out the guaranty's inherent value—even such elementary situations as disagreements over evaluation of intelligence information or changes in public opinion within the guarantor state or the position of its government at that time. Were Israel, therefore, to rely on outside guaranties, rather than to maintain a complete ability to defend itself, it would become almost totally dependent upon the guarantor. In effect, it would pass the

most critical decisions concerning its fate into the hands of foreigners who, even as the most loyal friends, would always be foreigners, and who, in the last analysis, could be expected to act in accordance with their own changing interests and concerns.

In such a situation, Israel might well be perceived as a burden rather than an asset to those seeking stability and a settlement in the Middle East. While credible military guaranties or pacts can fulfill a positive function in a settlement of the Middle East conflict—and I do not underestimate this function when, and if, the time comes—it will have to be a supplementary function to Israel's own strength, to its defensible borders, and in no way a substitute for them!

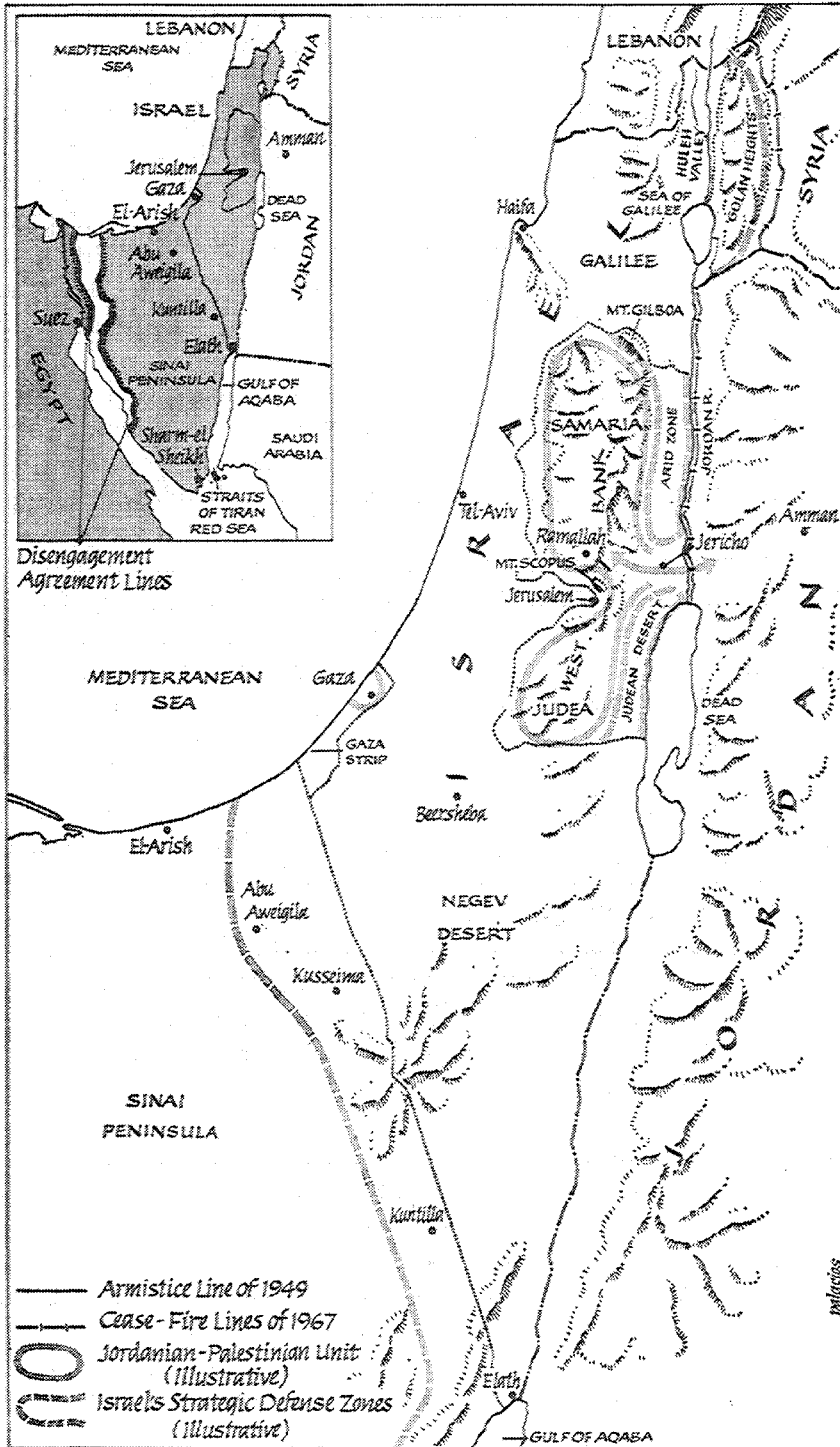
III

Fortunately, the geostrategic conditions that have existed in the Middle East over the past nine years permit a solution based upon a fair political compromise. This could provide Israel with the minimal defensible borders that are indispensable without impairing, to any meaningful extent, the basic interests of the other side, including those of the Palestinian community. As with every other compromise, so, too, is this one likely to be painful in the short term to both sides. But this compromise will, in the long run, grant advantages that both sides do not currently possess nor, without it, ever would in the future.

According to the compromise formula I personally advocate, Israel—within the context of a peace settlement—would give up the large majority of the areas which fell into its hands in the 1967 war. Israel would do so not because of any lack of historical affinity between the Jewish people and many of these areas. With regard to Judea and Samaria, for example, historical Jewish affinity is as great as that for the coastal plain or Galilee. Nonetheless, in order to attain a no less historically exalted goal, namely that of peace, such a deliberate territorial compromise can be made.

For its part, the Arab side would have to concede its claim to those strategic security zones which, together with a number of effective arrangements to be discussed below, will provide Israel with that vital element so lacking in the pre-1967 war lines: a defense posture which would enable the small standing army units of Israel's defense force to hold back the invading Arab armies until most of the country's reserve citizens army could be mobilized. These security zones would thus guarantee enough time to organize and launch the counteroffensive needed to defeat any such aggression.

As can be observed from the accompanying map, the armistice lines of 1949 ("the green line") extend along the foothills of the



Judean and Samarian mountains and along the Mediterranean coastal plain—that is, flat territory without any topographical barriers. This leaves central Israel with a narrow area that comprises the Achilles heel of the lines prior to June 4, 1967. It serves as a constant temptation to a hostile army in possession of hilly Judea and Samaria to attempt to inflict a fatal blow against Israel by severing it in two in one fell swoop. Moreover, this weakness would permit such an army not only to strike at Israel's densest population and industrial centers, but also in effect to paralyze almost all of Israel's airspace with surface-to-air missiles with which the Arab armies are so abundantly equipped.

According to the 1949 lines, Jerusalem was pierced through its heart—the university and the principal hospital on Mount Scopus were cut off, while access from the coastal plain to Jerusalem was restricted to a narrow corridor, threatened on both sides by a pincer attack.

In the northeastern sector, the 1949 line left Syria on the dominating Golan Heights, controlling the Huleh Valley and the Galilee Basin at their foothills, and including the sources of the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee from which Israel draws a vital part of its water supply. Moreover, after 1949 Syria not only repeatedly shelled the Israeli villages located at the Golan foothills but also attempted to divert the sources of the Jordan and thereby deprive Israel of a vital source of water. Even more important, the Golan Heights served in past wars as the most convenient base for the Syrian army to make swift and major attacks upon Galilee, ultimately aimed at the conquest of the entire northern part of our country.

According to the 1949 armistice agreements, signed by Israel in the naïve belief that they would lead swiftly to peace, Egypt was given control of the Gaza Strip. This was a dangerous and needless anomaly. Bordering the unpopulated Sinai desert and without any affinity to Egypt proper, this zone came to serve as a base for large-scale terrorist raids launched at southern Israel. Should the strip be returned to Egyptian control it might easily resume its destructive function. Even worse, it might serve Egypt as a bridgehead for an offensive northward and eastward toward the very heart of Israel, following the historic invasion route from south to north. Another serious defect in the armistice agreements was that it left Israel's southern port entrance at Elath on a tiny strip of shoreline only six miles long from its border with Egypt to that of Jordan. Moreover, Israel's maritime route to the Red Sea and Indian Ocean passes through the Straits of Tiran at Sharm-el-Sheikh, and the Egyptian

blockade there against Israeli ships and cargoes constituted a *casus belli* in both 1956 and 1967.

A reasonable compromise solution can be found for all these weaknesses in the current geostrategic and demographic situation existing in the Middle East. Without going into details or drawing precise maps, an activity that must await direct negotiations between the parties themselves, in my opinion the solution in principle ought to be along the following general lines.

Both to preserve its Jewish character and to contribute toward a solution of the Palestinian issue, Israel should not annex an additional and significant Arab population. Therefore the strategic depth and topographical barriers in the central sector, so totally absent in the lines preceding the 1967 war, cannot be based on moving these lines eastward in a schematic manner, even though this would be logical from a purely strategic point of view. Rather, apart from some minor tactical border alterations along the western section of "the green line," this same goal can be achieved through absolute Israeli control over the strategic zone to the *east* of the dense Arab population, concentrated as it is on the crest of the hills and westward. I am referring to the arid zone that lies between the Jordan River to the east, and the eastern chain of the Samaritan and Judean mountains to the west—from Mt. Gilboa in the north through the Judean desert, until it joins the Negev desert. The area of this desert zone is only about 700 square miles and it is almost devoid of population. Thus this type of solution would leave almost all of the Palestinian Arab population of the West Bank under Arab rule.

Cutting through this zone, which continues from north to south, it would be possible to delineate a corridor from west to east under Arab sovereignty. This would permit uninterrupted communication along the Jericho-Ramallah axis, between the Arab populated areas of the West and East banks of the river. In this manner the only realistic solution becomes possible—one that also helps resolve the problem of Palestinian identity that could then find its expression in a single Jordanian-Palestinian state. (After all, the population of both banks, East and West, are Palestinian Arabs. The fact is that the great majority of Palestinians carry Jordanian passports while almost all of Jordan's inhabitants are Palestinians.)

Jerusalem, Israel's capital, which was never the capital of any Arab or Muslim state, but was always the capital and center of the Jewish people, cannot return to the absurd situation of being partitioned. The Holy City and adjacent areas essential for its protection and communications must remain a single, undivided unit under

Israel's sovereignty. Because of its universal status, however, in that it is holy to three great religions, as well as the mixed nature of its inhabitants¹, a solution for the religious interests connected with it can be found, a *religious* and not a political solution. For example, special status could be granted to the representatives of the various faiths in the places holy to them, just as it might be possible to base the municipal structure of the city upon subdistricts that take ethnic and religious criteria into account.

While the strategic zone in the central sector is crucial to Israel's security, so, too, is a zone on the Golan Heights. As past experience has demonstrated, a border not encompassing the Golan Heights would again invite the easy shelling of the villages below in the Huleh Valley, the Galilee Basin and eastern Galilee. More important than the danger of renewed Syrian shelling and sniping at Israeli villagers and fishermen below, which is basically a *tactical* question, is that Israel needs an effective defense line on the Golan Heights for two cardinal *strategic* reasons: first, to preclude any new Syrian attempts to deny Israel its essential water resources and, second, to prevent a massive Syrian attack on the whole of Galilee, either independently or in coordination with other Arab armies on Israel's other frontiers.

In my view the city of Gaza and its environs, which is heavily populated by Palestinian Arabs, could comprise a part of the Jordanian-Palestinian unit which would arise to the east of Israel, and serve as that state's Mediterranean port. In this case, it would be necessary to place at the disposal of traffic between Gaza and the Jordanian-Palestinian state the use of a land route (as distinct from a land corridor) similar to that, for example, connecting the United States with Alaska. But Israel must continue to control fully the strategic desert zone from the southern part of the Gaza Strip to the dunes on the eastern approaches of the town of El Arish, which itself would be returned to Egypt. This strategic zone, almost empty of population, would block the historic invasion route along the sea coast which many conquerors have taken over the generations to invade the land of Israel, and further north.

A number of border adjustments will also be essential to ensure security along sensitive areas of the 1949 Armistice line between Israel and Egypt. These must be made in such a manner as to permit full Israeli control in a number of sectors of crucial importance to its defense and which lack any value for the security of Egypt. I am refer-

¹ From the middle of the nineteenth century Jerusalem has had a Jewish majority. Today, the population consists of 260,000 Jews, 84,000 Muslims and 12,000 Christians.

ring to such areas as those surrounding Abu Aweigila, Kusseima and Kuntilla, which comprise the principal strategic crossroads on the main routes from the desert to Beersheba, and to the Elath shore line which is the gateway to Israel's maritime routes to the Indian Ocean and the Far East.

An especially sensitive point is that of the area of Sharm-el-Sheikh at the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula. Although, from this vantage point, there is no danger of a massive surprise attack on Israel proper, a very concrete threat to Israeli freedom of navigation does exist. It should be repeated that Egypt has twice imposed blockades against Israeli ships and cargoes seeking passage through the Straits of Tiran. And, in both instances, Israel was compelled to break this blockade mounted from Sharm-el-Sheikh by capturing the place. In one way or another, unquestionable Israeli control over this corner of the Sinai—and over a land route reaching it—is not only critical to Israeli defense, but also serves to neutralize a focal point that is liable to set the area on fire once again. Moreover, because of the threat of blockade to Israeli-bound traffic through the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, which connects the Red Sea with the Indian Ocean, full Israeli control over Sharm-el-Sheikh might serve as a countervailing deterrent against such blockade attempts.

To sum up, there were numerous bitterly deficient points in the pre-1967 lines, and these proposals encompass minimal corrections to them required for an overall peace settlement. The necessity for these corrections is all the more apparent when it is realized that Israel not only faces the military strength of its contiguous neighbors, but may also have to face the combined strength of many other Arab countries. This has already happened to no small extent in the 1973 war, when contingents from Iraq, Libya, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Jordan and other Arab countries participated in the fighting, together with the armies of Egypt and Syria. Thus, in a very practical sense, solid defense lines are indispensable to Israel in order to withstand the attacks of the entire Arab world. In addition, these may well be supported by contingents of so-called volunteers who can be sent from certain countries from outside the area that are hostile to Israel.

Let me stress again that defensible borders are vital to Israel not out of any desire to annex territories per se, not out of a desire for territorial expansion, and not out of any historical and ideological motivation. Israel can compromise on territory but it cannot afford to do so on security. The entire rationale of defensible borders is strategic. This is also the only rationale for the selective settlement policy that

Israel is pursuing, as an integral part of its unique defense system, in those strategic zones so vital to its security.

Of course, when the peace for which we strive is achieved, the borders will not divide the two peoples but be freely open to them. In short, good fences make good neighbors.

IV

As I have pointed out, border adjustments essential for Israel's security, and hence for the long-term stability of the entire area, must also be linked with mutually effective security arrangements designed to prevent surprise attacks by one side on the other, or at least to reduce to a minimum the danger of such attacks. In the geo-strategic circumstances of the Middle East, to reduce the possibility of surprise offensives is, in fact, to reduce the danger of all offensives. I am referring to such arrangements as the delineation of both totally and partially demilitarized zones under joint Arab-Israeli control, with or without the participation of a credible international factor; or such arrangements as the delineation of parallel early-warning systems like those functioning in the Sinai according to the terms of the 1975 Interim Agreement between Israel and Egypt.

I will not enter here into the technical details of such arrangements, their nature, placement and scope. Not that they are unimportant or nonessential; on the contrary, without them, Israel could not permit itself to make the far-reaching territorial compromises which, in my opinion, it should be prepared to make within the context of peace agreements with its neighbors. Let me give one example, albeit the most important, in order to illustrate this point. According to the principles I have already outlined, if Israel were to forfeit the densely populated heartland of Judea and Samaria, it would not be able to forego—under any circumstances—the effective demilitarization of these areas. Apart from civilian police to guarantee internal order, these areas would have to be devoid of offensive forces and heavy arms. In the same way as any other country, Israel would be unable to abandon areas so close to its heartland if they were liable once again to become staging areas for full-scale, limited or guerilla attacks upon its most vital areas.

In short, Israel cannot permit itself to withdraw from a large part of the West Bank unless the area from which it withdraws is shorn of all aggressive potential. For this purpose, absolute Israeli control, as proposed above, of a strategic security zone along the Jordan Basin will not be adequate. Effective demilitarization of the areas from which the Israel Defense Forces withdraw will also be essen-

tial. Here as elsewhere, the two elements are interwoven: without a security zone, Israel cannot be satisfied with demilitarization alone; without effective demilitarization, Israel cannot be satisfied with just the security zone.

It should be clear from what I have said, that Israel does not hold most of the territories that fell into its hands in the war, which was imposed on it in 1967, as an end in itself. Despite the paucity of its territory compared with the vast areas of the Arab countries, and despite the historical, strategic and economic importance of these areas, Israel would be prepared to concede all that is not absolutely essential to its security within the context of an overall peace settlement. It is holding most of these territories now only as a means to achieve its foremost goal—peace with all its neighbors.

Peace is not only a Jewish and Zionist value and goal, but an imperative national interest for Israel, coinciding with the desires of all peoples and all peace-seeking forces in the world. Because of this, particular care must be taken regarding the nature of the settlement to be reached: whether it is to be fragile, provisional, and containing the seeds of a future war; or whether it is to be stable and enduring, cutting the ground out, to the greatest possible degree, from anyone intent upon war. But just as peace itself is one of the prime elements of national security, so, too, is the ability to defend oneself a prime guaranty for the maintenance of peace. In view of the marked asymmetry existing between the war aims of those participating in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and in light of the unstable internal and regional relations among the Arab states, one should be especially careful to uphold these principles here; this applies even more so to the case of Israel, for whom the threat of total obliteration is always present.

The strategic security principles outlined here are designed to achieve such a peace based on compromise—one that will satisfy the interests of both sides not merely for so limited a period as three, four, or even ten years, but for our children and the children of their children, and beyond. A conflict as complex and prolonged as that between the Arab states and Israel can only be solved through such a far-sighted approach; any other settlement will only lead to further hostilities, with all the concomitant repercussions for the entire world.

V

Is this not only desirable but also possible? My answer is yes, it is possible, maybe not today, or tomorrow, or at one time. Of course, if it were possible to achieve this in one fell swoop by an overall agreement that would solve the conflict, this would be splendid. And as

far as Israel is concerned, it desires and is ready for such a settlement as soon as possible. It may be very difficult to leap from the hostility and hatred which the Arab states bear toward Israel to an era of reconciliation and friendship. But this transition—a process if not a solitary act—is possible. It is a process that can lead from the cease-fire situation to an end of hostilities—from violence to nonviolence, from nonacceptance to acceptance, and from there to real peace. The three agreements signed since the 1973 war (two with Egypt and one with Syria) may mark the beginning of the beginning of this process.

All this of course is possible under the appropriate circumstances and requisite conditions. The central two are: first, that the realistic trend become dominant in the Arab camp, i.e., that the Arabs recognize that Israel is a reality which cannot be obliterated by further rounds of war, and that they reconcile themselves to Israel's existence by reaching a compromise agreement with it. To this end, Israel must have sufficient potential for self-defense to deter the Arab states from any additional military adventure; and should they nonetheless be so drawn to such an adventure, Israel's strength must be adequate to repel them with the minimum of damage to itself. Second, that the international community not foster the delusion among the Arab leaders that it is possible—whether by military means or political pressure—to force Israel to give up what is essential to its minimum security needs. Israel will never yield to such pressure nor will it accept any attempt to impose a solution. Its readiness to compromise is not a function of pressure or war but of its desire for peace and of Arab readiness to start moving toward that goal.

The various proposals or plans raised by third parties to the conflict only serve the opposite purpose, including that unfortunate American plan that entered history under the name of the "Rogers plan" of 1969, which erred on two main counts: first, by the very fact of its presentation to the parties instead of leaving it to them to negotiate their differences without prior conditions; second, by its total lack of any consideration for Israel's security needs. The presentation of this plan gave rise to expectation in the Arab States that Washington was about to impose on Israel a scheme favorable to the Arabs and thereby dealt a damaging blow to the hopes for evolution of realistic policies in the capitals of the Middle East. It is doubtful if any positive movement would have been achieved in the Middle East if this plan had not been shelved in 1970. French policy has played a conspicuously negative role since the Six-Day War of 1967 by its openly pro-Arab bias during the hostilities and by the unfounded interpretation given by France to Resolution 242 in flat contradiction to the

expressed intentions of its sponsors. There is no doubt that this French attitude has encouraged even the least extremist of the Arab States to adopt rigid and uncompromising positions. Outside powers and international organs should strictly refrain from making their own proposals for the solution of the conflict. And if one cannot hope for such "monasticism" in the coming period on the part of those powers hostile to Israel, such as the U.S.S.R.—which is interested in perpetuating the conflict in the region at the expense of the welfare of all the peoples living there—one would hope for such behavior on the part of such friendly powers as the United States, that insist upon the region's peace for the benefit of all. If we had not had to deal with such proposals in the past, we would now be nearer to a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The actual conditions and details of a peace settlement between Israel and the Arab states, and even the next stage toward it, should such a transitional stage prove necessary, must be left in the hands of the parties themselves. Should the Arab states sit at the negotiating table without any preconditions, with full acceptance of Israel's legitimate existence and readiness to make a balanced compromise peace with it, I believe it will be possible to solve all the basic points of conflict, including a constructive solution of the problem of Palestinian identity.

I have no doubt that Israel would be ready and willing, on the basis of such a realistic approach, to negotiate a peace settlement with each of its neighbors, at any time and at any place, within the framework of the Geneva Conference or outside it. If these conditions are achieved, peace in the Middle East becomes not only a desirable goal but a possible one. I will not prophesy when such a turning point will be reached. Very much depends on international circumstances, and on the way these are interpreted by the Arab states. However, it is my firm belief that this stage is bound to come because there is no realistic alternative for the peoples and countries of the region.