

Guerrillas Cannot Be Defeated? Really?

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After two years of fighting, Israel did not fail to defeat Hamas because the task was impossible, but because it operated politically and militarily in violation of the principles by which states with regular armies have defeated guerrilla organizations in the past.

As Israel approached the second anniversary of the longest war in its history, and as the Israeli cabinet considered ordering the IDF to capture Gaza City and the refugee camps in the center of the Strip, opponents of continuing the war renewed a familiar argument: an organization that fights by guerrilla methods cannot be defeated.

The debate over the aims of the war and the way it has been conducted in Gaza—inside Israel and abroad—has been ongoing since early 2024. The Swords of Iron War, forced upon Israel by Hamas's barbaric attack on October 7, 2023, began with broad moral justification and wide international and domestic legitimacy within Israeli society. Over time, however, it became deeply contested, at home and abroad. The reasons have been many: political (the bitter struggle between supporters of the Israeli government and its opponents); policy-related (the destruction and suffering inflicted on the population in Gaza); social (the tension between defeating Hamas and securing the hostages' return, alongside the human cost the war exacts from IDF soldiers); legal (the claim that Israel has committed war crimes in Gaza); and military (the neglect of time as a dimension of war, and the question whether—and how—a terror and guerrilla organization can be defeated).

This article focuses primarily on the military dimension. It seeks to refute the myth that guerrilla organizations cannot be defeated, by examining historical cases in which regular armies prevailed over guerrilla forces; considering what those cases suggest for Israel's war in Gaza; and explaining why Israel has struggled to achieve its war aims in a campaign conducted in violation of its own war doctrine—above all, through the neglect of the time dimension.

What Is Guerrilla Warfare?

The term guerrilla, from Spanish, literally means 'little war.' It denotes a method of fighting characterized by small, independent, flexible, agile, and mobile infantry units operating

according to the principle of deception through hit-and-run action. The essence of a guerrilla force is to avoid decisive battles and to harass the enemy relentlessly until it is exhausted.

Modern guerrilla warfare rests on a framework of principles identified with Mao Zedong and organized around the strategic logic of war by attrition—a method intended to erode the enemy's will to fight and power of endurance through the endless accumulation of thousands of small 'stings.' Its principles are familiar: avoid the strong, strike the weak, and withdraw quickly; preserving guerrilla fighters' lives matters more than inflicting casualties on the enemy; strike only when success is assured; surprise is essential and exposure means failure; do not be drawn into regular battle; slip away before the enemy can exploit its advantage; remain patient in order to identify the enemy's vulnerabilities; keep moving and blur the line of contact, because there is no true front line; keep the enemy on alert at the front and in the rear; preserve the fighters' morale, lest they dwell on the enemy's superiority; blend into the population like a fish in water; use media as a weapon, because a powerful image can matter more than a bullet and video more than artillery; hurt the enemy and stop before he loses control; and remember that lessons learned are the lifeblood of the fight—the side that wins the competition of learning will win the battle.

In practical terms, when the enemy attacks, the guerrilla withdraws; when the enemy is static, the guerrilla harasses; when the enemy tires, the guerrilla attacks; and when the enemy retreats, the guerrilla pursues. Guerrilla warfare combines defensive and offensive action—ambushes and raids whose purpose is not to defend or hold territory, but to inflict sustained damage, exact a price, and humiliate the enemy until it no longer wishes to remain and prefers withdrawal. That is the central reason Hamas chose this method of warfare at the end of 2023.

Why Did Hamas Choose Guerrilla Warfare?

After Hamas's October 7 attack, the IDF was a battered military organization, reeling from the gravest failure in its history, without an offensive war plan for Gaza and with a force neither built nor ready for a multi-front war. Even so, like a phoenix, the IDF recovered and entered Gaza only three weeks after October 7, maneuvering on a highly complex battlefield above and below ground that Hamas had prepared for fifteen years. Hamas's plan for halting the IDF maneuver rested on regional brigades deployed in several defensive belts, with battalion-, company-, and platoon-level strongholds. That plan failed completely in the face of the IDF's maneuver, which

encircled Gaza City and struck Hamas's defensive systems from the rear with close support from the Air Force and the Navy. After a month of fighting, Hamas understood that the continuation of the maneuver would lead to its defeat and, having no alternative, played its most important card—the hostages. The first hostage deal, in which Hamas released 110 women and children, produced a fundamental turning point in the war. Hamas used the ceasefire to halt the IDF's momentum and to learn. It returned from the pause to a guerrilla method of warfare, abandoning its linear defensive system and any attempt to prevent the capture of ground.

Hamas understood that the psychological barrier within the IDF high command to maneuvering into Shati and Shifa had been broken, and that it could not stop the IDF's war machine. From Hamas's perspective, the only way to avoid decisive defeat was to shift to guerrilla warfare—a method that would not prevent the IDF from taking terrain, but would drag both sides into a war of attrition while allowing Hamas to preserve its military force.

When measured against the principles of guerrilla warfare, Hamas implemented them with considerable success and achieved its essential aims: to survive and to exact a military and political price from Israel. Hamas refined its guerrilla methods and repeated the same pattern. When the IDF launched an attack to seize and control a given area, Hamas fighters disappeared and avoided friction, hoping that the improvised explosive devices they had planted in advance would exact a heavy toll. Once IDF forces shifted to clearing the area of enemy infrastructure, Hamas fighters began their collection phase. After enough time had passed—once they had accumulated sufficient information, identified a recurring pattern of activity, and detected vulnerabilities alongside a decline in IDF alertness—they struck through short hit-and-run actions combining sniping, sabotage, and anti-tank fire.

During the first half of Operation Gideon's Chariots (May-August 2025), most IDF casualties were caused by the IED belts that Hamas had laid in advance. As time passed and Israeli forces learned to cope with that threat, another classic feature of guerrilla warfare became more prominent. Hamas fighters exploited the fact that IDF forces had become worn down and fatigued over time and, in keeping with Mao's principle that 'when the enemy tires, the guerrilla attacks,' began charging rapidly at Israeli forces and attaching or throwing explosive devices onto tanks and armored personnel carriers. Each such action was documented intensively, and videos

of Hamas fighters charging Israeli armored vehicles did more damage to Israeli morale than any bullet or shell could have done.

Hamas had only one significant gap in its ability to implement guerrilla principles. From the beginning of the maneuver, the IDF acted wisely to empty the combat zones of the Palestinian population that had served as a human shield for Hamas fighters. Without that population, Hamas found it harder to confront IDF troops, and the interconnected tunnel system stretching across Gaza became its substitute. Instead of a civilian population in which the guerrilla could move like a fish in water, Hamas relied on a subterranean realm in which the IDF struggled to engage it effectively.

There were several reasons for this. First, after Operation Protective Edge in 2014, a commission headed by Maj. Gen. Yossi Bachar examined the challenge of subterranean warfare and produced a wide range of recommendations for IDF force build-up. In practice, however, little was done, and nearly a decade later the IDF entered the Gaza battlefield without a robust solution to the underground infrastructure that crisscrossed the Strip for some 600 kilometers—more extensive, for comparison, than the London Underground. Second, the pace of wartime force build-up did not match the scale of the challenge. Under the leadership of the Yahalom unit, the IDF developed methods, equipment, and techniques for underground combat, but not in sufficient quantity or speed. Third, senior IDF commanders chose not to send infantry brigades underground out of concern for soldiers' lives. The result was the absence of an adequate answer to Hamas's tunnel-based guerrilla warfare, which relied on quick sorties from tunnels for hit-and-run attacks that repeatedly exacted a heavy price. As long as the underground dimension remained intact, the IDF's presence above ground had limited meaning. Only in areas where the IDF succeeded in maneuvering simultaneously above and below ground—typically through slow, deliberate efforts to expose and destroy the tunnel infrastructure—was full operational control achieved and Hamas locally defeated.

How Do You Defeat a Guerrilla Movement?

As time passed, more and more voices in Israel, including some from within the defense establishment, began to argue that Hamas could not be defeated and that the war's objectives could not be achieved because Hamas was fighting by guerrilla methods—an allegedly

unbeatable method of warfare. Yet the myth of guerrilla warfare as unbeatable has no basis in reality. Modern military history shows that in most cases in which regular armies fought guerrilla organizations, it was the regular armies that prevailed. The myth was born largely because of two colossal failures by the superpowers that dominated the post-Second World War era: the Americans in Vietnam (1955-1975) and the Soviets in Afghanistan (1979-1989). Despite the enormous asymmetry in power, while the guerrilla organizations implemented Mao's doctrine in full, the superpowers committed nearly every military and political mistake possible and ended in humiliating defeat and withdrawal.

Apart from Vietnam and Afghanistan, modern history contains a handful of additional cases in which guerrilla movements defeated regular armies. In nearly all of them, the guerrillas successfully applied the core principles of guerrilla warfare: strong popular support and reliance on the local population for intelligence, shelter, supply, and legitimacy; long-term attrition aimed not at winning direct battles but at imposing psychological, political, and economic exhaustion on the enemy; intimate familiarity with the terrain and the exploitation of difficult geography—mountains, forests, or villages—in which mobility and concealment favored them; external support in the form of logistics, money, weapons, or sanctuary from foreign states; and a mobilizing ideological or national narrative strong enough to recruit fighters and sustain legitimacy, even in the face of adversity.

But alongside those relatively few successes, the overwhelming historical pattern is that guerrilla movements were defeated by regular armies that fought correctly. The examples are numerous; I will cite only a few of them.

The Second Boer War, 1899-1902

In the series of military confrontations that took place at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth between the British Empire and the independent republics established by European settlers in South Africa, the British sought to seize the rich natural resources discovered there and to realize their imperial vision of territorial continuity in eastern Africa. After the first stage of the war, which took the form of regular warfare, the Boers shifted to guerrilla methods that inflicted heavy losses on the British. Britain ultimately prevailed by mobilizing the resources of the empire, building a dense network of positions, destroying Boer

farms and fields, and concentrating the civilian population in camps. The Boer guerrillas lost their supply base and their influence over the population and ultimately surrendered.

- A scorched-earth policy: the British burned Boer farms, crops, and sources of supply in order to deny them the means of survival.
- Concentration camps for the civilian population: the families of Boer fighters were concentrated in camps, undermining morale and denying the guerrillas reliable civilian backing.
- A blockhouse system: the British built thousands of watchtowers linked by barbed wire, creating a territorial-control network that denied guerrilla fighters freedom of movement.
- Mobility, continuity, and persistence: small and fast British units, adapted to the terrain and to counter-guerrilla warfare, maintained a high operational tempo and continuity of action.

The Greek Civil War, 1946-1949

This conflict unfolded after the Second World War between the forces of the Greek government, supported by Britain and the United States, and communist guerrillas backed by the states of Eastern Europe. The war ended with the communists' defeat and Greece's remaining democratic and under Western influence. With Western assistance, the Greek army defeated the communist guerrillas and decided the war through several key measures:

- Broad American military and economic assistance, including equipment, training, and military advisers that significantly improved the army's capabilities.
- Control of population centers and separation of the guerrillas from the civilian population, which restricted guerrilla movement and eroded their support base.
- Targeted counter-guerrilla operations and advanced intelligence that exposed and destroyed guerrilla bases in the mountains, severed supply routes, and pushed fighters toward Albania and Yugoslavia.
- Exploitation of internal divisions within the communist camp.

The Malayan Emergency, 1948-1960

The insurgency broke out against a background of ethnic, economic, and political tensions, primarily among Chinese communists in Malaya who opposed British colonial rule and the dominance of the Malay elite. Many of the communist fighters were veterans of the Second

World War who had expected independence. Through a series of military operations, the British severed the communists from the population and from the terrain, and the guerrilla movement was broken and eventually surrendered. British success rested on the following moves:

- Separating the population from the guerrillas by relocating rural Chinese civilians into controlled settlements in order to deny the insurgents their sources of support.
- Effective intelligence work, including the establishment of special units to collect intelligence from the population and recruit collaborators.
- The integration of local forces and allies from within the population in order to increase both legitimacy and effectiveness.
- A campaign of influence: offering amnesty to defectors, disseminating anti-communist propaganda, and applying measured pressure on the Chinese community to disavow the guerrillas.
- Surgical military action: restrained use of force while avoiding unnecessary harm to civilians.

The Suppression of the Hukbalahap Rebellion in the Philippines, 1946-1954

The rebellion began after the Second World War, when Huk fighters who had resisted the Japanese occupation were not demobilized but instead turned against the central Philippine government. They represented mainly poor peasants on Luzon who demanded agrarian reform and social justice and opposed corruption and American influence. The Philippine army succeeded in suppressing the communist insurgency through:

- Military units specializing in counter-guerrilla warfare, established with American assistance and trained to understand the terrain and fight the guerrillas effectively.
- Moderate social reforms, especially in agriculture, that reduced the social grievances driving peasant support for the insurgency.
- A campaign of influence using media and civilian presence to delegitimize the rebels.
- Amnesty and reconciliation programs that encouraged fighters to abandon the struggle and reintegrate into society.
- Substantial American aid in money, equipment, and training.

The Second Chechen War, 1999-2009

At the end of the previous millennium, Russia launched a broad military campaign to reassert control over Chechnya after a wave of attacks and a Chechen incursion into Dagestan. Unlike the first war, this campaign was more consistent, more determined, and guided by a clear political aim: to crush the separatist leadership and reintegrate the republic into Russia. Russia achieved this through:

- Sustained, heavy military force—artillery and air bombardment that devastated Grozny, the capital, broke urban resistance, and were followed by the seizure of Grozny and the mountains, the severing of supply channels, and the destruction of guerrilla bases.
- The establishment of pro-Russian militias that took control of the ground and suppressed the guerrillas.
- Intensive intelligence warfare: penetrating guerrilla networks, surveillance, targeted killings, and reliance on powerful security services.
- A divide-and-rule strategy that exploited internal rivalries among Chechen clans and softened organized resistance.
- Infrastructure reconstruction and economic grants aimed at building legitimacy among the population after stability had been restored.

The Second Intifada, 2000-2007 (until the Wanted Men Agreement)

But the IDF need not learn only from others. It can learn from its own not-so-distant history in the Palestinian arena. In September 2000, the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians collapsed. Judea and Samaria and the Gaza Strip saw the eruption of an armed popular uprising led by Palestinian terror organizations, including Tanzim, Hamas, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad. During the first two years, Israel suffered hundreds of dead and thousands wounded in suicide bombings in city centers, murderous attacks in communities, and shootings along roads. The Palestinians waged an urban guerrilla war whose focal point was the dense refugee camps. The turning point came with Operation Defensive Shield in 2002, during which the IDF seized the refugee camps in the major Palestinian cities in the West Bank. After the operation, the IDF changed its method of action against the terror strongholds. The operational idea was to create for terrorists a constant sense of being hunted everywhere, concentrating on the incubators of terror in the refugee camps while imposing a permanent cordon on the major cities and denying terrorists freedom of movement along the roads through a dense network of checkpoints. From a

peak of 131 Israelis murdered in March 2002, the armed intifada gradually declined, until in 2007 the Palestinian Authority signed an agreement with Israel under which all remaining wanted men renounced terrorism and the new Palestinian leadership declared that the path of terror was not its path and had brought only harm upon the Palestinian people.

- No more sanctuary cities: renewed entry into Area A for hot pursuit of terrorists and the destruction of terror infrastructure in the refugee camps.
- Targeted decapitation of terror leadership: high-quality intelligence and close cooperation among all security organizations created a tight intelligence system built on agents, advanced technology, and rapid response.
- The construction of a security barrier along the Green Line, which sharply reduced the infiltration of suicide bombers from the West Bank into Israel and made terrorism less effective.
- A 'mowing the grass' approach of mass arrests and killings of terror operatives, which dramatically degraded the organizational and operational capabilities of the Palestinian organizations.

Across these cases, whenever regular armies defeated guerrilla organizations, several recurring principles were present:

- Separation of the guerrillas from the civilian population—through physical or psychological separation from their civilian base of support (for example, resettlement, curfews, propaganda, intimidation, or the purchase of loyalty).
- The integration of military force with political and social measures—using force to establish control while simultaneously pursuing reforms, amnesties, and improvements in living conditions in order to erode the guerrillas' legitimacy.
- High-quality, local intelligence—many successes rested on intelligence networks inside the population and on cooperation with locals who provided real-time information.
- Targeted elimination of guerrilla leadership—striking commanders, logisticians, and infrastructure in order to disrupt command and organization.
- Long attrition and strategic patience—most victories were not quick, but the result of sustained struggle in which the guerrilla movement wore down over time.
- Great-power support and international legitimacy.

What Should Israel Learn, and Can Hamas Be Defeated?

To learn from the past, one must first compare the conditions under which guerrilla movements succeed with those under which regular armies defeat them. The following table summarizes the core principles.

Principle	Guerrilla Success	Regular Army Success
Popular support	Reliance on sympathy and support from the local population.	Separation of the guerrillas from the population through incentives, deterrence, and physical distinction.
Control of territory	Operation in remote areas with topographic advantage.	Denial of sanctuary cities and sanctuary spaces; continuous presence on the ground; high tempo and continuity of operations; intelligence-based control.
Supply	Reliance on supply routes for weapons, food, water, medical supplies, and energy.	Severing the guerrillas' supply lines.
Time and attrition	A long war of attrition.	Either rapid decision or sustained pressure on guerrilla fighters and their sources of support.
Intelligence	Reliance on information from the local population and from clandestine infrastructure.	Precise intelligence, agents, and technological surveillance in order to expose the enemy.
External support	Support at times from foreign states or ideological networks.	Reliance on coalitions, international assistance, superior technology, and diplomatic legitimacy.

Popular support

Despite the immense suffering endured by Palestinian society in Gaza, the barrier of fear and identification with Hamas has not been broken. There are many reasons for this. The cruelty of Hamas rule, its ability to cast terror on any attempt at opposition, its control over resources in the areas where the Palestinian population still lives, and the population's dependence on the

movement have all reinforced Hamas's hold. Israel's failure to decide how humanitarian aid would enter Gaza—and its effective abandonment of that aid to Hamas—strengthened Hamas's rule and even enabled it to recruit replacements for the operatives it lost. Although during Gideon's Chariots Israel decided to take control of the humanitarian assistance, it did so negligently and in a way that helped Hamas entrench a false global starvation campaign, thereby destroying what remained of Israel's international legitimacy in Gaza. In the bottom line, Israel failed to separate the population from Hamas.

Control of territory

During the war in Gaza, the IDF failed to deny Hamas safe spaces. The central camps were never seized; the war once again proved that standoff fire does not solve the operational problem. The tunnel system became a sanctuary because the Chief of Staff decided not to maneuver infantry brigades underground, given the risk to soldiers' lives, and because no comprehensive solution to the underground challenge existed. Hamas thus turned the subterranean domain into a kind of remote sanctuary with a topographic advantage. In addition, the pace and continuity of IDF operations remained too low because of the size and wear of the Ground Forces and persistent gaps in manpower and equipment. International arms embargoes on Israel only deepened these difficulties.

Supply

Israel did eventually sever Hamas's supply routes from Sinai by taking control of the Philadelphi Corridor. But that had no decisive operational meaning. Israel faced two bad options if it wished to comply with the Biden administration's requirement to prevent a humanitarian crisis: either to establish a military government that would provide the population's needs, or to bring in the Palestinian Authority to do so. The Israeli government chose the worst option—indecision. Until Operation Gideon's Chariots, Hamas received everything it needed in order to survive as the military ruler of Gaza: food, water, medical supplies, and energy. Even when an attempt was made to disconnect Hamas from this flow through distribution points operated by an American contractor, the effort failed. In practice, Hamas exploited that failure to build a false starvation campaign that inflicted unprecedented strategic damage on Israel.

Time and attrition

Israel began its maneuver in Gaza with moves that threatened to defeat Hamas quickly. Hamas understood this and therefore pushed for the November 2023 ceasefire in exchange for hostages. The halt in the IDF's momentum was used both for learning and for a transition to a new form of warfare—guerrilla warfare in place of linear defense. In that way Hamas succeeded in dragging the IDF from a war of decision into a two-year war of attrition. At the same time, Israel proved that, despite the limitations of the Ground Forces in manpower and weapons, it was still capable of applying repeated and sustained pressure to guerrilla fighters and their sources of support. Hamas has survived, but it has also worn down over time.

Intelligence

Through its guerrilla operations, Hamas succeeded in gathering precise intelligence on IDF forces operating in Gaza. Because the civilian population had largely been evacuated from the combat zones, Hamas relied less on civilians and more on technology and the underground infrastructure itself. The many cameras it dispersed throughout the area, the drones it operated, and the observers it sent up from the tunnels gave it accurate information about the locations and routines of Israeli forces. The relative static nature of many IDF patterns made Hamas's task easier. The IDF, for its part, enjoyed highly accurate intelligence based on agents, technological superiority, and a large body of captured material collected from seized Hamas infrastructure and interrogated prisoners. It also substantially improved the combat collection capabilities of its own forces. This intelligence advantage allowed the IDF to eliminate virtually the entire military and civilian leadership of Hamas in Gaza, and even some of its leadership abroad. The intelligence balance, therefore, strongly favored the IDF—but Hamas possessed capabilities of its own.

External support

Hamas entered the war sustained by a murderous and extremist Islamist ideology around which it rallied both its operatives and the residents of Gaza. The massacre in the Gaza Envelope and the atrocities committed against Israeli civilians initially isolated Hamas internationally, including in the Arab world. That is no longer the case. The prolongation of the war over two years, the suffering of Palestinian society in Gaza, the number of civilian dead, and the starvation campaign and accusations of genocide produced a reversal of international legitimacy. Apart from the

United States, a broad global consensus came to condemn Israel and to call for an immediate end to the war without Israel achieving its aims. By the end of the war in October 2025, Hamas appeared to have achieved part of the strategic aims with which it launched the al-Aqsa Flood attack, despite its battlefield losses and the terrible price paid by Gazans: growing international recognition of a Palestinian state, the blackening of Israel as the guilty party in the conflict, and Hamas's continued governmental and military survival, at least for the time being. From the international coalition that supported Israel and its aims at the outset of the war, Israel has been reduced to a situation in which only the United States stands with it, while many states impose diplomatic pressure and arms embargoes. In the realm of external support, Israel still benefits from an American administration that gives it freedom of action and military backing, but vis-à-vis much of the rest of the world it is in acute distress.

From a purely military standpoint, the IDF has the ability to defeat Hamas both militarily and as a governing authority. But so long as, at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels, the Government of Israel and the IDF fail to implement the principles by which guerrilla organizations have been defeated in the past, that potential will remain unrealized.

Summary

Hamas as a guerrilla organization is not fundamentally different from other such organizations in history. It did possess a unique asset in the form of the hostages, together with the distinctive place that hostage rescue and the preservation of life occupy in Israeli society—facts that made it harder for Israel to pursue a war aim that often appeared to run against the immediate return of the captives. In practice, the hostages served Hamas as a kind of insurance policy for its survival. Many will therefore point to the hostage problem as the central reason Hamas was not defeated. In addition, Hamas began the war with an underground system exceptional in scope, which Israel struggled to address. Yet Gaza is not Vietnam and not Afghanistan. It lies adjacent to Israel and is a narrow, flat strip of only 365 square kilometers. That fact should have made Israel's task substantially easier.

The real answer lies elsewhere. On most of the principles by which regular armies defeat guerrilla organizations—popular support, control of territory, supply, time and attrition, and

external support— Hamas held a marked advantage over Israel. Only in intelligence did the balance tilt clearly in Israel's favor. Under such conditions, it should surprise no one that Israel failed to achieve its war aims in Gaza and did not defeat Hamas's guerrilla method of warfare.

Israel experienced on October 7 the blackest day in its history. Hamas's barbaric massacre in the western Negev dealt a severe blow to the Zionist narrative for which the State of Israel was created: to be a safe haven for Jews everywhere, one that would prevent a second Holocaust and renewed antisemitic persecution. The disaster and the heavy price Israel paid generated wide legitimacy and support within Israel and internationally for a war against Hamas and its defeat in Gaza. In the first weeks, despite the terrible opening position, it seemed that Israel was indeed succeeding in defeating Hamas on the battlefield. Hamas recognized this and halted the Israeli momentum through the ceasefire deal that brought about the release of 110 hostages, most of them women and children. After the ceasefire ended and the fighting resumed, however, Israel's management of the campaign in Gaza began to go awry. Hamas shifted to guerrilla warfare based on an interconnected tunnel network, while the IDF—fighting without regard for the time dimension, under political direction—began to suffer attrition in manpower and matériel while lacking an adequate response to subterranean guerrilla warfare. Domestic and international criticism expanded accordingly, and Israel's international credit steadily ran out.

This article was written at the transition from Gideon's Chariots A to Gideon's Chariots B, before the agreement ending the war and securing the hostages' release. Even after that agreement, the question of Hamas's continued rule in Gaza and the reconstruction of its military organization remained unresolved, and Israel might yet be compelled to impose the answer by force. The claims made by opponents of continued fighting—that a guerrilla movement simply cannot be defeated—are false. History shows that the myth of the unbeatable guerrilla, like many other myths, is inaccurate to say the least. From a purely military perspective, the IDF does have the capacity to defeat Hamas militarily and politically. But unless the Government of Israel and the IDF implement the principles by which guerrilla organizations have been defeated in the past—breaking the population's dependence on Hamas, controlling the ground above and below it, severing Hamas's supply lines that are fed through humanitarian aid, preserving Israel's own military strength instead of allowing it to be worn down through unresolved manpower and equipment shortages, and restoring the external legitimacy now enjoyed by the Palestinians

while Israel endures an unprecedented diplomatic crisis—Israel will have no chance of defeating Hamas's method of warfare and achieving military decision in Gaza.

The greatest threat to Israel has always come from within, not from without. Israel cannot afford to embark on such a course after two years of war without broad consensus in Israeli society and in the face of opposition from the military leadership. Even if the IDF were to fight correctly at the tactical level, such an internal rupture would tear the army apart from within—and after it, Israeli society itself.