Recent developments in the Middle East—the Soviet decision to withdraw from Afghanistan, the cease fire in the Iran-Iraq war, the introduction of chemical weapons and medium-range missiles, the uprising of the Palestinian Arabs and the withdrawal of King Hussein from his claim to the West Bank—have created new conditions in the region.

Interpreters of these developments and the tendency in the era of gianst to misread Soviet intentions may lead this or a new U.S. administration to attempt a settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute without proper consideration of America's global imperatives and the strategic needs of our most reliable ally in the region—Israel.

To maintain its ability to defend itself, and to continue to serve as a vanguard of Western interests in the region, Israel must retain the Jordan River as its defense border.

An Israeli withdrawal from this border would, in the present political reality, lead to the establishment of an irredentist Soviet-oriented PLO state in the 2,000 square miles of the West Bank. A dwarfed Israel would then be an inimical target for Arab adventurism, terrorism and ultimately for an all-out military attack that could end Israel's existence.

If Israel were to relinquish the West Bank, 80% of its population and most of its industry would be within the range of light artillery, mortars and even rifles positioned on the high ground of the Samarian and Judean ridges. These ridges cannot be effectively demilitarized or adequately inspected. Before 1967 they served as bases for terrorists, whose cross-border activities cost Israel over 700 dead and thousands injured. Since then, the natural barrier and the short border provided by the Jordan River have enabled Israel to control raids and infiltration and to prevent the country from turning into another Lebanon.

Military control of the Jordan River line is aided by Israeli observation posts on the range of hills overlooking the river from the west. Israel has installed extensive early warning and ELINT and SIGINT stations there. If Israel loses this line, it would have virtually no warning of attack. Its border would be three times longer than the present one. In the midst of the country it would be 9 to 18 miles from the Mediterranean. Virtually all the population would be subject to artillery bombardment. The Sharon Plain north of Tel Aviv could be riven by an armored salient within hours. The quick mobilization of its civilian army—Israel's main hope for survival—would be disrupted easily, and perhaps irrespectably.

In 1968, a then-secret report by the Joint Chiefs of Staff asserted that Israel's borders were indefensible without the mountain ridges of the West Bank. With the Arab armed forces at least four times the size they were twenty years ago, this assessment is even more valid today. To expect that Israel can repeat the miraculous military feat it performed in 1967 when it was attacked from these borders is to tempt fate.

It is often argued that the introduction of missiles to the region makes strategic depth irrelevant. After all, almost all of Israel is within the range of Soviet IRBMs and SRBMs now in the arsenals of Syria, Iraq and Iran, and the distance from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean can be crossed by superersonic missiles or a single attack profile in less than three minutes. But missiles, artillery and aircraft can cause devastation. They cannot occupy. Only infantry and armor can overrun a country—and those are still vulnerable to natural barriers.

Defensible borders are not impregnable borders. Rather, they are borders that give early warning time and provide some strategic depth. In the face of unremitting hostility to Israel's existence by Syrians, Iraqis, and the PLO, Israel must have such borders. Having repelled continued attacks on its population from this territory, and having acquired it in a defensive war in 1967, Israel has no legal, political or moral obligations to relinquish it.

A strong Israel has served America's interests. To remain strong it must retain the Jordan River line as its eastern security border. Presuming Israel to withdraw from this line will neither bring peace nor serve America's interests.

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**INTERNATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL**

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