

The Disengagement Plan: Vision and Reality

Zaki Shalom

Behind the Disengagement Plan

A plan to withdraw from the Gaza Strip, which was drafted and implemented during Arik Sharon's tenure as prime minister, included withdrawing IDF forces from the Strip, evacuating the entire Jewish presence in the Katif bloc, and dismantling four settlements in Judea and Samaria: Ganim, Kadim, Sa-Nur, and Homesh. Once publicized, the plan shocked the Israeli public. The notion of withdrawing the IDF from the Gaza Strip had long been debated, and many felt that Israeli settlements there were an exercise in futility. Three basic claims underpinned this idea. One, Gaza is of no religious or historical significance to the Jewish people. Two, the Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip would always remain a demographically marginal and geographically isolated enclave in the heart of the most densely populated Palestinian region. Three, in terms of security, Israeli settlement activity in the Gaza Strip is of little importance.¹

However, these opinions were never translated into a concrete political plan. Moreover, all the Israeli governments, both right and left wing, invested tremendous resources into Israeli settlement in the Gaza Strip up until the moment the disengagement plan was decided upon. It was difficult to believe that of all people, Sharon, the individual who more than anyone symbolized the Israeli settlement enterprise in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip, would destine the entire Gaza Strip project

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to destruction. Only a few months beforehand he had stressed, “What goes for Tel Aviv goes for Netzarim” (a Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip). In his speech before the Knesset about the disengagement, he expressed his personal anguish over implementation of the plan:

For me, this decision is unbearably difficult. During my years as a fighter and commander, as a politician, Member of Knesset, as a minister in Israel’s governments and as Prime Minister, I have never faced so difficult a decision. I know the implications and impact of the Knesset’s decision on the lives of thousands of Israelis who have lived in the Gaza Strip for many years, who were sent there on behalf of the Governments of Israel, and who built homes there, planted trees and grew flowers, and who gave birth to sons and daughters, who have not known any other home. I am well aware of the fact that I sent them and took part in this enterprise, and many of these people are my personal friends. I am well aware of their pain, rage and despair.²

In the annals of the State of Israel, the disengagement will be remembered as a singular event. Never before had Israel withdrawn unilaterally and removed settlers on such a scale from territory that was under its control. Because the disengagement was so dramatic and far reaching, and in order to earn as much public support as was possible for this move, government spokespeople, including the prime minister, went to great lengths to explain the exigency and justification of the plan. The

fact that the plan’s implementation necessitated the evacuation of thousands of Israelis from their homes, the destruction of agricultural and industrial enterprises, synagogues, schools, and cemeteries, required the government to engage in a widespread public relations campaign designed to stress the necessity of implementing the plan and its inherent advantages for the State of Israel.

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preparations for implementing the plan were extremely thorough and the assessments about the ramifications were based on plausible forecasts, it is fair to say that in the end almost little went as planned.³

Indeed, according to Sharon's vision, one of the central goals of the disengagement was to make it clear to the Palestinians that the State of Israel has no desire to rule over them and that it hopes to progress as quickly as possible towards a permanent settlement on the basis of the two-state solution: "We would like you to govern yourselves in your own country. A democratic Palestinian state with territorial contiguity in Judea and Samaria and economic viability, which would conduct normal relations of tranquility, security and peace with Israel."⁴ In practice, however, instead of progressing towards a permanent solution on the basis of two states for two peoples, the disengagement and subsequent events generated a series of political, security-related, and emotional obstacles to a permanent Israeli-Palestinian settlement. In addition to the events that were direct results of the disengagement, the region was host to other events and moves that presented more obstacles on the road to a permanent Israeli-Palestinian agreement. This essay examines the formulation and the expectations of the disengagement plan. In addition, the essay attempts to examine the ramifications of both the disengagement's direct results and indirectly linked events for the vision of an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement.

The Disengagement Plan: Explicit and Implicit Aims

Despite contradictory statements about the objectives of the disengagement plan, at its core the plan was meant to be the first stage on the path to determining the permanent borders of the State of Israel, a decisive step on the road to a comprehensive Israeli–Palestinian arrangement. As a neighbor to Israel, a Palestinian state was supposed to be established at some point, according to the vision of the two-state solution adopted by Israeli governments and the international community as a whole since the Oslo accords. The assessment was that such a move would make it clear to the Israeli population, the Palestinian Authority, and the world at large that Israel's leadership is determined to end the absurd reality, extant since the Six Day War, whereby Israel is a state without permanent, agreed-upon borders. Israel, so it was claimed,

The victory over the terrorist organizations reduces the motivation of both the public and Israel's leadership to choose the road of a political settlement, which would necessarily come with far reaching concessions.

must determine borders that can ensure the future of its identity as a Jewish and democratic state.⁵

Statements made by individuals who were linked to the disengagement initiative and its implementation indicate that the plan was designed fundamentally to undermine the longstanding, almost mystical belief among both left and right wing circles and within the national leadership that Jewish settlement in the territories had created irreversible facts on the territorial and political levels. If that were so, the room Israeli governments – right or left wing – had for maneuvering in terms of advancing an Israeli-Palestinian settlement would be very limited. The assumption was that an Israeli-Palestinian agreement would require the massive evacuation of Israeli settlements in Judea and Samaria so as to enable the establishment of a Palestinian state with reasonable territorial contiguity. Such a Palestinian state was supposed to include the Gaza Strip and most of the area of Judea and Samaria. A land corridor across the State of Israel was supposed to link the two territorial units.⁶

The message implicit in the disengagement was that when the Israeli leadership wants to evacuate settlers it knows how to prepare for such a complex task and how to execute it capably. In other words, the assessment whereby there was an irreversible reality in Judea and Samaria has no foundation. With the precedent of the disengagement and the massive evacuation of settlement residents, a cloud of uncertainty would form over every Jewish settlement east of the Green Line, and no settlement in the territories would have any insurance policy against evacuation. An Israeli government capable of evacuating a settlement area the scope of the Katif bloc would be able to carry out the evacuation of settlers on an even grander scale. It was only a question of determination and human and financial resources. At the Israel Business Convention in late 2005, Sharon said, “The disengagement plan, which I initiated and carried out, created a great window of opportunity for us and the Palestinians. Everyone understands today that Israel is sincere when it speaks of painful concessions. Moreover, everyone can see that when the State of Israel makes a commitment, it can also take very difficult steps.”⁷

Thus the hidden message behind the disengagement was that were this “project” to take place in an orderly fashion, without exceptional violence and in a way that would allow the evacuees to relocate and continue leading normal lives with their socio-economic welfare ensured,

and were peace and quiet to accompany the area, the disengagement would become a model for implementation of a parallel measure in Judea and Samaria. In the context of a settlement with the Palestinians or in its absence, the permanent borders of the State of Israel could thus be determined.⁸

Furthermore, the assessment was that the implementation of the disengagement plan would make it clear that Israel's leadership as well as broad segments of Israeli society were convinced that a retreat from the territories, in and of itself, and not necessarily in the context of some recompense from the Palestinian side, was in Israel's best national interests. This was a dramatic about-face in Israel's position on territories from the approach embraced since the end of the Six Day War. Over the years the standard approach was that the territories occupied by Israel were a deposit that would be returned to the Arabs in exchange for a peace agreement.

With the disengagement, it seemed as if Israel adopted a completely different approach. The implication was that Israel was abandoning this ironclad convention and making it clear that it was likely to view withdrawal by itself as a critical Israeli interest, regardless of what it would receive in exchange from the Arab–Palestinian side. Following the disengagement, Maj. Gen. (ret.) Giora Eiland explained: “When you say that evacuating settlements is good for Israel, you can't expect to get anything in return for doing so. Condoleezza Rice told us so explicitly at one of the meetings. She said: ‘Let me explain to you the meaning of a unilateral step. You take a unilateral step when that step is good for you. Therefore you cannot expect to get anything for having done yourself a favor.’”⁹

In addition, the disengagement again reaffirmed the idea that a withdrawal in the context of promoting an Arab–Israeli peace agreement necessarily means a withdrawal to the June 4, 1967 lines. This precedent was formed in the Camp David Israeli–Egyptian peace agreement, whereby Israel agreed to withdraw from all of the Sinai Peninsula. Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000 was also an expression of the understanding that retreating from territories necessarily means a withdrawal to the 1949 armistice lines.

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In 2005 as well, the disengagement reinforced this idea. However, this notion departs from Israel's initial position following the Six Day War on the interpretation of Security Council Resolution 242. Israel maintained that Security Council Resolution 242 requires Israel's withdrawal from "occupied territories," and not "the occupied territories." In other words, in the context of a peace agreement, Israel is not obligated to withdraw to the lines of June 4, 1967. However, in practical terms, Israel's withdrawals to the June 4 lines in the Sinai, the Lebanese border, and the Gaza Strip imply an endorsement of the demand that Israel withdraw to the armistice lines as part of a peace settlement.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, withdrawing IDF troops from the Gaza Strip, destroying the Jewish settlement there, and evacuating Israeli residents were supposed to bring about Israel's complete divestment of responsibility for the Gaza Strip and its residents. From this point onwards, so the plan's authors contended, the local residents would be their own lords and masters, choose the leadership they would desire, and bear responsibility for their actions, for better or for worse. Gaza, so it was explained, is a bottomless hole, an expanse of quicksand. Israel freed of responsibility for the Strip was a highly important strategic asset for the future development and prosperity of the State of Israel.¹⁰

Not a Divestment of Responsibility

In practice, these expectations were not realized. On paper, it seemed that removing IDF forces from the Strip, dismantling all Jewish settlements there, and moving the residents into the areas within the Green Line would allow a complete disengagement from the Gaza Strip and a divestment of all responsibility for it. As coined by Yitzhak Rabin and long echoed by Ehud Barak, the idea was, "We're here and they're there." The disengagement plan of April 18, 2004, stated: "The process of disengagement will serve to dispel claims regarding Israel's responsibility for the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip."¹¹

Five years later, it is clear that this expectation did not materialize. Rather, "We left Gaza, but Gaza didn't leave us" is the reality. The international community sees Israel and its government as bearing full responsibility for the Gaza Strip. Much of the Israeli public and leadership also acknowledge Israel's responsibility for the Strip, notwithstanding the protestations of those who think otherwise. And despite the myriad

of proposals in this regard, it seems that Israel has no practical way in which to divest itself of the Gaza Strip anytime soon.¹²

These developments will force Israel's leadership to act with redoubled care when it comes to future agreements on the Palestinian issue. The Oslo accords too looked promising on paper. At that time, the notion that they would lead to negotiations for a permanent peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians was prevalent. The reality, however, was very different. Violent confrontations broke out between the two sides, causing grave damage to both Israeli and Palestinian societies. The obvious conclusion is that in the Middle East planned agreements that look stable and balanced on paper, accompanied by stirring ceremonies and international fanfare, are liable – as has been proven – to produce disappointing and frustrating results that are very different from what we expect. This conclusion seems to have penetrated deeply into the present Israeli leadership and wide other political circles. It would necessarily create an obstacle on the way to a political agreement.

The Disengagement and Terrorism

The disengagement plan was spawned primarily by the intensive activity of Palestinian terrorist organizations against Israeli civilians and soldiers within the State of Israel and in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip during the intifada. However, the supporters of the disengagement enveloped the plan in layers of rhetoric to justify it on the basis of various claims. Usually terror was not mentioned as a cause for this process. Nonetheless, were it not for terrorism in the Gaza Strip in general and the Katif bloc in particular, or were calm to reign throughout the Strip, the disengagement plan would not have become a significant issue on Israel's public agenda and would certainly not have been implemented in practice. "Sharon," wrote the political analyst Ze'ev Schiff, "did not explain fully and in detail what was behind his about-face [which led to the disengagement plan]. The change took place because the wave of terrorism was unceasing despite the severe measures taken against the perpetrators." Former chief of staff Moshe Ya'alon also attributes the disengagement plan first and foremost to terrorism: "The possibility of taking a unilateral step," he says, "came up after the collapse of the ceasefire in the summer of 2003 because of shocking attacks by Hamas."¹³

Thus while terrorism was not the only reason for the disengagement and on its own was an insufficient condition, it was nonetheless an essential catalyst. Naturally, Israel in general and the security services in particular found it very difficult to admit openly that the disengagement was the result of the activity of Palestinian terrorist organizations against the State of Israel. Yet from late 2000, various terrorist elements attacked Israel's citizens and soldiers with a variety of methods, including suicide bombers, massive fire at citizens, booby-traps and car bombs, stabbings, and other physical attacks, and high trajectory fire across the borders. For a long time the IDF and other security services were at a loss in coming up with an effective response to this latter potent threat. Of particular concern were the suicide bombings. From the beginning of the second intifada until the implementation of the disengagement, more than one thousand people – civilians and security personnel – were killed. Thousands more were injured, physically and emotionally, with various degrees of severity.¹⁴

In addition to the large number of victims, it became clear that terrorism creates a new public agenda for Israeli society and fundamentally changes the way of life for Israel's citizens. The effect of the attacks was obvious both economically and in terms of morale. Many businesses closed down because of the dramatic drop in economic activity by Israelis, and foreign investments in Israeli projects decreased significantly. The attacks also affected the political scene in Israel. Terrorism remained a central issue in parliamentary elections as it had been for the previous two decades. The natural conclusion is that terrorism is more than a "nuisance" to the state. Rather, it is an element with far reaching internal and external strategic implications. It was certainly a factor (whose precise weight cannot be assessed) in the rise and fall of Israeli leaders during the same period.¹⁵

Over the years, two basic trends in dealing with terrorism emerged in Israel: one stressed the approach that a modern, democratic state based on regular army forces cannot tackle terrorist organizations successfully. From this perspective, prominent particularly in left wing circles in Israel, solving the problem of terrorism lies in a political settlement. The second trend, identified primarily with right wing circles in Israel, adopted an opposite approach, claiming that terrorist organizations, like all other organizations, operate rationally on the basis of cost versus

benefit considerations. Therefore, it is possible to deter them and even gain a decision against them.

In the years since the implementation of the disengagement and without any obvious connection to it, there has been a dramatic drop in terrorist organization activity, especially suicide bombers, within the State of Israel. Since 2007, the phenomenon has all but disappeared from the streets. This reality is contributing to a gradual change among widespread circles of the Israeli public, and entails a growing acceptance of the view that Israel succeeded in repressing the terrorist organizations and bringing about an almost total halt to their activities within their central cities, even absent a political settlement with the Palestinian Authority.

The reality of recent years allows us to determine that the terrorism phenomenon, especially suicide terrorism (as opposed to the Qassam rocket fire at Israeli population centers in the Negev), which was a central component in formulating the disengagement plan, has almost entirely faded from the scene as a significant element on Israel's agenda. Like any other victory, the victory against the terrorist organizations comes with a limited warranty, a fragile victory that in many ways is temporary. And yet it is a victory. Thus the motivation of both the public and Israel's leadership to choose the road of a political settlement, which would necessarily come with far reaching concessions, has decreased – though it is impossible to estimate exactly by how much – in light of the dramatic drop in terrorist activity. Here is an additional obstacle on the road to an Israeli–Palestinian peace agreement.

Land for Peace

Since the disengagement, in tandem with the disappearance of urban terrorism and largely as a result of it, there has been a steep rise in the phenomenon of high trajectory fire, particularly of Qassam rockets and mortar bombs, aimed at settlements in the Negev, in particular the city of Sderot. This prompted Israel to undertake Operation Cast Lead in late December 2008–early January 2009. Similar developments occurred following Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in May 2000. The conclusion drawn by large portions of the Israeli public and many political circles is that a withdrawal by Israel to the June 4, 1967 line is no guarantee of peace and tranquility as had long been thought.

There is no doubt that these developments were contrary to the hopes of the disengagement plan's authors, although they were careful in how they expressed their expectations of the disengagement. There was no attempt to foster unrealistic expectations of enduring peace as a result of the withdrawal. Sharon, who led the initiative, made it clear that he was not expecting the total disappearance of terror after implementation of the disengagement. He was talking in a much more modest manner, and in one of his speeches he stated: "The purpose of the disengagement plan is to reduce terror as much as possible, and grant Israeli citizens the maximum level of security."¹⁶

However, the disappointment and frustration that accompanied the escalation of violence in the Gaza Strip and on the Lebanese border strengthened the concerns over any further retreats. No Israeli leader can assure the Israeli public that a withdrawal from territory would reduce the security threats to Israel. This point is repeatedly stressed by Prime Minister Netanyahu and other government ministers in order to explain the supreme caution that now drives Israel's positions vis-à-vis the Palestinians. This reality raises the level of the already-existing obstacles on the road to an Israeli-Palestinian settlement.

The Split in the PA

Another result of the disengagement plan was the establishment of the Hamas regime in the Gaza Strip, a significant obstacle on the road to an Israeli-Palestinian agreement. It deepened the political and territorial split, and to a great extent also the emotional and economic split between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This split has been – and continues to be, albeit at a lower profile – accompanied by a blood-soaked struggle whose signs and residues are still clearly visible. All attempts at reconciliation in order to foster renewed unity between the two entities have come to naught. As far as anyone can tell, this split will continue for the foreseeable future.

The first significance of the split is that the pretension of the PA, located in Ramallah, to represent the Palestinian people as a whole is without any foundation. At best, it represents its own constituency. There can be no real Palestinian state without the Gaza Strip, and the PA cannot represent the Gaza Strip.

There are more than a few circles within the Israeli national leadership that view this split as a highly important strategic asset to the State of Israel. In their estimate, the split helps to foil the chance for the establishment of a Palestinian state that would of necessity cut through Israel's width by means of a land corridor and perhaps even by an aerial one at a later stage. Should a Palestinian state nevertheless be established in the territory of Judea and Samaria alone, it would necessarily be a crippled one – small, split, and without access to the sea. Its dependence on Israel would be enormous.

In addition, by its very existence the Hamas regime makes it difficult for the PA to modify its positions on Israel in negotiations over a political settlement. The PA operates under severe concerns of being accused by Hamas of collaboration with Israel. The willingness of PA leader Abu Mazen to hold direct negotiations with Netanyahu without any preconditions, i.e., without Israel acceding to his demand to freeze construction in the Jewish settlements in the West Bank, is already under heavy fire by Hamas and the other radical organizations. This will require Abu Mazen to harden his positions in any negotiations over a settlement. This too is a significant obstacle on the road to an Israeli-Palestinian settlement.

IDF Withdrawal from the West Bank

The reserved conduct of the PA under Abu Mazen's leadership over the renewal of the negotiations for a political settlement with Israel cannot but arouse bafflement. PA leaders are realistic enough to understand that every day that passes without a settlement with Israel strengthens Israel's hold on the territories. In practice, an irreversible reality is being – or has already been – created that will make it very difficult to establish a sustainable Palestinian state in the West Bank, and perhaps even neutralizes such a possibility altogether.

In light of this, it may be that the PA's conduct stems from concerns about the ramifications that a settlement with Israel would have, first and foremost the withdrawal of IDF troops from Judea and Samaria. In recent years, IDF forces labored to deflate the power of Hamas and the other radical organizations in the West Bank that threaten not only Israel but also the PA leadership. The absence of IDF troops on the West Bank would necessarily enhance the possibility of Hamas' gaining power

there. It appears that the PA does not now and will not soon have the capability of dealing with radical Palestinian organizations.

If a settlement with Israel is reached and IDF troops withdraw from the West Bank, no power will be able to stop Hamas from taking over, eliminating the PA regime, and perhaps even physically harming the PA's leaders. It is obvious that no PA leader is going to acknowledge openly the PA's willingness to preserve the Israeli military presence in the West Bank for the immediate future. However, this may be a secret wish of the PA, or of some individuals in it, which would explain in part the overt reluctance of PA leaders to engage in any activity that would promote a peace settlement with Israel. It may well be that senior personnel in the PA have reservations about an arrangement with Israel because in their heart of hearts they worry about being put at risk. Here too is another obstacle on the road to a political settlement with Israel.

Enforcing the Demilitarization

The Hamas regime in the Gaza Strip and the ongoing confrontations finally led Israel to the decision to strengthen the blockade on the Gaza Strip in order to apply economic pressure to Hamas and prevent arms smuggling to the Strip. Although Israel has all the means necessary to impose a blockade, enforcing it in practice entails many difficulties, some operational and logistical, others political, legal, and PR-related. The Turkish flotilla episode was a strong manifestation of the difficulties underlying the blockade's enforcement, and will likely lead Israel to harden its positions regarding every aspect of security arrangements to ensure the demilitarization of the Palestinian state, should it ever be established.¹⁷

The prime minister already made repeated reference to this in his statements prior to his May 2010 trip to the United States and during his stay there, while stressing the need for the most exacting security arrangements in order to ensure the demilitarization of the Palestinian state. This likely means, inter alia, that Israel will not be prepared to leave so critical an issue in the hands of international troops or even NATO forces. It is almost certain that Israel would insist that IDF troops supervise the demilitarization of the Palestinian state, perhaps in some sort of conjunction with foreign forces. The PA would likely find it extraordinarily difficult to accept a demand for an IDF presence on

the PA's borders after a peace agreement. It would be tantamount to a flagrant violation of its sovereignty. Here, then, is yet another obstacle; it is not clear how it would be possible to overcome it.¹⁸

US Credibility

In discussions with the Bush administration prior to the implementation of the disengagement plan, unprecedented strategic understandings were reached. These were expressed in letters from President Bush to Prime Minister Sharon on April 14, 2004, and in the exchange of letters between the director general of the Prime Minister's Office, Dov Weisglass, and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. As part of these understandings, it was agreed that the United States would: (a) continue to endorse the Roadmap, and would do everything in its power to prevent the imposition of any other plan on Israel; (b) express its recognition of Israel's right to retain independent deterrence (this almost certainly is a reference to the nuclear option); (c) recognize Israel's right to keep settlement blocs in Judea and Samaria as part of an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement. At the same time, more localized understandings were reached with regard to continued construction in the Jewish settlements in the West Bank.¹⁹

Since assuming office the Obama administration has deviated from these understandings to one degree or another. First, it explicitly placed on the agenda the option that the Obama administration will present the sides with its own plan for a settlement and seek to impose it on the sides. At this point it is unclear to what extent this plan is concrete, if it exists at all. However, the very raising of such an option is a deviation from the understandings Israel had with the Bush administration. Second, on the nuclear issue too, there seems to have been some erosion. At this point, the degree of change in the American administration's longstanding commitment to Israel's right to maintain independent deterrence cannot be determined. Finally, regarding the Jewish settlements, the Obama administration initially denied the existence of any understandings. Although it was subsequently forced to admit their existence, the administration demanded the formulation of a different document of understanding.²⁰

This policy compels Israel to relate to future American commitments and guarantees in the context of a peace agreement with a certain degree of suspicion. The Netanyahu government's reserved attitude to the "letter

of guarantees” sent to Israel by President Obama as an offer in exchange for continuing the construction freeze is likely a concrete manifestation of the doubts that are prevalent among Israel’s leaders about the credibility of the American administration. These doubts too are an obstacle on the road to an agreement.

Conclusion

One basic purpose of the disengagement plan was to promote the possibility of an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement on the basis of the two-state solution, according to the parameters of an agreement formulated by the administrations of Presidents Clinton and Bush. This essay has dealt only with the political and security aspects of the disengagement plan, and has not explored the inadequate rehabilitation of the Katif bloc evacuees, which presents an additional obstacle to an Israeli-Palestinian agreement requiring massive evacuation of settlements. Yet in any event, the disengagement plan, the manner of its implementation, and subsequent events created a completely different reality than the one the authors of the disengagement had envisioned. The bottom line is a decline in the chances for formulating an Israeli-Palestinian settlement any time soon.

Notes

- 1 The Gaza Strip is 365 sq km. The population density is 25,400 people per sq km; in the refugee camps, the number is 50,478 per sq km.
- 2 Prime Minister Sharon’s speech in the Knesset, October 25, 2004, <http://www.knesset.gov.il/docs/eng/sharonspeech04.htm>.
- 3 On the preparations for implementing the disengagement plan, see Yagil Levy, “The Entrenched Army: IDF Success in Executing the Disengagement,” in Yaakov Bar Siman Tov (ed.), *The Disengagement Plan: Idea and Reality* (Konrad Adenauer Foundation and Jerusalem Institute for Israel Studies, 2009), pp. 148-69.
- 4 Prime Minister Sharon’s speech at the Herzliya Conference, December 18, 2003, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2003/Address+by+PM+Ariel+Sharon+at+the+Fourth+Herzliya.htm>.
- 5 Prime Minister Sharon’s speech at the Herzliya Conference, 2003.
- 6 See Hanan Greenberg, “Mofaz: We proved we are capable of painful concessions,” *Ynet*, August 24, 2005.
- 7 Prime Minister Sharon’s statement at the Israel Business Convention, December 5, 2005, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2005/PM%20Sharon%20addresses%20Israel%20%20>

- Business%20Conference%202005-Dec-2005. See also Meron Benvenisti, "This is how Israel Became a Bi-national State," *Haaretz*, January 23, 2010.
- 8 On the disengagement plan as a precedent for other withdrawals, see the Israel Democracy Institute, "Round Table Discussion: The Social and Economic Implications of the Disengagement," June 22, 2005, http://www.idi.org.il/events1/RoundTableDiscussion/Pages/Events_RT_Forum_71.aspx.
 - 9 See Ari Shavit, "Eiland: The Disengagement – a Historic Blunder; the Retreat will not Lead to Stability," *Haaretz*, June 4, 2006. One of the leading proponents of this approach was Haim Ramon. See Aluf Benn, "The Knesset Says Goodbye to Haim Ramon: The Man who Thought but didn't Do," *Haaretz*, July 4, 2009.
 - 10 On end of responsibility for the Gaza Strip as a result of the disengagement, see "End of Responsibility for Gaza," *Policy Products*, Reut Institute, September 29, 2005.
 - 11 "The Disengagement Plan – General Outline," <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Reference+Documents/Disengagement+Plan+-+General+Outline.htm>.
 - 12 Even after Israel completed the disengagement from 21 settlements in the Gaza Strip, official Palestinian spokespeople continued to claim that the disengagement from the Gaza Strip changed essentially nothing, and that as far as they were concerned, Gaza remains under occupation. According to the website of the PA's Foreign Ministry, the PA's chairman declared the following on July 7, 2005: "The legal status of the territories that Israel is supposed to vacate has not changed." See Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, August 2005.
 - 13 Ze'ev Schiff, "Arik Sharon: Errata and Annotations," *Haaretz*, February 3, 2006. On Ya'alon's remarks, see Moshe Ya'alon, "Disengagement from Truth and Reality," *Maariv*, February 24, 2006. Brig. Gen. Eival Giladi, among the leaders of the disengagement, in an interview with *Maariv*, said that the disengagement plan took shape in his mind after the murder of Minister Rehavam ("Gandhi") Ze'evi on October 17, 2001. Ben Caspit, "This is how the Disengagement Plan was Hatched," *Maariv*, July 16, 2005.
 - 14 See the General Security Service analysis of terrorist attacks in the last decade, on the website p://wserv.bgu.ac.il/attach/DecadeSummary_he.pdf?sid=&mbbox=INBOX&charset=escaped_unicode&uid=26667&number=4&filename=DecadeSummary_he.pdf.
 - 15 Mazal Muallem, "The Voices of War," *Haaretz*, January 4, 2009.
 - 16 See Prime Minister Sharon's speech at the Herzliya Conference, December 18, 2003. At the same time the outgoing head of the GSS, Avi Dichter, assessed that the disengagement plan would not generate any change in the security situation. See also Amos Harel, "Avi Dichter Supports the Disengagement," *Haaretz*, June 10, 2005.

- 17 On the issue of enforcing the demilitarization, see Zaki Shalom, "The Cloud's Silver Linings: The Flotilla to Gaza," *INSS Insight* No. 189, June 23, 2010, at <http://www.inss.org.il/publications.php?cat=21&incat=&read=4180>.
- 18 See Zaki Shalom, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Netanyahu and Direct Talks with the Palestinians," *INSS Insight* No. 192, July 19, 2010, <http://www.inss.org.il/publications.php?cat=21&incat=&read=4247>.
- 19 Sharon, the Herzliya Conference. Also see Sharon's speech to the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, New York, May 22, 2005. See also exchange of letters between Prime Minister Sharon and President Bush, April 14, 2004, on the website of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs at <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Peace+Process/Reference+Documents/Exchange+of+letters+Sharon-Bush+14-Apr-2004.htm>. Regarding understandings about the settlements, see Elliot Abrams, "Hillary Is Wrong About the Settlements The U.S. and Israel reached a clear understanding about natural growth," *Wall Street Journal*, June 26, 2009.
- 20 See Zaki Shalom, "US-Israel Relations: Approaching a Turning Point?" *Strategic Assessment* 13, no. 1 (2010): 21-33.