

Confidence Building Measures and the Revival of Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations: Thinking Out of the Box

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Forecasters are predicting a stormy season in the Middle East. In September 2011, Israel may experience a political tempest when the UN General Assembly is expected to recognize a sovereign Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders. On the international arena, the recognition of an independent Palestinian state is liable, in Defense Minister Ehud Barak's words, to be accompanied by "a political tsunami," if economic and diplomatic sanctions are taken against Israel or charges are brought against senior Israelis in various international courts, should Israel be cast as invading the sovereign territory of a neighboring state. Extreme scenarios envision a widespread popular uprising among the Palestinians in the territories and the diaspora, encouraged by the winds of change blowing from the Arab spring.

Some claim that the ominous scenarios for September are overstated and that even if the UN recognizes a Palestinian state, the implications for Israel will be fairly limited. Nonetheless, among decision makers in Israel there is a sense that the status quo is untenable and Israel cannot sit idly by in light of the upheavals in its political environment, even if these are not necessarily expected to peak this coming September. As Barak stated: "Israeli inaction is deepening its isolation, such that it risks being left with nothing: the train proceeds toward a destination that is not good for Israel, and Israel is missing the opportunity to change the route."¹

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Thus, the prevailing difference of opinion among Israel's decision makers is not whether, rather how, Israel ought to respond to developments. However, the discourse over Israel's available options has not progressed much: to a very large extent, the alternatives currently debated are rehashed versions of familiar formulae that have been long promoted by various ideological factions (so far, fruitlessly). These formulae range from calling for efforts to conclude a permanent settlement immediately (qualified by reservations that implementation of the said settlement would be gradual and depend on developments on the ground; such an approach was promoted by opposition leader Tzipi Livni and Defense Minister Barak²), through proposals for interim agreements (such as a plan for a Palestinian state within temporary borders, proposed by Member of Knesset Shaul Mofaz), to demands for an aggressive move that would stress the firmness of Israel's positions, such as declaring the Oslo Accords null and void (Foreign Minister Avifdor Lieberman³) or annexing Judea and Samaria to the sovereign territory of the State of Israel (as per ideas by Uzi Landau, Danny Danon, and others⁴).

For its part, the PA leadership is also looking for an outlet that would allow it to demonstrate significant progress towards ending the Israeli occupation before the September ultimatum. The main concern is that if this time-constrained diplomatic move does not yield the breakthrough the PA promised its electorate, the Palestinian public might despair of the political route heralded by the PLO and transfer its support to the alternative of armed resistance represented by Hamas. Therefore, the Palestinian leadership, like Israel, is interested in preventing the stormy weather by means of a significant political move.

This essay is an attempt to expand the range of alternatives available to the parties in their respective political toolboxes. The starting assumptions for the discussion are: (a) as a result of political pressures both leaderships are working towards finding an immediate creative exit strategy from the political deadlock; (b) both leaderships are finding it hard to commit to all the details of a permanent settlement due to pressure by coalition hardliners and uncertainty about the broader strategic environment, i.e., the ramifications of the "Arab spring"; and (c) in the long term, both leaderships identify the two-state solution as the

most reasonable framework for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a way that would serve the fundamental interests of both sides.

On the basis of these assumptions, the essay proposes an alternate model of political interim moves based on confidence building measures, while differing with Israeli policymakers over the traditional interpretation of this idea.

Confidence Building Measures: Updating Parameters

The notion of “confidence building measures” has acquired a bad name in the annals of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and come to mean a tactic that helps Israel drag its feet while projecting the image of peace rejectionists onto the Palestinians. One of the reasons for the negative connotation associated with this political tool may be the incompatibility between the contents of the confidence building measures and the stage of their implementation in the chronology of the political process.

In the Israeli-Palestinian political process, extensive and effective use was made of two traditional types of confidence building measures. One was the formulation of mechanisms for security coordination designed to prevent an escalation of violence – when it was compatible with the interests of both sides.⁵ A second type of confidence building measure in the history of the process was Israel’s unilateral gestures designed to increase the Palestinians’ trust in negotiations by making the “fruits of peace” apparent in their daily lives, such as fewer roadblocks, economic incentives, and the release of political prisoners. Steps of this type do in fact represent important building blocks in the process of stabilizing relations between adversaries and managing the level of violence. However, given the point in time at which the political process finds itself today, where the political and public dialogue on both sides is focused on disagreements over the very vision of settling the conflict and narrowing the divide between the sides, steps of this sort are something of an anachronism. At this stage, political moves that avoid any direct effect on the end point of the negotiations, including the familiar gestures in Israel’s political repertoire, send a message of inertia, if not regression, regarding whatever mutual trust there is, as each side questions the other’s desire to arrive at a settlement.

Accordingly, therefore, confidence building measures that strive to demonstrate progress in the political process at its current developmental

stage must reflect the sides' willingness to compromise on the deepest points of contention and prepare the ground for negotiations over the permanent agreement, while avoiding a fundamental change in the status quo before the sides are ripe to make that change.

Lessons from the Construction Freeze

A typical example of a confidence building measure designed to respond to issues on the agenda in the conflict resolution stage concerned the Palestinian demand for an Israeli freeze on construction beyond the Green Line. Encouragement of construction and development in Judea, Samaria, and the Gaza Strip by the Israeli government even after the official talks began about the establishment of an autonomous Palestinian entity in these areas made the Palestinians doubt the sincerity of Israel's conciliatory declarations. A construction freeze was demanded in order to show Israel's understanding that its presence in the territories is temporary and that it embraces the objective of the negotiations: dividing the land into two states.

However, that which was seen by the Palestinian side (as well as by the international community) as a gesture that does not exceed a shared preliminary premise underlying the political process was perceived by Israel as an essential concession of a central point of contention, or at least of a bargaining chip that if conceded must be met with significant recompense. The political pressure that was brought to bear on the Israeli government to oppose the construction freeze stemmed less from its direct results (the temporary setback to the routine of life of residents in the territories) and more from the future political moves it was foreshadowing – i.e., signaling an Israeli willingness to retreat from this area. Therefore, only heavy American pressure moved Netanyahu to be the first Israeli prime minister who agreed to suspend construction in the territories for a period of ten months⁶ (though not in Jerusalem) as a condition for resuming direct political negotiations. It was for the same reason that he refused to extend the construction freeze beyond the end of the declared period, despite a generous compensation package that the Obama administration offered Israel in exchange.⁷ Perhaps this outcome is not surprising, as moves touching on the most sensitive issues of the conflict are bound to arouse protest. Nonetheless, it is also possible to

extract some valuable lessons from the failure of the freeze proposal that might reduce opposition to a move of this sort.

First, because the purpose of the move was to build trust between the parties about the capability of their partners to “deliver the goods” required by a permanent settlement, it is likely that planning a reciprocal gesture between the immediate parties to the conflict rather than a unilateral gesture (and not rewarded by a third party, in this case the United States) would help elicit the requisite public and political support. Even if a mediator was involved to help coordinate the move, the gestures included must apply to the parties themselves.

Second, the gestures by the two sides require a certain symmetry. If freezing construction in Judea and Samaria was tantamount to Israel declaring that it accepts the claim that Judea and Samaria, seen as the cradle of the Jewish homeland, are disputed territories, the American administration’s proposal to compensate for the freeze with a package of benefits, primarily a valuable squadron of planes, could have been seen as an attempt to bribe Israel to compromise its values and a commercialization of the commitment to the homeland. A Palestinian move that would reflect a conciliatory message with regard to the core issues to which the Palestinians attribute similar weight might have made such measures easier to effect. For example, when Netanyahu was asked to chart a course that would result in his agreeing to extend the construction freeze, he made his assent conditional on a symbolic gesture: Palestinian recognition of Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people.⁸

However, the question of Palestinian recognition of the Jewish nature of Israel is still one of the issues in the negotiations where the gap between the sides is substantial, and therefore the demand to implement it as a preliminary gesture for the negotiations is currently impossible. Thus, a third lesson of the “freeze failure” is that a confidence building measure at this point in the political process must relate to the sensitive issues, but in a creative fashion that will not arouse sweeping opposition. Finally, another weakness in the freeze proposal was the a priori determination of an

Reciprocal confidence building measures displaying the readiness of both sides to be flexible on the core issues form an alternative currently not in the parties’ respective political toolboxes.

end point (ten months). It should have been possible to foresee that not meeting the deadlines for a full agreement (or at least achieving a significant breakthrough in the negotiations by the deadline) would result in a termination of the talks.

“Voluntary Relocation” in Exchange for “Voluntary Rehabilitation”

The objective of confidence building measures at the conflict resolution stage is to touch on the gaps between the positions in a creative manner that allows the sides to prove both their willingness to undertake significant steps to promote a permanent settlement and their ability to honor these steps over time. They are similar to sending up trial balloons that put the parties’ declarations about their commitment to the process to the test of practice.

A proposal that may help thaw the political freeze, given the current limiting political and strategic circumstances, calls for the two governments, even before they return to the negotiating table, to simultaneously undertake parallel moves. The Israeli government will pass a Voluntary Evacuation-Compensation Law that allows residents of Judea and Samaria in a defined area (for example, east of the security barrier) to be compensated for their assets in exchange for relocating to inside the Green Line (and stipulating that once the law is enacted, any Israeli citizen who chooses to move into the said defined area will not be eligible for compensation). In tandem, the Palestinians will ratify a decision that allows the relevant international mechanisms to offer Palestinian refugees (recognized as such by UNRWA⁹) an arrangement of voluntary resettlement: they would receive assistance in rebuilding their lives in their current country of residence or other countries (other than Israel) plus generous monetary compensation in return for giving up their status as refugees (and thus the right to make any future personal claims).

This proposal relates to claims seen by each of the sides as necessary starting conditions for any agreement based on the two-state principle: from the Palestinian side, the demand to establish an independent state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and from the Israeli side, the demand that the Palestinian refugee issue be settled outside the borders of the State of Israel (barring a willingness to consider accepting a symbolic number of refugees inside Israel proper). The vast majority on either

side of the conflict views these issues as absolute red lines. Without an agreement over them, the sides would sooner continue the conflict than compromise.

Furthermore, the parties' threshold conditions regarding these two demands have in principle received positive responses (whether publicly or tacitly) from their respective partners: Netanyahu expressed his commitment to the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel in his September 2009 Bar-Ilan speech, and repeated his commitment to a vision that includes significant territorial withdrawals (excluding the settlement blocs) in his political speeches in May 2011.¹⁰ For its part, the leadership of the PLO, both in secret discussions between the sides (revealed by the al-Jazeera leaks¹¹) and in public political documents, noted its acceptance of Israel's reservation regarding the right of return in practice. For example, in an official document written by a PA support team for negotiations, which defines the PA's positions on all the core issues with regard to the permanent settlement and was made public on a PA ministry website (translated into a number of languages), the PA's position on the refugees is defined as follows:

A just solution to the refugee issue must address two aspects: the right of return and reparations..... Israel's recognition of the right of return will pave the way to negotiating how that right will be implemented. Choice is a critical part of the process...Compensation must be made for property that cannot be restituted (or if the refugee chooses compensation in lieu of restitution).¹²

In addition, there is fairly broad agreement even within the international community about the outlines for a permanent solution on the two issues: consistent pressure is exerted on Israel to commit to a withdrawal to the 1967 borders with corrections and land swaps around the Jewish settlement blocs, and despite the lack of concrete pressure on the Palestinian side about the refugees, official declarations indicate the support of the international community, headed by the United States, for the position that the issue must be resolved outside the borders of the State of Israel.¹³

The two issues described above touch on the very heart of the conflict, but at the same time there is a basic sphere of agreement about the fundamental principles of their resolution. Therefore, simultaneous moves that reflect the parties' commitment to implement these

principles would broadcast a clear message that the two sides recognize the compromises that will be required by the final settlement, while avoiding a steep political toll in the short term. Legislation officially defines government policy but its realization in practice is voluntary and leaves the right to choose in the hands of those who would be personally affected (a right representing a central basic condition in the Palestinian vision of resolving the refugee issue) and provides immediate tangible compensation for those who choose to accept it; for some, the financial compensation is significant, and even crucial. Such a policy would cushion the personal and public shock that attends forcible moves of this type. International funds that would be established to support the goal (where the money belonging to the parties to the conflict would also be deposited¹⁴) would be able to help finance the costs of both moves, and directorates of external experts (e.g., the UN) would be in charge of allocating compensation to individuals and coordinating the resettlement with the nations that agree to take in refugees. One could expect that some of the host nations, first and foremost Lebanon, would, out of internal political reasons, refuse to naturalize and resettle refugees on their sovereign land. Still, because the program is voluntary and would be realized in its first stage by a limited number of refugees, it is reasonable to think that it will be possible to offer alternate solutions to those interested, such as resettlement in Western nations (along the lines

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of the significant assistance in absorbing Iraqi refugees in recent years¹⁵). In fact, it may be that the political crises threatening the stability of regimes in the Arab world would actually strengthen their interest in participating in the resettlement process, as it would generate an influx of significant funds that would solidify the economies of the host nations. This advantage is of particular importance in states such as Jordan where most of the refugee population already has local citizenship.

Detailed planning of the apparatus and budgets that would be required to implement the two moves have been analyzed several times in studies over the past two decades and shown to be feasible.¹⁶ The voluntary aspect of the moves could serve as a test run

for examining over time the effectiveness of the apparatus proposed on a relatively small sampling of those signing up for the compensation plan, before any sweeping implementation as part of a permanent settlement.

Recruiting Public and Political Legitimacy

The ideas of monetary compensation in exchange for foregoing refugee status or residency in Judea and Samaria are not new: both may be found in the political discourse of both sides to the conflict since the beginning of the political process. Nonetheless, because of their symbolism and ramifications for the permanent settlement, these proposals have so far been rejected, largely due to the pressure exerted by the hawkish factions on both sides.

On the Israeli side, the “Home Redemption Law” for voluntary evacuation of settlement residents was placed on the Knesset table several times between 2005 and 2009, and today the NGO Blue White Future (among its founders is former minister Ami Ayalon) is promoting an effort to enact it as a unilateral Israeli move. However the effort has yet to receive sufficient parliamentary support.¹⁷ By contrast, a large majority of the Israeli public supports such an arrangement: public opinion surveys conducted in 2007 and 2009 show that nearly 80 percent of Israelis support a voluntary evacuation compensation law even absent a signed peace treaty.¹⁸

On the Palestinian side of the equation, the picture is somewhat more complex. The humanitarian resettlement of refugees and their personal compensation has been a central component in the vision of the Palestinians and Arab states since 1949, but these are seen as being tied in a Gordian knot to the political and moral settlement of the issue, i.e., the physical resettlement of the refugees can take place only as part of realizing the right of return. Moreover, while in the negotiations the political leadership has modified its demand for mass return to Israel to symbolic recognition of the right of return as a moral principle, no steps have been taken to prepare the Palestinian public for the possibility that their demand to return to their homes will not be realized. The Palestinian leadership even promotes the rhetoric of the uncompromising right of return in all public reference to the issue.¹⁹ Hence, the Palestinian side will have to cross two very difficult bridges in order to realize the proposed move: one, separating the personal resettlement of refugees from the

political resolution of the issue; two, breaking the taboo forbidding a public debate about compromising the right of return. Because the issue of the refugees lies at the very heart of the Palestinian national narrative, the challenge is significant. On the other hand, precisely because of this, the very act of starting the public debate on the issue indicates that the Palestinians are committed to the process.

Palestinians may fear that resettling the refugees would undermine their insistence on both recognition of the moral basis to their demand and requisite compensation for the moral wrong. Israel's concern is that enacting a voluntary evacuation law would weaken Israel's claim in the negotiations to rights in Judea and Samaria.²⁰ In order to allay these concerns, the confidence building measure could be supplemented by a declaration by both sides that would distinguish this step from the negotiations over the permanent settlement. Such a declaration could establish that the confidence building measure is designed to provide a solution to the existential and humanitarian needs of *individuals* on either side of the conflict, and in no way ends the demand for recognizing the *collective national* rights linked to the issues under discussion and the negotiations for a political settlement, which would constitute a central paragraph in the agenda of the talks once they open. On the one hand, such a declaration could help those considering voluntary evacuation and resettlement without being accused of treason against national goals. On the other hand, implementing the proposed confidence building measure would ease the negotiations over the collective and symbolic issues later in the process because it would reduce the threat inherent in the implementation of these demands (the right of return or the settlement enterprise).

In light of the public and political sensitivity of the issues under discussion, public opinion surveys measuring the willingness of the target populations to respond favorably to such arrangements are rare, but the few examples that exist indicate potential for their success. For example, a survey conducted in late 2007 in Judea and Samaria at the behest of Haim Ramon, then Deputy to Prime Minister Olmert, found that 25,000-30,000 of the Israelis living east of the separation fence would favor voluntary relocation in exchange for financial compensation that would allow them to resettle west of the Green Line. A more recent survey conducted in March 2010 showed that of the 80,000 residents

east of the fence, some 16 percent (about 13,000) would respond to such an initiative (the differences depend, inter alia, on the political context at the time the surveys were carried out, but the numbers nonetheless represent a significant segment of the 80,000-120,000 Israelis expected to be evacuated from their homes in the context of the permanent settlement, according to the various outlines of territorial division under discussion).²¹ Even the Head of the Judea and Samaria Council, Danny Dayan, referring to the voluntary evacuation-compensation bill in a secret conversation with an American diplomat leaked to the media by Wikileaks, admitted that, "I'm an economist, and I know that some people will take it if the price is right."²²

Surveys of the responses of Palestinian refugees to the principle of voluntary resettlement are even more rare because of the great sensitivity of the issue in the Palestinian public debate. The most comprehensive survey made public was carried out by the Palestinian research institute led by Dr. Khalil Shikaki in 2003-2004 among refugee communities in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Lebanon, and Jordan. Respondents were asked to indicate their preferred choice of five alternatives mentioned in the context of resettling the refugees within the context of a peace treaty: returning to Israel; naturalization in the Palestinian state and compensation for lost property and suffering; moving to areas in the State of Israel to be transferred to the Palestinian state in land swaps plus compensation; naturalization, resettlement and compensation in their current country of residence; or immigrating to another country and resettling there, with compensation. Only 10 percent of respondents preferred returning to Israel. Other than the remaining 13 percent who rejected all options and the 5 percent who refused to answer the question, all the respondents chose options that involved monetary compensation and resettlement in countries other than Israel.²³ While this survey touched on refugee preferences in the context of a full peace treaty, it still suggests that at least a part of this population would be open to monetary compensation that allows them to climb the socioeconomic ladder, were this arrangement to be defined as separate from the process of settling the political and narrative dispute over the issue.

Nonetheless, there is no doubt that the confidence building measures discussed herein would arouse protest among those opposed to compromise on both sides of the conflict. In light of the current deep crisis

of trust between the sides, the probability of their being implemented is not high. Nonetheless, even if such a reciprocal move would be proposed and not accepted, the very proposal as a political initiative is likely to relax Israel's current image of refusing negotiations and diffuse some of the diplomatic pressures exerted on it. In addition, because the positions on the two issues are seen as fundamental conditions necessary for any settlement, a refusal to engage in a reciprocal move on these issues would provide clear indication that the sides are not ready for starting serious negotiations. Such a failure, disappointing as it might be, would at least make it clear to those involved in the political process that the current conditions require a paradigm shift from conflict resolution efforts to better conflict management options.

On the other hand, a successful reciprocal confidence building measure such as the one described above has significance on a number of levels. In the domestic circle, the move would be an important step in readying the hearts of both electorates for a possible permanent settlement. The core issues of the conflict are, first and foremost, political issues, whose resolution is being checked to a large extent by the lack of public legitimacy. Therefore, preparing the public in Israel for the idea that it will not be able to fulfill its historic rights to all of the land of Israel, and preparing the Palestinian public for the idea that it will not be able to fulfill its right of return are important for strengthening the pragmatic elements in both societies and increasing the flexibility potential of the leaders at the negotiating table. In the bilateral circle, should the sides succeed in passing the test of action represented by these steps, a test of special significance for the Palestinian unity government to be established, a clear message will be sent to the negotiations partner that the parties are committed to the two-state vision and painful ideological compromises stemming from that vision. This message will allow the reopening of the door to the negotiations before it is completely shut. In the broader circle, an arrangement of the kind proposed herein would strengthen the trust of the international community in the willingness of both sides to work towards an agreement. All of this would be possible while minimizing any immediate political risks.

The current uncertainty regarding the political and strategic environments of the parties to the conflict calls for a creative move that would allow the leaderships to carry out a trial run, which would examine

the readiness of the two sides to take historic decisions that could lead to a resolution of the conflict without immediately committing to the terms of the permanent settlement. This essay has proposed a preliminary idea that could be added to the political toolbox: reciprocal confidence building measures displaying the readiness of the sides to be flexible on the core issues on the negotiating table. The continuing erosion of the Israeli-Palestinian political process, now nearing its twentieth anniversary mark, is evidence of the urgent need to widen the set of oft recycled political paradigms and instead challenge leaders to think outside the box about additional political tools, whether as responses to current challenges or measures for future opportunities.

Notes

- 1 Ehud Barak, speech at the conference "The Political Process in a Changing Strategic Environment," Institute for National Security Studies, Tel Aviv, March 13, 2011, <http://www.inss.org.il/heb/events.php?cat=337&incat=&read=5000>.
- 2 See, e.g., speeches by Livni and Barak at "The Political Process in a Changing Strategic Environment."
- 3 Ronen Medzini, "Lieberman: The September Declaration: The End of the Oslo Accords," *Ynet*, June 17, 2011.
- 4 MK Danny Danon, "Making the Land of Israel Whole," *New York Times*, May 18 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/19/opinion/19Danon.html?ntemail=y&_r=1&emc=tnt&pagewanted=print; Pinhas Wolf, "The Likud Hamstringing Netanyahu: 'We'll Annex the Jewish Settlements,'" *Walla*, May 16, 2011, at <http://m.walla.co.il/ExpandedItem.aspx?WallaId=1/1/1823824&ItemType=100&VerticalId=2>.
- 5 Gabriel Ben-Dor, David Dewitt, eds., "Introduction," *Confidence Building Measures in the Middle East* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 3-29; Yair Evron, *Confidence Building Measures in the Israeli-Arab Context*, The Steinmetz Center for Peace Studies, Tel Aviv University, 1995.
- 6 The construction freeze was in effect from November 2009 until September 2010.
- 7 The package included the United States promise of casting a veto on any anti-Israel UN Security Council resolution proposal for a full year, supporting Israel's security demands in the political negotiations, and giving a squadron of F-35 advanced fighter jets worth \$3 billion, all in exchange for extending the construction freeze by 90 days. Barak Ravid and Natasha Mozgovaya, "U.S. Offers Israel Warplanes in Return for New Settlement Freeze," *Haaretz*, November 14, 2010, at <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/u-s-offers-israel-warplanes-in-return-for-new-settlement-freeze-1.324496>.

- 8 Roni Sofer, "Netanyahu: Freeze in Exchange for Recognition of Jewish State," *Ynet*, October 11, 2010, at <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3967765,00.html>.
- 9 As of June 2011, UNRWA registers list some 4,820,229 refugees, with close to 2 million of these living within the West Bank and Gaza Strip and another 2 million in Jordan. See Statistics at the UNRWA website at <http://www.unrwa.org/etemplate.php?id=253>.
- 10 Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech before the American Congress, May 24, 2011, http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2011/Speech_PM_Netanyahu_US_Congress_24-May-2011.htm; and Prime Minister Netanyahu's speech to the Knesset, May 16, 2011, <http://sni-purl.com/25y9o>.
- 11 Barak Ravid, "In 2008 Livni Proposed Transfer of Control of Israeli Arab Villages to the PA," *Haaretz*, January 24, 2011, at <http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasite/spages/1211318.html>.
- 12 PLO Negotiations Affairs Department, *Negotiations Primer*, 2011, pp. 33-34, http://www.nad-plo.org/userfiles/file/primer_english_020311.pdf. The principle of compensation and resettlement of Palestinian refugees is common and accepted also within the Israeli right wing, which calls for promoting it separately and before negotiations over the resolution of the conflict, as part of a process to lessen the tensions between the sides. This project was promoted by an organization called Hayozma Hayisraelit (The Israeli Initiative), founded by Benny Alon <http://www.hayozma.org/Index.aspx>. Alon even succeeded in establishing a lobby in the Knesset that included MKs from the right and left of the political spectrum, designed to promote a humanitarian resolution to the refugee problem. See Pinhas Wolf, "First Time in Knesset: Lobby for Palestinian Refugees," *Walla*, July 29, 2008, at <http://news.walla.co.il/?w=9/1321212>.
- 13 This was true of the Clinton outline in 2000 and of Bush's letter to Sharon: "As part of a final peace agreement, Israel must have secure and recognized borders...In light of new realities on the ground, including already existing major Israeli population centers, it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949." Bush also declared that the solution to the refugee problem must be based on their settlement in the future Palestinian state "rather than in Israel." See <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2004/04/20040414-3.html>.
- 14 Throughout the entire history of the issue, Israel has expressed its willingness to help compensate the refugees and resettle them, from the Lausanne Conference convened right after the end of the Israel War of Independence to discuss the issue, because of recognition of the part it played (practically, though denying moral responsibility) for creating the problem. Therefore, one may assume that it would be able to undertake such a move even apart

- from a full peace agreement, if a clear distinction is drawn between personal compensation and recognition of moral responsibility.
- 15 Iris Dor-On, "The EU Prepared to Take in 10,000 Iraqis," *NEWS1*, November 28, 2008.
 - 16 E.g., Arie Arnon and Saeb Bamy, eds., *Aix Group: Economic Dimensions of a Two-State Agreement Between Israel and Palestine*, 2007, http://www.aixgroup.org/economic_dimensions_english_website.pdf; Gabrielle Rifkind, *Pariahs to Pioneers*, Oxford Research Group, May 2010, http://www.bluewhitefuture.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/Settler_Report.pdf.
 - 17 Akiva Eldar, "Lots of Talk, Few Opportunities for Implementation," *Haaretz*, September 5, 2008, at <http://news.walla.co.il/?w=/21/1341736>; Mazal Muallem, Aluf Benn, and Nadav Saguy, "Prime Minister: We should Discuss Evacuation-Compensation East of the Fence, but Not Soon," *Haaretz*, December 3, 2007, at <http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasite/spages/930587.html>; Jonathan Lis, "The Coalition Prevented Vote on Evacuation-Compensation Bill," *Haaretz*, November 11, 2009, at <http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasite/spages/1127361.html>; website of Blue White Future, Voluntary Evacuation Law, at <http://www.bluewhitefuture.org.il/hakika/495/>.
 - 18 Yehuda Ben Meir and Olena Bagno-Moldavsky, *Vox Populi: Trends in Israeli Public Opinion on National Security, 2004-2009*, Memorandum No. 106, Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, November 2010, p. 26; Akiva Eldar, "And Let Someone Try Stopping Them," *Haaretz*, March 29, 2007, at <http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasite/spages/843317.html>.
 - 19 Sari Nusseibeh, in an interview on the Camp David and Taba conferences in 2001, was quoted as saying that "the Palestinian leadership told the Israelis that the refugee problem is solvable. So they went back to the media and stood there giving speeches about the right of return for four million refugees. This is how you build up hopes for return." Are Hovdenak, "Trading Refugees for Land and Symbols: The Palestinian Negotiation Strategy in the Oslo Process," *Journal of Refugees Studies* 22 (2008): 37.
 - 20 Maya Bengal and Ark Bender, "Livni: Voluntary Evacuation from the West Bank – Only After Borders are Determined," *nrgMaariv*, September 3, 2008, at <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART1/782/436.html>.
 - 21 Rifkind, *Pariahs to Pioneers*, p. 20.
 - 22 Yossi Melman and Ofer Aderet, "Wikileaks Documents – the Israeli File Revealed: Chair of Judea and Samaria Council: Some Settlers would Evacuate for the Right Price," *Haaretz*, April 7, 2011, at <http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasite/spages/1224123.html>.
 - 23 For the complete data, see PSR - Survey Research Unit, *PSR Polls among Palestinian Refugees*, 18 July 2003, <http://www.pcpsr.org/survey/polls/2003/refugeesjune03.html>.