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## The Disengagement Plan: Political and Security Ramifications

**Shlomo Brom**

**T**he Israeli government approved the modified disengagement plan on June 6, 2004. The major difference from the original text lies in the declaration that the decision does not constitute approval of the evacuation of settlements, and that following the completed preparations required for the implementation of the plan the cabinet will decide whether there will be an evacuation of the four groups of settlements. The decision regarding each group of settlements will be made on its own basis, independent of decisions on the other blocs. Otherwise, the modified plan contains all the major components of the original:

- Israel will withdraw from the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria, without retaining a permanent military presence except on the Egyptian border.

- The IDF will continue to maintain its presence on the Gaza Strip-Egyptian border, along the Philadelphi route.

- The settlements designated for evacuation are grouped into four clusters, which suggests that evacuation will occur in stages, according to the following group assignments: Group A – the isolated settlements in the Gaza Strip (Morag, Netzarim, and Kfar Darom); Group B – the northern Samaria settlements (Ganim, Kadim, Sanur, and Homesh); Group C – the Gush Katif settlements; and Group D – the northern Gaza Strip settlements (Alei Sinai, Dugit, and Nissanit).

- The intention is to complete the intended evacuation process by the end of 2005.

## The Disengagement Plan: Political and Security Ramifications – cont.

■ Israel will supervise and guard the outer perimeter on land, singly control the Gaza airspace, and continue to conduct military activities in the sea region of the Gaza Strip.

■ Israel reserves the basic right of self defense, including recourse to preventive and retaliatory steps and the use of force against threats created in the Gaza Strip.

■ Israel agrees that subject to prior coordination, American, British, Egyptian, Jordanian, and other experts will offer consultations, aid, and training to the Palestinian security forces in order to combat terrorism and maintain public order. Israel insists that there shall not be a foreign security presence in the Strip and in the Judea and Samaria region (the West Bank) without coordination with the Israeli government and without its approval.

■ At a later stage, in accordance with the security situation and depending on the degree of cooperation by Egypt in creating a reliable security arrangement, the government will decide whether to evacuate the Philadelphi route and its vicinity. Israel will also be prepared to examine the possibility of establishing a port and an airport in the Gaza Strip, subject to arrangements to be determined by Israel.

■ Existing settlement residences and sensitive sites, such as synagogues, shall not remain in these areas. Israel shall strive to transfer other facilities, such as industrial, commercial, and agricultural facilities, to an international body, which will make

use of them for the benefit of the Palestinian population.

■ The arrangements specified in the interim agreement shall remain in force as far as Israel is concerned, including the demilitarization of the Palestinian political entity that will remain in the area, the civilian arrangements, those related to vital infrastructures (e.g., water and electricity), and the economic arrangements.

■ Israel shall view with favor the continued activities of the international humanitarian organizations and other groups engaged in civilian development that aid the Palestinian population. Israel shall coordinate the arrangements that will facilitate these activities with the international organizations.

The disengagement plan in this form creates a nearly complete separation between Israel and the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, but in most of Judea and Samaria it creates an interim reality, since even after the completion of the security fence in accordance with the current design many settlements will remain within the region to the east of the fence, and a significant Palestinian population will remain on the Israeli side of the barrier. This is an unstable situation. The aim of this essay is to explore the direct consequences of this situation and to address the question: is it possible that the disengagement plan will be the first stage in a far broader process that will lead to complete disengagement of Israel from the Palestinians?

### The Plan as an Opportunity

After almost four years of violent confrontation and upon the current deadlock in Israeli-Palestinian relations, the disengagement plan offers an opportunity for the creation of a positive dynamic in these relations. It may reduce the friction between Israel and the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. The plan contains a message to the Palestinians and the international community that Prime Minister Sharon is serious in his intention of achieving a two-state solution, as per his declarations of readiness for the establishment of a Palestinian state at the high price of evacuating settlements. In the modified disengagement plan, Sharon persisted in including a section on Judea and Samaria – specifically, the evacuation of four settlements in northern Samaria – because it is important for him to send the message to the Palestinians and the international community that Judea and Samaria are likewise part of the larger design, even though the cancellation of this part of his package would have made it easier for him to obtain support for the plan.

The possibility that the disengagement plan will form the first stage in the process of ending the conflict with the Palestinians, and might even jumpstart the process, depends on its success. The principal criteria for success will be the security situation and the reality created in Gaza and in northern Samaria after the withdrawal. If the level of violence decreases, Israel will be better able to combat the remaining violence; and if the Palestinian Authority (PA) will

be in stable control in the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria and the living conditions of the Palestinians will improve, then the plan will be considered a success by the Israelis and the Palestinians. This would then encourage a continued process of stabilization, possibly followed by a rapprochement between the two sides.

The “partner” deemed by most Israelis as glaringly absent will be created if the Palestinians, with the aid of the international community, exploit this opportunity and demonstrate seriousness in their intent to implement the first stage of the roadmap, which should cause a reduction in the level of violence and a return to normal life by both populations. The way will then be open for rapprochement and renewal of the diplomatic process while rebuilding mutual trust. All this is possible despite the fact that the disengagement plan is based on the assumption that there is no Palestinian partner for rapprochement.

Another possible course is the continuation of unilateral steps by Israel that will lead to complete unilateral disengagement in Judea and Samaria also. Progress along both these tracks is conditional on the success of the current disengagement plan. If it creates a positive dynamic and causes a reduction in the level of violence, the Israeli public will likely pressure its leaders to continue along one of these two tracks. If the first stage fails, it will be a serious blow to all the ideas of separation from the Palestinians, either by agreement or unilaterally. For this reason the plan must also receive

support from Israelis who believe that it is possible to resolve the conflict, though only by negotiations between the sides. In the current political reality in Israel and on the Palestinian side it is doubtful if it is possible to start permanent status negotiations. The success of the plan may change the fundamental conditions and create a “partner” on the Palestinian side.

The plan testifies to the realization that any progress toward easing the conflict with the Palestinians depends on the evacuation of settlements.

### The Unresolved Questions

In order to implement the disengagement plan the prime minister must overcome serious political obstacles. The central question is whether he will have the political power to implement the plan, and if not, will the plan be discarded entirely or will just a watered-down version of it be implemented. Up to now the prime minister has demonstrated great persistence and was prepared to pay a heavy political price, including the dissolution of his coalition and perhaps even early elections if he fails to get the Labor Party to join his coalition. He was even prepared to take the risk of dependence on Egypt in ele-

ments of the plan, despite his basic suspicion of Egypt. The major obstacle to implementation of his plan is the opposition within his own Likud party, specifically, about half the Likud MKs and perhaps even the majority of the Likud Committee. The opposition in the Likud is not prepared to allow Sharon to have the Labor Party join the coalition, and it is likely that he will be obliged to call for early elections.

Another question is whether the prime minister has an overall vision of a solution to the conflict with the Palestinians in which the current disengagement plan is a stage, or if he intends to make do with this plan only (“Gaza first and last”). Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has said on several occasions that he is striving for total disengagement from the Palestinians. It is not clear if Sharon is a party to this view. Sharon has made it clear on numerous occasions that in his opinion it is impossible to achieve a permanent solution with the current Palestinian leadership. It seems that he is also doubtful regarding the possibility of reaching a permanent agreement with any Palestinian leadership, and therefore is striving for a solution that obviates an agreement and depends on unilateral steps. Here too there is a great difference between a comprehensive plan aimed at unilateral disengagement from the Palestinians, and this plan, which achieves full disengagement in the Gaza Strip but makes no significant change to the situation in Judea and Samaria. One cannot ignore the hypothesis that it is likely that the prime minister wants



to implement total disengagement in the Gaza Strip and very partial disengagement in the West Bank, in order to strengthen Israeli control of parts of the West Bank and to consolidate the settlements in these regions.

In addition to these fundamental questions there also remain questions regarding the plan itself and its possible results:

- The plan is unilateral and it is clear that there is no intention of entering into negotiations with the Palestinians regarding its composition. Does this mean that there will be no dialogue with the Palestinians regarding its implementation and that no attempts will be made to coordinate the implementation with them?

- What is the extent and depth of the international involvement that Israel will be prepared to accept?

- What conditions must be met in order for Israel to agree to evacuate the Egyptian border region and permit the opening of an airport and a port?

- What kind of reality will be created in the Gaza Strip after the withdrawal? Will the Palestinian Authority control the region, or will Hamas, or will the region slide into anarchy? What will Israel be prepared to do in order to influence the results of the withdrawal?

- Will the plan actually lead to a reduction in the level of violence and improvement of the security situation, as its proponents believe?

## The Disengagement Plan as Part of a Process

Even if in the end the prime minister

lacks the political strength to implement the disengagement plan, great importance should be attached to the decision regarding disengagement. It testifies to the realization that any progress toward resolving or easing the conflict with the Palestinians – with or without an agreement – depends on the evacuation of settlements. Significantly, this realization has been accepted by the Israeli public and is not limited to the Left only. If some settlements are evacuated, even as part of a very limited plan, this will set a precedent of tremendous importance within the country and demonstrate the seriousness of Israel's intentions to the outside world. From this aspect the plan can be regarded as a train that has already departed the station. Any prime minister coming after Sharon will find it difficult not to follow in his footsteps.

In response to the demand of the international community, as made clear by the US and the Quartet, the Israeli government has expressed with reservations its readiness to consider the disengagement as part of the implementation of the roadmap, but this was mainly intended to help garner support for the plan from the international community. It does not imply that Israel estimates there is a real chance that the roadmap will be implemented according to plan, and it certainly does not mean that Sharon is ready to commence negotiations regarding the permanent agreement, as required in the third stage of the roadmap.

Again, the success of the disengagement plan depends on the

behavior of the Palestinians, and this depends to no small extent on their perception of the plan. The initial Palestinian response to the disengagement idea was negative, because it is unilateral and because it does not form part of a process that will lead to a permanent solution. It seemed to the Palestinians that once again their fate was taken out of their hands, and that major decisions that will influence their future were made without their involvement. Furthermore, the Palestinians have a fundamental lack of trust in Sharon, and assumed that the aim of the plan is to continue to exercise control over them in different ways, and especially to strengthen the Israeli hold in the West Bank and to consolidate the settlements there. President Bush's letter of April 14 strengthened the opposition because of Palestinian fears of what appears to be US support for the Israeli positions in the fundamental issues of a permanent agreement. In the time that has elapsed since the publication of the plan, some of the Palestinian leaders have had second thoughts regarding the disengagement. They evinced a readiness to accept that this is not a zero sum game and the plan is likely to serve Palestinian interests as well. This attitude will be reinforced if the concept of the disengagement plan as the first stage of a process of rapprochement and of progress in implementation of the roadmap is strengthened.

Inherent in the disengagement plan is a serious discrepancy between the defined aim of the plan and the plan itself. On the one hand, the deci-

sion adopted by the government states that its aim is to lead to a better security, diplomatic, economic, and demographic situation; but on the other hand it is clear that in all these aspects the situation in the West Bank affects Israel far more than that of the Gaza Strip, since in Gaza there has been separation between Israel and the Palestinians since the beginning of the Oslo process. Gaza is surrounded by an effective security fence and most of the settlements are concentrated in a single bloc, separated from the rest of the Strip. Despite this, the current disengagement plan concentrates on the Gaza Strip, and its implementation in the West Bank is very limited.

The reason for this is the political reality in Israel. There is very broad agreement in the public and among politicians that it is necessary to leave the Gaza Strip. In contrast, broad sectors of the population and the political arena maintain that as part of any solution in the West Bank considerable areas will be annexed to Israel, and many settlements will remain in place. It is politically easier to leave Gaza, though even this is not guaranteed because of Sharon's difficulties in coping with the opponents of his plan. If the plan is successful, the next expected stage is more extensive implementation of disengagement in Judea and Samaria, but it is doubtful whether Sharon is capable, or even wishes, to proceed to the next stage. It is more reasonable to assume that this will be left for the post-Sharon leadership, which will also have to consider if it is preferable to continue

with the unilateral path, or if there is a Palestinian partner with whom it will be possible to discuss the continuation of disengagement by agreement.

### **The Gaza Strip Perimeter**

In accordance with the interim agreement Israel has continued to control the outer envelope of the Gaza Strip. It controls the border between Israel and the Gaza Strip, in addition to a narrow strip along the border with

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Egypt (the Philadelphi route), the airspace, and the sea border. Israel also controls the international crossing into Egypt at Rafah.

The prime minister's original plan called for the removal of IDF forces from the Philadelphi route, and even considered allowing the Palestinians to open the port in Gaza and the airport at a later stage. However, the plan did not provide a suitable answer to security threats resulting from giving up control of the outer envelope. The major fear is that this change will be exploited for smuggling arms into the Strip. Weapons and ammunition are currently smug-

gled through tunnels dug by the Palestinians in the Rafah area. The IDF is struggling against these tunnels and has been able to limit the amount of arms smuggled. The Palestinians have not succeeded up to now in smuggling long-range rockets and anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons in significant quantities. Flinging the gates wide open is liable to enhance the capabilities of the armed Palestinian groups in these fields. Long-range rockets will permit more effective targeting of Israeli towns located relatively far away from the Gaza Strip, such as Ashkelon. Anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons will limit the IDF's capability of action, if required to act inside the Strip, and will enable the Palestinians to attack IDF patrols along the fence and at sea more effectively. For this reason the prime minister accepted the IDF recommendations, and the current disengagement plan retains Israeli control of the outer envelope, and even intends to widen the strip on the Egyptian border, although it retains the option of making changes at a later stage.

At the same time, disengagement from the Gaza Strip with retention of Israeli control of the outer envelope harms the chances of success of the plan, for four reasons. First, it creates points of violent friction with the Palestinians (particularly along the Philadelphi route). Second, it makes it difficult for the Palestinians to conduct proper economic activities in the Gaza Strip. Third, it creates a judicial reality in which Israel still actually controls and is responsible for the

Gaza Strip. Finally, it makes it difficult for the international community and Egypt to assist implementation of the disengagement plan, since this will be regarded as aiding Israel to maintain the siege of the Palestinians, and to actually control them.

For all these reasons it is important to find a solution that will enable the Israeli government to decide to evacuate the Philadelphi route and permit the opening of an airport and a port, even if Israel continues to control the waters and airspace of the Gaza Strip in accordance with the interim agreement. If the US and Egypt submit to Israel a plan containing a serious and reasonable solution to the security problems indicated, they will likely find an attentive ear in the Israeli political leadership.

A solution of this sort would be required to handle both the Egyptian and Palestinian sides of the border, and to include several elements:

- Egypt would undertake to make great efforts to prevent smuggling from its territory to the Palestinian side. For this purpose it would deploy appropriate forces, both military and paramilitary, along its border with the Gaza Strip. In order to permit the deployment of such forces, the military appendix of the Israel-Egypt peace agreement would be changed, with the approval of Israel and Egypt. In the existing version the appendix permits the deployment of civilian police only, and the latter have been shown to be ineffective.

- There will be international supervision of the Egyptian deployment and activities against smuggling. It

seems that the multi-national force (MFO) responsible for monitoring operations in Sinai can carry out this task with minor changes to its mandate.

- A mechanism between Israel, Egypt, and the MFO will be set up that will permit the exchange of information and the coordination of activities against smuggling.

- The Palestinian Authority will make a commitment to the Quartet to prevent smuggling to its territory.

- An international presence will be deployed on the Philadelphi route and at the Rafah crossing point, with the task of preventing smuggling and monitoring the Palestinian activities in this field.

- At all the international crossings, including the airport and the port, international inspection groups will be set up with appropriate equipment (e.g., x-ray machines) to supervise the transit of merchandise and the Palestinian activities to prevent smuggling.

So far the Egyptians have not made great efforts to prevent smuggling from their territory to the Gaza Strip. Their recent vigorous activities, reflected in the frequent visits of the head of Egyptian Intelligence, Omar Suleiman, to Israel and the Palestinian Authority, indicate that Egypt is interested in the success of the disengagement move and the stability of the government in the Gaza Strip after the withdrawal of IDF forces. It may be assumed that it will be motivated to fulfill its responsibilities in understandings of this kind.

The vulnerable point in this solu-

tion is the behavior of the Palestinian side. Will the Palestinians wish to carry out their commitments? On the assumption that they wish to do so, will they be capable of doing so? The first problem is partially solved by international supervision, but a more complete solution is dependent on the dynamic created between Israel and the PA and the subsequent situation created inside the Gaza Strip. The answer to the second question depends mainly on the capability of rebuilding the security capacities of the Palestinian Authority.

## The Internal Situation in Gaza

The internal situation that will take shape in Gaza after the Israeli withdrawal will greatly influence the security situation. It is possible to envision four basic scenarios: stabilizing of control by a rehabilitated Palestinian Authority with a security capability in the Gaza Strip; domination of the Gaza Strip by Hamas; creation of a state of anarchy with islands of control by the various organizations and armed groups. In practice there are areas in the Strip in which this situation already exists; and joint control by the secular and Islamic organizations.

The common interest of Israel, the international community, Egypt, and the Palestinian secular-national camp is for the Gaza Strip to be stabilized by a rehabilitated Palestinian Authority that has adequate security capability. Such a situation would facilitate achieving security and a certain degree of calm, dialogue between Israel



and the Palestinians, and the beginning of the implementation of the roadmap. A slightly different possibility, to which Mohammed Dahlan apparently aspires, is that a new governing body would be established in Gaza under a PLO umbrella instead of the Palestinian Authority, and this body would strive to include Islamic opposition groups as well. The factors that are liable to obstruct the implementation of one of these two approaches are the weakness of the PA and the resistance of Israeli policy-makers to talk with the Palestinian Authority and coordinate moves with them.

In the current situation great importance is attached to Arafat's position. Inside the Palestinian camp he still has the capability of blocking any move he does not favor. Even if he doesn't desire further weakening of his camp relative to the Islamic bodies, he displays a reluctance to cooperate as long as it is not clear that the decisions made inside the Palestinian camp are his and not those of someone else, and as long as a deal is not cut by which he will be released from his captivity in the Muqataa in Ramallah. The Egyptians understand this very well, and the deal they are trying to make with Israel and the Palestinians with US backing addresses these elements. Israel will have to decide whether continuing to hold Arafat in the Muqataa is worth the damage to the chances of creating a positive dynamic by implementing the disengagement plan.

Reform in the PA in Gaza that will lead to the rehabilitation and recon-

struction of its security agencies, based on the principles of the roadmap, will only be possible if there will be Palestinian readiness to do so, if they receive the requisite aid from the international community and Egypt, and if Israel doesn't place obstacles in the way but agrees to coordinate its moves with the PA. The way the situation appears today, the Palestinian leadership wishes to rebuild its security capabilities in the Gaza

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Strip and the West Bank in order to guarantee its control of the Strip and of northern Samaria. Of course, this does not mean that they agree with the concept presented in the roadmap regarding the organization of these security capabilities and the control of the security organizations. However, this situation provides considerable room for third parties to become involved in the construction of these security capabilities with financial aid and assistance in equipment, training, and supervision. It is possible that this will be done in accordance with the British security plan, which attempts to construct a Palestinian security sys-

tem with unified control. Egypt is willing to be involved in this aid in the Gaza Strip, as is Jordan in the West Bank.

Special importance is attached to the role of the Egyptians, who are applying heavy pressure to the Palestinians to begin the reform in the security forces and contribute to the success of the disengagement plan. Egypt has an interest in the internal stability of the Gaza Strip and the halting of violence, since Egypt is worried by the possible domination of the Strip by Islamic elements, and sees this as a threat to Egypt's internal stability.

In order that the Palestinian reform will be real and will permit the consolidation of effective security forces under central control, essential is close international monitoring, in a kind of apprenticeship framework. The roadmap permits the construction of such a monitoring mechanism under American leadership; however, it is desirable that this organization also include European inspectors and inspectors from other countries with the agreement of both sides, since experience shows that the US is incapable of doing this by itself because of its numerous international commitments, mainly in Iraq, and because of the restrictions imposed on the free movement of its personnel. This inspection is also important after the implementation of the disengagement plan, in order to verify that the Palestinians are carrying out their commitments to prevent terrorism and to dismantle the terrorist infrastructures, in accordance with the terms of the roadmap. Israel's role will mainly take

the form of rescinding the restrictions on freedom of movement for Palestinian security officials involved in the reform of the security organizations and strengthening their capabilities.

Successful reconstruction of the PA in the Gaza Strip also depends on a constructive internal Palestinian dialogue that the PA will have to conduct with the Islamic organizations. The aim of the dialogue will be to convince Hamas and Islamic Jihad, through pressure and co-opting tactics, to cooperate with the PA and halt the terrorism and acts of violence. Critical in this dialogue is the role of the Arab countries, Egypt in particular, that are capable of applying pressure to both sides, and particularly to Hamas. The understanding between the sides must lead to a decision regarding a ceasefire, to be coordinated with Israel. Israel must give a ceasefire a chance by adopting a similar policy on its part and avoiding operations within the Gaza Strip. The latest initiative that came from prisoners in Israel jails, led by Marwan Barghouti and coordinated with Hamas prisoners – according to which a ceasefire will be implemented if there is full disengagement – indicates that there is a reasonable chance that the Palestinian organizations will reach agreement regarding a ceasefire. The ceasefire will have to be comprehensive and also apply to the West Bank. A ceasefire that will apply only to the Gaza Strip will not be stable, because of the influence of serious incidents in the West Bank on the behavior of the Palestinians and the Israelis in the Gaza Strip. The internal Palestinian dia-

logue will also have to lead to the inclusion of the Islamic organizations in the Palestinian political process, apparently by the initiation of local and general elections.

If there will be a general ceasefire, the disengagement plan creates an opportunity to change the internal Palestinian situation in Judea and Samaria also through reform in the security organizations. From many aspects it will be easier for the Palestinian Authority to do so in this region because the Islamic elements are weaker there, and because Israel has severely harmed the capabilities of the violent armed groups of all political shades that are not subordinate to the PA. On the other hand it will be more difficult for the PA to receive backing from the Palestinian population in this region for its activities because of the continuation of the state of occupation.

As part of the understandings regarding a mutual ceasefire, it will be necessary for the Palestinian Authority and Israel to reach agreement regarding the treatment of suspected terrorists sought by Israel. A suitable solution may well be the creation of a third party supervisory organization that would permit wanted persons to halt their activities and hand over their weapons in return for an Israeli undertaking not to hunt them down. For "more serious" wanted persons it will be possible to develop a mechanism for holding them under supervision in a place such as Jericho.

The actual implementation of the disengagement plan will only take place in about a year. This is a long

period of time that can be used to reconstruct the Palestinian security capabilities and to reach understandings with Israel, so that the PA will be able to assume control in the Gaza Strip and in northern Samaria.

## Israel-Palestinian Coordination

Coordination with the Palestinians serves Israel's interest in the maintenance of a stable and responsible Palestinian government in Gaza. The coordination will enable Israel to influence the struggle between the forces that may develop among the various Palestinian factions, since the Palestinian factions that have coordinated with Israel will enjoy an advantage over other parties. The coordination will also aid in the orderly transfer of the property that Israel intends to hand over to the Palestinians. The homes in the settlements are unsuitable for the Palestinian population and therefore, along with the synagogues, will not remain in the area. However, the government has correctly decided to transfer the economic infrastructure to the Palestinians, since Israel has an interest in the improvement of the economic condition of the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. Yet if the transfer is not coordinated with a responsible Palestinian function it is likely that the mobs will loot the infrastructure that remains or that local "strongmen" will gain control of this property.

Improvement of the economic situation in the territories from which Israel will withdraw will serve its interest for stability and peace. Eco-



conomic improvement requires investing extensive resources in security measures and in enhancing Israel's cooperation. There is readiness in the international community to invest the required resources in order not to miss the opportunity latent in the disengagement plan. There will also be need for close international inspection of the expenditure of these resources so that they will be exploited in an optimal manner and not reach the wrong pockets.

Cooperation with Israel will be required in order to guarantee an orderly flow of merchandise to the Gaza Strip and access by Palestinians to foreign markets, including Israel. Although the ideology behind disengagement supports the severing the link between the Israeli and Palestinian economies, this dissociation will be a process taking many years. In the short term, significant positive change in the Palestinian economy depends on Israeli involvement.

Although the government emphasizes that the disengagement plan is totally unilateral and that rapprochement with the Palestinians is not a prerequisite, this need not prevent coordination at various levels. In this matter too an important role can be played by an international presence since it can act as a mediator between Israel and the Palestinians, and Israel can claim that it is not deviating from its policy that states that there is no Palestinian partner: it is coordinating with international and not with Palestinian elements.

## Risks Prior to Implementation

The protracted period of implementation creates numerous opportunities for the opponents of the plan to attempt to thwart it. On the Israeli side the opponents of the plan have a broad range of forms of political action. On the Palestinian side there are elements that will attempt to continue and even intensify the violence in order to prevent any positive dynamic. Their aim will be to prove that Israel is fleeing from the Gaza Strip under violent pressure and that there is no point in participating in any kind of political process with Israel and making compromises. Rather, continue the pressure of violence until Israel withdraws, in the West Bank as well, to the 1967 borders. Therefore, Israel will have to continue to cope with terrorism in the Gaza Strip and in the West Bank as it is already doing, until a change takes place within the Palestinians. A second conclusion is that the work with the international community for the implementation of the reform in the Palestinian security agencies and for the encouragement of the internal Palestinian dialogue must begin as soon as possible and not wait until the actual implementation of the disengagement.

## Conclusion

The success of the disengagement plan depends on the capability of integrating it in a more comprehensive process of easing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, finding solutions to avoid a permanent Israeli presence in terri-

tory from which Israel will disengage, creating positive internal Palestinian dynamics, and mobilizing significant international and Egyptian involvement. Israel has an interest in doing all that is required to increase the chances of success of this move.

Of special importance is the varied role that may be assigned to the international involvement. This does not mean the deployment of international forces that will be responsible for security in the Strip, but international involvement in the monitoring at critical points. International involvement also presents disadvantages for Israel. It will limit the IDF's freedom of action and is liable to produce friction between Israel and the countries whose personnel are involved in the tasks mentioned.

However, it seems that in the post-disengagement reality, the advantages of international involvement will exceed the disadvantages. It will help in realizing the potential latent in the plan. In any case, if the plan fails and the vicious cycle of violence revives in full, Israel will take all the measures required for its security as it sees fit, even if there will be an international presence in the Gaza Strip, just as it did in Lebanon for many years. From this aspect a window of opportunity has been created, in which there is both a need for a major contribution by the international community, and a readiness within this community for an important role to contribute to the success of the disengagement plan. Israel should exploit this moment of grace.