



# Strategic ASSESSMENT

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The purpose of *Strategic Assessment* is to stimulate and enrich the public debate on the issues that are, or should be, on Israel's national security agenda.

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## Editors' Note

This issue of *Strategic Assessment* focuses on different ramifications of Israel's plan for disengagement from the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria. The six articles included explore potential political developments following the disengagement from Israeli, Palestinian, and American perspectives.

In the opening article, Shlomo Gazit examines the key issue that will face the Israeli public following the disengagement: the choice between maintaining the familiar policy in the territories and continuing the prime minister's novel step of separating from the Palestinians through withdrawal. In the second article, Meir Elran looks at some of the plan's socio-political implications for Israeli society, concentrating on the questions of the IDF and the national consensus. The third article from the Israeli vantage, written by Professor Yair Evron, challenges the idea that Israeli deterrence has been harmed by the unilateral disengagement plan.

With an eye to implications for Palestinian society, Shalom Harari and Dr. Mark Heller review the political and economic conditions likely to dominate in the Palestinian Authority following the disengagement. The authors conclude that for the Palestinians, the risks posed by disengagement seem to outweigh the opportunities. In the final two articles of the issue, Dr. Eran Lerman and Dr. Roni Bart reach divergent conclusions as to what to expect from the remaining three years of the second Bush administration regarding its policy toward Israel.

Even though the disengagement establishes a precedent and harbors

major domestic and international implications, Prime Minister Sharon apparently views it as an isolated action that will not be followed by additional overtures to the Palestinians. Yet since the disengagement can perform only temporary gains, it is likely that a crisis of expectations will develop that, exacerbated by intra-Palestinian strife, could translate into a vicious cycle of terrorism and military retaliations.

Abu Mazen is trying to plow his way through the crucial issue of the war on terror by reaching understandings with the armed groups in his own organization and with the leaders of the opposition organizations – Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Driven by its own political interests, Hamas will probably intensify the use of terror, wielding it as an instrument for advancing its intra-Palestinian status in anticipation of the January 2006 elections. In Israel elections are scheduled for November 2006, and while they may well occur earlier, the coming year may offer little or no potential on the political and diplomatic levels.

The disengagement, considered by many as a bold, courageous step, has aroused a strong debate among many sectors of the Israeli public, and Israel has also witnessed serious challenges regarding its fundamental goals, its innermost beliefs, and its political and social futures. The long-lasting effects on Israeli society have yet to emerge. Similarly, whether this disengagement will remain an isolated event or is the first step in a more far-reaching political process of disengagement remains to be seen.

# "Two Roads Diverged": Israel's Post-Disengagement Strategic Options

Shlomo Gazit

The disengagement plan, or more precisely, the plan to evacuate Israeli settlements from the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria, is a watershed for Israel's policy in the territories captured thirty-eight years ago in the Six Day War. In June 1967, Israel stood alone, facing what it perceived as an existential threat, in the form of a military coalition that united nearly the entire Arab world. The coalition assembled its forces, violated the understandings that Egypt had reached after the 1956 Sinai Campaign, and threatened war. Nearly four decades later, Israel has initiated a disengagement plan with the aim of staving off a completely different threat to its survival – the demographic threat.

## The Disengagement Choice

For many years a large majority in Israel has understood the difficult and painful choices facing the country. One choice is to quit the territories and divide the region into two states that will leave Israel with narrower borders, but whose limited size is essential for ensuring that Israel remains a democratic state with a solid Jewish majority. The other choice is continued Israeli deployment in the Gaza Strip and West Bank in order to retain control over all of the territory between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River, even if this results in the loss of a Jewish majority in the area within a short time and/or the end of Israel as a democratic state.

One person who understood the need for changing direction was Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who initiated the current political plan that unilaterally cedes Israel's control of the land and the Arab population in the Gaza Strip. This plan arose in the absence of a Palestinian partner with whom to negotiate a program for ending Israel's occupation and establishing a Palestinian state alongside Israel. Sharon's assumption is that this step, which involves the evacuation of all Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip (home to approximately 8,000 people), will free Israel from responsibility for 1.3 million Palestinians, an Arab population whose birthrate is one of the highest in the world.

## The Post-Disengagement Alternatives

How the disengagement scene will be played will only be known once it is completed. Nonetheless, whether the disengagement is implemented in full, as expected, and is unmarred by extremist violence, or whether it is accompanied by force and clashes that lead to casualties and even bloodshed, it will leave psychological scars as well as serious political, social, economic, and moral consequences for Israel.

The evacuation of the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria will not be echoed by similar withdrawals in the near future. It is generally assumed that immediately after the withdraw-

al, Israel's government will falter and Knesset elections will be held, very possibly before the scheduled date of November 2006. The balance of forces in the inevitable political struggle will undoubtedly be shaped by the deep rift and heated political and public debate that has taken place this past year over the disengagement. But the most important issue facing Israel and its political system in the coming national elections will be a new and painful choice. The electorate will have to choose between what is necessarily a short-range policy, which essentially continues the policy that has dominated thus far, and the adoption of a policy that resumes and furthers the prime minister's step of separating from the Palestinians. This latter choice is a more long-term, far-reaching policy.

The choice that Israel faces can also be formulated in another way. On the one hand, the trauma and harsh, painful scenes of the evacuation may convince Israel and the outside world that no one can expect and demand of Israel to implement another evacuation, this time in Judea and Samaria. It is even doubtful whether Israel will be able to live up to its promise to the American administration to dismantle the illegal outposts and halt construction activity in the settlements. There are more than a few signs that preserving the status quo and refraining from dramatic political initiatives may very well be the prime minister's policy in the near future and the platform he brings to the electorate.

Against this option is the opposite

alternative: the evacuation of the settlements in the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria may create a precedent for dismantling more settlements and evacuating Jewish settlers. Just as 8,000 settlers will be evacuated in the forthcoming disengagement plan, in the not too distant future and for the same reasons it will be necessary to evacuate tens of thousands of Jewish settlers from areas in Judea and Samaria as part of the strategy for separation, under the rubric of a unilateral pullback behind ethnic-demographic borders determined by Israel.

### The Well-Traveled Road

Underlying the short-range policy is the desire to avoid another rupture in Israel's weakened social fabric. The rationale is predicated on the despair of reaching a political agreement with the Palestinians, even though a window of opportunity seemed to open after Arafat's death. This policy will consciously avoid taking further steps toward withdrawal in Judea and Samaria. Its main goals will be the completion of the security fence, turning it into a separation fence and de facto border, and at the same time ongoing settlement expansion in most of the territory enclosed by the fence.

After Israel's agonizing social and political confrontations of the last year and after the trauma of the evacuation itself (even if it takes place without bloodshed), this policy will strive to restore "domestic tranquility" in the leading government party and provide it with a strong opportunity to win a new solid victory at the

polls. If indeed this policy is adopted, it will return Israel to the worldview and ideology that it appeared to have shed in the last two years – a policy directed toward a more vigorous settlement drive and strengthening Jewish Israel through the unilateral determination of permanent borders, on the assumption that they will eventually be accepted by the Palestinians and the international community.

Even if the security separation fence defines borders that include a minimum Palestinian population in Israel (leaving aside the question of approximately 200,000 Palestinians residing in the Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem), this will not be sufficient to guarantee the plan's success. The weak link in this policy is the hopeful if not naive assumption that the Arab world will reconcile itself to it and accept the dictated borders for the future Palestinian state although they neither match nor even approximate the June 4, 1967 borders, with the possibility of Palestinian territorial contiguity highly doubtful.

Since June 1967 Israel has experienced territorial withdrawal in three arenas. The first was in the Egyptian arena, when Prime Minister Menachem Begin signed a peace agreement with Egypt only after he agreed to Israel's unconditional withdrawal to the international border. In the Jordanian arena, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin reached an agreement with Jordan that included minor changes and adjustments to the original border, but he achieved this only after he recognized the old mandatory border

and engaged in negotiations to reach a mutual agreement. On the northern border, it was Prime Minister Ehud Barak who decided on a unilateral pullback to the recognized international border with Lebanon, a line that was also approved by the United Nations.

Israel's unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip may succeed in bringing quiet and stability to that arena only if two key conditions are met: an unconditional pullout to the recognized June 4, 1967 lines, and a complete end to Israeli occupation in the region. On the other hand, assuming that Israel has no intention to make a similar move in Judea and Samaria, the only way to reach an agreement on the borders in this arena will be through negotiations, mutual understandings, and international backing.

The strategic goal of current Israeli policy appears to strive to use the security fence for unilaterally determining the future borders, since the fence will be transformed from a security barrier into a political-demographic one. Practical expression of this policy will be the attempt to return to massive, intensified construction in the existing settlements as well as expansion beyond them. The obvious goal is to create facts on the ground that guarantee that these settlements will indeed remain in Israel's hands for a long time as sovereign Israeli territory, while ignoring the likelihood that large portions of the area and the settlements will have to be ceded in the future.

Three conclusions may be drawn from this scenario:

- Sooner or later this policy will lead to the renewal of a violent struggle. Although the security fence (assuming it has been built along the entire length of the planned route) will make it difficult for suicide bombers to penetrate Israel, it will leave Israel exposed to attack by high trajectory weapons.

**A permanent arrangement will never be attained unless the two nations separate and there is a proposal for realistic borders that will permit the Palestinians to establish a viable state of their own.**

- This policy will return Israel to the unstable international status it had before the disengagement plan, with severe political, economic, and moral implications. In addition, the more ambitious the lines are that Israel tries to stabilize in Judea and Samaria, the less likely that they will be accepted when a permanent solution is hammered out. This will be a painful case of "biting off more than can be chewed." It will also be an attempt to capitalize on the current American president's statement that the facts created on the ground since 1967 will have to be taken into account.

- This policy will entail huge Israeli financial investments in new

settlement projects and their accompanying security features. The heavy price that Israel will soon be paying for the Gaza pullout is an indication of the future price it would have to render for the inevitable evacuation of already costly settlements in Judea and Samaria.

In other words, this option represents a short term policy indeed. Ultimately its shelf life is limited, and it will be replaced by an approach that is more durable in political, economical, and security terms on both domestic and international levels.

### **A Road for the Future**

The alternative policy is a continuation of the basic idea at the heart of the disengagement plan. This platform can be presented to Israeli voters in the coming elections, even if it creates a deepening schism in the Likud Party to the point of cleavage and reshuffling of the political system. The cornerstone of this policy is the realization that a permanent arrangement will never be attained unless the two nations separate, there is only minimal annexation of Arab-Palestinian territory, and there is a proposal for realistic borders and contiguous physical terrain that will permit the Palestinians to establish a viable state of their own.

In the absence of negotiations and a political agreement, there seems little reason now to initiate a new disengagement process in Judea and Samaria. Israel's policy and international position, however, will be examined according to its record on the

## Underlying the Disengagement Plan / Zaki Shalom

In December 2003, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon announced his plan for disengagement from the Palestinians. Since then, the question has arisen what prompted him, "the father of the settlement movement," to change his longstanding views and switch course so radically. The prime minister's public statements during the past year may shed light on the issue.

■ On June 7, 2005, in a speech at Bar Ilan University, Sharon declared that Israel has to recognize the **limitations of its power** and act accordingly. Israel lacks the power to fulfill the dream of settlement in all of Greater Israel, and must be satisfied with realizing only parts of the dream.

■ In his speech at the Herzliya Conference (December 16, 2004), Sharon stressed that Israel has to accept that **it does not have an option to create a Jewish majority in the Gaza Strip**. Therefore, even in a permanent arrangement, Israel has no interest in holding onto Jewish settlements there: "Disengagement recognizes the demographic reality on the ground specifically, bravely and honestly. Of course it is clear to everyone that we will not be in the Gaza Strip in the final agreement . . . and that, even now, we have no reason to be there."

■ Sharon has repeatedly stated that in the current reality, the international system would not tolerate a vacuum in the Middle East. Israel must understand that if it does not come forth with its own **political initiative** in resolving the conflict, the international community will impose a much less acceptable one on it. The disengagement plan, he asserted, has deflected this move, and has allowed Israel to lead, rather than be led. (Caesarea Conference, June 30, 2005)

■ Sharon has argued that the reduction of friction between the Palestinians and Israel will lead to a decline of hostile activity. Nevertheless, if terror continues, Israel will be able to combat it more effectively because after disengagement, Israel will have **the legitimate option to make better use of broad-spectrum force** against terror. (Sharon's speech at the Confer-

ence of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, Jerusalem, February 20, 2005)

■ Sharon has pointed out that another gain resulting from the disengagement plan was a set of **far-reaching, unprecedented strategic understandings** between Israel and the United States, reached with the president and endorsed by Congress. Accordingly, the US will not demand an Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 borders. In addition, during negotiations over the permanent arrangement, the United States would be expected to support Israel's retention of the settlement blocs in Judea and Samaria as Israeli territory and the preclusion of the Palestinians' "right of return." Furthermore, with each step in the roadmap, the Palestinians will have to prove that they have made an actual move in rooting out and eradicating terror, have made progress in genuine reforms, and have ended the indoctrination of hatred toward Israel. (Sharon's speech to Jewish leaders in New York, May 22, 2005)

■ Sharon has contended that disengagement **will contribute to enhancing national unity**. The settlement project in the territories, he declared with exceptional candor in one of his speeches, was mostly undertaken without the general agreement of Israeli society. "We established the settlement enterprise with faith and zeal, but also with the resentment of many citizens who disagreed with us. They too are part of the Jewish people, they too send their children to the army, and even if our views are not theirs, no political camp in Israel has a monopoly on absolute justice. Unity is a painful, mutual surrender in order to remain together." (Bar Ilan University, July 7, 2005)

A comprehensive look at how the prime minister has argued in favor of the disengagement plan reveals some of the motives underlying the initiative. Presenting the disengagement plan in its broader context allows a measured evaluation of its intentions, its potential, and its possible ramifications.

ground – either a continuation and perhaps even acceleration of land acquisition and the physical expansion of the existing settlements, or the reduction of the settlements' current perimeters while conveying an un-

equivocal message that Israel is open to political suggestions.

The adoption of the latter strategy as a long-term policy is not a simple matter in Israel's present political system or in the current Palestinian

political reality. It is highly unlikely that pragmatic and capable leadership can be found on either side that could facilitate an agreement today. The weak political positions of Ariel Sharon and Abu Mazen certainly pre-

clude any chances of arriving at this goal in the near future. In light of this obstacle, Israel's leadership will have to choose between steps that encourage a positive process in the foreseeable future or steps that will stiffen the Palestinians' position and push them to resuming the violent confrontation.

In other words, what kind of messages will Israel relay? The national election campaign that is expected in the coming year will demand of the contending parties, with the government party in the lead, to place the Palestinian issue at the forefront of their political platforms. They will have to declare their intentions of either settlement expansion or the opposite: steps for further withdrawals.

These declarations will contain a twofold message – one for the Israeli electorate and the other, of no less importance, for the Palestinians and the world. The reality in the coming years will be decided by the Israeli voters at the polls according to the strategy they choose. At this stage it seems that the decision will be determined to a great degree by Prime Minister Sharon who – assuming that he wants to be reelected – will have to decide between the two aforementioned alternatives. Whatever Sharon's decision, the movement that he

heads will have a good chance of remaining at the helm.

### Behind an Agreement

Finally, it is important to emphasize that in the coming years Israel will have to decide on negotiations and the substance of the political agreement it will eventually sign with the Palestinians. At the same time, even if the long-range plans are not directly connected with the imminent disengagement and its results, the agreement will remain a limited, political one, and Israel should not disillusion itself into thinking that a true reconciliation with the Palestinians or the surrounding Arab world can be attained in the foreseeable future.

The public must be aware of the limitations of the political goal. Menachem Begin did not hesitate to affix his signature to the agreement with Egypt that we define today as a "cold peace." Yitzhak Rabin signed the peace agreement with the Kingdom of Jordan fully aware that the Palestinian majority in that country would reject a true reconciliation with Israel. Similarly, we too must realize that even after an agreement is reached with the Palestinians, the only factor guaranteeing Israel's survival in the coming years is its military strength. In this strength lies the ability to deter

the other side from initiating military moves, and, if need be, to win decisively while inflicting heavy losses and damage on the aggressor.

If Israel decides not to sign an agreement with the Palestinians (and Arab states) until absolute security has been achieved based on the other side's commitment to peace and reconciliation, then Israel will have chosen the path of violent confrontation. On the other hand, the realistic path for reaching genuine peace and reconciliation lies in a long and gradual process. After the political agreement is signed, after the strength of the agreement removes all the centers of friction, and after an independent Palestinian state is established, the Palestinian leadership will have to bear the responsibility for administering the state. This will require a change in its national priorities that will be possible only when the reasons for violent armed conflict are removed.

Last but not least, Israel's problems in its narrow regional sphere cannot be divorced from the formidable global problems in the Arab-Muslim world where existential political, economic, cultural, and even religious questions abound. The unrest and struggle in Arab world also impact on events in the local arena.

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# Disengagement Offshoots: Strategic Implications for Israeli Society

Meir Elran

## Introduction

The plan for disengagement from the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria, the preparations for its implementation, and the public debate surrounding the initiative compose the main story of the Israeli social and political scenes of 2005. If the disengagement plan is carried out on schedule, how it is implemented will impact on many important components of Israeli society.

Prime Minister Sharon's disengagement plan has created a new political reality. It is unclear whether the plan reflects a genuine conceptual volte-face in the prime minister's political agenda for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, or whether the plan is primarily a tactical step designed to gain time for Israel to bolster its control over the West Bank. Either way, however, for the first time Israel is withdrawing unilaterally and on its own initiative from large sections of mandatory Palestine. True, the withdrawal from Sinai and the dismantlement of the Yamit settlements serve as a precedent, and an important one at that, for the current withdrawal. But the two cases are clearly dissimilar from the point of view of the national ethos. Sinai was never considered part of the historic

Land of Israel, and the withdrawal was part of a peace agreement with Egypt that was of critical historical importance. As such, an ethos that Sharon himself cultivated for many years – that “the fate of Netzarim [an isolated Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip] is the fate of Tel Aviv” – is being shattered. This ethos is based on the strategic-historic assertion that present-day Jewish settlement in the territories determines Israel's future borders. The shattering of the myth is even more pronounced by linking the withdrawal from the entire Gaza Strip to the evacuation of four settlements in northern Samaria, a political decision with far-reaching symbolic significance. This may be a harbinger of what to expect in the future.

According to surveys conducted by the Tami Steimetz Center at Tel Aviv University, the disengagement plan has registered consistent solid support in the Israeli public since its announcement in late 2003. For many months the level of support remained stable at around 60 percent. Surveys by the Dahaf Institute show an even higher percentage of support for the disengagement policy: in October 2004, 70 percent of respondents strongly or somewhat supported it, in February 2005, 66 percent were

strongly or somewhat supportive of it, and in May 2005, 60 percent strongly or somewhat supported it. Since February 2005 a slight downward trend can be seen in public support for the plan. According to the Tami Steimetz Center, in late May 2005, 57.5 percent of the Jewish respondents supported disengagement and 35.3 percent opposed. One month later, support among the Jewish population dropped to 54 percent and opposition rose to 41 percent. Other surveys of June show support dropping to even closer to 50 percent.

The decline in support in recent months may be attributed to statements about the lack of suitable solutions for evacuating the settlers. A majority (56 percent) of those who support the disengagement and a majority (64 percent) of those who oppose the disengagement estimated that with only weeks before implementation, the government and relevant institutions are not prepared. The drop in support may also be due to the government's decision to postpone withdrawal from July to August. A poll conducted in early May 2005 revealed that only 35 percent of the public believed that the disengagement would take place on time. By the end of June, however,

their number rose to 42 percent. In May, 36.7 percent thought it would be postponed again (32 percent in late June), and 11.8 percent were convinced (13.5 percent in June) that the disengagement plan would not be implemented at all.

Against the background of these trends, the article below examines some of the ramifications of the disengagement plan for Israeli society. The issues discussed include concern for the possible dissolution of the national consensus, the IDF and the refusal problem, and the legitimacy of the army's intensive involvement in the disengagement process.

### **The Ideological and Religious Dimension**

The prime minister's announcement of the disengagement plan aroused a deep public debate regarding the Land of Israel and its borders. The debate has widened to reach the realm of certain values linked to Israeli society's fundamental ethos and myths. Perhaps because of the ideological and emotional weight of the issues, the debate early on evolved into a full-blown social and political struggle. As such, it challenges one of the country's cardinal myths: the unity of Israeli society, or more precisely, of Jewish Israeli society, as a key factor in the country's strength and its ability to cope with adversity.

The religious dimension became its own salient component in the public debate on disengagement due to deep-rooted beliefs on the Land of Israel. This dimension has created – not

for the first time, but with new intensity – a situation in which key figures in the religious public find themselves opposed to decisions made by the state's highest power on crucial issues, with their most prominent political representatives consistently and unequivocally voicing such a position. According to a survey conducted by the Tami Steimetz Center in May 2005, the religious parties' support of the disengagement plan is well below the national average: National Religious Party – 36 percent; Shas – 25 percent; United Torah Judaism – 16 percent.

The vehement opposition by many among the religious public to the disengagement is rooted not only in their understanding of the Gaza area as part of the historical Land of Israel, "the land of our forefathers." It seems that it is also linked to concern that this serves as a precedent for further withdrawals from Judea and Samaria. Furthermore, much of the resistance of the religious camp and their religious and political leaders extends to other issues, relating specifically to the alienation between the religious and secular sectors in Israel: secular society is deemed by some in the religious sector as a society that has distanced itself from fundamental Jewish values. But whatever its driving ideology, the opposition has searched for a variety of means to obstruct the plan. Some of these measures are deemed unacceptable to the secular community and as threatening to the socio-political fabric of Israeli democratic society.

Government authorities dealing with the pullout have been forced to plan for extremist contingencies. In a survey carried out by the Tami Steimetz Center in January 2005, 46.5 percent of those questioned believed that there was a high or quite high danger of civil war in Israel if the unilateral disengagement plan is implemented. Perhaps the context for this belief lies in statements by certain rabbis and other spokespeople of the settler community who have called for physical resistance to evacuation. In late June, 50.7 percent of Jewish respondents thought there was a real danger of political assassination to supporters of the disengagement, and 72.8 percent thought there was a real danger of violence and bloodshed in the areas marked for evacuation. Seventy-five percent of those polled in a Dahaf Institute survey in February 2005 were very or quite concerned that clashes between the settlers and the soldiers who come to implement the evacuation might lead to an exchange of fire.

Indeed, under the present circumstances of mutual suspicion and alienation, physical opposition to evacuation, whether passive, or certainly if active, could lead to casualties and perhaps fatalities. Such a worst-case scenario, even if the forces participating in the evacuation make a supreme effort to avoid it, will have momentous consequences for the future. This is true to a great degree regarding the government's legitimacy or freedom of action to decide on the steps for withdrawal from other parts

## Open Questions apropos the Disengagement / Shlomo Brom

The implementation of the disengagement plan in the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria will be a precedent-setting event, with immense potential influence on Israeli–Palestinian relations and political developments in Israel. Though the implementation is scheduled to begin in mid-August, many open questions remain regarding the plan’s key features that are likely to impact on the attainment of its objectives.

The first question is whether the Gaza withdrawal will be a comprehensive withdrawal. If Israel maintains control of the outer envelope of the Gaza Strip by leaving a military presence on the Philadelphi route (which divides the Gaza Strip from Egypt), retaining control of the border crossings at Rafiah, and preventing the opening of the sea and airports, there is deep concern that friction with the Palestinians will continue. International recognition that Israel’s occupation of the Gaza Strip has come to an end will also be harder to gain.

On the other hand, if Israel relinquishes its control of the outer envelope without alternative solutions that guarantee the supervision of goods entering Gaza and prevention of weapons smuggling, then the security threat to Israel is apt to increase significantly. Under these circumstances, it will be impossible to maintain a joint Israeli-Palestinian customs arrangement according to the 1994 Paris agreement, and it is doubtful that different customs arrangements can be set up in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

The potential role of a third party is relevant here: can solutions be devised for monitoring the outer envelope of the Gaza Strip by introducing a third party – such as an Arab state like Egypt or other international players – to solve the problem of smuggling on the Philadelphi route.

What should be the role of the Quartet’s security team headed by General Ward? Is it to assist the Palestinians in introducing reforms into their security agencies and strengthening them, or is Israel interested in having this team act as a monitoring mechanism for the two sides’ reciprocal fulfillment of obligations that was supposed to have been established according to the road-map?

What will happen to the buildings in the settlements after the evacuation has yet to be decided. According to the government’s original decision, the settlers’ homes are to be razed, though there is a willingness to transfer the economic infrastructure – mainly the hothouses – to the Palestinians on condition that an international party will supervise their orderly transfer. So far adequate arrangements for transferring the economic infrastructure to the Palestinians have not been found. In the meantime much opposition has developed in Israel against the leveling of homes because of the likely damage to Israel’s international image. The demolition and removal of debris will also require much time,

thus considerably lengthening the disengagement timetable and jeopardizing the forces involved.

Another question still open is the legal status of the areas that will be evacuated in northern Samaria. Regarding the Gaza Strip this question is a non-issue. Israel is withdrawing from the Gaza Strip and has no desire to maintain any links whatsoever in the area. The only issue that will continue to plague Israel is the security threat emanating from the Strip, which it will tackle regardless of the area’s status. The situation in northern Samaria is different. There the area to be evacuated is not separated from the rest of the West Bank by a physical obstacle, nor are all the settlements in northern Samaria being evacuated. Therefore it will be difficult to separate this region from the rest of Judea and Samaria. This situation will probably induce Israel to retain maximum flexibility by maintaining the current legal status of the evacuated area – defined as Area C – in which Israel has complete authority. However, the Palestinians cannot assume any control in these areas without at least having civilian authority transferred to them. The question then becomes whether it would be possible to grant the Palestinians civilian control without changing the area’s status to that of Area B (whereby Israel retains security control and the Palestinians have civil jurisdiction).

How will movement between the Gaza Strip and Judea and Samaria take place? Will a kind of “safe passage” be set up according to an interim agreement or other arrangement? Moreover, what passage between northern Samaria and the rest of Judea and Samaria will be devised for people and commercial goods? If northern Samaria receives a different status, then a partition might divide it from the rest of the West Bank, strengthening Palestinian suspicions that Israel’s only intention is to set up separate cantons so that it can frustrate the chances to establish a viable Palestinian state.

What will be the economic ties between the Gaza Strip, northern Samaria, and Israel? According to the Israeli government’s decision, Israel is to cease employing Palestinians by 2008. At the same time, it is in Israel’s interest that economic conditions in these territories improve because economic oppression and its consequences are liable to spill over into Israel. Yet economic conditions cannot improve quickly without strengthening economic ties with Israel, which includes issuing work permits to Palestinian laborers and allowing the movement of goods to and from Israel with minimum interference.

The last question deals with the level of coordination between the two sides. Currently, despite mutual declarations of willingness for coordination, they have yet to be translated into practical understandings. Unless that changes, the disengagement may proceed with a very minimal degree of coordination, especially if the security situation continues to deteriorate.

of the West Bank (whether it is carried out unilaterally or in agreement with the Palestinians).

### **The IDF, Evacuation, and the Consensus**

One central dimension linked to the disengagement plan is the army's role as a principal agent in evacuating the settlers and the danger of those among the rank and file who refuse to undertake this task. The Israeli police, as part of their job to maintain public order, have been assigned to deal directly with the settlers, yet it is not clear if the police force alone will be sufficient. Saddling the IDF with the disengagement's manifestly non-military tasks, even if this means deploying it in the "second ring" of contact with settlers about to be evacuated, is also extremely problematic by professional standards. The IDF is assumed to possess skills that can be adapted to areas outside its professional experience. What, however, has prepared the army to deal with the evacuation of civilians – women, children, and the elderly – except its ability to deploy large forces within the framework of an efficient well-disciplined organization?

However, the more difficult problem in the IDF's involvement in the disengagement, especially if violence erupts involving casualties, has already triggered many questions about the degree of legitimacy in entrusting the IDF with police-civilian assignments, especially when public consensus over them is lacking. In this area too, disengagement is not

the only issue at stake. The current withdrawal has a moral and historical background over which a big question mark hovers regarding the national ethos that defines the IDF as a "people's army." The potential clash between IDF troops and Israeli citizens, the application of force against civilians, and the possible escalation to violence involving casualties are all liable to create schisms more unbridgeable than those the country has known previously in the unwritten covenant that binds the IDF, the state, and Israeli society.

This issue is of great concern to IDF senior officers not simply because of the immediate implications for the disengagement, but mainly because of its implications for future developments. Can the IDF continue to carry out non-military and semi-non-military missions as it has been doing since the state's inception? Will the government be able to marshal the army in other areas lacking national consensus and where a spirited public debate prevails? Can the troops be mustered for disengagement Stage II?

### **Refusal in the Military**

The danger of insubordination, specifically the refusal to obey military orders during the implementation of the disengagement plan, increases the threat to the army's ethical and social foundations. The Tami Steimetz Center's December 2004 survey found that approximately 45 percent of the overall public (and 47 percent of the Jewish population) thought it certain

or probable that insubordination, whether on the political left or right, would compromise the IDF's operational ability. In the same survey, 26.4 percent of those polled (27 percent of the Jewish respondents) replied that they thought it certain or likely that soldiers from the political right were justified in refusing to take part in the dismantling of settlements, since an act of this sort would violate their belief. An even larger number of the general public (32.5 percent) answered that the army ought to exhibit understanding toward soldiers who disobey orders that clash with their conscience. A Dahaf Institute survey of January 2005 found that 32 percent of the respondents felt that insubordination was permissible within the framework of freedom of expression. The same survey also revealed that only 35 percent believed that those who advocate insubordination should immediately be put on trial, whereas 52 percent thought that an anti-insubordination information campaign should be launched first, and 11 percent felt that nothing should be done to those implicated.

This data shows that the general public harbors a large degree of lenience, tolerance, and acceptance of military insubordination – an attitude that naturally encourages potential "refusers" and makes it difficult for the IDF to put them on trial or to punish them harshly. The data also indicates that the problem runs deep and wide, since it goes to the heart of the traditional concept that sees the IDF soldiers' identification

with their assignments as an intrinsic and vital factor in the army's strength and preparedness. Although the view on insubordination does not seem to question combat assignments at the individual or unit level in the face of a clear external enemy, it does question the general public's attitude toward the army's role in non-military assignments. It is liable to seep into the operational level, thus obstructing the government's ability to employ the army as a systems instrument for the assignments it chooses.

The extent of insubordination is of critical importance regarding future developments. If the phenomenon is widespread, penetrates the IDF's officer corps, and spreads across regular (non-reserve) army units, the nature and character of the IDF could become a major issue on the national agenda. Even if insubordination is limited, it will not be able to erase the fact that the IDF was swept up into the epicenter of a political maelstrom. This will require serious public and political grappling and soul-searching on this issue. For many years it was claimed that the IDF stood outside, better yet, above the political and ideological debate. Will this be said for much longer?

After the second intifada the IDF found itself internally stronger in many ways and on the receiving end of the Israeli public's recognition and heartfelt gratitude. Its successes in the war against terrorism again proved its merit as an efficient tool

for safeguarding state and individual security, as well as its ability to adapt to changing areas and circumstances of conflict. The IDF has justifiably earned the public's increasing trust. But on the issue of public legitimacy, the army faces a more complicated situation. Despite official statements that the IDF merely carries out state policy, the soldiers and officers serving in the army, like a growing number of groups in general society, see a greater link between the IDF, the high command, military service, and political positions. These are also based on the common assumption that the army and its senior officers are increasingly involved in political decision-making. A February 2005 survey by the Tami Steimetz Center found that 25 percent of the public (and 20 percent of Israel's Jewish population) believed that the IDF had too much influence in shaping national policy; 16 percent felt its influence was too weak; and 45 percent claimed that it was sufficient. Under these circumstances, and with the sensitivity characteristic of the coming period, the relationship between army, state, and society will face new challenges.

### Conclusion

The implementation of the disengagement plan in the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria will be a political and social watershed in Israel. If the disengagement occurs successfully or even with a few hitches, but without casualties, it will strengthen

Israel both at home and abroad. The government's basis of legitimacy and room for maneuvering will remain intact and even strengthened. The state system will have proven itself capable of carrying out normative democratic processes in decision-making on complex, highly controversial national issues; therefore successful disengagement will have a significant influence on future developments. The political system's strength and ability to wield democratic tools will enable it to determine, by means of regular processes, Israel's position on basic national security issues, including the manner of resolving the conflict with the Palestinians.

Thus the implementation or the failure to implement the disengagement plan, as well as the nature of its implementation, will have far-reaching implications for Israeli society, or more precisely, for social and political factors and processes in the Israeli arena. Unqualified success in carrying out the plan will awaken normative forces and vitalize the democratic system. Failure, however, would clearly denote, already in the short-term, a sharp deterioration and serious weakening of one of the main features of Israel's strategic strength: that Israel is a law-abiding state, based on a society rooted in democratic values, and able to overcome all types of internal challenges by democratic means, difficult though they may be.

# Disengagement and Israeli Deterrence

Yair Evron

One of the main arguments raised against the unilateral disengagement from Gaza and northern Samaria focuses on its possible impact on the success of Israeli deterrence vis-à-vis the Palestinians. The more extreme version of this argument contends that any withdrawal from the territories critically weakens Israeli deterrence. A more moderate version holds that a withdrawal that is not accompanied by considerable Palestinian concessions is liable to weaken Israel's deterrence. This approach corresponds to a general trend in Israeli popular strategic thinking about the meaning and role of deterrence in overall Israeli behavior vis-à-vis the Arab world in general and the Palestinians in particular. According to this school of thought, Israeli survival relies first and foremost on deterrence, and deterrence is determined by demonstrations of resolve, for example, by a refusal to make any concessions and especially not during an armed conflict. Consequently, the disengagement would critically weaken Israeli deterrence.

This line of reasoning, however, is simplistically faulty, whereas deterrence is in fact a highly complex process. It involves in the first place threats or the actual use of force (as signals for further use of force),<sup>1</sup> but its success depends on strategic, political, and psychological elements.

Before analyzing the Israeli–Palestinian deterrence equation and the possible effects of the disengagement from Gaza, a very brief elaboration of the deterrence equation between Israel and the Arab states will help inform this analysis.

■ **The overall Israel–Arab states deterrence process:** Generally speaking, in deterrence relationships between states, deterrence success or failure depends on the interaction between three balances: the balance of military power; the balance of political interests; and the balance

of resolve. In fact, however, most of the deterrence situations between Israel and Arab states have been determined by the relationship between the balance of military power and the balance of interests. Resolve was less relevant. Thus, Arab states initiated war in 1948, in 1969 (the War of Attrition), and 1973 when they calculated that their vital political interests demanded the initiation of hostilities.<sup>2</sup> In 1969–70 Egypt waged a "stationary" war because its political grievance was unbearable, but it designed a type of war that fit its self-perceived

military inferiority. In 1973, Egypt and Syria launched an offensive war (though with limited objectives), again because of the unbearable political situation, but tried to tailor the plan and execution of the war to their self-perceived overall military inferiority. Before 1967 and since the 1979 Israel–Egypt peace treaty, Arab states were deterred from initiating conventional wars because they rationally assessed the military balance as unfavorable and the political situation as tolerable.

■ ***Deterrence in sub-war contexts:***

At the same time, Israel has frequently had to respond forcefully to limited armed challenges in order to impose stable local deterrence in sub-war situations. In these situations, the objective of Israeli force

**The termination of armed Palestinian activity, be it even temporary, is a result of successful Israeli deterrence. This success was predicated on the combination of military and political factors.**

was to compel Arab governments to stop their limited military activity or to control independent organizations that conducted operations against Israel. In the 1950s Israel acted primarily against Jordan and Egypt; in the 1960s primarily against Syria (and briefly again against Jordan); and in later periods against Lebanon. While the use of limited force was at times necessary, the success of deterrence depended on additional factors as well. Moreover, sometimes the use of disproportionate force led to escalation.

An analysis of Israeli retaliatory activity suggests several important dimensions of sub-war deterrence. The first is the unavoidable need for the use of force, though strictly oriented to deterrence purposes. Second, when there is not a critical conflict of political interests between Israel and

a specific Arab state and the latter is militarily weak vis-à-vis Israel, the Arab government will try to restrain armed organizations from activity against Israel (e.g., Israel vs. Jordan). Third, success of deterrence increases as the regime becomes domestically stronger. When the same conditions apply but the Arab regime is critically weak in domestic power (as in the case of Lebanon), armed retaliation is not likely to establish stable deterrence. When the Arab regime is strong and its prestige adversely affected (e.g., Egypt in the mid 1950s), Israeli retaliation ultimately leads to major escalation. Thus, the relevant factors in sub-war contexts are: the balance of military power; the balance of interests; the stability and power of the relevant regimes; and their ability to control their domestic environment.

**Deterrence and Recent Examples of Disengagement**

Historical experience suggests that even when disengagement occurs under military pressure and consequently is perceived as a lack of resolve, deterrence is not weakened. In the mid 1980s, Israel withdrew from most of Lebanon. This was preceded and accompanied by prophecies of doom: Israeli deterrence against Arab states would be critically weakened, resulting in major escalation by Arab states. Nothing happened. What did develop was the guerrilla war against the Israeli presence in southern Lebanon, though not for lack of demonstrable Israeli resolve. Rather, the

very presence of Israel in Lebanon provoked the reaction of local organizations backed by large parts of the population.

When Israeli forces withdrew from southern Lebanon in 2000, there were again predictions of catastrophic outcomes based on the said argument: withdrawal would demonstrate the lack of Israeli resolve and therefore Hizbollah would escalate its activity. In fact, however, the Lebanese front has essentially remained calm since then. Moreover, current promising developments in Lebanon, though resulting from other causes, were probably made possible by – or at least were contingent on – the previous Israeli withdrawal and the stability along the Israeli border.

From a different vantage, the withdrawal from Lebanon has been widely perceived as a trigger for the outbreak of the intifada, hence presumably giving credence to the ar-

**The majority of Palestinians share the view that the intifada did force Israel to disengage from Gaza. At the same time, the majority of Palestinians feel that a continuation of the intifada hurts Palestinian interests.**

gument that Israeli retreats correlate with weakened Israeli deterrence. According to this argument, the Palestinians "learned" from the Israeli

experience in Lebanon that if they resorted to violence, Israel would succumb and accept the Palestinian conditions. There are still major disagreements about how the intifada began, but in any event, in its initial phase it was largely unarmed. It became "militarized" (thus presumably mirroring Hizbollah tactics) only in the second phase, and there is a very strong Israeli school of thought (and needless to say many Palestinians adhere to it as well), that attributes this transformation to the massive Israeli military reactions to the first phase.<sup>3</sup> All this puts in doubt the direct connection between the outbreak of the intifada and the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon. Beyond that, a population at large does not start a major armed struggle just because in another context the enemy made concessions in the face of hostilities. The intifada was fueled in the first place by deep feelings of grievances and the perception – wrong as it was from an objective point of view in light of the Barak and Clinton proposals – that the political process was blocked. This does not mean that emulation of Hizbollah strategy was absent from Arafat's calculations and behavior once the intifada evolved. But it does mean that it was not the main trigger for the intifada.

### **Deterrence of the Palestinian Intifada**

There is an argument that it is impossible to apply deterrence to a conflict with terrorism or guerrilla warfare, namely, states cannot deter non-state

actors. This debatable argument may be valid when the non-state actors are small terrorist organizations. But whatever the general merits of this argument, it certainly cannot be applied to the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians. In this conflict the two sides are political communities, whose leaderships operate under political constraints and require wider measures of societal legitimacy for their policies. Furthermore, while the particular conditions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are not entirely representative of other Israeli-Arab sub-war scenarios, the dimensions of sub-war deterrence could form a useful framework for the analysis of Israeli deterrence vis-à-vis the Palestinians.

### **The Israeli withdrawal from Gaza – and consequently the assumed lack of resolve on Israel's part – does not weaken Israeli deterrence.**

The position of many in the PLO leadership from the beginning of the intifada was that its militarization was a major mistake, but their position was pushed aside by Arafat.<sup>4</sup> With his departure, Palestinian policy has changed. Indeed, the fact that Hamas has recently become far more tentative about widespread armed activity demonstrated its awareness that the majority of the Palestinian population backs the view of the current Palestinian leadership.

The new policy was the result of several factors: first, the high costs that the Palestinian community suffered at the hands of Israeli security forces; second, the appreciation that the mobilization of international – and primarily American – support is critical for the Palestinians and ultimately could be the main instrument in convincing Israel to come to terms with the Palestinians. In addition, the realization has grown among many in the Palestinian leadership that they need the goodwill of part of the Israeli body polity, which is contingent on a cessation of violence. Finally, the coincidence of the Israeli disengagement plan with the changes within the Palestinian community and leadership has also contributed to the Palestinian attempt to endorse a new approach. The Palestinian leadership attributes to the end of the armed intifada what it sees as a positive change in the Bush administration's position, voiced during Abu Mazen's visit to Washington in late May 2005.<sup>5</sup> Thus, military pressure combined with political developments and assessments have led to the new Palestinian strategy. The termination of armed Palestinian activity, be it even temporary, is a result of successful Israeli deterrence, but this success was in fact predicated on the combination of military and political factors.

When Hamas publicly claims that it was the intifada that secured the Israeli disengagement, it is not clear whether it really believes this claim or it is trying to enhance its political position in the Palestinian community.

The majority of Palestinians share the view that the intifada did force Israel to disengage from Gaza. At the same time, the majority of Palestinians feel that a continuation of the intifada hurts Palestinian interests. Thus, only 29 percent of Palestinians listed support for continued violence inside the Green Line and a similar percentage backed the continuation of violence emanating from the Gaza Strip after disengagement, while 68 percent opposed it. Significantly 84 percent voiced their support for return to negotiations on a peaceful settlement.<sup>6</sup>

There are several possible explanations for the simultaneous divergent approaches on the added value of the violence. The dualism might demonstrate a cognitive dissonance. Or, the Palestinians may believe the intifada contributed to the Israeli decision to disengage, but at the same time realize that armed struggle exacts costs that are too high and therefore demands an alternative policy to achieve national aspirations. Finally, the Palestinians have to justify to themselves the high costs and suffering they endured for a long time. But the net result of this analysis is very far from the claim that because the majority of the Palestinians perceive the Israeli withdrawal as a victory for the armed struggle they believe that it should be a recipe for future behavior. If we translate this observation to the deterrence analytical framework, the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza (and consequently the assumed lack of resolve on Israel's part) does not weaken Israeli deterrence.

## The Israeli Decision to Disengage

Was it Palestinian violence that led to the decision to disengage? It is useful to separate between the public's view and the decision-makers' approach, and the situation is complex on both levels. The majority of Israelis are tired of the continued conflict and would welcome moves towards its resolution based on compromise. This was its position even before the intifada, particularly in regard to the Gaza Strip. However, precisely when terrorism was more intensive, the Israeli public tended to coalesce and back stronger security measures against the Palestinians. Only when Palestinian violence declined were Israelis more ready to accept a scenario of disengagement. Furthermore, there is widespread assessment that support for the disengagement would decline if a campaign of terrorism started yet again.

To the decision-makers, wider political considerations were uppermost. The decision to disengage was most probably rooted in an appreciation by Sharon and his advisers that some political move was necessary, especially as Israel was losing the overall political initiative. There was concern about possible future American diplomatic initiatives in the absence of an Israeli move. Apparently the demographic factor also played an important role, and Sharon rightly assessed that the plan would receive considerable public support within Israel.

The lessons of the first intifada (1987-1991) are likewise relevant here.

That widespread largely non-violent civil campaign demonstrated to the Israeli public the unity and viability of the Palestinian national community. It impressed on the public the need to change leadership and led to the election of Rabin, who in turn decided on the Oslo process. The combination of the will and unity of the Palestinians, therefore, though without the use of terrorism, is what lay at the basis of the Israeli recognition of Palestinian nationalism and the need to partition the country. The overall conclusion is that when the Palestinians demonstrate strong resistance but without terrorism, especially suicide bombings against civilians within the Green Line, the Israeli public is more prepared to accept political compromises. Its readiness for that even increases in a period of calm after the end of violence. This is not to say that violence is absent as a contributing factor to the overall composite of influences. But it is important to understand that violence alone has not dictated the Israeli moves towards the Palestinians. Indeed, when targeted by violence, the Israeli public tends to give precedence to military reactions over diplomatic compromises or concessions of any sort.

## Deterrence as a Dialogue between Opponents

Rather than a flat idea of force and uncompromising steadfastness, Israeli deterrence vis-à-vis the Palestinians depends in the first place on the costs of violence to the Palestinians combined with both sides' assessments

of their respective national interests. Significantly, each side's assessment of its own vital interests depends to an extent on the perceptions it has of the vitality of the other side's parallel interests. When Israel defines its most vital national interests, this in turn can affect the definition of the Palestinian vital interests and vice versa. Each side is ready to suffer high costs in order to defend its most vital national interests. Thus, the success of deterrence is affected by each side's self-definition of its own vital interests, but this definition is partly influenced by the assessment of what are the opposite side's definitions of its own vital interests. Deterrence is not a simple either/or situation, but a constant process in which both sides continue assessing the balance of respective interests and the strategies designed to affect the perceptions of the other side regarding these interests.

There are main Israeli national interests that are deemed beyond calculations of deterrence. One such interest on which there is a very wide consensus is that the state should be "Jewish and democratic." Continued occupation of the territories stands in total contrast to this central Israeli interest. Consequently, disengagement from the territories serves Israel's vital interests. This consensual objective encapsulates an additional vital interest: opposition to a large influx of Palestinians into Israel according to the "right of return" agenda. This interest is also likely to play a role in the balance of interests that affects deterrence success. It is reasonable to

## Disengagement Plan Chronology

### **18 December 2003**

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon announces the "Plan for Disengagement from the Palestinians" at the Herzliya Conference.

### **15 March 2004**

The official announcement of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on the disengagement plan is narrowly passed by the Knesset – 46 in favor, 45 opposed.

### **14 April 2004**

President George W. Bush expresses support for the disengagement plan, calling it an "historic and courageous" action.

### **2 May 2004**

In a party referendum on the prime minister's disengagement plan, 59.5 percent of registered Likud voters opposed the idea.

### **28 May 2004**

The revised disengagement plan is presented. Settlement evacuation will occur in four stages, with each requiring government approval before its implementation. The evacuation will be completed no later than the end of 2005.

### **6 June 2004**

The government approves the amended disengagement plan, 14 ministers in favor, seven opposed. The decision calls for the removal of all settlements and army installations from the Gaza Strip and four settlements and army installations in northern Samaria by the end of 2005.

### **24 October 2004**

The government approves the proposal for the Compensation Law for the settlers, with 13 ministers in favor and six opposed.

### **26 October 2004**

The Knesset passes the disengagement law, with 67 Knesset members in favor, 45 opposed, and 7 abstentions.

### **16 February 2005**

The law proposing implementation of the disengagement is approved, with 59 in favor, 40 opposed, and five abstentions.

### **9 June 2005**

The Supreme Court lends legal backing to the disengagement plan. Led by Chief Justice Aharon Barak, the Court dismisses twelve appeals against implementation of the disengagement and the compensation law, with ten justices in favor and one opposed.

### **20 July 2005**

The Knesset votes down the proposal to postpone the disengagement, with 68 opposed and 43 in favor.

assume that at least part of the Palestinian leadership and the political echelons recognize this Israeli position, and consequently would tend to formulate the Palestinian national interests accordingly. However, there is a considerable uncertainty whether this indeed would be the ultimate position taken eventually by the Palestinians.

The majority of Israelis also tend to accept the formula according to which a two-state solution is inevitable, and are ready therefore to accept the establishment of a Palestinian state, even if it lacks the urgency of the "Jewish and democratic" objective. As a two-state solution suits the Palestinians' formulation of their own national interests, the Israeli perception could encourage those within the Palestinian body polity who are ready to accept political compromises.

The main components within the Israeli-Palestinian deterrence equation are: the balance of interests, namely, what would be the outcomes of the future political process; the inputs of extra regional powers (and primarily the United States) to the political process; the inputs of other regional powers to the political process; security measures that Israel could apply in order to lessen future Palestinian violent activity; and the domestic strength of the Israeli and Palestinian governments. Successful Israeli deterrence is therefore not predicated on Palestinian assumptions about assumed Israeli lack of resolve in the past, but rather on po-

litical considerations, coupled with the application of Israeli force when it is required.

Needless to say, there are considerable uncertainties involved in future developments. First, it is not clear at all that there would be any meeting point between the formulation of respective Israeli and Palestinian national interests. If this happens, there might be a possibility for some kind of intermediate agreements that could delay a major crisis between the sides. What is important to point out is that the Palestinian side is much more aware of Israeli positions and attitudes than it was during the intifada.

Second, splinter Palestinian armed organizations might try to break the current (or future) lull in violence. At present it appears that the main body of Fatah and the leadership of Hamas are ready for a long ceasefire. This would probably be maintained during the next year or so (provided Israel executes the disengagement) with possible intermediate crises. Beyond that, and depending on social and economic conditions in the territories, this backing might weaken and then splinter groups may assess that they would gain social support for a renewal of attacks on Israel. Opposition groups might also try to renew the armed intifada in order to destabilize the political control of the PA. Thus, to return to the parameters formulated at the outset of the discussion, the weaker the Palestinian institutions and their authority and

the more fragmented the Palestinian community, the less successful Israeli deterrence stands to be.

## Conclusion

The simplistic assumption that the Gaza disengagement plan would by itself lead to a weakening of Israeli deterrence against future Palestinian violence is unsound. The lessons of the intifada suggest that deterrence is possible, but is predicated on a combination of political and military interests and processes. Similarly, the future deterrence equation between Israel and the Palestinians depends on a mix of political factors and on the application of force if political accommodation fails and armed insurgency is renewed.

## Notes

- 1 The use of force can be designed for coercion as well, but the subject lies beyond the scope of this discussion.
- 2 In 1956, 1967, and 1982 it was Israel that initiated hostilities. Needless to say in 1967 Israel acted in the face of an enormous challenge to its security.
- 3 See, for example, the journalistic detailed account of the evolution of the intifada in Raviv Drucker and Ofer Shelah, *Boomerang: Failed Leadership in the Second Intifada* (Jerusalem: Keter, 2005).
- 4 Yezid Sayigh, "The Palestinian Strategic Impasse," *Survival* 44, no. 4 (Winter 2002-3): 7-21.
- 5 See, for example, Ghassan Khatib, "Some Positive Movement." *Bitterlemons*, June 27, 2005.
- 6 Public Opinion Poll #15, Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR), March 2005.

# The Effects of Disengagement on Palestinian Politics and Society

Shalom Harari and Mark A. Heller

For several years Palestinian society has been grappling simultaneously with the impact of the intifada and with a process of leadership transformation. Both phenomena are profoundly disruptive and their courses remain highly uncertain. Since the Israeli disengagement will take place under the shadow of these two factors, its effect cannot be analytically isolated from them. Instead, the disengagement is almost symbiotically connected to them, making its ultimate impact on Palestinian society difficult to predict with any degree of confidence.

## The Pre-Disengagement Socio-Political Environment

### *The Collapse of Public Order*

Whatever its effect on Israel, the intifada has had serious detrimental consequences for the Palestinians. The outbreak of the violence in September 2000 accelerated the pre-existing deterioration of public order in the West Bank and Gaza, to the point where the term most widely used to describe recent conditions is "intifawda" – a pun derived from the word *fawda* (chaos) and connoting "armed chaos." The progressive loss of the Palestinian Authority's ability to enforce its legal monopoly on the use of force is reflect-

ed in the emergence not just of armed militias guided by political agendas, but also of private groups and semi-political/semi-criminal gangs, of which some ten to fifteen are operating in various cities alongside (and sometimes in place of) PA security forces. The result is a pervasive sense of personal insecurity. The privatization of violence and the spread of lawlessness (*falatan*) are the most visible manifestations of the PA's failure to exercise authority, but the loss of control extends to other spheres as well, especially the internal management of the PA itself. Lacking clear lines of responsibility and accountability, the administration in PA-controlled areas has acquired an image of corruption (*fassad*) and mismanagement, leading to widespread public alienation.

In short, the intifada has culminated in a state of chronic disorder, both within the PA and on the streets of the West Bank and Gaza. This has given rise to persistent fears of *fitna* (civil strife). Indeed, there is already a kind of small-scale *fitna* in the independent initiatives of armed gangs, sometimes directed against Israel but often against the institutions and leading personalities of the PA, rival gangs, or private individuals – especially businessmen – whose vulnerability makes

them easy prey for intimidation and extortion in the name of "the cause." But while that form of fratricide already poisons the daily lives of many Palestinians, it also raises even more horrific fears of full-scale civil war involving the major political camps in Palestinian society: Fatah and the Islamists.

### *Transformation of Political Leadership*

Systemic disorder has been accompanied by, and to some extent has accelerated, a parallel process of leadership transformation in all the major Palestinian political institutions. As a result, the PA, Fatah, the PLO, and Hamas all find themselves at something of a crossroads on the eve of disengagement. The PA, in urgent need of renovation after more than a decade under the leadership of Yasir Arafat, was scheduled to hold Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections in July for the first time since 1996, but Chairman Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), lacking confidence in his own organizational base and concerned that Hamas might manage to reap electoral benefit from its claim of having forced Israel to withdraw, sought to postpone the parliamentary election as long as possible in the hope

that the salience of the disengagement would diminish in the minds of Palestinian voters. At this point, he has succeeded in deferring the election at least until January 2006.

One of his assumptions in pushing for the delay was almost certainly that he would, meanwhile, have managed to convene a Fatah Congress scheduled for August 2005 and to use that event to consolidate his authority over the movement. Since the death of Arafat, Abu Mazen has been unable to assert his control over Fatah and put his political house in order. Instead, he has been frustrated at almost every turn by the old guard of corrupt time-servers, challenged both from outside (by Farouq Qaddumi) and from inside (by Ahmad Qurei [Abu Ala'a]), and incapable of bringing to heel the nominally subordinate local militias operating under the rubric of the Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. Abu Mazen undoubtedly hoped that this Congress, the first in sixteen years, would sweep into positions of power a new generation of honest, locally-grounded supporters and produce an attractive list of candidates who would enhance Fatah's prospects of success in the PLC elections. But even this project was frustrated by the Central Committee, and the Fatah Congress was postponed until after the PLC elections. It is possible that Abu Mazen and his supporters agreed to this delay because they judged that the few months remaining until the parliamentary elections would not suffice to bring about a thorough reform of Fatah anyway, and they might achieve better results

by integrating some independent candidates into the Fatah list in order to endow it with greater credibility.

Nevertheless, Abu Mazen's hesitancy has exacerbated fears that the movement is completely incapable of promoting the agenda that it ostensibly upholds and for which Abu Mazen was ostensibly elected chairman. One expression of these fears was an "Open Letter" in late June in the PA's own newspaper, *al-Hayat al-Jadida*, by Nabil Amr, the same former minister and Fatah reformer whose denuncia-

**Many Palestinians view Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and the northern West Bank with grave misgivings, suspecting that it may turn out to be a "poisoned chalice."**

tions of Yasir Arafat's mismanagement had resulted in an attempt to assassinate him and who now criticized Abu Mazen for failing even to produce a workable reform plan, much less begin its implementation.

The ongoing crisis within Fatah has raised expectations that it will fail to withstand the growing challenge from Hamas, which has already registered significant gains in local elections and in public opinion polls. However, Hamas itself faces increased confusion about its political course. In part this is a function of the

expectation that the disengagement will exacerbate tensions between the local leadership and the leadership abroad, because the latter might take advantage of Israel's withdrawal to enter Gaza and compete directly for control of the movement. But it also arises from the ambivalence about Hamas' decision to contest the parliamentary elections. That implies recognition, however tacit and indirect, of the detested Oslo agreements, because the PLC is a creature of those agreements and participation in Oslo-inspired processes runs counter to the basic ethos of the movement. Moreover, while Hamas would surely like to make a respectable showing in the elections and perhaps secure several key social and economic ministries that could be used to buttress its popular base further, it is much less certain about the desirability of an outright majority and of inadvertently gaining control of the entire PA. That would force it to accept overall responsibility for the fate of the Palestinians, including the need to engage in some sort of non-violent interaction with Israel.

That possibility emerges from the fact that Islamist resurgence means a transformation, not only in the PA, but also in the PLO – the ultimate source of authority for all Palestinian relations with the rest of the world, including Israel. For much of the past decade, Hamas has carried out on-again, off-again negotiations with Fatah about its potential incorporation into the PLO. These negotiations always foundered on Fatah's rejection of Hamas demands for 40 percent rep-

resentation in PLO institutions based on the untested claim that Hamas had the support of 40 percent of the people. But such demands will be more difficult if not impossible to resist if Hamas registers close to that degree of success, or better, in the elections. In that case, Hamas will carry significant weight within the PLO by right, rather than by Fatah generosity, perhaps to the point of bringing about a fundamental transformation of the organization into what some Hamas spokesmen already call "PLO-III" (with barely disguised contempt for both the PLO-I of Ahmad Shukeiri and the PLO-II of Yasir Arafat). Because of the religious absolutism central to the Hamas worldview, such a transformation would diminish the chances, already rather remote, of any productive permanent status negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

Apart from Fatah and the Islamists, most of the other pre-intifada components of political society have faded into insignificance. The left, represented by Mustapha Barghouti in the presidential elections, is a marginal force, and its organizational manifestations, including Fida (largely consisting of remnants of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine), the communists, and even the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, are little more than shadows of their former selves. And while they have attempted to use opposition to the security fence/wall as a lever for mobilization of non-violent activity, there is nothing to suggest that their pros-

pects for revitalization are promising. As for the Palestinian "peace camp," it is in a state of what can charitably be described as suspended animation.

### ***Social Fragmentation***

Beyond its direct political impact, the intifada has had some noteworthy consequences for Palestinian society. Israeli countermeasures, including the disruption of free movement between different regions, have contributed to the relocation of social frameworks. But social fragmentation has been psychological as well as geographical. Because of the breakdown of public order and the dysfunction of public institutions, there has been a reversion to reliance on traditional clan networks for protection and welfare support. In the face of these trends, few national networks have emerged. The major exception has been the prisoners' movement, which has become more prominent because of the increase in the number of prisoners in Israeli jails (about 9000) and because the prison population includes senior politicians, religious leaders, and other members of the Palestinian elite. These prisoners are seen to embody the national struggle and symbolize Palestinian suffering, and their movement has acquired a rare moral authority.

### **The Consequences of Disengagement**

Although few Palestinians would go so far as to oppose Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and the northern West Bank, many view it with grave mis-

givings, suspecting that it may turn out to be a "poisoned chalice." Their concerns relate to post-disengagement Israeli-Palestinian dynamics, domestic politics, and economics.

### ***Israeli-Palestinian Dynamics***

Palestinian efforts to guarantee Israeli commitment to an ongoing process of withdrawal and/or permanent status negotiations after the disengagement have been singularly unsuccessful. Notwithstanding similar urgings by various international parties and lip-service to the roadmap, Israel has refused to undertake such a commitment, not just because that is ideologically distasteful to powerful elements in the government, but also because Israeli politics are likely to be paralyzed after September 2005 by coalition crises and the possibility that the country will enter a pre-election phase. Therefore, the Israeli government is apparently planning to buy time and create a sense of motion without movement by instituting some confidence-building measures (CBMs). Measures under consideration include the opening of a seaport and airport in Gaza, expansion of the maritime operating space available to Gaza fishermen, the release of substantial numbers of "high quality" prisoners, authorization of voting rights for those prisoners remaining in jail, institution of some arrangement for "safe passage" (or "semi-safe passage" between Gaza and the West Bank), and support for efforts to re-equip Palestinian security forces and mobilize financial assistance to Gaza.

Although such measures might produce a sense of hope among Palestinians sufficient to compensate for the likely absence of any serious progress in political negotiations, even they will be problematic for Israel, because they will be difficult to initiate in what may be an atmosphere of post-disengagement trauma and almost impossible to sustain except in the highly improbable situation of a complete absence of terrorist acts emanating from either Gaza or the West Bank. Besides, the two sides will be pursuing contradictory aims in any experiment in confidence-building: in advance of Israeli elections, the Israeli government will want to mark time and make minimal unrequited concessions; in advance of Palestinian elections, the PA will want to maximize concrete gains while minimizing any reciprocity in order to demonstrate the superiority of coordination with Israel over the preferred Hamas approach of outright confrontation. Since the only ostensibly common aim of the two sides is to lay the groundwork to blame the other if/when the situation deteriorates, there is little prospect of any real breakthrough in the immediate aftermath of the disengagement, not only with respect to negotiations but even with respect to the stabilization implied by the institution of CBMs.

### *Domestic Politics*

A second source of apprehension concerns the ability of the PA to assume control of Gaza and perform as an effective, responsible government. This

stems from the belief that Gaza will be seen both by Palestinians and foreigners (especially the US administration) as a test case, and that the PA will fail the test. Indeed, considerable effort is already being invested in preparing the alibi for anticipated failure by developing the argument that disengagement will not really be the end of Israeli occupation. The most specific focus of concern is the disposition of the real estate Israel will evacuate in Gaza. This state land, which comprises about 18 percent of the territory, is worth millions and has already provoked some instances of squatting. The PA would like to gain direct control of the land and any other physical assets Israel leaves behind, if only because they could become a precious electoral asset. It therefore would prefer a quiet, orderly transfer and has already announced the establishment of a special 5000-man force under the command of Interior Minister Nasir Yousef to ensure that outcome. But by most accounts, all Palestinian security forces remain in a state of serious disarray, and there are doubts about the PA's ability to prevent an unregulated land rush.

### *Economics*

Third, the disengagement may well have an adverse impact on Palestinian economics. The most immediate consequence will be the loss of jobs in the Katif bloc within the Gaza Strip itself for about 5000 Palestinian workers. The direct job losses may also extend to the industrial parks along the Gaza-Israel border, including the

one at Erez that once employed 3000 workers and still provides jobs for about 300. Moreover, the disengagement is part of a broader process that involves the erection of the separation barrier in or around the West Bank. When that barrier is completed sometime in 2006, it will eliminate the gray/black economy that persists because of what remains of access by West Bank Palestinians to Israel. All this suggests that the immediate economic impact of disengagement/separation is likely to be negative.

Of course, the completion of the barrier will also probably result in the easing of current restrictions on movement within the West Bank, which would have a positive economic impact. Moreover, the G-8 has recently announced its support of the initiative by Quartet representative James Wolfensohn to mobilize a global contribution of up to \$3 billion per year over the coming three years to help in the reconstruction of Gaza. But unless the PA designs a comprehensive economic plan to deal with the possible rupture of all ties between Palestinians and Israelis and, more urgently, acts decisively to end the *fawda* and establish conditions of stability, public order, and transparency, even that sum will have no more durable structural impact than did the billions in aid given to the PA before 2000.

### **Political-Security Implications**

Extrapolation from current trends suggests that the disengagement does not augur well for the Fatah-controlled PA. Barring unanticipated

developments, its inability to govern effectively or to produce any short-term tangible benefits for Palestinians will reflect badly on its reputation and on its political viability. That, in turn, may work to the short-term advantage of Hamas, an advantage that could translate into electoral gains if the elections are held soon after the disengagement, before the immediate psychological gratification of Israeli withdrawal gives way to disaffection that might also be directed against it.

In such circumstances, there is little reason to expect that tranquility will prevail for very long. Technically, the *tahdia* (informal agreement to maintain calm) is scheduled to expire at the end of 2005, and whatever interest the general public may have in prolonging it, the decision ultimately rests in the hands of Hamas, which might revert to violence in order to salvage its political standing following a failed experiment of participation in government; of other groups like Islamic Jihad and the PFLP; or even of uncontrollable individuals.

Whether or not Gaza will become a hotbed of intensified terror after the disengagement is a matter of speculation, and opinions are divided. But most indicators suggest – and most analysts agree – that while the terrorists' major center of gravity will shift to the West Bank and their focus will be on the settlements and the access roads (if not also on targets inside the Green Line), Gaza will at least serve as a training area and as the terrorists' rear echelon and support base for weapons smuggling and local

production; and will offer safe harbor for wanted terrorists and senior commanders. It may also provide Hamas with a favorable environment in which to build a larger militia, since the organization will enjoy a considerable degree of immunity, at least at first, as a result of international pressure on Israel to allow the PA time to organize itself and stabilize the situation in the area.

### Conclusion

As a factor impacting on Palestinian politics and society, Israeli disengagement poses both risks/costs and potential opportunities/benefits. In the context of broader underlying processes, however, the former generally appear to outweigh the latter, because the disengagement contributes little to the ending of public insecurity and chaos, social fragmentation, or economic deterioration. And though the sight of unilateral Israeli withdrawal will almost certainly provide some short-term psychological gratification, that will hardly provide for a fundamental change in underlying conditions or a resolution of the current dilemmas, some of which may actually be exacerbated. Without structural change and tangible benefits for ordinary citizens, the Gaza disengagement alone will therefore do little in the medium and longer term to change the balance of forces in Palestinian society. At best, it will allow for prolongation of the economic and social status quo; at worse, it may even lead to further deterioration.

To the extent that such developments are perceived by Israel to be detrimental to its own interests, it may decide to implement a number of complementary measures in order to ameliorate the negative consequences of disengagement and enhance Abu Mazen's ability to consolidate his rule. Such measures, some of which were already agreed to and/or initiated in the past, could include:

1. accelerating projects to create the "safe passage" between Gaza and the West Bank
2. permitting rehabilitation of the airport in Gaza
3. avoiding large-scale destruction of existing facilities and infrastructure in Gaza and transferring them intact to the PA
4. facilitating efforts by international factors to promote job-creation projects in Gaza
5. releasing Palestinian prisoners to the maximum extent consistent with concrete security concerns
6. showing the maximum degree of consideration possible for Palestinian humanitarian needs in the operation of security-barrier crossing points

To the extent that the post-disengagement political capacity of Israel's own government permits such measures (which is by no means certain), their adoption could mitigate the negative consequences of disengagement for the Palestinians and perhaps even stimulate structural changes that could work to the benefit of both Palestinians and Israelis.

# The Primacy of Regional Transformation: US Strategy in the Post-Disengagement Era

Eran Lerman

## A Swing in Policy?

At the core of the US decision-making process – on Middle Eastern issues as on others – it is often the president and the small group of influential people around him, the so-called "presidential elite," who determine the broad outlines of policy.<sup>1</sup> True, the basic currents of Congressional positions and public opinion have a role to play, and at times, create an important input. The professional class of Foreign Service officers and others in vast Washington bureaucracies who deal with the region (some of whom still tend to be "Arabists," promoting a close linkage between the Palestinian issue and US standing in the Middle East) can likewise leave their mark on implementation. However, it has consistently been the White House that called the key shots, ever since Truman overrode the central figures of his own administration and recognized Israel within minutes of its inception; and it will certainly be so in the second term of the present administration, which enjoys a partisan hold on both houses of Congress.

This presidential dominance has led at times to remarkable, personalized swings in mood and mode of action. For example, the deliberate inaction of the Reagan administration on the peace process replaced Carter's intensive involvement; in 1989, George Bush and James Baker took a radically fresh look at their options; more recently, George W. Bush turned his back decisively on Clinton's last-gasp "parameters" – and on Arafat as an interlocutor – and soon became a close ally of Sharon's strategy. Moods can change even in the lifetime of one

administration: the attitudes towards Israel that marked the late years of the Eisenhower administration bore little resemblance to the earlier conflicted relationship.<sup>2</sup>

Can such a sharp swing in US policy occur again at this time, as some of the right-wing opponents of Prime Minister Sharon's policy steadily warn, and some voices on the Israeli left openly hope would happen? Throughout much of 2005, Israel enjoyed a diplomatic "free ride," so as to make it easier for Sharon, beset by severe internal challenges, to ac-

complish his goals. Will this pattern persist after the completion of disengagement from the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria?

No simple predictions are possible in the extremely complex dynamics now at work in Israel itself, in Washington, among the Palestinians, and in the region as a whole. Present calculations may need to be redrawn – if a violent internal conflict engulfs Israel and acts as a restraint on future government decisions; if the unwieldy Sharon coalition comes unglued and early elections in 2006 change the

political landscape; and/or if a major terror attack, let alone a sustained outburst of Palestinian violence, brings an end to the present attempts to achieve calm and to promote confidence-building measures. Moreover, the long shadow of the troubling situation in Iraq and the setbacks in the war on terror as a whole taint all hopeful visions for the future.

Still, the short answer is no. Broader considerations may indeed compel the US to adopt a course of action that would lead to growing friction with Israel – particularly if the Israeli leadership chooses to exercise a "move to the right" after the disengagement – but not to a fundamental departure from the present strategy of stages. To understand why, it is necessary to take a closer look at the internal dynamics of current US policy in the region, which follows a pattern already familiar from previous Republican administrations.

### **The Predominance of Strategy**

When the ebb and flow of US policies is assessed over time, it appears that Democratic presidents, of which there were only three since the Six Day War, tended to value the pursuit of Arab–Israeli peace as a strategic goal in its own right, reflecting, among other considerations, the strong sentiment of many of their liberal Jewish supporters. It was Johnson who set the stage for future events, by stipulating that Israel's gains in 1967, unlike 1956, should be used to achieve peace agreements, and by letting UN Security Council Resolution 242

be worded so as to leave some room for territorial compromise. Carter invested immense efforts in negotiating the Israeli–Egyptian peace treaty (made possible, paradoxically, by Sadat's effective rebellion against Carter's initial policy of cooperation with the Soviets). Clinton, enticed by the possibilities offered by the active and audacious pursuit of peace under Rabin, Peres, and Barak, was equally involved and engaged: Arab–Israeli peace, for his administration, was

**With "Bush 43," efforts to promote Israeli–Palestinian accommodation can be expected to move ahead only in the context of a much broader and extremely ambitious vision for the future of the Middle East.**

not only a vital goal but the very cornerstone of his regional strategy, the pillar upon which all else depended (with tragic consequences).

Republicans, on the other hand, tended – fairly consistently, despite their own profound variance in ideological orientation and operational style – to subordinate the pursuit of peace to a broader regional agenda. This divergence should not be overstated: Democrats are mindful of broad strategic concerns, and Republicans are attentive to the moral imperatives of the quest for peace. The

resulting policies on both sides are marked by complexity and nuance, and often influenced by public and political pressures. Nevertheless, different points of departure do produce distinct policies. Ironically, those most ardently committed to the pursuit of peace "for its own sake" ended up by making it less likely, and vice versa.

For the Nixon and Ford administrations, guided by Kissinger's focus on the Soviet challenge, the Arab–Israeli process was above all an important arena of the Cold War, in which they were able to make significant gains, not least by making good use of Israeli military achievements. Reagan's attitudes towards Syria and the PLO were very much a function of the latter's Soviet affiliations. For Bush in 1991, Madrid was part of the broader effort to create a stable regional "architecture" in the aftermath of the Gulf War. With "Bush 43," despite the radical difference (the father was the enforcer of stability, the son an ardent advocate of democratic destabilization and change), this aspect of policy reemerges, after years of Clinton's "peace first" attitude: efforts to promote Israeli–Palestinian accommodation can be expected to move ahead only in the context of a much broader and extremely ambitious vision for the future of the Middle East.

### **The Decisive Issues**

What are the key goals of US policy, from which we can expect to deduce the present and future priorities of the Bush administration? Two purposes stand out as the pillars of policy, even

though many suspect they may be fatally contradictory.

On the one hand, there is the drive for creation of what should be carefully defined not as "democracy" (too fast, too soon) but rather as the building blocks necessary for the emergence of civil society. This "generational" project, as defined by Bush and Rice, requires a broad range of initiatives – from the encouragement of a free press to the aggressive promotion of women's rights – ultimately leading to the establishment of democratic norms and institutions. The administration proudly points, even now (despite tragedies and losses in Iraq and elsewhere, including the London attacks) to the dramatic rise of new, participatory political patterns in the Arab and Muslim world, after generations (if not eons) of repression. It can be expected to hold on to this "defining" vision even at a time of severe adversity.

On the other hand, the US actively seeks the defeat of all attempts by totalitarian Islamists to come to power anywhere in the Arab or Muslim world. After all, these movements, Sunni and Shiite alike, are the specific enemy in the war on terror. The neo-conservative core of the present administration may have come to the conclusion that only a basic change in regional politics would be a real guarantee against such totalitarian bids for power, but until this long-term remedy does its work, the short-term challenge is to prevent the exploitation of the democratic process by totalitarian parties of any color (i.e., to avoid the

phenomenon of one man, one vote, one time).

It is yet to be seen whether both seemingly incompatible purposes can be served. After all, a dramatic shift towards democracy, while true liberal institutions and social forces are yet to mature, could easily play into the hands of the organized Islamist movements; while on the other hand, an extensive attempt to repress the latter could easily lead to the reversal of the (delicate and limited) gains made so far towards introducing the

### **The administration must prove that US efforts are indeed capable of promoting both democratization and the containment of the Islamist threat.**

building blocks of civil society and democratic culture. In both cases, the entire rationale of Bush's vision, as emphatically stated in his second inaugural address and in his 2005 State of the Union Address – and more recently, by Karl Rove,<sup>3</sup> who signaled no retreat, despite the difficulties in Iraq – would be cast into serious doubt, and with it, the central tenets of American policy in the post-9/11 era. It is therefore necessary for the administration to prove to its critics, at home and abroad, that US efforts are indeed capable of promoting both democratization and the containment of the Islamist threat.

The crucial testing grounds for

this strategic challenge will not be in the Palestinian arena. Above all, Iraq is the key battleground at this time, and for the foreseeable future the outcome there will continue to hang in the balance. Developments in Iran, particularly in light of Ahmadinejad's election to the presidency, could soon add to the drama. So will the response of the Syrian system to the recent, resounding setbacks in Lebanon. Egypt – and even more so, Saudi Arabia, which is fast becoming the target of angry pressures in Washington<sup>4</sup> – may be subjected to steadily mounting American pressures for change. The future orientations of the emerging Palestinian polity cannot be expected to shape these broader patterns, and indeed, they are more likely to be shaped by them.

Nevertheless, the Palestinian "experiment" is important in and of itself. It seems to be authentically viewed and is certainly paraded by the Bush administration as "exhibit no. 3" (beside the elected governments of Iraq and Afghanistan), attesting to the transformative role of US policy in the region. For this very reason, it serves its purpose better when it can be presented and perceived as a successful work in progress, rather than be driven again, as during the catastrophic sequence of events in 2000, into a "make or break" corner. This implies that the administration would prefer tactics enabling Abu Mazen to survive in power, despite his shortcomings, over attempts to push him, and Israel, towards a permanent status agreement.

After all, the present administration is unlikely to find an Israeli government that would agree to Palestinian requirements; nor can it coerce Israel on issues such as Jerusalem or the refugees' "right of return" against the basic positions of the Israeli electorate, the sentiments of many in the American public domain, and the broad majority in both houses of Congress. Thus, any attempt to follow Clinton into the realm of laying down markers on the key components of the permanent status would be avoided, and even seen as an active threat to broader US interests.

### **The April 2004 Commitments**

US options for dramatic progress towards Phase III of the roadmap are further curtailed by the formal commitment the US entered into in the exchange of letters between President Bush and Prime Minister Sharon on April 14, 2004. Much has been written of late – most of it politicized and misguided – to the effect that the more recent promise made to Mahmoud Abbas, namely, that no permanent change in the 1949 armistice lines can be made other than by mutual agreement, has rendered the April 2004 commitments irrelevant or meaningless. This is not the case. Israel itself is committed to the notion of an equitable and negotiated two-state solution (although this was hardly imaginable from a Likud leader until a few years ago); but the formal American assessment of what might be the outcome of the permanent status negotiations has taken away the mainstay of the Arab

position in advance of such negotiations. Bush "explained," and in effect asserted, that the latter are indeed unlikely to lead to a full return to the armistice lines. He did not even adopt the preferred Arab term, the "June 4, 1967 lines," which implies the "undoing of the outcome of Israeli aggression." By doing so, he took issue, directly and openly, with the Arab interpretation of "international legitimacy" – and with the expectation that this interpretation would sooner or later be imposed on Israel, not least by the US itself.

This American position negates the Palestinian assumption that there can be no peace process, unless its terms of reference are those they presume – namely, that 1967 was a war of aggression that entitles Israel to no gains at all; and that UN General Assembly Resolution 194 of December 1948 grants them, at least in theory, the right of return. The only prospect for a successful permanent status negotiation depends on the emergence of a Palestinian leadership willing to enter into open-ended negotiations without this "cover." There is little if any reason to assume that Mahmoud Abbas, despite his genuine rejection of terror, can transcend his domestic and inter-Arab limitations and make this choice.

### **The Long and Winding Road(map)**

None of this, however, promises smooth sailing for any Israeli government, let alone one that may choose, after the disengagement and its trau-

ma (or after the 2006 elections), to opt for a sharp turn to the right and a hard-line stance on the future of the West Bank. The crucial issues, on which Israeli behavior might roil the Bush administration, are above all expansion of settlements and retention of outposts, and the mode of reaction to ongoing terror activities. While Bush has no intention of satisfying Abu Mazen's forlorn hopes of abandoning the elaborate mechanism of the roadmap and thus forcing Israel into the permanent status negotiations, he is equally unlikely to allow Israel to humiliate and break the Palestinian Authority (PA), in a manner that would ease the way for a Hamas takeover, with disastrous consequences for US regional policy.

The main thrust of the effort to sustain Abbas in power and reverse Hamas' recent political gains would come in the economic and social realm. Using the Gaza Strip as a vital testing ground and the Wolfensohn mission as the key instrument of policy, the US and the other members of the Quartet (certainly the Europeans, for whom "soft" influence is the preferred tool of change) would seek to make the rewards of stability and calm – investment, employment, good governance, social supports that replace what Hamas now offers to the poor and needy – manifest to the majority of Palestinians. The latter's present sympathy towards the radicals, after all, flows from their anger over corruption and poor services, rather than from real identification with the fundamentalist religious and political

program and its warlike anti-Israeli agenda.

Still, not all can be done by contributions from outside. Israel should therefore be prepared to do its part, or it will otherwise be pressed relentlessly toward several measures, including:

- Easing restrictions on everyday life, releasing more prisoners, and above all, going as far as prudence allows towards giving the Palestinians freedom of movement (in the West Bank, and possibly between it and Gaza). At present, nothing contributes more to the Palestinian grievance – and to the manner in which it is read in Washington – than the endless litany of complaints about the roadblocks and checkpoints that hamper Palestinians going about their lives. Bush has more than once expressed his personal concern on this, and so far it has been proven again and again that with him, "what you see is what you get." In other words, his concern is genuine and has been expressed well and beyond the need to "make noises" that would keep Abu Mazen happy. Thus, solutions to the problem of "transportational contiguity" should be found soon.

- Avoiding actions deemed as blatantly prejudging the outcome of negotiations, and as such highlighting Abu Mazen's helplessness and inability to restrain his Israeli interlocutors. The expansion of settlements and "pushing out" the contour of the fence in the areas where it has not yet been built are likely to provoke a

sharp American reaction. Again, the question of enabling the PA to withstand the Hamas criticism would play a major role in determining US policy – and even more so in the dialogue with Europe – and is bound to create extensive disagreements with Israeli policies.

Painful as they may sound, the same considerations are liable to lead to a lenient American position towards Palestinian failures to deliver on counter-terrorist actions at this stage, as long as the level of violence is not a major disruptive factor. The best Israel could do is swallow this grievance, as against the requirements of Phase I of the roadmap, and possibly use it to ease American pressures to fulfill its own obligations.

Beyond these immediate concerns, the mounting difficulty of managing the tensions between the continued presence of settlements in the very heart of the West Bank, particularly along Route 60 (dissecting the access from Ramallah to the other key population centers in Samaria) is bound, sooner or later, to force the larger issue of further disengagements and the creation of Palestinian territorial contiguity – a key concept endorsed by Israel as early as December 2002<sup>5</sup> and later reaffirmed at the Aqaba Summit, but not yet actualized.

Theoretically, the better way of achieving Palestinian contiguity, while avoiding the pitfalls of permanent status negotiations, would be for the US to press both sides to implement Phase II of the roadmap and

reach an agreement on the creation of a Palestinian state "within provisional borders." It remains uncertain, however, whether the present Palestinian leadership would be willing to take the risks involved – it certainly fears that Phase II would be the last – although it may become more amenable to American suasion once US power is more effectively demonstrated in other theaters in the Middle East. Until this happens (if ever), the one course of action that would best serve American purposes may well be to try and coordinate with the next Israeli government, which will emerge after the 2006 elections, further unilateral steps (i.e., disengagements and withdrawals) that would help rather than hinder Abu Mazen's ability to consolidate his power.

## Notes

- 1 The authoritative text on this issue remains Steven Spiegel, *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy, from Truman to Reagan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).
- 2 See, for example, Abraham Ben Zvi, *Decade of Transition: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the Origins of the American-Israeli Alliance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).
- 3 Speaking before the New York Conservative Party, June 16, 2005.
- 4 To sense how much the Saudi "Teflon" has peeled off, see Robert Baer, *Sleeping with the Devil: How Washington Sold Our Soul for Saudi Crude* (New York: Three Rivers, 2004).
- 5 Sharon's speech at the Herzliya Conference, which preceded the following year's disengagement announcement.

# New (Im)Balances: American Policy after the Disengagement

Roni Bart

After the disengagement is completed, the United States will almost certainly strive to implement the roadmap, a direction already determined when Washington decided to back the disengagement and announced that the plan was consonant with the roadmap. The intention to return to the roadmap has been reiterated over the last two years, most recently by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice during her visit to the Middle East in July 2005, and there are reasons to assume that the Americans mean to do so. The United States, the Quartet, Israel, the Palestinian Authority (PA), and the entire international community are committed to the roadmap. Even if at first the administration formulated the roadmap as lip service to the Europeans, the map has acquired the status of a *sine qua non*. Abandoning the roadmap would be fatal to the international credibility of the United States and the chances of progressing toward a permanent resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Therefore when it approved the disengagement plan, the United States insisted that Israel reaffirm its commitment to the roadmap's outline such that "the roadmap is the only plan on the table."

## The Roadmap

The "Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," published in April 2003, contains three stages. The first, intended as a two-month period, is designed to stabilize the volatile situation by ending terror and violence, normalizing Palestinian life, and establishing the PA's institutions. The second or intermediate stage, to last one year, is to strengthen and broaden stability, and upon its completion a Palestinian state will be established with "provisional borders" and "maxi-

mum territorial contiguity." The third stage will last for two years, during which negotiations will be held and culminate in implementation of the permanent agreement. The process was originally designed to end in late 2005, but by the time Yasir Arafat died in November 2004, the process had essentially not yet been launched. President George W. Bush announced after his reelection that the two and half to three year plan would be completed by 2008.

The "performance-based" roadmap is built on steps to be taken by

each party. In the first stage the Palestinians are supposed to institute a serious reform of the PA (which includes drafting a constitution and holding elections); unite all the security forces into three organizations free of links to terror; dismantle the terrorist organizations; confiscate illegal weapons; and apprehend terrorists. Israel, for its part, is expected to help the Palestinians carry out these steps, including the opening of institutions in East Jerusalem, by allowing freedom of movement, the transfer of funds, and humanitarian activity; ceasing all ag-

gressive acts, including the expropriation of land, expulsion of Palestinians, and leveling of houses; gradually returning its forces to the September 28, 2000 lines; removing illegal outposts; and freezing "all settlement activity" (including natural growth).

Some of these steps have already been taken. However, at least one pitfall threatens each side that, if not carefully negotiated, is liable to bring the whole process to a halt. Abu Mazen may be able to satisfy the Americans with his reforms, but his ability to unite the security mechanisms effectively remains in doubt. It is almost certain that the dismantling of the terror organizations will not occur. Israel will be able to take risks – including a return to the September 2000 lines. But the dismantling of the outposts, a difficult step especially after the trauma of disengagement, will be well nigh impossible since only a government dominated by the left would implement a total freeze on construction activity in the settlements, and this option seems highly unlikely in the foreseeable future. The question then is: how will the United States deal with these two pitfalls?

### **Dismantling the Terrorist Organizations**

It is apparent that the United States will not insist on dismantling the terrorist organizations as a stipulation for advancing the political process. "Dismantling" refers to the Israeli demand to declare the terrorist organizations illegal, confiscate their weapons, apprehend their leaders

and activists, and cut off their financial sources. However, the more that Hamas strengthens its position and political involvement, the more that American willingness to accept it as a partner in the dialogue will overcome the demand to dissolve Hamas as a terrorist organization. A number of reasons substantiate this claim.

First, al-Qaeda is the only case to date in which the United States has demanded the ostracism and total dismantling of a terror organization.

### **Abandoning the roadmap would be fatal to the international credibility of the United States and the chances of progressing toward a permanent resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.**

In the case of the IRA, the Americans were satisfied if it laid down its weapons without surrendering them (this experience might serve as a model). In Iraq, Muqtada al-Sadr was defined as a terrorist, but the campaign against him ceased after he became part of the political system, even though his militancy potential (and possible intentions) still exist. For twenty years Hizbollah has been defined as a terror organization, but the American administration said and did nothing against its participation in the Lebanese elections. Washington appears

to accept with quiet blessing the integration of terror organizations into the political system, even if they have not laid down their weapons and renounced their intentions. The theory of "democratic peace" that holds sway in the United States is based on the pragmatic, rational, and "very American" hope that terrorists can be transformed into moderates. During the transition period low-scale terrorist activity may be tolerated, similar to what happened during the *hudna* that Abu Mazen initiated after Arafat's death.

Second, and in tandem with the first claim, the United States will not ostracize Abu Mazen (as it did Arafat) if he fails to disarm the terror organizations. In this case too, Bush's September 2001 statement "we will not distinguish between terrorists and those who harbor them" has been valid only for al-Qaeda and the Taliban regime. Syria has been protecting terrorists who kill American soldiers in Iraq for over two years, but the administration has taken only relatively moderate countermeasures. Furthermore, the United States was willing to work with Abu Mazen and Abu Ala'a at the same time that Arafat was consenting to, if not encouraging, terrorist activity. Therefore it is highly unlikely that it will be more forceful with politically-weak Abu Mazen when he invites Hamas to join his administration.

Third, there are already signs of American willingness to accept Hamas and not insist on the organization's disavowal of terror. In the

spring of 2005, President Bush hosted first the Israeli prime minister and then the chairman of the PA. During a news conference with Sharon, Bush called on the Palestinians to disband the terror organizations. He did not repeat this demand when Abu Mazen stood next to him, even though six weeks earlier he had no qualms about reminding Sharon that Israel would have to dismantle its outposts and freeze construction activity in the settlements. When reporters asked the president if he thought Abu Mazen was acting aggressively enough against the terror organizations, Bush chose to brush the question aside, lauding Abu Mazen for his commitment to democracy. Afterwards the White House spokesperson hedged the question on whether Bush expected Abu Mazen to disarm Hamas. A few weeks later the secretary of state also felt it sufficient to declare that the United States viewed Hamas as a terror organization, without saying a word about Abu Mazen's flirtations with its leaders. In an announcement by the Quartet (led by the United States) in May 2005 there was a lengthy reference to steps that Israel would have to take to assist the Palestinians, but again no mention was made of the Palestinians' obligation to combat terrorism.

There are currently low key, unofficial contacts between the Americans and elected Hamas officials of the local councils. In addition, in the middle of June, the United States ended the ban that had been in effect for over a year and a half on visits

by American diplomats to the Gaza Strip. The ban, instituted after an attack on a diplomatic convoy in which three American security guards were killed south of the Erez crossing in October 2003, was lifted even though the Palestinians have not imprisoned the attacker, whose identity is known. Although National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley told the delegation of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations in the middle of June that the administration would continue to demand the disbandment of the terrorist infrastructure, the Americans are sending a different message to the Palestinians. This trend has continued for over two years.

For Israel the effort against terror peaked in President Bush's speech of June 2002, when he announced that the Palestinians' campaign against terror would serve as the first condition for moving any process forward:

The United States will not support the establishment of a Palestinian state until its leaders engage in a sustained fight against the terrorists and dismantle their infrastructure. This will require an externally supervised effort to build and reform the Palestinian security services. The security system must have clear lines of authority and accountability and a unified chain of command.

The Palestinians rejected this approach outright, and ten months later, the roadmap no longer stipulated the Palestinians' struggle against terror as

a condition for the process, but as an effort that should continue during the process. This basic change not only generated disappointment among the Israelis and a list of reservations that the Israeli government affixed to the roadmap, but it also prompted a letter signed by eighty-eight senators criticizing the administration's flagrant divergence from its position on the Palestinians' struggle against terror.

Over the years Washington persisted and succeeded in pressuring Sharon to relax his staunch anti-terrorism position: hence the reduced prerequisites, from a demand that the Palestinians produce results in their anti-terror campaign to a demand that they make an effort; from a demand for a 100 percent effort to a demand for a partial one; from thirty days of quiet to one week, and so forth. At the same time, the administration held talks with Arafat and the heads of his government despite their declared refusal to dismantle the terror organizations. American moderation on this issue reached a new climax in the single anemic sentence that the president devoted to the matter when he hosted Abu Mazen in late May 2005: "All who engage in terror are the enemies of the Palestinian state, and must be held to account."

### The Settlements

The American attitude to the settlements pitfall, which stands firm on the Israeli government's doorstep, is less understanding and forgiving. Thus, even during Sharon's visit to the United States, which was intended

to strengthen his position as the disengagement approached, President Bush reminded him of Israel's obligation to freeze settlement growth. In the press conference with Abu Mazen, Bush explicitly stated for the first time that Jerusalem was one of the places where Israel had to cease construction activity that was contrary to its commitment to the roadmap. When Secretary of State Rice visited Israel, she warned Israel – albeit very tactfully – against a confrontation with the United States over settlement construction that altered the status quo by creating facts on the ground. According to Rice, the administration would not tolerate unilateral changes in East Jerusalem's Arab neighborhoods, in the link to Ma'ale Adumim, and in the settlements in general. It seems that only because of the approaching disengagement an American team has not been dispatched yet to Israel to survey the building area permitted to the settlements, as agreed upon by Condoleezza Rice and Dov Weisglass in the summer of 2004. The prime minister's chief advisor understands American policy better than anyone else in Israel, and his public statements in June 2005 regarding Israel's intention to dismantle the outposts after the withdrawal would seem to testify to the Americans' degree of determination.

As long as disengagement is on the agenda, the Americans will refrain from pushing Israel too hard on the settlement and outpost issue. American administrations are very much aware of the effect of domestic

political pressure, as they themselves are vulnerable to it. They understand the Israeli political arena and realize that Sharon's faltering government is unable to remove the outposts and freeze the settlements while the disengagement is in progress. They have no doubts about the disengagement plan's extreme importance. On the other hand, the United States often reminds Israel, and especially the prime minister, of the promise to the president to dismantle the outposts. We may assume that Sharon's failure to keep this promise could well damage his credibility in Bush's eyes, even if the situation is not identical to the *Karine A* incident, which dealt a fatal blow to Arafat's credibility.

### After the Disengagement

Since the administration believes that "a successful Israeli withdrawal will energize the roadmap," after the pull-out the United States will apparently strive vigorously to implement Phase I of the roadmap. Although the Iraqi issue still heads the Americans' list of priorities in the Middle East, this focus does not preclude intense American activity in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. On the contrary, the administration feels that its conduct in the conflict not only impacts on its efforts in the region – including Iraq, the war on terror, advancing democratization, and even its relations with Europe – but also forms a central pillar in the attempt to stabilize the Middle East. An example of this sentiment is the statement by the chairman of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, Sen.

Richard Lugar, that progress toward solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is vital to the war on terror because that conflict serves as a means for al-Qaeda and its offshoots to recruit terrorists. The United States does not wish to be seen by the Palestinians, Arab states, and international community as though it is satisfied with the Gaza withdrawal alone.

The implementation of Phase I will require both sides to execute a list of tasks according to timetables and detailed benchmarks. This relates primarily to security matters and their implications for the fabric of Palestinian life: the unity and increased effectiveness of Palestinian security forces; removal of checkpoints and gradual pullback to the September 2000 lines; the Quartet's establishment of monitoring mechanisms; the institution of civil reforms according to the blueprint of the Task Force on Palestinian Reform; a relaxing of restrictions in the economic-humanitarian sphere; and so forth. The United States will work with the parties to reach an acceptable interpretation of Phase I along the lines of a mini-roadmap. One of the main practical recommendations for progress in the Israeli-Palestinian arena made by Dennis Ross in 2001 was the need to deal with details and establish strict monitoring measures. At the time, the Bush administration announced that this is how things would be done – "when there's someone to talk with." Thus, General Ward has been handling matters this way since he stepped into the role of security coordinator,

and we may assume that his replacement will continue in this direction after the pullout (Ward is slated for a promotion). Nevertheless it should be remembered that the list of tasks still omits the two key stumbling blocks: dismantling the terror organizations and freezing settlement expansion.

American policy will be heavily influenced by what happens during the disengagement and immediately afterwards. First, the direction that the Palestinian arena takes will serve as a test for Abu Mazen. If the Gaza Strip falls into a state of chaos and/or the Kassam rocket barrages resume, then progress will be impossible unless the PA takes control of the situation and proves that it is the party in charge and a serious partner for negotiations. In this case, the United States will have expectations of Abu Mazen, but it will also demand that Israel provide "first aid" in the form of easing restrictions and granting work permits in Israel so as to enable the PA leader to strengthen his control in the Gaza Strip. At least in the initial weeks following Israel's "courageous step" in implementing disengagement, the administration will not pressure it to take additional steps of this sort.

The second factor that will influence American policy will be the election timetable that the two sides face. Until elections for the Palestinian parliament are held (the estimated date is January 2006) the United States will do everything in its power to bolster Abu Mazen. Washington will urge Israel to be generous and

flexible, and to curtail its responses to terrorist attacks. In contrast, the impact of the elections in Israel will be less significant. Out of respect for the democratic process, the United States will not expect Israel to make significant progress while the campaign and installation of a new government are underway. On the other hand, the official date for Israeli elections, November 2006, is more than one year after the disengagement, and the administration is not likely to grant Israel a "time out" for a whole year.

**The United States does not wish to be seen by the Palestinians, Arab states, and international community as though it is satisfied with the Gaza withdrawal alone.**

As long as there is a government in Jerusalem (center or right) and until a date is decided for elections, the United States will count on Sharon to keep to his word and proceed according to the roadmap.

If and when Abu Mazen proves that he is firmly in charge, whether before or after the Israeli elections, the American orientation points to increased friction with Israel. On the one hand, the United States will not demand the dismantling of the terror organizations as a condition for progress. Current signals are that the administration will be satisfied if

Abu Mazen continues to mouth the right lines and make weak-to-moderate efforts at curbing terror. Although the roadmap is based on accomplishments, the determining factor in this area will be the size and frequency of attacks. Paradoxically, the more successful that Israel is in rooting out and foiling Palestinian terrorism, the less the Americans will pressure the PA to disband Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other factions. This deviation from the first section in the roadmap will be perceived as a necessary move for the map's realization, and will be made possible by loosely interpreting the term "dismantle" to mean the cessation of activity. If terrorism escalates, the United States will pressure the PA to rein it in (perhaps at first as a condition for political progress), but not to completely dissolve the organizations. It is doubtful whether the administration will demand of Abu Mazen in 2006-7 what it did not demand of Arafat in 2002-3.

On the other hand, the United States will urge Israel to honor its obligations regarding the outposts and settlements. The asymmetry in Washington's relations with the two sides – not a new phenomenon – is based on the view that Israel is the stronger and more institutionalized party, hence the more responsible one. If the dismantling of the terrorist organizations is made a stipulation for progress, it will lead to a dead end and/or transfer of power in the PA from Fatah to Hamas. Pressure on Sharon, on the other hand, may lead to his replacement in the Likud lead-

ership by Netanyahu but not to the ascension of a government further to the right. The Americans know that any Israeli government that chooses settlements over negotiations has no chance of surviving; the Bush family has experience in helping topple an Israeli prime minister against this background. The forecast, then, is for increased friction between the United States and Israel on these two issues.

It is of course possible, as is suggested by a number of assessment agencies in Israel, that precisely because the issues of terrorist organizations and settlements impede progress, the United States may prefer to deal with “maintenance” under conditions of low-level conflict. Such a scenario may indeed be the norm during the elections period. Yet while perpetual foot-dragging might result if the terrorist organizations have their way, it is doubtful whether this will happen. The Palestinians have proven on a number of occasions that violence erupts unless progress is made in a political process favorable to them, and the last situation the United States wants in the Middle East is a return to the state of military confrontation between Israel and the Palestinians.

### **Implications for Israeli Policy**

The implications for Israeli policy should be derived, first and foremost, from Israel's political goal. This goal, however, is vague. Does Sharon intend for Israel to retain most of Judea and Samaria, or is he headed for another disengagement plan – whether unilateral or part of the permanent

arrangement – that will transfer the majority of the area to Palestinian control? At the same time, it can be assumed that he is anxious for American support, and to achieve this, Israeli policy will have to live up to the following American expectations.

First, Israel will have to prove that it intends to pursue the peace process by taking the initiative. Counter to its tendency to avoid investing time and energy in the conflict, the Bush administration was dragged into drafting the roadmap in part because of Israel's political passiveness during 2002–3. Furthermore, the disengagement initiative has shown that Israel is capable of taking the lead in a process when it suits its interests, and can even enlist United States involvement. If Israel hopes to influence American policy after the disengagement, it will have to propose its own “roadmap” that details Phase I, rather than waiting for an American initiative. Naturally this mini-map will not be accepted in its entirety, but Israel will be able to utilize it in order to achieve greater influence on the American trend than without it. In any case it will demonstrate Israel's intention to make progress and not rest on its laurels.

Second, Israel has to display flexibility in all facets of security arrangements by relaxing restrictions on the Palestinians. This will be easier to accomplish after the completion of the separation fence. Israel will also have to comply with official and personal promises that Sharon made to President Bush by dismantling all of the illegal outposts. Without this step

Sharon will lose his credibility in the eyes of the administration.

The presentation of a mini-map for Phase I, the display of maximum flexibility on less important issues, and its fulfillment of its commitment to remove the outposts will prove to the administration that Israel is the responsible partner. Israel will be able to declare honestly that it intends to meet its obligation to freeze settlement activity after the Palestinians reciprocate by fulfilling their commitments, including the dissolution of the terror organizations. Under these circumstances, and with emphasis on the terror issue, Israel will be able to rely on certain power groups in the United States, first and foremost the Christian fundamentalist right, for their support. If Israel regards the disbandment of the terrorist organizations as a condition for progress, then a series of preventive acts will have to be taken before the United States concedes it either formally or in practice. It will be necessary to remind the United States of its previous experience with the PLO (i.e., American willingness to accept the PLO as a partner in dialogue only after it recognized Israel's right to exist and abandoned the path of terror) and to the current American campaign against radical Islam.

If Israel takes the initiative and unilaterally abides by most of its commitments, it will be able to forestall the approaching friction from developing between the two countries, or at least prepare for it with a politically optimal public relations position.

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