

When Negotiations Fail to Bear Fruit: The Case for Constructive Independent Steps

Gilead Sher

Despite decades of negotiations aimed at resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians has not yet been achieved. Efforts to conclude a two-state solution have been the central aim of direct bilateral negotiations for over twenty years, and agreements, most notably the Oslo Accords, have been signed by both PLO and Israeli government leaders. However, with frequent rounds of violence, the 50-day Operation Protective Edge against Hamas in Gaza being the latest to-date, and the recurring decision to postpone negotiation of core issues, no plan has been successfully implemented. Early in 2014, the Palestinian Authority's strategy shifted to the legal and diplomatic international arena. Designed to curb Israel's military power and right to self-defense through exploitation of the media, diplomatic channels, international institutions, and international law, it fuels the de-legitimization campaign against Israel, erodes its international standing, and invites an internationally imposed solution to the conflict. Since then, Palestinian lawfare has been building momentum. This paper first briefly outlines the main problems of the Gaza withdrawal and explains how a gradual evacuation of parts of the West Bank could be more successful and avoid many of its pitfalls. It then outlines how independent Israeli steps could be conducive to the conflict resolution process, advancing both Israeli and Palestinian vital interests. Finally, the paper presents a set of policy recommendations on key issues: borders, security, economics, and garnering support among Israelis, Palestinians, and the international community.

The most recent nine-month round of Israeli-Palestinian talks, arranged by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, ended with the parties no closer to an agreement. With growing apathy among the civilian populations, increasing distrust of the other, and the impasse on any resolution of the core issues, it is questionable whether the conflict is ripe for a negotiated settlement. Indeed, the recent developments would suggest that bilateral negotiations as a standalone process towards resolving the conflict are unlikely to bear fruit in the near future.

Among supporters of a two-states-for-two-peoples solution, there is wide consensus that a negotiated settlement is the best way to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, when negotiations fail and the status quo is no longer viable or desirable, leaders must examine constructive alternatives toward a peace agreement. This paper argues that there are complementary and ultimately alternative options to the “negotiations only” notion. These include, *inter alia*, a broader spectrum of gradual, partial, and regional steps, first and foremost an independent and gradual withdrawal from Palestinian territory in the West Bank. The Israeli government needs to begin a process of taking independent steps toward turning the two-state solution into a reality, thus securing the future of Israel as the democratic nation-state of the Jewish people.

As early as 2002, the idea of “proactive separation” from the Palestinian territories was presented in a policy paper drafted by the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute and intended for public debate.¹ From 2003 the policy was debated in the public sphere,² and withdrawal from the Gaza Strip was even included within the Israeli Labor Party’s platform in its unsuccessful bid in the 2003 elections. In late 2003, Prime Minister Sharon, who earlier that year publicly criticized the policy, embraced it, stating that if peace talks with the Palestinians were not successful, “Israel will initiate the unilateral step of disengagement with the Palestinians.”³ In 2005, Sharon implemented the policy with the unilateral withdrawal from Gaza and four settlements in the northern West Bank.⁴

This paper contends that for independent steps to be effective and yield the desired results, they must be carried out gradually. The impact of each respective step must be evaluated before any successive measure is taken. From Israel’s perspective, it should attempt to coordinate steps with the

Palestinians and garner support from the U.S. and as many members of the international community as possible. In addition, while implementing the independent approach, which relies solely on Israel's own decision making, Jerusalem should continue genuine efforts to revive the negotiation process with the Palestinians. It must present an initiative expressing its clear willingness to end the Arab-Israeli conflict while securing its vital national interests.

Israel should design and prepare for a two-state solution on its own, challenging the Palestinians to do the same and seeking to impart convincingly that it intends to live side by side with them as two nation-states. That could begin motivating each side to try to unify its constituents behind a peaceful future, as opposed to waiting for spoilers to decide that periodic war is inevitable. In tandem, Israel should also explore coordination and possibly below-the-surface negotiations on points of common interest with the Palestinians, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, a number of the Gulf principalities, the United States, the European Union, and others. All share a common concern: to counter the spread of violent Islamic fundamentalism, led by ISIS and other radical Islamic jihad terrorist organizations and Iran's nuclear race.

However, if bilateral, regional, or secret multilateral negotiations do not produce a two-state reality, Israel must do whatever it can in the meantime to advance the peace process and create a situation ripe for negotiating a final end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Independent Israeli action has the power to create visible progress toward a two-state solution and generate momentum toward reviving negotiations.⁵ It can offer the parties a renewed sense of progress and hope, and facilitate a rapid return to negotiations. And indeed, ensuing negotiations will have to address core issues that an independent withdrawal from areas in the West Bank does not begin to tackle – including the future of Jerusalem and the issue of the Palestinian refugees.

Lessons Learned from the Gaza Withdrawal

The Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip that was implemented in 2005 in the absence of an agreement with the Palestinians was – and still is – highly controversial among the Israeli public. The disengagement saw the dismantling of Israeli settlements, which included the eviction of more than

8,000 Israeli civilians in Gaza, as well as the evacuation of the residents of the four isolated settlements in the West Bank.⁶ It also saw Israel's 38-year military rule come to an end with the withdrawal of all IDF troops from the Gaza Strip. However, the context of the disengagement was unclear. Whether Prime Minister Sharon's aim was to begin a process of creating a two-state solution, or to sever the Gaza from the West Bank while strengthening Israel's presence in the West Bank, was not stipulated.

The plan, which required the uprooting of thousands of Israeli citizens from their homes by their own government on an unprecedented scale and destroying communities and infrastructures, met strong opposition within the Israeli public. Yet while the Israeli government went to great lengths to persuade the public of the advantages of independent withdrawal and convince it of the soundness of the measure, little proceeded as planned.⁷ Following the disengagement, in part due to a shortsighted George W. Bush administration that insisted on holding elections in the Palestinian Authority, Hamas assumed control of the government, and the terrorist organization was now in a more favorable environment to strengthen its terrorist capacity and build a larger militia. Within the first year after Israel's withdrawal, Hamas intensified its rocket fire from the Gaza Strip into Israel and captured Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit; in response Israel launched Operation Summer Rains. Similar cycles of violence have repeated themselves since, leading to numerous deaths and casualties and constant insecurity in bordering Israeli towns and villages. In addition to these new security concerns, rehabilitation measures for the evacuated Israeli civilians proved inadequate. The state-commissioned report headed by retired Supreme Court Justice Eliyahu Matza concluded that "the State's handling of the evacuees has been riddled with failures."⁸ Many of those evicted resided in mobile homes for a significant period before being resettled, remained unemployed, or found work but at a far lower salary, faced the dissolution of their community, and did not receive the compensation they were expecting.⁹ To avoid a recurrence of these serious problems, Matza also instructed the Israeli government to begin preparing itself for the eventual relocation of Israelis residing in the West Bank settlements.

Given the experience of the Gaza withdrawal, the notion of withdrawal from additional Palestinian territory, perhaps predictably, conjures up visions

of self-destruction, chaos, and war in the minds of many Israelis today. However, Israel can learn lessons from the Gaza withdrawal and construct a plan that circumvents many of the pitfalls. With these lessons in mind, a policy for independently delineating the provisional border between Israel and the Palestinian state in-the-making should:

- a. Be implemented in the wider context of a two-state solution resulting from direct Israeli-Palestinian and regional negotiations that will hopefully be revived during the process.
- b. Be launched as a gradual process, allowing Israel to assess the impact of each step, including the repercussions for security, before undertaking the next measure.
- c. Allow for a continued IDF presence in the West Bank and the Jordan Valley even after the relocation of Israeli civilians, until a time when Israel feels confident handing over the responsibility to an international force.
- d. Consider not withdrawing from all West Bank land in order to retain some bargaining chips and give the Palestinians incentives to resume or continue negotiations.
- e. Ensure mechanisms for proper compensation of Israeli civilians.
- f. Be coordinated with the Palestinians and the international community as much as possible.
- g. Address wider issues of the occupation, including borders, airspace, infrastructure, power, and commerce.
- h. Be implemented at a time of relative quiet and stability and not in response to violence or pressure from Palestinian terrorism.¹⁰

If these elements are included in the policy, then Israel is likely to see a much better outcome than that of the Gaza disengagement.

Meeting the National Aspirations of Both Peoples

A majority of Israelis and Palestinians still support resolving the conflict through a two-state solution,¹¹ the only solution that allows both parties to fulfil their respective aspirations for a sovereign state for their people. However, support for this option, particularly among the Palestinian population, is waning in the name of historic justice, morality, and realism, and a one-state or bi-national state solution is gaining popularity.¹² As the Jewish settlements

become increasingly entrenched in the West Bank, the idea of separating the populations is becoming less viable.

For Israel, continuing its current policy of occupation and settlement expansion is actually far riskier than implementing a policy of gradual, measured, independent steps. Although Israel may feel safer continuing with what it deems to be the status quo, no such status quo actually exists, as Israel has no control over adverse developments. Adopting a “wait and see” approach would be based on an illusion: there is no way to maintain the status quo, as the situation on the ground continues to evolve, Arab and Jewish populations become increasingly entangled, and the two-state solution moves farther out of reach.¹³ Of course, not all risks will be eliminated through a policy of independent steps. Israel will still face threats with enemies such as Iran and its proxies, Hizbollah and Hamas, seeking its destruction. Implementing this policy is likely, however, to create a new and auspicious horizon for Israel to meet its national aspirations and secure its vital national interests.

It is unlikely that the Palestinians will support Israel’s independent gradual steps. Meantime, though, PA President Mahmoud Abbas has laid out his own unilateral plan, which consists of three alternatives. The first involves U.S.-led negotiations between Israel and the PA for a limited time period, which would begin with Israel’s presentation of its idea of permanent borders. The goal is to determine the borders of the Palestinian state and achieve Israeli recognition of the state, all within four months. Little is new in this idea. In case this alternative fails or is not tried at all due to Israeli and U.S. opposition, as indeed has happened, the second alternative would be activated, whereby the PA, through the Arab League, would demand that the UN Security Council instruct Israel to withdraw from Palestinian territory within three to five years. Should both the first and second alternatives fail, the PA would join all international institutions and organizations, sign the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in The Hague, and subsequently file a suit against Israel and its leaders. By now, all alternatives have been activated.

One could argue how constructive this threat-driven Palestinian plan is. Regarding an Israeli unilateral plan, however, even if the proposed timeframe is not optimal for the Palestinians, it would still remove settlements and many

of the problems associated with them, such as restrictions on freedom of movement within the West Bank and extremist settler violence. Furthermore, the occupation has existed for almost fifty years and there is no sign that it is becoming any less entrenched. Therefore, surely a ten year framework per se is far better than no framework.

Palestinians have also opposed the notion of independent steps, arguing that they allow Israel to dictate the framework and outcome.¹⁴ Rather than viewing withdrawal as an opportunity for peace, they view it as an attempt by Israel to delineate the final borders of a two-state solution. However, without the pressure of an agreement with the Palestinians, Israel only needs to consider its own interests.

To be sure, withdrawing the Jewish population from the settlements outside the main settlement blocs in the West Bank is in both parties' interests. Even if independent withdrawal is not the optimal solution for neither the Israelis nor the Palestinians, the policy proposed here would still mark an improvement. In addition, each move will be coordinated with the Palestinian Authority as much as possible to advance the Palestinians' right to self-determination. As Israel withdraws its civilians there should be a gradual transfer of powers and authorities from Israel to the PA. Still, however, independent steps cannot replace a negotiated settlement and will not bring about an end to either Palestinian or Israeli claims related to the contested core issues. Ideally, independent steps will be taken in parallel with a negotiated process, or they will create a better set of circumstances in which negotiations can be revived and have a higher chance of success. As such, Israel will not be dictating the final agreement to the Palestinians.

Thus, there are several advantages of such a policy:

- a. It allows Israel to remain a secure, Jewish, democratic state, with a strong Jewish majority under the State of Israel's jurisdiction.
- b. It works toward realizing the Palestinian right to self-determination – the withdrawal of most settlers will create a more homogenous Palestinian territory in the West Bank and will allow Palestinians to have more control over their institutions.
- c. It enables the establishment of provisional borders for the State of Israel and the future Palestinian state.

- d. The dismantling of numerous Israeli settlements and the gradual withdrawal of IDF forces will strengthen Israel's international status.

The Policy

What would a policy of constructive independent Israeli steps look like? All the details of the policy must be carefully reviewed in advance to leave as little room for error as possible, and avoid the mistakes of the Gaza disengagement. At the same time, during the gradual implementation, there must be enough room for evaluation of the policy and its adaptation, if required. Simultaneously, the U.S. should adopt a paradigm that allows all stakeholders to take independent steps that will advance a reality of two states, by clearly spelling out the parameters of the end game.

Once the parameters – or even Secretary John Kerry's document comprising the U.S. insights from the latest negotiation round – are on the table, any independent step taken in the future can be clearly evaluated whether it moves the parties closer to the reality of two states, and thus considered constructive, or takes them further away.

The U.S. should announce that it will support constructive steps taken by either party, and will object to any destructive step.

Borders

Israel will independently withdraw its civilians to provisional and not final borders. The end of the conflict will of course require the demarcation of final borders, but these will be determined in negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians in either a bilateral or a multi-lateral framework. Even after withdrawing independently, it is advisable that Israel retains its settlements in Hebron, Kiryat Arba, Ariel, Ma'ale Adumim, and the Jordan River and not offer land swaps at that stage. The Israeli withdrawal from the majority of Palestinian territory (around 90 percent), but not of all of the territory, will allow Israel to retain bargaining power and provide incentive for the Palestinians to negotiate.

Security

Following decades of Palestinian terrorism, suicide bombing, hostilities, and rocket fire that have killed thousands of Israeli citizens and traumatized

many others, security is a prime concern for Israel. Israel needs to be sure that withdrawing from any land will not compromise its own security. Arguably, the withdrawal from the majority of the West Bank may be viewed by the Palestinians as a sign of Israeli defeat and weakness, opening the country to further threats due to an erroneously perceived decreased deterrence. This is what many believed happened after Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005, and from Lebanon in 2000. However, this independent action will differ fundamentally, and given the gradual nature of the process the IDF will remain in the West Bank for an extended time period after civilian withdrawal, retaining full freedom of action. Evacuated settlement outposts will be transferred initially to the Israeli army. Thus, there is no reason to assume that the security situation would worsen, as the IDF will be equally able to thwart any terrorist threats from within the territory. Only if and when Israel is confident that terrorist cells are not active within the West Bank, will it consider gradually replacing the IDF presence with that of an international military force.

The plan must also take into account the worst scenarios from the Israeli security perspective, including increased motivation by Palestinian and Islamic fanatics to attack Israel, with the Palestinian Authority unable to prevent it. On the one hand, it is hoped that progress on the ground toward a two-state solution will reduce motivations for violence; nonetheless, all circumstances should be considered. The preparations, therefore, must include a plan for the prevention of infiltration of rockets and missiles and defense against high trajectory weapons. Israel must also initially maintain control of the border crossings between the Palestinian Authority and Jordan, as well as movement between Gaza and the West Bank, in order to prevent the supply of weapons to potential Palestinian terrorists. Only following a long and monitored period of quiet will Israel consider replacing an IDF presence with an international force. Such a process that allows for the continued presence of the Israeli military will ensure the prevention of a security vacuum, avoiding the main security-related mistake that was made in the Gaza disengagement.

Absorption of Evacuated Israeli Citizens

Preparing a national plan for absorbing Jewish residents returning to Israel's recognized borders is essential. The plan must thoroughly address issues of compensation, employment, economics, security, psychological impact, and social planning. The process of being uprooted from one's home, community, social and religious environment, and workplace will be painful. Sufficient planning and provisions, however, could allow for a much smoother transition for evacuated residents than in the case of the Gaza withdrawal. A fringe benefit of such planning would be its serving a negotiated outcome as well.

The proposed policy requires the evacuation of up to 100,000 Jewish residents. Israel has never withdrawn a number of civilians approaching this scale. However, although circumstances are far different, Israel has successfully absorbed larger numbers into the state in the past. Since its establishment, Israel has received over three million immigrants, and in the early 1990s, Israel absorbed 200,000 immigrants per year and altogether one million in less than a decade. In addition, tens of thousands of Ethiopian Jews, whose absorption was especially costly, were taken in by the state. During these waves of immigration, the country's GDP was much smaller than it is today and the economy was far less robust. This suggests that a smooth absorption of the settler population is within Israel's means and is doable, subject to adequate preparations and planning.

A fair compensation scheme must be put in place, with a smooth bureaucratic process instituted so that those relocating can access easily what the state offers. There should also be legislation mandating that those living in the West Bank can relinquish their homes and/or their businesses, industrial plants, agricultural enterprises, and so on under state auspices, in exchange for an alternative home and related means of employment within Israel's borders. This law will ensure that those whose homes are of no real market value are not placed at a disadvantage.

Even with all these measures in place, the evacuated residents will still pay a very heavy personal price in the realization of a two-state solution. Nonetheless, the relocation, however difficult, in fact marks a step toward promoting Israeli fundamental interests and values, rather than the abandonment of Zionist ideals. It is to be hoped that with this higher goal in mind, the policy will gain the support of the majority of the Israeli public.

Economic Aspects

Any two-state solution necessitates the relocation of tens of thousands of Israeli citizens, whether it is the outcome of a negotiated agreement or whether it is preceded by an independent Israeli move. Israel's gradual, independent withdrawal from most of the West Bank will require the state to provide temporary and permanent housing solutions, including construction of new housing developments and community centers; compensate relocated residents, including for the loss of livelihood; redeploy its military forces in the area; and establish institutions to formulate, coordinate, and evaluate the policy. For the removal of over 8,000 residents of the Gaza Strip and four West Bank settlements, the government set aside NIS 3.8 billion (the equivalent of roughly \$884 million) just for the compensation.¹⁵ According to press reports, by 2012 the sum grew incrementally to NIS 5.5 billion. With the relocation of around ten times as many people, the estimated costs will be around \$10-15 billion, but some of this will be offset by the savings from direct and indirect costs of the occupation.

Although costs for implementing an independent withdrawal will undoubtedly be high, with a combination of foreign aid and long term government bonds marketed overseas and in Israel to be purchased primarily by the pension and provident funds, Israel should be able to meet these costs. As Israel's policy of independent steps is likely to be internationally perceived as a move in the right direction, it can be expected that Israel will receive significant special aid from the U.S. and other countries. Despite the financial costs Israel will incur, a policy of well-planned constructive independent steps is financially viable. When it came to the building of the security fence separating Israel from the West Bank, it was said that Israel would not be able to sustain the expense, yet the barrier continued to be built – the state found a way.¹⁶

Moreover, in the long term, without the heavy costs of maintaining the West Bank settlements¹⁷ (which averaged \$215 million annually in 2004-2010¹⁸), Israel will be able to channel funds toward internal development and domestic issues. It can also be expected that as a result of Israel's efforts to advance the conflict resolution process, Israel will gain a better international reputation, and the BDS (divestment, boycott, and sanctions) campaign that could potentially have a serious impact on the country's economy would

lose momentum. In the 2000s, the U.S. deducted over \$2 billion from Israeli aid precisely because of continued settlement construction. There are thus financial gains to a policy of independent steps that go a long way to offset the losses. And in any event, the costs for resettling West Bank residents will have to be met, sooner or later, if Israel wants to realize a two-state solution and maintain a democratic Jewish state.

Garnering Support

For the policy to have maximum impact, Israel must put effort into amassing support for the policy within Israeli society, among Palestinians, and internationally.

Israel: the government will have to address many sectors of society, including those from lower socio-economic backgrounds that will oppose giving budgetary preferences to the residents of evacuated settlements. A campaign must focus on a clear presentation of the process and make full details of the policy accessible to the public. Government leaders must initiate serious preliminary discussion in order to build a consensus based upon confidence through an internal empathetic and respectful Israeli dialogue. The urgent and essential need for a two-state solution and the difference of the proposed policy from the Gaza disengagement must be explained. Strong leadership can thereupon amass adequate support behind this well calculated policy, which is motivated by Israeli interests.

Palestinians: although this policy is motivated by Israel's own interests, Israel should publically acknowledge its desire to see the establishment of a demilitarized Palestinian state living peacefully alongside the Jewish state. Israel should also end construction east of the security fence and in the Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem to show in both words and deeds its commitment to fostering a two-state solution.¹⁹

The process of disengagement needs to be given as much consideration as the end goal of a comprehensive final status agreement. In this vein, it is highly recommended that Israel coordinate its moves with the Palestinians as much as possible. Indeed, "independent" and "unilateral" do not necessarily mean uncoordinated. One reason cited for the instability after the Gaza disengagement is precisely this lack of communication and coordination. More than just the practical benefits of a coordinated withdrawal, coordination

signifies Israeli respect of the Palestinian perspective. Moving toward a non-occupation reality, although it may meet Palestinian interests, does not necessarily fulfill other objectives of justice, respect, dignity, and rights. If the major action of withdrawal is carried out in the Palestinian territories without any coordination with the Palestinians, this would likely further entrench the imbalance of power between Israel and the Palestinians, which would in turn only exacerbate tensions and stall the peace process. However, this policy, if carried out well, could improve relations between the Israel government and the Palestinians leadership, perhaps leading to the resumption of more successful negotiations.

The international community: the U.S., European Union, and other members of the international community have consistently condemned Israeli settlement expansion within the West Bank, to the extent that it has at times even compromised the relationship between Israel and its main allies. This is an issue the world cares about. Therefore the support of foreign governments for this policy of gradually withdrawing from the territory is attainable. Support from the international community in several areas could assist the implementation of the policy. Special financial aid to assist Israel with the heavy financial toll of resettling West Bank Israeli residents will be essential, as will the deployment of a peacekeeping force after IDF withdrawal following a sustained period of quiet.

Conclusion

For the proposed policy to succeed, Israel must undertake three major policy efforts simultaneously:

- a. Pursue a negotiated solution with the Palestinians, even partial or transitional, while mobilizing international and Arab support.
 - b. Take constructive, independent steps that delineate a border and promote the concept of two states for two peoples.
 - c. Launch an intensive, internal discourse to prevent domestic conflagration.
- Accordingly, the preferred negotiations model, if not viable on its own, should be complemented and eventually replaced by a new paradigm of constructive independent steps to create a reality of two states.

By promoting a two-state solution on the ground, Israel will deliver the message that it is taking action to advance the peace process, without

jeopardizing its own security. Israel cannot afford to give up striving for a two-state solution because negotiations are not advancing, let alone yielding desired results. The intractable Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not close to resolution, and a new way to break the deadlock must be found. An independent gradual withdrawal from parts of the West Bank, planned carefully in a nation-wide process, represents progress and a renewed sense of opportunity. These independent steps will ideally help revive a negotiation process in order to begin tackling the core issues seriously. If not, Israel will at least be fulfilling its own interests of preserving the Jewish democratic nature of the state and gaining international support, as well as realizing a main Palestinian interest of dismantling settlements.

A process of disengaging from territory in such a politically volatile region brings with it a risk factor. However, doing nothing and just waiting for negotiations to eventually bear fruit may be the biggest risk of all. In addition, there are many expected advantages of this policy for both parties. Israel is likely to benefit in the long term from a stronger economy and heightened security, stronger national solidarity, and hopefully increased international legitimacy. With the relocation of Israeli civilians from the West Bank, the Palestinians are a significant step closer to the establishment of a sovereign state. After rounds of failed negotiations and deadlock on the same core issues, it is clear why both Israelis and Palestinians are close to giving up hope on a peaceful way out of this conflict. However, transitional arrangements, regional dialogue, and partial understandings can make complementary contributions along parallel tracks. Alternative options invite exploration, and decision makers can often find creative ways to begin resolving the conflict and lead the way toward peace.

Notes

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- 1 Uri Sagie and Gilead Sher, "Policy Paper," Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, 2002, http://www.vanleer.org.il/sites/files/product-pdf/55_PDF.pdf.
- 2 Robert Zelnick, *Israel's Unilateralism: Beyond Gaza* (Washington, DC: Hoover Institution Press, 2006).

- 3 Address of PM Ariel Sharon, Fourth Herzliya Conference, December 18, 2003, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/pressroom/2003/pages/address%20by%20pm%20ariel%20sharon%20at%20the%20fourth%20herzliya.aspx>.
- 4 In this essay, the term Gaza disengagement or Gaza withdrawal refers to the 2005 Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and four towns in the West Bank. In 2012, a research group at INSS studying Israeli-Palestinian issues presented a detailed policy recommendation of gradual, controlled, and measured implementation of independent withdrawal from the majority of the West Bank toward setting in place a two-state reality. From a comparative analysis of options, independent Israeli steps emerged as the most popular when taking into consideration its contribution to a two-state solution and to achieving political calm and security stability. See Shlomo Brom, "Israel and the Palestinians: Policy Options Given the Infeasibility of Reaching a Final Status Agreement," *Strategic Assessment* 15, no. 2 (2012). I was a member of the INSS working group that dealt with the Israeli-Palestinian arena and in that capacity contributed to the abovementioned policy options analysis.
- 5 See Amos Yadlin and Gilead Sher, "Unilateral Peace: It's Time for Israel to Move toward a Two-State Solution, Alone if Necessary," *ForeignPolicy.com*, March 18, 2013, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/03/19/unilateral_peace_israel_palestine.
- 6 Jonathan Rynhod and Dov Waxman, "Ideological Change and Israel's Disengagement from Gaza," *Political Science Quarterly* 123, no. 1 (2008): 11.
- 7 Zaki Shalom, "From Vision to Reality," *Strategic Assessment* 13, no. 3 (2010): 86.
- 8 Aviad Glickman, "Inquiry Commission: State Failed in Rehabilitating Evacuees," *Ynet*, September 9, 2009, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3783016,00.html>.
- 9 William Booth, "Ariel Sharon Was No Hero for Israeli Settlers Evicted from Gaza," January 13, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/ariel-sharon-was-no-hero-for-israeli-settlers-evicted-from-gaza/2014/01/12/aa56ee22-7bc9-11e3-9556-4a4bf7bcbd84_story.html.
- 10 Gilead Sher, "Op-Ed: Steps Israel Should Take to Control its Destiny," *Crescent City Jewish News*, October 11, 2012, <http://www.crescentcityjewishnews.com/op-ed-steps-israel-should-take-to-control-its-destiny/>.
- 11 Poll number 50, Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey, December 19-22, 2013.
- 12 Reut Institute, "Is One State Enough?" June 12, 2007, <http://www.reut-institute.org/Publication.aspx?PublicationId=1753>.
- 13 Brom, "Israel and the Palestinians."
- 14 Transcript from roundtable discussion "Going It Alone? Unilateralism vs. Negotiations," with Mazen Sinnokrot, Nazmi Ju'beh, Ron Pundak, Danny Rubinstein,

- and Omar Karmi (moderator), *Palestine-Israeli Journal* 13, no. 2 (2006), <http://www.pij.org/details.php?id=819>.
- 15 Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Israel's Disengagement Plan: Renewing the Peace Process," April 20, 2005, <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/Peace/Guide/Pages/Israels%20Disengagement%20Plan-%20Renewing%20the%20Peace%20Process%20Apr%202005.aspx>.
 - 16 "Going It Alone? Unilateralism vs. Negotiations."
 - 17 A recent report by Molad ("The Settlers' Secret Slush Fund," September 14, 2014, analysis by Liat Schlesinger) shows that hundreds of millions of taxpayer shekels are transferred to the Settlement Division of the World Zionist Organization each year, and are used as a secret slush fund for the settlement movement. The analysis alleged that despite being fully funded by taxpayer money, the Division keeps its budget under wraps. Molad's report uncovers that the Division allocates 74.5 percent of its support to settlements in the West Bank. In fact, the single settlement of Beit El receives more than all 115 beneficiaries in the Negev and Galilee combined.
 - 18 For example, see Local Authorities in Israel 2010, Publication No. 1498 of the Central Bureau of Statistics, June 28, 2012.
 - 19 Yadlin and Sher, "Unilateral Peace."