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## Evaluating International Approaches to Security and Aid Following Disengagement in Gaza

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- The experiment in Palestinian autonomy, as implemented in the Oslo framework, was unsuccessful, with deeply-rooted corruption, administrative chaos, terror, and lawlessness - the characteristics of a failed state.
- In this environment, international efforts to provide assistance to the Palestinian population have also been ineffective, and have contributed to the corruption and the terror attacks. Unless these issues are addressed successfully through a reform process, this situation will continue.
- A major international effort is underway by policy-makers in Israel, Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, the World Bank, the UN, the U.S., the EU, Canada, and Norway to develop and implement a plan to provide assistance to the Palestinian population in Gaza.
- However, unrealistic expectations and unworkable plans that do not consider security issues in a substantive manner will not lead to stability or improve the lives of Palestinians or Israelis.
- Israel is concerned that the presence of international forces could greatly complicate Israel's own efforts to protect its security.
- In addition, the assumption that massive economic assistance will end the deeply-held ideological and religious forces of rejectionism that drive Palestinian terrorism needs to be re-examined to avoid wishful thinking.

### **The Israeli Disengagement Plan**

The Oslo process of Palestinian-Israeli peace negotiations ended in four years of extreme violence, followed by other diplomatic initiatives that produced no significant results. This led Israeli Prime Minister Sharon to adopt an approach based on unilateral separation, in order to reduce friction and violence.

On December 18, 2003, Prime Minister Sharon formally disclosed his intention to implement a wide unilateral disengagement that would include full removal of Israeli civilians from Gaza and the closure of Israeli military bases, accompanied by similar moves in northern Samaria in the West Bank.<sup>1</sup> Responsibility for the development of the details of this plan was given the highest priority by the National Security Council, headed by Maj. Gen. (res.) Giora Eiland,

whose focus included international linkages and coordination of plans for insuring security and providing humanitarian assistance for the Palestinian population.

Disengagement marks a fundamental change in the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians since the 1993 Declaration of Principles and, in many ways, since the 1967 war. Yet many aspects of the post-disengagement environment remain uncertain, including the mechanisms by which the residents of Gaza will manage their economy, politics, security, and foreign relations. The experiment in Palestinian autonomy, as implemented in the Oslo framework, was unsuccessful, with deeply-rooted corruption, administrative chaos, terror, and lawlessness - the characteristics of a failed state. In this environment, international efforts to provide assistance to the Palestinian population have also been ineffective, and have contributed to the corruption. Unless these issues are addressed successfully through a reform process, this situation will continue.

There remains the need to ensure that Gaza is not used as a base for terror attacks into Israel. Chaos and rule by armed gangs characterizes Gaza's current political environment, and the smuggling of weapons and launching of rockets at Israeli towns must be addressed in an effective manner.

### **International Aid to Gaza Palestinians Requires a Security Framework**

At the same time, a major international effort is underway to develop and implement a plan to provide assistance to the Palestinian population in Gaza. This effort, which includes policy-makers from Israel, Egypt, Jordan, the Palestinian Authority, the World Bank, the UN, the U.S., the EU, Canada, and Norway (individually and in their capacities as members of the Quartet and Local Area Coordinating Committee)<sup>2</sup> is examined here. While a great deal of thought has been given to economic development and humanitarian assistance, the security foundation on which all of these plans rest has not been considered adequately to date. The absence of this vital aspect puts the implementation of all the other components of post-disengagement planning in doubt. Although reports from the World Bank and other international institutions explicitly address the need for dismantling terror networks, there are few details.

No large-scale humanitarian assistance operation can be launched successfully without first creating the security framework to insure that aid workers do not become targets (similar to ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq). This assistance must be distributed to the civilian population, and not pillaged or used to undermine security. Unrealistic expectations and unworkable plans that do not consider these security issues in a substantive manner will not lead to stability or improve the lives of Palestinians or Israelis. Post-disengagement planning by the international community requires a more substantive and workable foundation before the concepts can be implemented and result in progress towards managing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

### **The World Bank Report on Disengagement**

Key international actors began to address the disengagement process after Prime Minister Sharon's announcement, primarily with respect to its economic dimensions. On June 23, 2004, the World Bank issued a report on "Disengagement, the Palestinian Economy and the Settlements," which presents a detailed proposal for economic growth in Gaza and an outline for a massive campaign of donor assistance to the Palestinians following disengagement.<sup>3</sup> This proposal includes the expectation that the restrictions on movement in Gaza will be lifted, and sets out a program to raise \$1.5 billion per annum in aid from 2004 through 2006 (for a total of \$4.5 billion). This unprecedented aid is designed to allow the Palestinian economy to "turn the corner."<sup>4</sup> After tacitly acknowledging the issue of corruption, this plan emphasizes

the need for extensive reform, including a credible financial system, which, as acknowledged in earlier reports,<sup>5</sup> has been absent to date. If the status quo is maintained, such a huge influx of funds is likely to be squandered or used to finance terror, as in the past.

Beyond extensive reform, economic development in Gaza also requires the establishment of a stable security environment. The Roadmap calls on the Palestinian leadership to end incitement by issuing an "unequivocal statement reiterating Israel's right to exist,"<sup>6</sup> and to "declare an unequivocal end to violence and terrorism and undertake visible efforts on the ground to arrest...individuals and groups conducting and planning violent attacks."<sup>7</sup> The World Bank report notes: "The World Bank will only be able to make a strong campaign for donor assistance if the PA meets its security obligations under the Roadmap."<sup>8</sup> The international organizations seeking to play a role in this process (the Quartet, the World Bank, the LACC, the EU, etc.) cannot expect to implement any economic plan in the absence of security in Gaza following disengagement.

Unfortunately, the perceptions and plans prepared by many of the key actors in the international community are unrealistic and lack credibility with respect to the critical issue of security. Attempts to implement these approaches are likely to fail, and even add to the already considerable level of instability and violence, rather than promote accountability and stability within Gaza.

### **The UN/World Bank "Plan of Action"**

In developing models for intervention in Gaza following disengagement, the UN and World Bank have presented detailed scenarios based on the assumption that Israel will undertake a full military withdrawal, to be followed quickly by massive international aid to stimulate economic development, accompanied by fundamental reforms in the Palestinian Authority.<sup>9</sup>

This plan is also predicated on the assumption that many of the Israeli security restrictions on land, sea, and air movement in Gaza and along the border with Egypt will be removed. These basic policy changes, in turn, require the prior implementation of a fundamental process of reform in the Palestinian Authority, in administration, democratization, security, economic transparency, and accountability.

In other words, the UN/World Bank concept is based on the expectation or hope that after the Israeli disengagement from Gaza, the Palestinians will use humanitarian aid to strengthen their economy, rather than for terror or personal gain. The plan envisions a secure economic environment in Gaza that will lead the Palestinian Authority to implement fundamental measures toward reform. According to this optimistic theory, a stable and reformed PA, in turn, will be able to provide real security guarantees to Israel, and act as a viable negotiating partner. Yet evidence from past behavior does not support claims that economic development and improvement will lead to political flexibility, cooperation with Israel in place of terror, and the willingness to make fundamental compromises necessary for resumed negotiations. If this were the case, the PA's economic growth during the 1990s<sup>10</sup> would have led to an end to terror.

### **Possible Post-Disengagement Security Roles for the International Community**

Six possible security roles may be anticipated for external actors (the international community):

1. Insuring security and preventing smuggling along the Philadelphi corridor
2. Acting as a liaison to improve cooperation between Egypt and Israel
3. Encouraging and monitoring the Palestinian reform process

4. Monitoring traffic at points of entry such as sea and airports, Israel-Gaza borders, etc.
5. Verifying that facilities and materials in Gaza are not being used to produce weapons and explosives
6. Serving as a third party for the secure transfer of Israeli buildings and infrastructure following disengagement

In order to implement these objectives, a number of mechanisms are being discussed, including the dispatch of international (meaning UN, EU, NATO, or other) forces to monitor Gaza's borders, seaports, and airports to ensure that no contraband reaches Gaza. International forces might also conduct joint patrols with Palestinian security forces, while also fulfilling a liaison role between Israel, the PA, and Egypt.

Such international involvement is suggested as a means of insuring security while at the same time avoiding the negative Palestinian responses to the presence of Israeli security forces, particularly along the Egypt/Gaza border area, including the Philadelphi corridor. However, any significant international security role is likely to be considered as collaboration with Israel. Thus, in the words of one diplomat, international forces would need to be deployed "discretely so as not to raise the ire of Palestinians," while at the same time having sufficient capabilities to provide security - a formidable challenge.

Proposals are also being developed for the privatized operation of the Philadelphi corridor, in which a contract would be negotiated for control of this area and commercial traffic across it, while maintaining Israeli security requirements including prevention of weapons smuggling including through underground tunnels. However, the effectiveness and credibility of such arrangements is highly problematic due to the legacy of the past decade.

As part of efforts to implement Palestinian-Israeli agreements related to the Oslo process, the "international community" - particularly the UN and EU - invested heavily in security-related issues, with generally meager results.<sup>11</sup> As in the case of the CIA, the EU's security liaison with the Palestinian security forces did not prevent those forces from using their weapons and training for terror attacks. Similarly, the UN failed to disarm and end attacks by Hizballah following the Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000. As a result of this record, Israeli officials and analysts doubt the credibility of security proposals drafted by the EU and UN regarding disengagement.

### **The Role of the UN**

UN Special Representative to the Middle East Peace Process Terje Roed-Larsen told the UN Security Council in July 2004: "Israel's task is to withdraw fully and completely from the Gaza Corridor, transferring control to a reformed and reorganized PA, with reliable Palestinian security arrangements supervised by third parties acceptable to both Israel and the PA."<sup>12</sup> He also spoke of a "well-developed security plan that enjoys the support of the international community," which should be readily implemented by the PA. However, no such plan has been published, and no details are available.

### **The Role of the EU**

EU policy also emphasizes "an organized and negotiated hand-over of responsibility to the Palestinian Authority" and Israeli agreement to "facilitate in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Gaza."<sup>13</sup> In November 2004, Javier Solana, the EU official responsible for foreign policy, presented a very general proposal designed to revive the Roadmap, based on the disengagement process.<sup>14</sup> Towards this goal, Solana noted that "the Israeli disengagement plan constitutes a strategic opportunity." This outline included references to Palestinian reform, and assistance for economic development. There was no mention of

terrorism or realistic plans to halt the smuggling and production of weapons in Gaza, and Solana simply noted the need for the EU "to listen to Israeli concerns and offer the necessary incentives for the risks Israel is ready to take."

More tangibly, the British have been active in efforts to develop and train a professional Palestinian police force, and to promote fundamental judicial reform in the Palestinian Authority. Alastair Crooke served as the EU Security Advisor, working with the Palestinians until his departure from the region in 2003. Despite the involvement of many Palestinians trained by the CIA and the UK during the Oslo period in subsequent terror activities, the British resumed cooperation with Palestinian security forces in October 2003. A security advisor with extensive experience in Northern Ireland was appointed to head these efforts, including training for Palestinian security personnel. The British program includes the development of a Central Operations Room in Ramallah, where the leaders of the different security groups can coordinate their activities in policing and preventing terror.<sup>15</sup> This new facility is equipped with extensive intelligence and surveillance technology, and some of the Palestinians involved in its operation participated in a short training course in the UK. A similar facility is planned for Gaza.

In October 2004, EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana revealed plans to dispatch European experts to train Palestinian security forces in cooperation with Egypt.<sup>16</sup> In addition, Solana's November 2 presentation on EU policy included discussion of "the implementation of an EU assistance program to the Palestinian civil police, in close coordination with Egypt and other partners. The program aims at supporting the rehabilitation and reform of the Palestinian civil police." However, the probability that these British and European efforts will have positive results is quite low.

## **The United States**

In contrast to the UN and EU, U.S. planning is not based on the highly unlikely assumption that Israeli forces will be replaced by international forces along the Philadelphi corridor in the short term. The Americans also do not share the assumption that Israeli withdrawal and massive aid will lead automatically to reform, an end to terror, and rapid implementation of the Roadmap. Instead, the U.S. places major emphasis on pragmatic steps towards ending weapons smuggling, and appears to be prepared to support a continued Israeli presence in the Philadelphi corridor in order to insure that this is implemented.

## **Israel**

Israel is concerned that the presence of international forces could greatly complicate Israel's own efforts to protect its security. Even in the immediate post-Arafat era, the probability of a major and positive change in entrenched Palestinian policies of violence and rejectionism is very small. Barring an unprecedented and highly unlikely change in the Palestinian social and political framework, humanitarian and development funds provided to the Palestinian factions will continue to be transferred into terror and corruption. Similarly, the assumption that massive economic assistance will end the deeply-held ideological and religious forces of rejectionism that drive terrorism is not based on realistic analysis and available evidence.

Thus, Israeli security requirements in the post-disengagement framework focus on immediate security issues - preventing terror, and weapons smuggling and production. Until these threats are resolved, there is little chance for reopening the airport in Gaza or for allowing sea traffic into Gaza in the near future, even under some form of international supervision or guarantees.

Israelis place little credibility in UN and EU forces and security pledges, and their proposals for guarding Gaza's borders are essentially non-starters. More credible alternatives are being explored, such as U.S. or NATO forces, as well as the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) in Sinai used to monitor the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty. However, the overall Israeli experience with international forces has been so negative as to make this option generally unattractive, particularly in the absence of an agreement with the Palestinians.

In the effort to overcome these obstacles, a small group of Israelis and Palestinians, "acting in their private capacities" (including Labor Party MK Efraim Sneh), have proposed their own detailed action plan based on joint Israeli-Palestinian coordination in the implementation of disengagement issues. The plan envisions a limited role for "an American-led team to coordinate and assist with security reforms," with participation of Arabs and Europeans in "training and supervisory roles," as well as a "limited team of international monitors" with no military role or powers to advance an "imposed solution." This proposal depends on a fundamental miracle in Israeli-Palestinian relations, as well as acceptance by the international community (particularly the EU and UN) of major restrictions on their role.<sup>17</sup>

## **Egypt**

An alternative approach is based on significant Egyptian involvement to block arms smuggling into Gaza, as well as playing an active role in restoring civil order and preventing terrorism. But initial reliance on Egypt is likely to be limited.

Increased discussion of Cairo's role in Gaza security issues reflects an Egyptian interest in preventing the creation of a radical Islamic base on its border. Furthermore, the Roadmap anticipates Egyptian membership in an oversight board responsible for monitoring Palestinian security forces consolidation, restructuring, and retraining. Since 2003, the Egyptian government has also played a central role in negotiations between Hamas, Fatah, and other armed militias operating in Gaza.<sup>18</sup> Although Egyptian officials have declared they have no interest in reinstating Egypt's pre-1967 role as the controlling power in Gaza, or even to act along the Philadelphi corridor, their level of involvement is increasing.<sup>19</sup>

High-level talks have taken place between senior Israeli and Egyptian security officials to discuss cooperation in implementing the disengagement process. Elements of a proposed package include advising and monitoring the activities of Palestinian security forces, border control, and the training of security officials.<sup>20</sup> In addition, in recent months Egypt has reportedly undertaken some limited actions to confiscate weapons being smuggled through its border with Gaza.<sup>21</sup>

However, given the history of Egyptian-Israeli security relations since the 1979 peace treaty, and the very limited and sporadic role of Cairo in cooperating to prevent smuggling along the border with Gaza, Israeli decision-makers remain reluctant to rely on an expanded Egyptian role. Israeli agreement to any initial large-scale Egyptian role, in which core Israeli security requirements will be dependent on implementation by Egypt, must be considered unlikely.<sup>22</sup>

## **Conclusions**

Israel is under no illusions regarding the difficulties involved in the post-withdrawal period. The main local actors - Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and Egypt - and the international community are highly divided in terms of expectations and approaches.

A realistic examination of the available options suggests that Israeli forces will continue to operate and control the Philadelphi corridor. The UN/World Bank/EU approach is based on the unrealistic assumption of full Israeli withdrawal from supervision of Gaza's border

crossings. Furthermore, there are many other assumptions built into this model regarding extensive and effective Palestinian administrative and security reform, democratization, and other processes that appear to reflect wishful thinking rather than substantive and realistic analysis.

Thus, many of the detailed international proposals and plans developed to date for responding to Israeli disengagement from Gaza are non-starters. They do not provide a realistic foundation for the effective provision of humanitarian and economic assistance to the Palestinian population in Gaza, and will not create a security infrastructure that will prevent the use of this territory for launching terror attacks. Instead, events in Gaza after the withdrawal are likely to be determined by developments "on the ground," including a struggle for power among Palestinian factions, perhaps moderated by Egyptian and even British involvement. Palestinian efforts to obtain weapons and to use Gaza to launch terror attacks can be expected to continue, subject to Israeli and perhaps Egyptian counter-measures. To the extent that Palestinian reform or Egyptian involvement prove effective in ensuring security, not only for Israel but also for international aid workers and for the Palestinian residents, the scale of direct Israeli involvement can be reduced.

In a broader sense, the elaborate post-disengagement plans for economic assistance to Gaza and large scale Palestinian reform, in all dimensions, followed by an immediate return to Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on "permanent status issues," is unrealistic. The core of this concept reflects a highly utopian approach that assumes that the Palestinians will have strong economic incentives to maintain peace and stability, an expectation unsupported by the evidence and experience of the past decade.

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## Notes

1. Address by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon at the Fourth Herzliya Conference, December 18, 2003; <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Speeches+by+Israeli+leaders/2003/Address+by+PM+Ariel+Sharon+at+the+Fourth+Herzliya.htm>
2. The LACC was established under the auspices of the AHLC (Ad Hoc Liaison Committee) as a coordinating forum for all the official agencies providing aid to the Palestinians. Norway acts as the chair and the World Bank and UNESCO constitute the Secretariat. "Aid Management and Coordination during the Intifada: Report to the LACC Co-Chairs," July 23, 2003, p. 44 ([www.mokoro.co.uk](http://www.mokoro.co.uk)) London, England.
3. "Disengagement, the Palestinian Economy and the Settlements," World Bank, June 23, 2004; [http://Inweb18.worldbank.org/mna/mena.nsf/Attachments/Disengagement+Paper/\\$File/Disengagement+Paper.pdf](http://Inweb18.worldbank.org/mna/mena.nsf/Attachments/Disengagement+Paper/$File/Disengagement+Paper.pdf)
4. World Bank, p. ii, Summary section k.
5. The 2003 Country Financial Accountability Assessment (CFAA), [www.mof.gov.ps/CFAA.pdf](http://www.mof.gov.ps/CFAA.pdf)
6. "A Performance-Based Roadmap to a Permanent Two-State Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," Outset of Phase 1, p. 2; <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2003/20062.htm>
7. *Ibid.*, Security, p. 2.
8. World Bank report, section 24, p. 7. Also see Summary g) p. ii, where the report explains that Israeli easing of closure will only be possible when it is accompanied by a "credible Palestinian security effort."

9. World Bank report, "II - The Economic Benefits of Disengagement - Of Itself, Very Limited," p. 4.
10. World Bank report, "Table 1. Recent Macroeconomic Indicators 1999-2003," p. 39.
11. Gerald M. Steinberg, "Learning the Lessons of the European Union's Failed Middle East Policies," *Jerusalem Viewpoints*, no. 510, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs (January 1, 2004).
12. Terje Roed-Larsen's Briefing to the UNSC, July 12, 2004;  
<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2004/sc8146.doc.htm>
13. Herb Keinon, "EU promises PA to work to speed up road map," *Jerusalem Post*, October 24, 2004.
14. Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the CFSP, "Outline of Presentation on Proposals to Revitalize the Roadmap," Meeting of EU Foreign Ministers, Brussels, November 2, 2004.
15. Foreign Secretary Meets Palestinian Foreign Minister Sha'ath, October 18, 2004.
16. Herb Keinon, "EU Promises PA," citing an interview with Solana in *Der Spiegel*.
17. "Disengagement Toward Re-engagement: A Policy of Unilateral Disengagement and Mutual Responsibilities," Special task force organized by the UCLA Ronald W. Burkle Center for International Relations.
18. See Beverley Milton-Edwards and Alastair Crooke, "Waving, Not Drowning: Strategic Dimensions of Ceasefires and Islamic Movements," *Security Dialogue* 35(2004):295-310.
19. As opposed to Almog's concerns regarding a significant (as distinct from minimalist) Egyptian role. Doron Almog, "Tunnel-Vision in Gaza," *Middle East Quarterly*, v. XI (Summer 2004):3.
20. "Report: Egypt, Hamas Reach Deal on Unity after Israeli Exit," *Ha'aretz*, August 9, 2004.
21. "All is Not Quiet on Tunnel-Smuggling Front," *Ha'aretz*, August 25, 2004.
22. Doron Almog, "Tunnel-Vision in Gaza."

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