Building Walls or Mending Fences?

The Middle East Peace Process Beyond Israeli Disengagement

Benita Ferrero-Waldner
on the role of the EU in the peace process

Michael Ancram
on opportunities and risks in the new era

Naomi Chazan
on the promises and pitfalls of the road ahead

Yossi Mekelberg
on the domestic repercussions in Israel

and others

Simon Roughneen, Editor
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At a time when we all too often are harshly reminded of the human costs of the conflict and the fragility of the peace process between Israel and Palestine, the latest issue of the Oxford Journal on Good Governance explores the likely impact of Mr Sharon’s decision to withdraw troops and settlers from Gaza. The pullout has been hailed as ‘brave move’ but it is also his biggest political gambit yet faced with an ever growing faction of dissenters within his own party.

What happens next might well decide the future course of the peace process in the Middle East. Many hope that this will usher in new chapter of dialogue and amity between these neighbours and end the violence on both sides of the border. Whatever the outcome, this initiative from Tel Aviv will certainly change the dynamics of the pursuit of the Roadmap.

What happens in Palestine might also affect what happens in Iraq, Kashmir, Chechnya and other venues of conflict.

Summary
On the same day as Israel embarks on the process of disengagement from Gaza, the Oxford Council on Good Governance publishes a new issue of the Oxford Journal on Good Governance that explores the likely impact of the Israeli pullout on the Middle East peace process, one of the key issues on the global agenda of good governance.

About the Author
Dr Rajnish Jaiswal is the Managing Editor of the Oxford Journal on Good Governance. A qualified physician, he is a Felix Scholar at the University of Oxford and a visiting fellow at Massachusetts General Hospital at Harvard University.
where extremist Islamism is a dimension. With the likes of Hamas being elected to office, is democratic representation a viable solution to Islamist terrorism? Is it conceivable that the militant groups in Palestine one day could emulate the IRA and pursue a non-violent and peaceful path to political influence? Only time will tell.

At the Oxford Council for Good Governance, we have made an attempt to understand the implications of the Gaza withdrawal for the Middle East peace process by inviting leading experts and high-level policy-makers from around the world to re-examine the past, present and future of one of the longest running and bloodiest conflicts in modern history in the light of the Israeli disengagement.

The Oxford Journal on Good Governance thereby remains dedicated to its mission of presenting cutting edge analysis and actionable advice on the key issues of public policy and current affairs. The purpose of the Council and this Journal is to equip those at the commanding heights of politics and government with ideas, knowledge, frameworks, and solutions that enable good governance.

The Oxford Council on Good Governance will continue working on both Israeli-Palestinian relations and other critical issues in the Middle East, including postwar reconstruction in Iraq and WMD non-proliferation in Iran, in the Advice Program on Effective Multilateralism in the OCGG Security Section.
With Israeli disengagement from the Gaza strip imminent, the Oxford Council on Good Governance have taken the opportunity to publish a Journal issue examining the state of Israeli-Palestinian relations from a number of viewpoints.

Featuring contributions from policymakers, politicians and researchers from the region, and from the international community, this series of short essays looks at the post-Arafat political landscape in the Middle East.

As well as giving pointers on ways forward for political progress between Israel and the Palestinian Authority after disengagement, some of the crucial regional and intra-national changes and dynamics receive attention. These include Palestinian security reform, Israeli political realignment, the role of the EU in developing governance in the Palestinian Authority, and analyses of the underlying causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Summary

How will the Israeli departure from Gaza affect the peace initiative in the Middle East? The OCGG, along with leading experts and policy makers, analyses vital issues such as Palestinian security reform, Israeli political realignment, the role of the EU and the underlying causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The views expressed in the contributions are those of the authors, while the policy recommendations are to be attributed to the OCGG alone.

About the Author

Simon Roughneen is an Analyst in the Security Section of the OCGG.
However, cautionary notes abound, with our high-profile contributors reminding us of the many internal and international dilemmas and pitfalls facing Israelis, Palestinians, and the international community if the current phase is to be transformed into re-engagement with the Roadmap for peace.

While the focus in the few past months has been on disengagement and on reform in the Palestinian Territories, a peace process must remain on the horizon if the current political initiatives in and between Israel and the Palestinian Authority are to be sustainable.

The months since the death of Yasser Arafat has seen many positive developments for the immediate future in the Middle East. French President Jacques Chirac called disengagement ‘a brave move’ on the eve of Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon’s visit to Paris on July 26. This is true – Sharon has made his domestic position in Israel much less secure.

However, if this is to have any long-term effect on security and peacemaking in the region, then disengagement needs to be co-ordinated with the PA, who will of course assume some control over the territory once the Israelis remove the settlers.

After disengagement, the focus will return to Israeli policy vis-à-vis the West Bank and Jerusalem. Settlement building in the West Bank, the construction of the Wall/Separation Barrier and urban planning policy in and around Jerusalem will come under increasing international scrutiny regarding their implications for any peace process.

The various reform initiatives taken by Mahmoud Abbas since assuming the Presidency of the PA must also be commended. However, these need to go further, and doubtless they will over time. Abbas must get the Fatah house in order, almost as much as he needs to curb the Hamas threat to Israeli citizens – which is also an abstract threat – to the possibility of a peace process emerging and the creation of a viable Palestinian state in the near future.

The PA needs international assistance and pressure to reform, restructure and modernise its’ security forces. Arafat left an array of competing and overlapping agencies ill-equipped to prevent terrorist attacks on Israeli cities and citizens. Israeli compliance with the
creation of a functioning and effective PA security force is vital – and practical assistance may also be necessary.

The role of the international community in general will become increasingly important over the next few months. The EU must continue to give structural support to the PA via the various regional and bilateral partnership agreements, and should continue to develop trade and business links with Israel. Arab states should fulfil unpaid financial pledges to the PA, now amounting to around US $900 million. An intra-Arab dialogue – within the context of the Arab League – should be set in motion, based on principle of recognition of Israel in the context of a renewed peace process.

The United States must engage dynamically and forcefully with the Israeli administration and the PA. Ad-hoc ventures such as the sending of General Ward, and the hastily-arranged visits by Secretary of State Rice are welcome and necessary. However, the US needs to show commitment to the implementation of the Roadmap, and to demonstrate the political will to use carrots and sticks with the Israeli government and the PA to ensure that progress is made after disengagement.
The eighteenth century philosopher, Immanuel Kant, wrote that “Peace is reason’s masterpiece.” Democracy, on the other hand, was described by Winston Churchill as “the worst system devised by the wit of man, except for all the others”. Whatever their imputed (im)perfections, it is now commonly accepted that peace and democracy are mutually reinforcing and interdependent.

Promoting democracy and good governance is central to the European Union’s foreign policy. It is not just a question of high-minded principle: we too recognise that democracies are, on the whole, more prosperous and more stable and therefore make better partners. Nowhere is this more important than in our immediate neighbourhood in the Mediterranean and Middle East. Without democracy, good governance, and human rights, our strategic objectives for the region –economic development, social stability, and above all peace – will be impossible.

Summary
If peace is to prevail in the Middle East, good governance principles and practices need to be firmly established in the region. The EU will continue to promote good governance through its Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and through financial support for Palestinian reform.

About the Author
Benita Ferrero-Waldner is European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy. She is a member of the Board of Advisors of the Oxford Council on Good Governance.
The cornerstone of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership is “encouraging actions of support for democratic institutions and for the strengthening of the rule of law and civil society”, according to the Barcelona Declaration that the EU signed in 1995 with 10 Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey).

ENP – LINKING PEACE AND GOVERNANCE

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), launched in 2002, reinforces our mutual commitment to democratisation, human rights, the rule of law and good governance. Through the ENP we aim to create an area of stability, security, and prosperity for ourselves and our neighbours to the east and to the south. As our partners demonstrate a firm commitment to our common values and to economic reform we will offer them new opportunities for greater involvement in the Single Market, closer co-operation on energy and transport links, and a chance to participate in EU programmes.

The ENP’s potential for spreading stability, security and prosperity is particularly relevant in the context of the complex and volatile situation in the Middle East. Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) both have ENP Action Plans containing specific priorities linked to the peace process. These include political dialogue; promoting good governance and respect for human rights; combating incitement; easing access and promoting respect for international humanitarian law; encouraging trade facilitation; and promoting cooperation on practical issues that will lead to improved living conditions, such as environment, energy, transport and new technologies.

A VIABLE PARTNER

Our first priority is to ensure the PA is a viable partner, capable of rising to the challenge of government. Support for good governance and institution building in the PA is valuable in and of itself. But it also has an impact on the peace process; it is an important element in re-establishing confidence and trust with the Israelis. A well-governed Palestinian State which follows democratic principles and operates in a transparent and accountable way on the basis of market economy rules is the best security guarantee for its neighbours, and in particular for Israel.

This is why we have been working with the PA on institution build-
ing since its inception. Based on our “recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people” and belief that “the creation of a democratic, viable and peaceful sovereign Palestinian State on the basis of existing agreements and through negotiations would be the best guarantee of Israel’s security” we have focused our assistance on building the necessary institutions for government.

Since 1994 the Commission has provided over €2 billion in assistance to the Palestinians. An important goal has been to build up the institutions of a democratic Palestinian State, including most recently some €14 million for preparing elections, and a €7 million programme to support reform of the legal system. Using the leverage of our assistance we have helped to ensure a number of important measures, including the adoption of the Basic Law and legislation on the independence of the judiciary. We have made a direct contribution to improving financial transparency and the fight against corruption. All sources of Palestinian Authority revenue have been consolidated in a single treasury account; the budget is publicly available; there is close monitoring by the International Monetary Fund; and the Finance Ministry has been given full responsibility for managing the Palestinian Authority payroll. The IMF has confirmed that the PA has “a level of fiscal responsibility, control, and transparency which rivals the most fiscally advanced countries in the region.”

We deployed one of our largest-ever election observation missions to monitor the Palestinian Presidential elections in January 2005, a reflection of the level of our commitment to the PA’s democratic development. Overall, the conduct of the election was impressive and represented an important step forward in the PA’s ambitions for full-fledged democracy. While we will continue to urge the PA and particularly the Central Elections Commission to build on this achievement and strengthen their performance, the election is an example for the entire region.

BUILDING CAPACITY, BUILDING PEACE

We will provide further support for institution building and reforms to increase the PA’s governance capacity in three main areas: consolidation of the rule of law, including a functioning judiciary and court system; a better electoral framework for legislative elections; and an anti-corruption task force. We will also support activities which, though less headline-grabbing, are nevertheless essential in
a modern state. These include the modernisation of the PA’s taxation system and building the capacity of its customs services. Above all, we need to continue to work with the PA to ensure that reforms which have been decided on paper are also implemented in practice.

Creating a viable Palestinian State is vital, but not the full solution for peace in the Middle East. Through bitter experience we know how fragile the peace process is, and how easily it can be derailed. Fundamental to preserving the cease fire is a clear demonstration that peace brings greater rewards than violence. The Palestinian people need to see concrete results in terms of improved economic conditions, and they also need to be reassured that there is an acceptable political perspective for the future. For this the PA depends upon the cooperation of Israel and the international community.

Which is why, ultimately, there is no choice other than to follow the process laid out in the Road Map. And we must deal with the final status issues as soon as the moment is right. The EU is fully committed to playing its part, both through the Quartet and bilaterally. But the hardest task is for the Israelis and Palestinians. Their leaders will need to show particular courage - in a corruption of John Milton’s sonnet Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, “Peace has its victories, but it takes brave men to win them”.

Notes

1 Venice Declaration of 13 June 1980
2 Berlin Declaration of 24 March 1999
3 International Monetary Fund West Bank and Gaza report, 15 September 2003 “Economic performance and reform under conflict conditions” p9
The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Prospects for Peace

Michael Ancram

Since 1948 the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been the backdrop to politics and geopolitics in the Middle East. It has coloured the regional and international scene and shaped the attitudes of many in the region, colouring the prism through which they view the world. Sadly the conflict appears to be no closer to resolution than it has on so many occasions in the past fifty years only for the opportunity to slip through our fingers.

I believe we can see a new landscape emerging in the Middle East and new opportunities for peace. The passing of Yasser Arafat last year undoubtedly marks the end of an era in Israeli-Palestinian relations. He was a man who dominated the Palestinian stage and to many of his people he was the personification of their cause and the leader of the Palestinian fight for freedom and statehood. Israelis, undoubtedly, tended to view Chairman Arafat in a different light. They saw him as a terrorist; as a man who would never negotiate in good faith because to accept

Summary
The opportunity remains for a new and revived Israeli-Palestinian peace process to be set in motion. However, experience elsewhere tells the author that timing and timetabling will be crucial methodological issues for developing a successful Israeli-Palestinian dialogue.

About the Author
The Rt Hon Michael Ancram QC is Deputy Leader of the Conservative Party, MP for Devizes and Shadow Secretary of State for Defence.
a settlement would undermine his own position. It is far too soon to judge which, if either, view may prove more accurate. The death of Yasser Arafat had a profound effect on the Palestinian people and led to unprecedented outpourings of grief, unequivocally changing the geopolitical landscape.

In the months ahead, after Israeli disengagement from the Gaza Strip, the response of the international community, and particularly America, will be vital in determining what progress can be made down the road to peace.

**ADDRESSING DOMESTIC CONCERNS**

The peaceful and orderly nature of the Palestinian elections, and the clear mandate they afforded Abu Mazen in January, offer a platform for progress. Hamas and other terrorist groups did not get drawn into a bloody power struggle, and both Israel and the wider world believe they can do business with the new President.

None of this, however, is to suggest that his task will be easy. Already we have witnessed the teething troubles this Prime Minister has faced over his choice of Cabinet, with the ever-present need to represent and appease all factions and groupings. The fragility of the Palestinian polity at present is apparent to all, and while quiescent for the moment, extremists continue to wait in the wings to derail any peace process should the opportunity arise.

Also on the Israeli side the political landscape is by no means smooth for peace efforts. While Prime Minister Sharon’s coalition appears secure, the expenditure of political capital and the divisions laid bare by the Gaza withdrawal plan demonstrate the fragility that remains at the heart of any moves towards peace.

At the time it was announced, we made clear that the Gaza withdrawal was welcome – it should not be regarded as remaking the ‘Roadmap’ or replacing it, and issues such as the borders of a Palestinian State must remain on the table for negotiation, but as a first step it is nonetheless welcome.

In a dispute that has for so long appeared insoluble, even despite high hopes in the past – for example at Taba in 2001 – the basic contours of a settlement appear clear and are familiar ground for negotiation.
A CLEAR OBJECTIVE

Our objective must be the two-state solution: a viable, independent, Palestine living peacefully alongside an Israel, secure within her borders and with her citizens free from the scourge of terrorism. To achieve this both sides must be prepared to negotiate on matters of considerable importance to them: the Palestinians on the ‘Right of Return’, the Israelis on the futures of the illegal West Bank settlements. Alongside this, agreement on the status of Jerusalem and on the borders of a Palestinian State – most likely roughly the 1967 borders – will need to be teased out.

Though we have been here before, only to see the process stumble over contentious issues, we realise that these areas of disagreement, these obstacles, are by no means insurmountable. What is needed is the political will, and the political courage, to take bold steps to rebuild the trust and the dialogue that is the necessary precursor to a successful peace-process. That trust can only exist if the Palestinian authority acts as a functioning organ of government and takes clear and unequivocal steps, matched by results, to rein in terrorists and to prevent future terrorist attacks.

For its part, Israel must genuinely cease any expansion or building in illegal West Bank settlements, and seek to address international concerns about the route of the fence and the impact it has on Palestinian life, as well as concerns about the treatment of Palestinians by Israel’s security forces.

On my last visit to Israel and the West Bank, I had it explained to me by an Israeli, an interesting theory of the cycle of terrorism and resentment in the region. He asserted that there are two aspects to terrorism – the means to commit a terrorist act; and the will to commit terrorist acts. Recent Israeli clampdowns and the fence itself have undoubtedly reduced the ability of terrorists to carry out attacks; yet at the same time the hardships and resentments that are exacerbated, risk increasing the will to do so. The equation is almost like a see-saw. Instead, alongside security measures, dialogue is needed to help address the root causes of resentment, harboured by ordinary Palestinians, in order to depress both the means and the will in parallel.
REBUILDING DIALOGUE

Once we have begun to see the rebuilding of a dialogue, it is important that neither side, nor the international community, seeks to force that dialogue at an unnatural pace or set it against rigid timescales. As I discovered with a Minister in Northern Ireland, negotiations have a tendency to find a natural pace at which both sides are happy for them to proceed. Furthermore, to set up rigid timescales and conditions gives undue power to those that would seek to disrupt them.

As an external power with an interest in a settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict we, and the wider international community, must always remember that any settlement must, if it’s to be sustainable, emerge from the two parties to the conflict themselves and not be imposed from outside.

It is all too easy for us to hector, to set demands and impose conditions but we should instead be prepared to allow Abu Mazen an opportunity to establish himself as President among his own people and to attempt to forge a consensus for peace.

A practical step that the international community should take to help rebuild dialogue would be the appointment of a high-level international figure to act as facilitator between the two sides. Not someone who would force a peace but someone who would help get people talking, and act as a go-between.

Such a step may be a small one but every long walk is made up of many small steps. The path to peace between Israelis and Palestinians is undoubtedly a long one, but the sooner we all start walking down that path, the sooner that peace will be a reality.
The year 2005 will be remembered as a turning point in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The heightened expectations that accompanied the election of Mahmoud Abbas in January and the approval of the Ariel Sharon’s Gaza disengagement plan will not, in all probability, be realised. By the end of this calendar year, the options available to decision-makers will contract and barring vigorous action by international actors (which is highly unlikely), the prospects for the achievement of a viable two-state solution might fast dissipate.

**REDRAWING PALESTINE, REDRAWING THE ROADMAP**

The present trajectory points to the redrawing the map of the area in such a way that a mini Palestinian state—lacking territorial contiguity, economic viability or administrative integrity—will be created de facto within the next year. This unilaterally imposed variant of a two-state option is a far cry from the independent, robust, negotiated Palestinian state envisaged.

**Summary**

It looks unlikely that the recent dramatic developments in Israeli and Palestinian politics will herald any imminent change in the status of the peace process. It is clear that minus any sustained focus on returning the parties to the negotiating table, no conflict resolution will take place in the immediate future.

**About the Author**

Naomi Chazan is Member of Knesset representing the Meretz Party. She is Professor of political science at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She is currently on sabbatical at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
aged by the international community and enshrined in the final stage of the Roadmap.

The fact that the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza (and the evacuation of its 21 settlements, along with an additional four in the northern West Bank) will probably take place on schedule in the latter part of August should not obscure the extent of modifications taking place concurrently on the West Bank. In fact, the stepped-up construction of the physical barrier there is an avowedly political act aimed at separating the major settlement blocs from Palestinian population centers, thereby predetermining the boundaries of any future settlement. The wall being built in the Jerusalem metropolitan region is effectively redrawing the municipal lines of the city for the first time since 1967. Allied steps include the expansion and fortification of major settlements, the approval of construction in the E1 quadrant linking Jerusalem and Ma’aleh Adumim, and the completion of a series of bypass roads and tunnels that will effectively bifurcate the West Bank into several truncated enclaves. The physical foundations for a fragmented Palestinian state are essentially in place.

In a similar vein, the turmoil accompanying the Gaza disengagement provides a useful cover for the coalescence of a new majority mindset within Israel, one that favors the extension of the Gaza formula to the West Bank. This new Sharon Doctrine is taking shape while too much attention is focused on the likelihood that the Gaza pullback will be accompanied by substantial internal disarray.

Indeed, the Israeli opponents of disengagement—mostly within and to the right of the Likud—will employ civil disobedience in an effort to stop or postpone the withdrawal. It is possible that some groups will resort to violence. Israeli life within the Green Line, at least to some extent, will be disrupted.

On the Palestinian side, it is probable that the popularity of the Hamas will increase, especially in Gaza. The severe problems of governance evident in the Palestinian Authority will persist. Even though the Israeli disengagement from Gaza will come together with some agreement on the disposition of forces, a major injection of international aid and the deployment of Egyptian troops in the Sinai for the first time since 1967, the administrative capacities of the PA will be adversely affected by the transition. There are few signs that in these circumstances the Abu Mazen government will succeed in dismantling the armed militias and overcome the persuasive corruption inherited from the Arafat era.
DISENGAGEMENT FROM THE WEST BANK

These processes, however riveting, are far less significant than the quiet, yet powerful, emergence of an Israeli consensus on the need to promote another unilateral disengagement in the West Bank. The premises behind this campaign are familiar: there is still no reliable negotiating partner on the Palestinian side, the new Palestinian leadership lacks sufficient legitimacy and hence authority, and—since there is no possibility of resolving the conflict at this time—the best one can hope for is more progress on conflict management. In this worldview, negotiations are not advisable now and therefore no effort should be made to engage in bilateral talks. The inescapable conclusion is that Israel must single-handedly secure its own future as a ‘Jewish’ state by further divesting itself of control over most Palestinians (and some territories). These precepts, widely circulated in the press in recent months, have been most clearly codified by journalist Ari Shavit, the self-anointed voice of the center, in the afterword of his collection of interviews published under the title: Partition: Disengagement and Beyond.

The popular appeal of this idea within Israel is buttressed by two, somewhat divergent, factors. First, the fragility of the Likud-Labor coalition is such that it is doubtful that the Sharon government can survive much beyond the conclusion of the exit from Gaza. Early elections—sometime between February and June 2006—should be anticipated. The fragmentation of the Likud is not inconceivable, with Ariel Sharon running on a separate list either independently or in alliance with some members of Labor and/or Shinui. Whatever the contours of the political party spectrum, most self-styled moderates will adopt further unilateral withdrawal as the linchpin of their electoral platforms. They will base their position both on domestic currents and on the lack of clarity regarding the status of the Hamas in the impending parliamentary elections in Palestine.

Secondly, there are clear indications that an attempt will be made to mollify the international community, and especially the United States, by tying this plan to the Roadmap, and specifically to Phase Two which call calls for the creation of a Palestinian state with provisional boundaries (PSPB). Washington is already actively weighing this option. The other members of the Quartet will be left with the choice of either following suit or dissolving the umbrella under which they have operated since 2003.
BACK TO THE ROADMAP – INTERIM SETTLEMENT OR PERMANENT SOLUTION?

The PSPB logic appears to be gathering strength as the dynamic on which it rests is proceeding apace. It is, however, highly problematic for Israeli interests because it provides, once again, a ready excuse for avoiding peace negotiations and, as a result, continues to raise questions about Israel’s international legitimacy. It also creates a serious dilemma for the Palestinian Authority, the remnants of the Israeli peace camp, and other concerned parties. They have to decide between acceding to this eventuality and abandoning the prospect of a full-fledged Palestinian state alongside Israel or rejecting the proposed arrangement and being perceived as hopelessly recalcitrant and lacking minimal credibility.

The obvious alternative to this developing scenario is to press for a resumption of negotiations on a permanent settlement in the near future. The arguments for such a move, as in the past, are compelling. There is an inextricable link between the substance of an agreement—a just two-state solution—and the mechanism for its achievement—negotiations. The ongoing acrobatics aimed at foreclosing this necessity offer the dim prospect of continued violence and conflict (albeit in a geographically modified area) in the short term. In the long run they lead, almost inexorably, to a one state option (either fundamentalist or secular and bi-national).

Neither of these possibilities is either desirable or preferable in the eyes of the majority of Palestinians and Israelis today. Both can be avoided. But this can happen only if progress on the present path is either halted or diverted. The former can be achieved if a hiatus is called—and implemented—following the Gaza disengagement in order to consider the next steps. The latter can occur if a partial Israeli pullback in the West Bank does take place but the PA, instead of attempting to assume control, requests international trusteeship pending a permanent settlement. Either of these moves might, perhaps, assist Israelis, Palestinians and the international community to do what they know full must be done—return to the negotiating table to conclude a mutually acceptable and hence workable two-state agreement. Anything less is a prescription for change without resolution.
For more than four years, since the breakdown of the peace process between the Israelis and the Palestinians and the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa intifada, the mood among the leaders and peoples of both nations was one of gloom, with no hope of any sort of reconciliation between the two sides. However, events in the closing months of 2004 seem to have changed this atmosphere of mutual despair. Nothing epitomises this change more than the meeting in the Egyptian tourist resort of Sharm al Sheikh between the Prime Minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon, and newly elected Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. Under the auspices of Egypt’s President Hosni Mubarak, the two leaders announced an unlimited truce, which brings an end – even if temporarily – to more than four years of violence in which over 4,500 people from both sides of the divide have been killed and many thousands injured. The peace process was granted a new lease of life, a breathing space to advance a solution to the decades-long conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

**Summary**
While the reforms and changes in the Palestinian Authority presents the opportunity to revive the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, Israeli disengagement from Gaza threatens to alter the Israeli political system. This could jeopardise Israeli capability to engage with a meaningful peace process.

**About the Author**
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Two principal factors made this development possible. First was the disengagement plan presented and approved by the Israeli government after months of internal debate. If and when implemented, Israel will pull out its security forces and will evacuate all her settlements and settlers from the Gaza Strip. Moreover, four settlements will be evacuated from the north of the West Bank. As flawed as this unilateral disengagement plan may have been, it at least reintroduced some momentum and debate into the otherwise paralysed political discourse. Yet, it exposed the vulnerability of the Israeli political system and the difficulties its decision makers face in approving and implementing their vision for the country.

Last November, as the debate on the disengagement raged, dominating Israeli politics, another major event struck. Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader and symbol of resistance and liberation for four decades, died after a mystery illness. How historians will judge his contribution to the conflict remains to be seen. However, in the years following the collapse of the peace process, it became apparent that as long as he was at the helm, no progress could be made between the two sides. The disengagement plan and the demise of Arafat appear to have created an atmosphere more conducive to peace initiatives.

NEW OPTIMISM – ILLUSION OR REALITY?

Following the ceasefire declaration in Sharem Al Sheikh on 9 February and the approval of the disengagement plan by the Israeli cabinet on 20 February, a new mood of optimism can be discerned on both sides. For the first time in a long while there is a renewed sense of belief that some progress has been achieved in advancing the cause of peace. However, one should not overlook the strains that the disengagement plan has put on Israel’s political system, which was unstable enough even prior to these events.

For many years Israeli politics has been preoccupied with, even ruled by, the conflict with its Arab neighbours, in particular the Palestinians. Elections in Israel usually serve as some sort of referendum for the competing parties’ approach to the future relations of Israel with her neighbours. Public opinion soundings in both Palestinian and Israeli communities consistently indicate that there is majority which supports a peaceful solution based on the two state solution along the pre-4th of June 1967 border. In a recent survey by the Tami Steinmetz institute at Tel Aviv University, 75% of Israelis supported...
negotiations with the Palestinians, and 66% against 33% supported the disengagement plan. Moreover, it is important to note that the support for the plan continues despite, and apparently also because of, the prevalent view (67%) that the plan will constitute the first move toward a far-reaching evacuation of Jewish settlements in the West Bank within the framework of a permanent agreement with the Palestinian Authority. Only about 19% believe the disengagement plan is the final step, in the sense that there will be no further settlement evacuations in the West Bank. And among the Palestinians The Palestinian Center for policy and survey Research found that some 54% support a two state solution on the basis of the 1967 lines, with border corrections and no massive return of refugees. Some 63% of Palestinians favour the proposal that after the establishment of the state of Palestine and a solution to all the outstanding issues – including the refugee question and the Jerusalem question – a declaration should be issued recognizing the state of Israel as the state of the Jewish people and the Palestinian state as the state of the Palestinian people.

Nevertheless, these promising findings among the respective populations have not necessarily translated into active political support, and the Israeli government has struggled for many months to execute its Gaza disengagement plan. Back in May 2004, Sharon suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of his own Likud party, which rejected a referendum over his government’s plan. Moreover, in a campaign of defiance, many settlers in Gaza’s Gush Katif settlement bloc and in the occupied West Bank, began a hate campaign against the government and its leader, including threats on his life by some of the more extreme. Dozens of army reserve soldiers and officers made it clear that they would not take part in any action to remove these settlements and their inhabitants. Time and again, progress on approving the plan either in cabinet or in Israel’s parliament, the Knesset, proved to be painfully slow. These outcomes exposed in many ways the intrinsic weakness of the Israeli political system and its limited capacity to take far-reaching strategic decisions without being destabilized almost to the point of paralysis.
DISENGAGEMENT AND DOMESTIC ISRAELI POLITICS

Prime Minister Sharon, despite his vast political experience, has clearly underestimated both the determination and zeal of those among the settlers who oppose his plan and their ability to organize an effective campaign. Moreover, he has also misjudged the mood of his own party, or even the cynical way that some of his cabinet colleagues from the Likud party were prepared to use the issue to advance their credentials amongst the hawks the Likud and favourably position themselves for future leadership contest. Whether one is a staunch supporter of the disengagement plan or unwaveringly rejects it, one cannot ignore the damage done to the Israeli body politic as a whole as a result of the less than satisfactory manner in which the entire decision making process was conducted. First, Sharon decided to consult only his party membership in a referendum on the disengagement, while ignoring the views of the rest of the Israeli electorate on an issue of such importance to them. Second, when his party members overwhelmingly rejected the plan he completely ignored them and carried on with it. Then he applied completely different standards to cabinet ministers from his own party than to those from other coalition partners. The former did not face any retribution for opposing the plan in a cabinet vote, while the latter were fired even before they arrived at the cabinet meeting, solely to ensure what was thus an artificial majority. All these political maneuvers reached a climax when Sharon rid himself of his coalition partners and formed a new government with the Labour Party and the Ultra-Orthodox (Agudat Israel) parties.

On February 21 the Israeli cabinet approved, once again, an action plan that proposed July 20 (now changed to mid-August) as the start date for the evacuation of the settlements. The next few months, as the disengagement plan is gradually implemented until the actual removal of the settlements begins, will test and stretch the resolve of the Israeli body politic and its ability to deal with the most critical issues on which her future existence and character depends. To a large extent the outcome of the disengagement plan and its conclusion may determine whether Israel can move forward and negotiate a peace agreement that can meet the minimum requirements of the Palestinians. A relatively trauma-free removal of the settlements and pull-out from Gaza will set the scene for further negotiations with the Palestinians based on the Madrid Quartet’s Road Map for Peace, with improved prospects for reaching a successful conclusion within
the framework of the two state solution. The alternative scenario – of increased political violence and bloodshed between settlers and the Israeli security forces, and perhaps even the assassination of politicians – might traumatize Israeli society to the extent that it will paralyze the peace process and perhaps result in a complete realignment of the Israeli political system.
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Addressing the Root Cause of the Arab-Israeli Conflict

Caroline B. Glick

One of the key misconceptions regarding the Arab-Israeli conflict generally and the Palestinian Arab – Israeli conflict specifically is that it is at its base a territorial dispute. According to this reasoning, Israel is wrongfully in control of territories that rightfully belong to someone else and if Israel were to give these territories to their rightful owners then peace would prevail in the region.

This conception was twice proven false in recent years. In the spring of 2000, then Syrian President Hafez Assad rejected a peace offer from then Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak. In exchange for Syrian recognition of Israel and the establishment of diplomatic relations between Syria and Israel, Barak offered to transfer control over the Golan Heights to Syria. Assad, who throughout the 1990s had claimed that the price that Syria demanded for peace was precisely what Barak offered him, rejected the offer.

Summary
The most common ingredient in the recipe for solving the Arab-Israeli conflict, upheld by policymakers throughout the world, is to address the root cause of the conflict. The question is, what is the root cause of the conflict.

About the Author
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The second time this conception was shown to be hollow was at the Camp David Summit between Israeli and Palestinian leaders in the summer of 2000. There Barak did everything possible to address Palestinian territorial demands on Israel ahead of the establishment of a Palestinian state. Barak offered the Palestinians sovereignty over East Jerusalem, including over the Temple Mount, Judaism’s holiest site, over all of the Gaza Strip and over 95 percent of the West Bank. The remaining 5 percent, that Barak would retain under Israeli sovereignty were to be compensated for by the transfer of sovereignty over lands inside of Israel itself to the Palestinians.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat not only rejected the offer, upon arriving back in the West Bank and Gaza after the summit failed, he instructed his security chiefs to prepare for war. That war began on September 27, 2000 when a Palestinian security officer on a joint patrol with Israeli forces turned his firearm on his Israeli counterpart and murdered him. For the next four and a half years, the Palestinians conducted a terrorist war against Israel. Their target was Israeli civilians. And indeed, 75 percent of the more than one thousand Israelis killed during the war have been civilians.

The Arab rejections of Israeli offers to transfer to them control over disputed territories in exchange for peace belies the view that the conflict in the Middle East between Israel and its neighbors can be reduced to a real estate dispute.

Another explanation of the longevity of the Arab-Israeli conflict has been the personality of the leaders. It was said that it was Assad per se was simply constitutionally incapable of making peace. When his youngish London-schooled son Bashar assumed the helm of Syria after his father’s death, it was hoped that he, as an aficionado of the internet, would be willing to cut a deal with Israel. Alas, the opposite has occurred. Bashar shares his father’s rejectionist stance but lacks his finesse.

Rather than keeping the Syrian occupied Lebanon-based Hizballah terror organization at arms length, in order to blur the lines of communication and support between the Syrian regime and Hizballah, as his father had, Bashar has welcomed Hizballah chief Hassan Nasrallah to his home in Damascus. Shortly after he rose to power, Bashar began overtly arming Hizballah. Syrian strategic cooperation
with the Iranian mullocracy also has risen steeply since Bashar assumed the throne.

As to the Palestinians, once Israel seized documented evidence from Arafat’s headquarters in Ramallah and from Palestinian Authority Security Services offices in Nablus and Jenin in April 2002 proving that Arafat was directly responsible for payments to terrorists and for ordering terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians, the blame for the breakdown of the peace process began to be laid at his feet. Former negotiators like retired US peace envoy Ambassador Dennis Ross explained repeatedly that Arafat in persona was the sole cause for the failure of negotiations. If he were to die or be cast aside, so the thinking went, it would be possible to reach a settlement.

ABBAS – A NEW DEPARTURE?

This view has been enthusiastically adopted by EU member states and by the Bush administration in the aftermath of Arafat’s death in November 2004. Mahmoud Abbas, Arafat’s deputy of forty years, has been embraced as the new Palestinian leader who will be capable of making peace with Israel and leading the Palestinians to statehood.

Yet, far from living up to this role, in every move that Abbas has made since November 2004 to shore up his own support base both within Palestinian society and in the larger Arab world, he has extolled his support for terror organizations; state supporters of terrorism like Syria; and has espoused maximalist demands for any future peace negotiations with Israel such as the so-called “right of return” whereby Israel would be forced to accept millions of foreign born Arabs from surrounding states as citizens in the Jewish state. Such a move would cause Israel’s immediate destruction.

Indeed, during the campaign leading up to the January 2005 elections, Abbas went on a tour of Syria and Lebanon where he met with Assad and terror leaders like Ahmed Jibril from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Khaled Mashal of Hamas, and Ramadan Shalah, head of Islamic Jihad.

Leaving the meetings, Palestinian foreign minister Nabil Shaath told reporters that “there are no differences between the objectives” of these arch-terrorists and Abbas. Since all these men are sworn to the destruction of Israel, there can be no question of what Shaath was talking about.
While campaigning in the West Bank and Gaza, Abbas embraced terrorists who are wanted for murder by Israeli authorities and referred to Israel as “the Zionist enemy.”

After winning an election marred by corruption (which caused members of the Palestinian elections commission to resign en masse in its aftermath), Abbas was sworn into office. His first demand on Israel has been for the Israeli government release some ten thousand Palestinians jailed on terror offenses from Israeli prisons. The message he has delivered both to Israeli leaders and to his own people is that these imprisoned terrorists are the heroes of Palestinian society.

Abbas has repeatedly rejected the international community’s demand that he reform the Palestinian security forces and fight Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Rather than fight terrorists, Abbas has offered to integrate them into the security services. He has called for a cease-fire from the terror groups which they have conditionally accepted while announcing that they will use the lull in fighting to rearm and regroup.

Sadly, it would seem that the overwhelming majority of Palestinians support the aims of the terrorists which, as they have repeatedly declared, is the physical annihilation of Israel. At the end of January, Hamas for the first time competed with Abbas’ Fatah party in open elections for the municipal councils in Gaza. Hamas won seventy percent of the seats. Palestinian voters explained that they support Hamas because it was Hamas, through its terrorism that won the war for them by forcing Israel to declare its intention to remove all Jewish communities from Gaza.

Finally, the Palestinians demand that any eventual settlement between Israel and the Palestinians involve the forcible removal of all Jews from lands that will become part of Palestine. This demand is wholly and completely racist. Jews today make up some ten percent of the population of the West Bank. Many of the communities were originally built before the Arab invasion of Israel in 1948 and were destroyed by the Jordanians who conquered the West Bank only to be reestablished by the children of the original residents after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. There is no reason other than racism that Jews should not be allowed to live in a Palestinian state just as Arabs make up eighteen percent of Israel’s citizenry.
What we learn from all of this is that the foundation of the Arab-Israeli conflict has little to do with real estate, and indeed, little to do with specific leaders. The core of the conflict is the rejection of Israel’s right to exist in the Middle East.

**THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

For its part, the EU has done nothing to address this root cause of the conflict and indeed has done much to legitimize and strengthen it. Despite mountains of documented proof provided by Israel and authenticated by the EU’s own investigative body of OLAF that EU monies transferred to the Palestinian Authority were being diverted to financing terrorism, the EU has not stopped the flow of monies nor has it forced the Palestinians to stop using EU funds to finance terror operations against Israel.

As well, by condemning every action Israel has undertaken over the past four and a half years to protect its citizens from mass murder, the EU has effectively legitimized the use of terror as a tool of policy by the Palestinians. Indeed, by attempting to use tendentious international legal arguments to remove from Israel all legal right to self-defense, the EU has undermined the credibility of the international legal institutions like the International Court of Justice at the Hague and the United Nations which it purports to uphold.

European acceptance of the Palestinian racist demand that their state be empty of any Jewish residents further encourages the Palestinians to believe that their anti-Semitic ideology is acceptable.

It is no doubt the case that for peace to come to the Middle East it is necessary to address the root cause of the Arab world’s conflict with the Jewish state. That root -- as has been shown consistently since 2000 – is the Arab world’s refusal to accept Israel’s existence in the region regardless of its borders and regardless of the personalities in charge of the various Arab regimes. Europe can do much to advance the cause of peace, but to do so it must refocus of its policies to reflect the realities on the ground. Arab societies from the Nile to the Jordan to the Yarmuk and the Euphrates must be forced to reconcile themselves with the existence of Israel. Once this is accomplished, there is no reason to doubt that peace will soon follow.
The nuclear non-proliferation regime has come up against problems in the past decade and a half in light of new cases of suspected proliferation. The realization that the NPT might be lacking as a non-proliferation measure first came in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War, when it became apparent that Iraq had made significant advances in the nuclear realm, while a party to the NPT.

But, the challenge has greatly intensified in the past three to four years, as evidence has mounted with regard to North Korea and Iran in particular. Moreover, the case of Libya, and especially the latest findings in connection with A. Q. Khan’s nuclear network, have increased suspicions of possible nuclear aspirations in additional states in the Middle East – and Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Egypt have been named in this context.

**Summary**

While it is unclear just what the links are between counter-proliferation the Middle East region and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, it is clear that making talks on proliferation contingent on progress in the bilateral Israeli-Palestinian peace process will not be conducive to successfully confronting nuclear proliferation in the Middle East.

**About the Author**

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COMPENSATING FOR THE NPT: US AND EUROPEAN EFFORTS

In an effort to confront this new reality, and to compensate for the exposed deficiencies of the global non-proliferation regime (mainly the NPT), new modes of confronting proliferation are emerging on the global scene, and the role of both the US and Europe is prominent in shaping these new trends.

As for the US, fears that were voiced in the prelude to the war in Iraq of extreme unilateralism on the part of the US, especially as far as adopting a policy of military preemption against any suspected nuclear proliferator, have not been borne out. Rather, there are indications that new arms control and non-proliferation directions are being considered, as indicated by the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), as well as the handling of Libya. US policy on Iran and North Korea is still evolving, although in recent statements, President Bush has made clear his desire to see both disputes resolved by diplomacy, albeit not ruling out the military option. Clearly, these new directions need to be further developed, and this will take time.

On the part of Europe, we find that the EU – and especially the UK-France-Germany trio – has also taken on a more prominent role in non-proliferation efforts in the past few years. This is most apparent in the deals that these three states concluded with Iran in late 2003 and late 2004, but is also evident in the role of the UK in negotiations with Libya. The EU also sought to pressure Syria to commit to non-proliferation through the Association Agreements concluded with the EU as part of the bilateral track of the Euro-Med Partnership.

While these emerging trends have registered some success, tackling suspected proliferators on a state-by-state basis is not an easy proposition, especially in light of differences of approach between the US and European states. The case of Iran – a determined proliferator – has demonstrated these constraints most clearly.

In addition, it is noteworthy that the new directions in arms control are designed in the main as complementary non-proliferation measures: aimed to convince or compel states to uphold the non-proliferation commitments they have made, or to derail prohibited nuclear activity if attempted. In terms of the arms control logic being applied, it focuses primarily on the weapons themselves as the source of threat and concern.
ARMS CONTROL THAT TARGETS SECURITY RELATIONS

An alternative arms control logic was prominent in the Middle East in the early 1990s, and featured in the regional arms control talks (ACRS) that took place as part of the multilateral track of the Madrid peace process. Rather than targeting weapons development or acquisition per se, these talks focused on improving the security context in the Middle East. They advocated building confidence and stabilizing relations as the first stage in creating a regional security regime within which discussion of a WMDFZ could ultimately be contemplated. The approach maintained that arms control must be tailored to the specific security concerns of the relevant regional states, and this logic is echoed in numerous articles from the early 1990s, written just before, and during the time that the arms control and regional security talks were active.

The question is whether regional arms control dialogue is an option today, as an arms control approach for the Middle East. Many issues need to be taken into account in this regard (and I will return to this below), but the crucial issue to be considered is Iran, the most determined proliferator in the Middle East today. Iran presents a dilemma, for on the one hand it underscores the need for regional security dialogue, because non-proliferation efforts are not producing results. But, inclusion of Iran also raises concerns that such dialogue might be a risky enterprise, as it is not clear what Iran’s status in the talks would be, and how this would reflect on Israel.

There is good reason to deal with Iran solely in terms of its suspected non-compliance. As a party to the NPT, Iran is obliged to uphold its commitment not to develop a nuclear weapons capability. The problem is that the past two and a half years of trying to deal with Iran in this manner have not produced results, and all indications seem to be that, although progress has been delayed somewhat, Iran is still moving forward with its nuclear plans. In this sense, the case of Iran underscores the need for a complementary approach to arms control in the Middle East that would be geared to improving regional security relations, rather than targeting weapons per se. The goal of this endeavor would be to focus on the context within which weapons acquire their threat value.

Israel’s approach has been to emphasize the imperative of checking Iran’s nuclear ambitions, and compelling or inducing it into compli-
The current regional reality, with proliferation concerns rising, especially in the context of the activities of the black-market nuclear network, Israel could not realistically be urged to join the NPT in the initial stage of such talks, as was the demand in the early 1990s. IAEA Director General Dr. Mohamed ElBaradei noted last summer on his visit to Israel that while he would be happy if Israel joined the NPT, he had no illusions of Israel changing its nuclear ambiguity in the short term. He noted this in the context of his message to Israel to begin a regional dialogue that would focus on states’ security concerns.

A regional approach would be most conducive for confronting the fears of additional proliferation in the Middle East. By including all states of concern in the process of regional security dialogue, the long-term goal would be to create a context for forging new rules of engagement for Middle East states in the new and shifting strategic environment.

The idea of creating a regional seminar for discussion of a WMDFZ has been raised by ElBaradei, and although there are still some disagreements as to the agenda, there is a chance that a discussion of the concept of NWFZ, and of the experience gained in other regions, will be initiated. The idea of beginning such regional dialogue has also been raised by the EU, as part of the package of incentives offered to Iran, as well as in the framework of the Barcelona Process.

Beyond the question of Iran, there are many additional variables to be considered when contemplating regional dialogue: such as, at what point dialogue is initiated, in what framework, with the participation of which regional and extra-regional parties, and, most importantly, with what agenda. It seems clear that dialogue would
have to include all relevant states in the Middle East, especially those (like Iran and Syria) who were not part of ACRS. In addition, there are many lessons to be learned from ACRS in terms of the regional dynamics that developed in these talks, and these would need to be taken into account. Perhaps the most important principle for regional dialogue is to focus on those issues that can be dealt with, in a step-by-step incremental fashion, and in line with regional realities; to get a discussion going, and not hamper it with issues that are non-starters. While getting such dialogue going is not a simple endeavor, the logic of targeting security relations rather than weapons alone is one that needs to be revisited and reconsidered in the arms control debate, and in policy circles, as a means of dealing with new proliferation risks.

A final issue is where this idea stands vis-à-vis developments in the Israeli-Palestinian sphere. Attempts were made at the time that ACRS was active, to hold the talks hostage to developments in the bilateral talks. In fact, these processes should go forward in parallel. Issues of regional security are wide and varied, and not necessarily dependent on progress toward Israeli-Palestinian peace. While an improved bilateral atmosphere will no doubt be conducive to regional dialogue, there is much to be done in terms of creating a culture of dialogue among states in the Middle East, and conditionalities that have the effect of postponing this issue will result in the loss of valuable time.
The era of one party rule in Palestine is over. The Islamic Resistance Movement’s (Hamas) decision to compete in Palestinian parliamentary elections has demonstrated its adaptability and centrality in Palestinian national politics and challenges the decades of dominance by Fatah, the party of President Mahmoud Abbas. The only thing now missing is an election date. Hamas’s strong showing in municipal elections in the West Bank and Gaza has thrown the ruling Fatah party into disarray. By integrating Hamas into the political mainstream, President Abbas has rejected pressure to confront the movement militarily in the hopes that political responsibility would ultimately moderate the movement’s position and lead to a stabilization of Palestinian politics. Abbas’s courtship of Hamas avoided bloodshed in the short term, but enhanced the organization’s legitimacy without diminishing either its arsenal or its armed capabilities. The failure to reach clear agreement either on disarmament or on his own authority may come back to haunt Abbas, as the

**Summary**

Mahmoud Abbas must first deal with his Fatah as part of Palestinian reform, prior to dealing with Hamas and Islamic Jihad. However, he must not shy away from confrontation over co-optation and must receive necessary reciprocation from Israel in the context of a revived peace process, if Palestinian reform is to be successful.

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Palestinian president remains hostage to the whims of Hamas and the threat of its political veto: violence.

BACKING WORDS WITH ACTION

Despite an escalation in violence and the uncertainty of Israel’s disengagement from Gaza, it is not too late for Abbas. He must act decisively to establish the rule of law within Palestinian society, which has been plagued by corruption, violence, and vigilante justice. Abbas recognizes the serious threat to the Palestinian order, yet is paralyzed from imposing the necessary steps he envisions. In a recent speech to Palestinian security officials in Gaza, Abbas emphasized the importance of the rule of law and the tahdiya, the period of calm agreed to among the Palestinian factions. He stated, “Those who violate it will be outside the national consensus and must be struck with an iron fist because we cannot allow any individuals, whoever they might be, to take the law into their own hands.”

But the “iron fist” has thus far been an empty expression. Despite the lull in violence that immediately followed the tahdiya, violence continues to escalate, signaling that Abbas is losing control. His tough language has been met with barrages of rockets and mortars fired from Gaza against Israeli communities. Angry militants from the President’s own Fatah movement have repeatedly brandished weapons at Abbas and his interior minister and attacked Palestinian Authority officials, security offices and other governmental buildings. With armed gangs administering “justice” in many parts of the West Bank and Gaza, the Palestinian territories are on the brink of chaos and lawlessness. Violence and instability continue to undermine Palestinian governing institutions. If Palestinians are ever to achieve a viable independent state they must first establish the rule of law, which includes a state monopoly on the use of force, or in the words of Abbas, “one law, one army.”

GETTING PRIORITIES RIGHT – FATAH FIRST

This contest will have many rounds and, contrary to conventional wisdom, convincing Hamas to disarm will likely be the last step in the process. Putting his own house in order needs to be the priority for Abbas. Hamas maintains its arms not only to continue the fight against Israel but, also as insurance against a possible clash with Fatah. The Islamic movement cannot contemplate disarmament as
long as gangs of Fatah-affiliated gunmen remain unchecked. The postponement of parliamentary elections is another source of tension which Hamas rightly fears is an effort by Fatah to halt the Islamic movement’s political ambitions. For the moment, Palestine’s parliamentary elections and democratic development is held hostage by the narrow interests of Fatah.

For too long Fatah’s gangs have acted above the law, challenging the authority of the President, bullying and extorting the population, and disrupting the electoral process. Abbas miscalculated the effect of this disarray within Fatah when he made an agreement to integrate Hamas as his top priority. The internal conflict within Fatah ultimately weakened his negotiating position with Hamas over its entry into the political system, and led to significant gains for the Islamists in the first rounds of municipal elections.

The first step on the path of enshrining the rule of law in Palestine is to discipline and rehabilitate Fatah. Abbas needs strong party support if he is to successfully establish order in the Palestinian territories and strengthen governing institutions. He cannot do it alone. Despite Fatah’s endorsement of Abbas as its candidate for president, he continues to struggle against the entrenched interests of those in the party who see their unpopular dominance and power eroding.

**WIDER REFORM, DEALING WITH HAMAS**

The irony in Abbas’s strategy to integrate Hamas is that he did so at the expense of his own party, Fatah. A rise in Hamas’ political stock means the further decline of Fatah, already severely fractured and in crisis. Beyond the clash with the aging generation of former Arafat loyalists, Abbas must contend with the young militants of his movement who have been demanding a share of power for over a decade. These gunmen, affiliated with the Tanzim and Al Aksa Martyrs Brigades, are increasingly marginalized and threaten to disrupt the order Abbas seeks to establish.

Restoring order to Fatah is inevitably linked to the wider issue of Palestinian security reform. Abbas has moved deliberately to force hundreds of officers into early retirement and edge out incompetent commanders. He is also trying to absorb some of the disgruntled Fatah gunmen, many of them wanted by Israel, into the Palestinian Authority’s security services.
As he does this, he must ensure that the price of admission is coming clean. He needs to be merciless in cashiering security officials who engage in criminal or terror-related activities. Abbas also needs to assure Hamas and the other Palestinian factions that they are welcome to join the force under the same conditions. This transformation will inevitably be a difficult process.

As Fatah gangs begin to disarm through incorporation into the PA security structure, the burden will fall on Hamas to comply with the emerging consensus. Hamas’ position on this issue will also shed light on the intentions of the movement. Failure to respect the rule of law and disarm is a clear sign that Hamas intends to use violence, or at least the threat of violence, once it has secured its position within national politics.

Thus far Hamas has shown restraint and avoided any serious escalation despite threats to nullify the agreement reached with President Abbas. Hamas has successfully participated in three rounds of municipal elections and agreed to participate in parliamentary elections. The postponement of the election date and wrangling over the mechanics of the election law has escalated the tension already brewing between Hamas and Fatah. Regardless of the date set for parliamentary elections, Abbas must successfully portray any effort to launch attacks or bear arms outside of the security services as an attack on Palestinian unity and national interest. Having articulated a national consensus committed to the rule of law, the President must act decisively against those who use violence to disrupt it.

Ultimately some elements of Hamas, Fatah and the other factions will resist this new political contract. Those militants who remain outside the system and refuse to recognize the authority of the state should be dealt with through direct force and legal means. They must be apprehended by the security forces and brought to trial to face prosecution. Yet this can only be done once the playing field is leveled for all parties. Many Palestinians, fed up with the lawlessness, will support such a confrontation if it is a part of a genuine effort to establish the rule of law and strengthen governing institutions. They also need a clear commitment that a rejection of violence will lead to a resumption of negotiations with Israel and the creation of an independent Palestinian state.
With Hamas’s influence on the rise, President Abbas has little room left to maneuver. The only viable option for disarming Hamas and transforming it into a real political party, which Abbas publicly advocates, is to demonstrate that Fatah has also accepted the rules of the game. Abbas must first disarm Fatah, a task which is difficult yet remains possible. As hard as it will be, if Abbas fails to impose the rule of law and disarm the militants affiliated with his own Fatah movement, he will surely fail with Hamas.
Disengagement – From the Roadmap? The Flawed Logic of Uni-Nationalism

Simon Roughneen

With Israeli withdrawal, or disengagement, from the Gaza Strip imminent, there has been little talk about the Roadmap, or any peace process, in the Middle East in recent months.

Instead, a uni-national logic has emerged, similar to what peace building or conflict resolution thinking and practice calls single-identity or uni-national work. Single-identity or uni-national work means that to successfully build peace within, or as in this case, between societies, groundwork must be done within societies rather than between them. Each side needs to work out its own internal social and political issues and develop new policies to prepare itself for the inter-community or inter-national work that is to come.

The problem with such thinking is that it omits the often interlinked nature of these ‘internal’ issues – that it often not possible to fully comprehend the needs or meaning of a particular policy initiative or a socio-political debate, without reference

Summary
Recent months have seen both Israel and the Palestinian Authority engage in their own internal societal and political debates and reform. While these are necessary, they are flawed in practice as they do not sufficiently reflect the interlinked Israeli-Palestinian aspect of the issues involved. This logic threatens to take both sides away from the reciprocal thinking necessary to successfully implement a peace process.

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Simon Roughneen is an Analyst in the OCGG Security Section.
to the other in the divided society, or the case of Israel-Palestine, in the other society-polity.

**ORANGE V BLUE, GUN V OLIVE BRANCH**

Since the Sharon-Abbas Sharm-al-Sheikh summit in February, the truce, or more accurately, ‘period of calm’ agreed to by Hamas, has held – up until the start of July. However, this has not been followed up with a concerted bilateral Israeli-Palestinian dialogue based on the Roadmap, or any international involvement in a systematic, goal-oriented way. Instead, there has emerged a parallel internal or intra-national political process in both Israel and the Palestinian Territories – what has already been outlined as single identity or uni-national logic.

Israel is dealing with the ‘orange-blue’ dichotomy that has emerged in the past few weeks – the orange being the colour taken up by the settlers and their supporters, the blue taken from Israel’s national colours, representing the 2/3 Israelis who support disengagement. Palestinians are bringing about internal reform that reflects the predominance of the gun over the olive branch.

The conventional wisdom is that peacemaking needs to wait until after at least one of those intra-national processes runs its course – that of Israeli disengagement from Gaza. The same logic applied to the Palestinian territories suggests that the emergence of a ‘viable partner’ on the Palestinian side requires that the PA curb corruption, develop a functioning and sustainable democracy, embellish the rule of law, and above all, ensure that security reform curbs terrorist attacks on Israeli citizens in Israeli cities.

Developing this logic further, both Abbas and Sharon are deemed better off without the pressures of the Roadmap and negotiations to deal with. Sharon, now vulnerable to the settler movement and their allies in the Likud, needs the breathing space to complete disengagement without suffering the additional political damage that final-status Roadmap concessions would entail. Similarly Mahmoud Abbas, lacking Arafat’s symbolic status and nose for being all things to all Palestinians, could not yet be strong enough to reform Fatah, face down a Hamas buoyed by its apparent ‘victory’ in getting Israel out of Gaza – while preparing a Palestinian public for the major concessions that a final status deal will require.
Prime Minister Sharon is focused solely on disengagement, and then looking ahead to Israeli elections, most likely by spring 2006. No peace process can formally be expected to begin before then, as it is possible that even a smooth disengagement from Gaza will lead to realignments in Israeli domestic politics, as well as within the Likud, where Sharon’s rival and former leader Benjamin Netanyahu has emerged as a champion of the settler cause.

The current phase in Israel-Palestinian relations can be best characterised as two parallel tracks rather than an interlocked process of reciprocation, trust-building, and in some ways this suits the predilections of both leaders. Sharon does not seem to believe in negotiations or peacemaking, while Abbas is wary of the concessions that negotiations will entail. Israelis and Palestinians both feel let down at best, duped at worst, by peacemaking efforts and negotiated agreements. Since Oslo these negotiations have not been followed up by delivery. Palestinians have not delivered on security, while Israel has not ended the occupation.

More specifically, to Palestinians, democratisation and reform are irrelevant to the conflict, which is entirely due to Israeli policy in occupying the West Bank and the Gaza Strip – in defiance of various UN Security Council resolutions, since UNSC 242 was passed after the 1967 Six Day War.

To Israel, disengagement is an internal Israeli affair, with relevance only for domestic Israeli society and politics and nothing to do with Israeli-Palestinian issues or any peace process. The logic here is that to maintain Israel’s Jewish identity and improve security, Israel needs to divest itself of at least some Palestinian territory, given long-term demographic projections for the area between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea.

Part of the problem is that - in practice - both sides are right in their assessment, for two reasons. Palestinian reform and Israeli disengagement entail practical measures - which can only be implemented by either side. Secondly both Israel and Palestine need to work out a complex of internal societal and political issues - in effect both must have an honest and inclusive national dialogue prior to being able to develop a peace process with final status issues in mind. Israel is confronting the religious and territorial-based legacies of Zionism as
it attempts disengagement. Although internal reform has accelerated in recent months under Abbas, the Palestinian Authority remains in transition, with its roots in militancy and national (PLO) liberation, as it slowly takes up the limited attributes of statehood afforded it since Oslo.

THE REAL LIMITS OF UNI-NATIONALISM

However, the other part of the problem is that both sides are also wrong in their assessment, and that the uni-national logic can only be stretched so far. A peace process would be a more viable prospect if these domestic issues and policies were evaluated, managed and conducted with their inter Israeli-Palestinian attributes and effects in mind. The logic of uni-national thinking, as applied within Israel and the Palestinian territories, although useful from a short-term and pragmatic point of view, is ultimately flawed.

Firstly, although a welcome and necessary internal debate and reform is taking place in both Israel and the Palestinian territories, in neither case does the debate go far enough, and in neither case has either debate or reform been conducted with the needs of the other sufficiently in mind.

After disengagement, what happens next? In Israel, this has not been clarified. Therefore, to the Palestinians, the implications of disengagement for any peace process are shrouded with doubt. For all the talk of a successful disengagement in Israel, there has been little policy acknowledgement of the reality that successful disengagement means a peaceful Palestinian succession, based on facilitating a sustainable political economy in Gaza, linked to the West Bank. Therefore disengagement has everything to do with the Palestinians, as it has with Israeli security. The narrow focus whereby a successful disengagement means no more than Israel removing the settlers at minimum human and political cost ignores the practicalities of facilitating Abbas in ensuring that Gaza does not go up in flames after Israeli withdrawal. A more co-ordinated approach to disengagement could have helped offset these now grave uncertainties.

For Abbas, reform is do-able only to the extent that a peace process remains on the horizon after disengagement. Otherwise his internal credibility will crumble and the viable partner will be seen as a lame duck by Hamas and younger elements of the Fatah movement. Bur
reform needs to be corroborated by the Israelis, even while Abbas needs to confront Hamas and Fatah militants as much as he seeks to co-opt the former and mollify the latter. Here, the role of the US becomes crucial. Abbas needs a clear statement from the White House that Sharon will be not allowed to put the peace process ‘in formaldehyde’ after disengagement.

Palestinians have their own internal dialogue to conduct. The right-of-return is a key issue that will emerge in any peace process, for different reasons, for Palestinians and Israelis. For Palestinians, it will require compromise in any peace deal based on the Roadmap – and as society and coherent political entity, the PA needs and the Palestinian people need to be ready. But when and how this dialogue takes place remains to be seen. It is fair to say that such a dialogue cannot be expected prematurely – given that Sharon is unlikely to move toward dialogue any time soon.

However, that such a dialogue is necessary is clear – and is only one example. More immediate term issues include the potential role for Hamas, should it do well in the impending Legislative elections. Were Sharon to follow up the sacrilege of disengagement with a serious and concerted dialogue on a peace deal with Abbas, then the role of Hamas becomes crucial, as well as the policy and stance of Abbas towards it. Hypothetical as this is for now, the key issue is that the interlinked or inter-national nature of the political process is clear, and that it will become impossible for both sides to remain on their respective uni-national tracks for much longer.

The reality for Abbas is that there are limits on how far he can go, effectively or constructively, from his own or the Israeli viewpoint, without a return to the Roadmap, or some form of dialogue and reciprocity. Thus the limits of the uni-national logic become clearer. Abbas is not merging the Palestinian security forces into three core agencies solely because it is makes sound technocratic sense, or to enhance centralised control. He does so as it is – to him – part of the bigger picture of the peace process, of making himself a viable partner.

Sharon, for his part needs to see that disengagement too needs to be thought about in terms of the bigger picture. It remains unclear just what the reasoning behind disengagement is in terms of the peace process. However, if Sharon is keen for a peace process to work, then
disengagement should be carried out in a manner that facilitates a smooth ‘hand-over’ (limited as this will be for now) to the Palestinian Authority, and ensures that it is portrayed as a concession to Abbas that requires reciprocation in terms of security and good-will. This in turn requires serious policy development on facilitating good governance and economic development in the Gaza Strip. All these issues are linked, and the potential success of policymaking in one area is often contingent on measures taken elsewhere. However, the present uni-national logic pervading policymaking in Israel and Palestine does not account for this and threatens to facilitate a disengagement from the reciprocal thinking and action demanded by the Roadmap, or indeed any viable peace process.
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