



SPECIAL REPORT

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ABOUT THE REPORT

The United States Institute of Peace's Project on Arab-Israeli Futures is a research effort designed to anticipate and assess obstacles and opportunities facing the peace process in the years ahead. Stepping back from the day-to-day ebb and flow of events on the ground, this project examines deeper, over-the-horizon trends that could offer new openings for peace. The effort brings together American, Israeli, and Arab researchers and is directed by Scott Lasensky, a Senior Research Associate at the Institute.

In this report, General Shlomo Brom traces the development of Israeli national security thinking about Palestinian statehood, and the implications it holds for American policy. The first study in the series, "The Future of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Critical Trends Affecting Israel," by Yossi Alpher, was published in September 2005. The second report, "Willing to Compromise: Palestinian Public Opinion and the Peace Process," by Khalil Shikaki, was published in January 2006.

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Shlomo Brom

From Rejection to Acceptance

Israeli National Security Thinking and Palestinian Statehood

Summary

- Despite the current stalemate between Israel and the Palestinians, the issue of Palestinian statehood is sure to reemerge.
- Israeli national security thinking on Palestinian statehood and the two-state solution has undergone a revolutionary change in the past two decades from total rejection to broad acceptance.
- After the 1967 war, Israeli thinking was characterized by the denial of the existence of a Palestinian national identity, and the perception that a Palestinian state would pose an existential threat to Israel.
- The first intifada, which broke out at the end of 1987, convinced the Israeli security community that the denial of Palestinian national identity was pointless and that only a political solution could resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Although security measures alone may have contained the conflict, they simultaneously perpetuated it.
- At the same time, Israel's regional threat perceptions began to change as the conventional balance of power tilted in Israel's favor, and the likelihood of large-scale ground war was gradually replaced by the threats of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles on one hand, and terrorism and guerrilla warfare on the other.
- These new perceptions led Israel's political leadership to initiate the Oslo process, which enjoyed wide support among the security community. This process led to mutual recognition between the state of Israel and the Palestinian people, and implicitly to Israel's recognition of the Palestinian right to statehood.
- The collapse of the Oslo process in 2000 and the outbreak of the second intifada had a conflicting impact on Israeli national security thinking. On one hand it had a moderating effect on Israeli thinking about the terms of the resolution of the conflict

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and led to broad acceptance of Palestinian statehood, while on the other it deepened Israel's mistrust of the Palestinians and shook its belief in the feasibility of negotiating a permanent status agreement with the Palestinians.

- The most salient facet of present Israeli national security thinking is the growing importance of demography over geography because current population trends threaten Israel's Jewish and democratic character. As the acquisition of territory has become less important, national security is being defined in broader terms to include threats to the character of the state.
- The wide acceptance of Palestinian statehood has not precluded an intense debate on the nature of this state and its relationship with Israel. Those who assume that it will be a dysfunctional state hostile to Israel favor unilateral separation, while those who believe in the feasibility of a Palestinian state living in peace with Israel continue to argue for a negotiated settlement.
- These findings lead to several conclusions:
 - Most Israelis are prepared to accept a withdrawal from most of the West Bank that will lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state. This may facilitate future negotiations.
 - However, those who want to establish a limited, constrained Palestinian state through a unilateral process will create a self-fulfilling prophecy: a Palestinian state that is irredentist and in continuous armed conflict with Israel.
 - The United States and its allies must try to prevent this development, which is detrimental to their interests, by encouraging dialogue between the two parties, and a negotiated settlement. At the very least, the United States should strive to turn a unilateral Israeli process into a cooperative process.
 - The United States needs a policy that can accommodate renewed Israeli-Palestinian negotiations with the reality of Hamas holding public office. A nuanced, cautious policy of engagement may be the best option.
- From the Israeli perspective, the question of Palestinian statehood is deeply intertwined with the following three scenarios:
 - Israeli-Palestinian negotiations resume following a Palestinian national dialogue that leads to positive changes in Hamas policies.
 - Negotiations do not resume, because Hamas does not modify its positions, and Israel pushes ahead with unilateral disengagement from the West Bank. The recent war in Lebanon made this unilateral option less popular in Israel, but it is likely to reemerge.
 - A mixed scenario in which unilateral Israeli steps are carried out in parallel with Israeli-Palestinian negotiations over less than comprehensive agreements. This scenario is more feasible than the first and more promising than the second.

Introduction

The international community widely accepts a two-state solution as the framework for resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Israeli approach to this formula has undergone a revolutionary change in the past two decades, from total rejection to broad acceptance. National security perceptions and arguments played a major role in this evolution, due to the centrality of the national security issue in Israeli life. The purpose of this study is to describe the evolution of Israeli national security thinking on the issue of Palestinian statehood, analyze the current thinking with all its variations, and conclude with the implications of this shift on the prospects for Middle East peace, and some recommendations for U.S. policy.

The study concludes that the change in Israeli national security thinking leading to acceptance of the establishment of a Palestinian state presents opportunities for the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.¹ It also addresses ideas such as unilateralism, which may lead to the creation of a two-state reality characterized by an adversarial relationship, and enumerates steps that should be taken to counter these ideas.

In many cases the resolution of a conflict is an interactive play among not only the two parties to the conflict but various external actors as well. This is certainly true for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Therefore an analysis of one party can lead only to partial conclusions that should be complemented by a similar analysis of the Palestinian side, followed by an attempt to understand the complicated interplay among the two parties and external actors.

Israeli policy toward the Palestinians is not determined solely by national security considerations. Domestic politics, historical narratives, religion, and emotions also play important roles. In this study the term “national security thinking” refers to the thinking of the Israeli national security community that is based mostly, but not only, on national security considerations. This national security community is composed of the military as well as the other security services, former senior military and security service personnel, political leaders who are engaged in national security matters, and the (surprisingly small) part of Israeli academia that deals with national security.

Bargaining Chips, Defensible Borders, and the Jordanian Option

When Israel found itself occupying the West Bank and the Gaza Strip as an unexpected result of the June 1967 war, two competing impulses developed within the security and political communities: (1) to use these territories as bargaining chips in negotiations that could lead to the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict; and (2) to realize suppressed national urges to break out of the confined boundaries of pre-1967 Israel. The first impulse dominated immediately after the war and led to a decision not to annex the occupied territories to Israel, with one exception, East Jerusalem and its periphery, which were annexed by administrative decision in June 1967 and later by the Knesset in the Basic Law on Jerusalem.²

There was no place for Palestinian nationalism, and certainly no place for Palestinian statehood, in Israeli security thinking during these years. The main problem was perceived to be the unwillingness of the Arab world to accept the existence of a Jewish state in its midst. According to this conception, the Arab world was actually one unitary actor. The separate Arab states were not authentic manifestations of separate national movements, but artificial creations of the colonial powers Great Britain and France. Paradoxically, Israeli security thinking adopted the paradigm of pan-Arabism espoused by the person perceived as Israel’s archenemy during the fifties, Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser. Palestinian nationalism was perceived as one of these artificial phenomena, a tool created by the Arab world for the purpose of fighting and destroying Israel. It was an effective tool from the Israeli point of view because it turned the conflict from a territorial one, focused on a very small chunk of territory, to an existential one between two peoples living on the same piece of land. In 1969, then Prime Minister Golda Meir, summed up this attitude by stating flatly “There was no such thing as Palestinians. When was there an independent Palestinian people with a Palestinian state?” The implication of this mind-set was that Israel had to negotiate the fate of the occupied territories with the states that had controlled these areas before the war. Therefore, when Yigal Allon, one of Israel’s leading politicians and national security thinkers, developed his famous Allon Plan, he did so based on the assumption that in order to create secure borders for Israel the West Bank would have to be divided between Israel and Jordan. Israel would annex the Jordan Valley and the western slopes controlling it, while the rest of the West Bank would return to Jordanian sovereignty. A corridor passing through Jericho would link the West Bank to Jordan.

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Israeli security thinking in this period was also characterized by the supremacy of geography over demography. This is best illustrated by the term “defensible borders,” which was frequently invoked at the time. The main lesson learned in the aftermath of the 1967 war was that the initiation of a preemptive war had been necessary because of Israel’s inability to defend itself from the pre-1967 borders. Since a preemptive strike would not always be possible, the conclusion drawn was that Israel must have defensible borders. Former Foreign Minister Abba Eban, one of Israel’s most eloquent spokesmen, labeled the pre-1967 borders “Auschwitz borders.” The boundaries of expanded Jerusalem found in the Basic Law on Jerusalem reflect this thinking because they were determined mainly by the wish to control the hills overlooking Jewish neighborhoods, with very little attention paid to the effect that the annexation of these areas and their Palestinian inhabitants had on the demographic balance.

At the same time, Allon made some effort to reconcile geography with demography by suggesting that the densely populated central West Bank would be returned to Jordan while the sparsely populated Jordan Valley and the surrounding hills would be annexed to Israel.³ This concept was generally followed by the ruling Labor coalition at the time in its settlement policy. The government initiated and encouraged the establishment of settlements in the Jordan Valley and tried—not always successfully—to prevent settlements in the populated Palestinian areas. The willingness to give up the areas populated by Palestinians did not constitute recognition of the Palestinian people, because, according to the Allon plan, these areas of the West Bank were supposed to be returned to Jordanian sovereignty.⁴ The Labor party continued to be committed to the “Jordanian option” even after its defeat in the 1977 elections. The “Jordanian option” died only in 1988, following the collapse of the London talks between King Hussein and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres in 1987, and Hussein’s subsequent decision to wash his hands of the West Bank.

The Rise of Likud and the Idea of “Greater Israel”

The fall of the Labor coalition in 1977 and its replacement by successive Likud-led coalitions headed by Menachem Begin led to a fundamental change in Israeli thinking. Following this change of governments, demography ceased to be of any concern whatsoever. The concept of defensible borders was united with and fortified by the perception that the Jewish state had historical and religious rights to all the territory of *Eretz Yisrael*, historical Palestine, and a national obligation to settle these areas and, when possible, annex them. Selection of areas for settlement was no longer based on security considerations,⁵ although attempts were sometimes made to use them as an excuse, especially when the issue was brought before the Israeli Supreme Court. Token attention was given to the problem of controlling and settling areas populated by a hostile Palestinian population. It was argued that massive settlement of these areas, coupled with encouragement of the local population to emigrate, would change their demographic composition and solve the problem. The selection of areas for settlement was mostly determined by the availability of state land, that is, land that was not the private property of individuals.

Palestinian resistance to the Israeli occupation, often through the use of terrorism, did not have much effect on Israeli national security thinking at this time. Israel succeeded in achieving control over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, thwarting attempts by the various armed groups under the PLO umbrella to make these areas ungovernable. Nevertheless, it was during this time, in the Camp David Accords of September 1978, that Israel first formally recognized the existence of the Palestinians as a people deserving some sort of self-determination. The accords stated that Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and representatives of the Palestinian people should engage in negotiations to resolve the Palestinian problem in all its aspects. It was also agreed that there would be a transition period of five years, during which full autonomy and self-government would be provided to the Palestinian inhabitants of these areas. The possible implications of these interim

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arrangements and a final status agreement on Israel's national security were recognized when the accords stipulated that "all necessary measures will be taken and provisions made to assure the security of Israel and its neighbors during the transition period and beyond."

Ultimately, the "autonomy talks" that were supposed to negotiate the implementation of the Palestinian-related part of the Camp David Accords failed, and Israel avoided a serious discussion of the implications of Palestinian autonomy and a final status agreement on its national security. Instead, Israel became more absorbed in settlement activities in the West Bank. This outcome reflected the lack of real commitment by Begin and his government to these stipulations.⁶ They were looked upon as something that the Egyptian president needed politically vis-à-vis his fellow Arabs, rather than a real commitment. At the same time, the failure also reflected the fact that Egypt was much more committed to the return of the Sinai than it was to the Palestinian cause.

The First Intifada

The first intifada broke out at the end of 1987. It persisted for some three years before winding down in 1990, following Arafat's ill-advised decision to support Saddam Hussein during the Gulf crisis, thus drawing Arab and global attention away from the Palestinians. The intifada, however, left a deep impression on both the Israeli psyche and its security thinking.

What impressed Israelis most was the popular nature of the uprising. Although armed groups engaged in terrorism and guerilla operations during the intifada, it was characterized mostly by unarmed mass protests. The Israeli security forces knew very well how to deal with the armed groups and did so quite effectively. At the end of the intifada, Israel had captured nearly all wanted Palestinians. Israel did not, however, know how to deal with unarmed mass protests. Its attempts to suppress Palestinian protests led it to several conclusions:

- The Palestinian population was not going to accept Israeli occupation indefinitely. Although in 1987 a substantial part of the Palestinian population had lived most of their lives under Israeli occupation and did not know any other reality, they were nevertheless unwilling to accept it.
- The debate regarding the existence of a Palestinian people was senseless, because the Palestinians' existence was dependent on how they defined themselves—and the ongoing struggle with Israel only served to strengthen their separate identity.
- There was no way to subjugate a people fighting for their freedom without paying a price in human rights abuses that is unacceptable in a democracy. As a result of the intifada, Israelis became aware of the malignant effect the occupation had on their society.
- If there was no military solution, Israel had to look for a political solution. This period was characterized by repeated pronouncements by the military leadership that there was no military solution to the conflict with the Palestinians.⁷
- The Jordanian option did not exist anymore. Palestinians' self-awareness had reached a level where they could not be coerced into accepting Jordanian rule. That was manifested clearly in July 1988 when King Hussein ceded to the PLO all claims to the West Bank.

Although an intensive discourse on these subjects developed in the Israeli public and security community, the political leadership was the slowest to accept these conclusions. Prime Minister Shamir was adamant in his refusal to consider any political settlement with the Palestinians. The Palestinian leadership was quicker to understand the implications of the intifada and try to build on them. This awareness was manifested in the Algiers declaration of Palestinian statehood on November 15, 1988.⁸ The PLO based its declara-

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tion on the partition plan set out in UN General Assembly Resolution 181, thus accepting the two-state solution and Israel's right to exist.

It took a few more years and the first Gulf War for the new Israeli discourse to start affecting Israeli policies. The Gulf War was significant because the defeat of Saddam Hussein's Iraq resulted in the end of the threat from the "eastern front." Since the inception of the state of Israel, its threat perception was focused on the possibility of a united Arab military coalition that would exploit Israel's "soft underbelly" by attacking from the east at Israel's narrowest point. In the Gulf War, Iraq's military capabilities were decimated, and thus a central pillar of this potential anti-Israeli military alliance was removed. This development was an important element in Israel's changing threat perception. It solidified the process of gradual fragmentation of the Arab world that had begun with the defeat of the Arab states in the 1967 war and accelerated after the 1973 war. The wars had undermined pan-Arabism, and as the Arab states began to look inward, separate national identities began to crystallize, which made an anti-Israeli military coalition much less likely. The first major manifestation of this process was Egypt's decision in 1977 to conclude a separate peace agreement with Israel.

The collapse of the Soviet empire at the end of the eighties further weakened the anti-Israeli elements in the Arab world. These elements, both states and nonstate actors, lost their superpower patron and primary source of weapons and political backing. All these changes tipped the strategic balance in favor of Israel. Many in the Israeli strategic community started to acknowledge that a central pillar of Israeli strategic thinking, the asymmetric relationship between Israel and the Arab world, began operating in a fundamentally different way. What used to be a source of Israeli weakness and Arab strength had in many ways become the opposite. The large Arab populations only contributed to their political fragmentation and socioeconomic ailments.

There were several outcomes of the changing strategic balance. First, Israel gained enough self-confidence to make territorial concessions and take riskier political initiatives, as the threat of Arab conventional forces had dissipated. Second, two new kinds of security threats were gradually becoming more significant: weapons of mass destruction and terrorism/guerrilla warfare. The Iraqi missiles that were launched at Israeli cities during the 1991 Gulf War illustrated one of the new threats while driving home the point that control of the West Bank did not provide protection against these threats. These threats cannot be defeated by more advanced military capabilities. Weapons of mass destruction have to be dealt with using a delicate combination of deterrence, defensive means, and diplomacy designed to prevent any situation that may bring about the use of such weapons. Similarly, terrorism can be contained but not eliminated through the use of security means; the underlying conflict must be solved through political arrangements.

The 1991 Gulf War also provided the international context for a change in Israel's approach toward the Palestinian question because President George H. W. Bush and his European and Arab coalition partners wanted to use the results of the war as a springboard for the resumption of the Arab-Israeli peace process. Bush initiated the Madrid conference, where parallel bilateral and multilateral negotiating tracks were launched. Israeli Prime Minister Shamir was dragged to Madrid while still refusing to accept the separate identity of the Palestinian people. As a compromise, it was agreed that one of the bilateral tracks would be a joint Jordanian-Palestinian track. The Bush-Shamir confrontation over Madrid and later over the U.S. refusal to provide Israel loan guarantees because of ongoing settlement activities also had an impact on Israeli security thinking because it demonstrated that the continuation of settlements and occupation threaten one of Israel's most fundamental security interests, the U.S.-Israeli alliance.

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The Oslo Process, Mutual Recognition, and Negotiations over Statehood

The Oslo process can be seen as the culmination of the effects of the first intifada and the changing Israeli threat perception. The Israeli public began to realize that there was no way to eliminate terrorism by security means alone. This realization resulted partly from

a series of stabbing incidents in Tel Aviv in 1992.⁹ It also stemmed from public disapproval of the Shamir government's refusal to take advantage of and adjust to the dramatic changes in Israel's strategic environment, not to mention the related confrontation with the United States. This led directly to the victory by the Labor party, headed by Yitzhak Rabin, in the 1992 election.

The Oslo process was based on the mutual recognition between the state of Israel and the PLO, as the representative of the Palestinian people. This occurred through an exchange of letters between the two parties, which constituted formal Israeli recognition of the Palestinian people and its right to self-determination. The Declaration of Principles of September 1993, however, left the question of Palestinian statehood unanswered and did not formally go beyond an agreement to establish Palestinian self-rule in parts of the occupied territories. Israel only declared its willingness to agree to the establishment of a Palestinian state six years later, when Prime Minister Ehud Barak began permanent status negotiations with the Palestinians. The Labor governments of Rabin and Peres always avoided any mention of the term "state." In November 1995, Yossi Beilin, a deputy minister in the Labor government, presented the so-called "Beilin-Abu Mazen plan" to Peres and suggested a permanent status agreement that would include the establishment of a Palestinian state. Peres rejected the idea, arguing that he did not accept the idea of a Palestinian state. He supported a functional solution, namely, a solution that would maintain Palestinian autonomy under Israeli control. This suggests that throughout the Oslo process there was no Israeli consensus on where the process was headed. The interaction reflected a struggle that developed within the Israeli establishment between those who, like Beilin, believed that the two-state solution was in the best interest of Israel, and those who, like Peres, were still concerned that the establishment of a Palestinian state would be a security threat.

The Oslo process was based on the assumption that the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through a negotiated agreement would result in greater security for Israel, and that therefore Israel should be willing to take more risks in the short run to create a better security environment in the long run. As a result, the Israeli government was ready to continue negotiations even when the security situation deteriorated. Rabin declared that Israel should fight terrorism as if there were no negotiations and should negotiate as if there were no terrorism. This strategy was based on the concept of "peace before security," in other words, on the proposition that the only way to end the violence is through a negotiated peace agreement that will nullify the reasons for terrorism.¹⁰ After Rabin's assassination in 1995, Peres took over as prime minister. However, Peres was shortly thereafter succeeded by Binyamin Netanyahu of the Likud party, who narrowly defeated Peres as a result of the perceived failure of the "peace before security" concept. The Israeli people were not willing to risk their short-term security for what seemed to be a dubious promise of better future security. The violence that continued throughout the Oslo period—along with both sides' failure to implement commitments—overwhelmed and ultimately halted the process.

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The Collapse of the Oslo Process

Ehud Barak won the 1999 election largely because of the public's disenchantment with Netanyahu and the impasse in the Israeli-Palestinian relationship that characterized his government. Barak's election raised hopes, nurtured by him during the campaign, that he would seek a swift resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. His approach seemed to make a lot of sense to many in the security community because he asserted that he intended to overcome the main weakness of the Oslo process—its open-endedness—by avoiding more interim steps and negotiating a full permanent status agreement. Several members of the security community, especially in the intelligence community, distrusted

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Arafat's intentions and concluded that a permanent agreement was not possible, and Barak's approach appealed to them because, as he argued, in this way he would uncover Arafat's true intentions. A failure to conclude a permanent status agreement would indicate that Arafat did not really recognize Israel's right to exist.

The collapse of the Oslo process in 2000, as a result of the failure of the Camp David negotiations, and the subsequent outbreak of the second intifada had a deep impact on Israeli national security thinking. On one hand, it had a moderating effect by promoting the notion that Israel needed a permanent status agreement to end the conflict. On the other hand, however, it tremendously increased the level of Israeli mistrust of the Palestinians and therefore undermined the belief that it was possible to reach a negotiated agreement along the new, moderate lines that Israelis were willing to accept.

The broad acceptance in Israel today of the need to establish a Palestinian state as part of the two-state solution is the most striking manifestation of the moderating effect that Oslo's violent collapse had on Israeli thinking. The violence made absolutely clear for most Israeli strategic thinkers and the majority of the public that it is in Israel's national interest to pull away from the Palestinians and reach a two-state solution. The close linkage with the Palestinians and the lack of an identifiable border poses clear and imminent risks to Israel's security on both the strategic and the tactical levels. On the strategic level, as a direct result of the events since 2000, many Israelis suspect that the Palestinians are not willing to accept Israel's existence as the sovereign state of the Jewish people. Thus, the Palestinians' greatest weapon against Jewish sovereignty is to remain part of a single territorial unit and rely on demographic trends to overwhelm the Jewish majority. On the tactical level, the lack of separation between Israelis and Palestinians makes Israeli society highly vulnerable to Palestinian terrorist attacks, as was clearly demonstrated by Palestinian suicide bombers in Israeli cities during the second intifada.

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's evolution represented the long road the Israeli polity and society have traveled toward recognition of the need for the establishment of a Palestinian state. In 1973 Sharon founded Israel's dominant right-wing party, the Likud, and in 1977 he contributed to its first election victory, which ushered in a long period of Likud dominance. He spearheaded its settlement policy in the occupied territories, wishing to annex these areas to Israel. His settlement policy was designed to make the establishment of a Palestinian state unfeasible, by planting Israeli settlements that would fragment the Palestinian populated areas. While doing this, he faithfully represented the school of thought that looked upon the establishment of a Palestinian state as an existential threat to Israel. In September 2001, only a few months after being elected prime minister, the same Sharon began to suggest that Israel should let Palestinians have their own state.¹¹ By saying this, and by implementing his unilateral disengagement plan, he started a struggle with the ideological hard core of his party, which led eventually to his decision to leave Likud, splitting it into two parties—one consisting of Sharon and like-minded officials, and the other consisting of those faithful to Likud's original ideology. Thus, Sharon brought about a realignment of Israel's political landscape that paralleled the changes in Israeli thinking about a Palestinian state.

At the same time, the growing disbelief in the feasibility of negotiating an agreement with the Palestinians has created a greater tendency to support unilateral steps that do not require the consent of the Palestinians, but which may nonetheless lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state. This tendency is also a consequence of the changing perception of the relationship between peace and security. The collapse of the Oslo process is perceived as the failure of the "peace first" approach and has led to the ascendancy of the "security first" concept, which holds that it is not possible to make progress toward peace unless a reasonable level of security is achieved first. In this way of thinking, if the Palestinians are not capable of providing this minimal level of security, then they cannot be partners to a negotiated deal, and Israel will have to take unilateral steps to separate from the Palestinians. Once this prerequisite is achieved, the Palestinians can establish their own state if they wish.

The Effect of the Withdrawal from Southern Lebanon and the Hezbollah War

The unilateral withdrawal from southern Lebanon in May 2000 reflected an additional change in Israeli security thinking: a greater understanding of the significance of international and domestic legitimacy. The withdrawal was based on the assumption that once Israel fully withdrew from Lebanese territory, Hezbollah would lose the international and the domestic Lebanese legitimacy necessary for continuing the fight against Israel. At the same time, Israel's presence in southern Lebanon had lost domestic legitimacy because most Israelis no longer saw the utility of an Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) presence that was not fulfilling its original role of protecting the civilian population from rocket attacks. In practical terms, after the withdrawal Israel believed it could react forcefully to Hezbollah provocations, with broad international support.

For several years, until the outbreak of war with Hezbollah in July 2006,¹² the withdrawal from southern Lebanon was generally perceived in Israel as a success story that underlined the notion of international legitimacy. Still, some skeptics argued that the withdrawal worsened Israel's security because Hezbollah gained freedom of movement along the border, which threatened Israeli towns, and because it damaged Israeli deterrence. For some, the Israel-Hezbollah war validated the skeptics' concerns. It indicated on one hand that Hezbollah's deployment along the Israeli border was indeed posing a serious threat to Israel's security, and on the other that although Hezbollah had no legitimate reason for attacking Israel, it was still willing to provoke Israel in a way that forced it to enter into a large-scale and costly military clash. As a result, the general notion of unilateralism suffered a dramatic decline among the Israeli public, leading Prime Minister Olmert to abandon his campaign promise to withdraw unilaterally from the West Bank and, by so doing, establish Israel's permanent borders. But this abandonment was the immediate fallout. It is too early to "bury" the idea, which is likely to emerge in the future if further Israeli attempts to engage the Palestinians do not bear fruit.

Another important aspect of the withdrawal was Israel's interest in and respect for the United Nations' border delineation and verification. The UN seal of approval gave the withdrawal international legitimacy. In the Palestinian context, the Lebanon experience has reinforced the understanding that Israel cannot get international legitimacy for its arrangements with the Palestinians without getting rid of the "occupation," and it has strengthened the desire to have borders with the Palestinians that are accepted by the international community. In fact, the Israeli government initially considered asking the United Nations to verify the Gaza border after the disengagement, but abandoned the idea because it was assumed that the partial nature of the disengagement—in contrast to the comprehensiveness of the Lebanon withdrawal—would preclude a UN endorsement.

Israeli Security Thinking and the Hamas Election Victory

One can only speculate on the long-term effects that Hamas's victory in the January 2006 election may have on Israeli security thinking. In the short term, it is adding to Israeli skepticism regarding whether there is a Palestinian partner for a negotiated settlement, and hence strengthening support for unilateral disengagement. Olmert chose to present unilateral disengagement as a central plank in his platform during the election campaign because he assumed it was a popular idea, especially after the Palestinian election. On the other hand, Hamas's victory increased Israeli uneasiness over a unilateral withdrawal from the West Bank that will give Hamas control over areas that are so close to the heart of Israel.

It is not clear whether the Hamas government will survive the enormous obstacles it is facing, but if it does succeed in entrenching itself in government, it will play a major role in the development of Israeli thinking. Although most Israeli security thinkers do

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not believe it is possible for Hamas to change and become a partner for Israel, there is an undercurrent of thinking that posits that sooner or later Israel will have to talk to Hamas, and that in the long run Hamas could develop into a more trustworthy partner than Israel's traditional Palestinian partners.¹⁹ Paradoxically, Hamas also may be a more convenient partner for a coordinated Israeli unilateral disengagement in the West Bank. Its aversion to permanent status negotiations makes unilateral disengagement a more attractive option. A unilateral move may also give the two parties the time they need. Hamas needs time to consolidate its government and adjust to its new governing role, while Israel needs to study Hamas as a governing party and evolve an appropriate policy for dealing with it.

The Rise of Demography

The most salient development in Israeli national security thinking in recent years has been the growing role of demography at the expense of geography. Since the inception of the state of Israel, Israelis have been concerned with the implications of the demographic disparity between Arabs and Jews. That meant primarily the fact that the Arab states, having large populations, would be able to mobilize armies much larger than the IDF. Since the 1967 war and the subsequent occupation of areas populated with large numbers of Palestinians, the emphasis shifted toward the demographic balance in Israel and the occupied territories. The immigration of approximately one million Jews from the former Soviet Union in the late eighties and nineties created the illusion that Israel would be able to preserve the demographic balance between Jews and Arabs. But at the end of the nineties it became clear that the reservoir of potential Jewish immigrants was drying up and that it would not change the basic demographic trends resulting from the higher birth rate of the Palestinian population.¹³

Based on current and predicted demographic trends, it is clear that Palestinians, currently 40 percent of the population living between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, will become a majority in the next few years. If Israel continues to occupy the Palestinian areas, its identity as the democratic state of the Jewish people will be threatened. Once Jews become a minority, Israel could not remain both Jewish and democratic unless it became an apartheid state in which a minority controls the majority. For most Israelis engaged in national security thinking, this "South African" option is simply unacceptable. It is unacceptable not only because it does not fit the dominant value system in Israel, which is both liberal and democratic, but also because of Realpolitik considerations. If Israel adopted such a position, the international community would not accept it and most likely would force Israel to bear gradually increasing costs that would also threaten its security. Thus, Israel must leave the Palestinian areas in order to remain both Jewish and democratic. Sharon himself presented this choice in the clearest terms when he invoked the founding father of Israel, David Ben Gurion, in a speech in 2005, stating: "We never forgot that this is our country and we never gave it up. Nevertheless for peace we are willing to give up part of our right. When we had to choose between the completeness of the land without a Jewish state or a Jewish state without the completeness of the land, we chose a Jewish state." For Ben Gurion, too, the option of a Jewish minority ruling an Arab majority was unthinkable. At the same time, the reduction in the threat of a ground invasion, coupled with the growing threat of ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction, has reduced the value of the territories acquired by Israel in 1967, thus allowing for this shift in priority between demography and geography.

This kind of analysis represents a broadening understanding of the concept of national security. It means that in current Israeli security thinking, national security is concerned not solely with physical threats against the existence and welfare of the nation, but also with social trends that pose existential dangers to its identity. That may create situations in which the optimal solution involves willingness to take more physical risks in order to

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avoid these new threats. The wide acceptance of this reprioritization of security risks has led to wide acceptance of the need for “separation” between Israelis and Palestinians, or in other words “disengagement” from the Palestinians.¹⁴ It means that Israel has to relinquish control of the Palestinian population by making it a separate political and geographical entity.

Sharon is the most visible example of this change in Israeli national security thinking, but there are even more interesting cases of leaders involved in national security that underwent this evolution. Three such persons are former ministers Dan Meridor and Tzahi Hanegbi and current Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni. All three grew up in families that were part of “the fighting families.” In Israeli terminology this means that their parents were leaders of the two radical underground movements (the Irgun and Lehi) that fought the British before 1948 and later became the founders of the right-wing Herut party, which eventually became part of Likud. They followed their parents and became political activists in Herut and Likud. During the Oslo years, the three of them gave up their dream of a “Greater Israel” that would control all the biblical land of Israel, because they realized that this pursuit would result in the end of the Jewish homeland. This transformation was much harder for them because of their background than for Sharon, who came out of the Zionist Labor movement and therefore had a more natural inclination toward pragmatism.¹⁵

Why Israel Needs a Viable Palestinian State

The dominant view is that true disengagement and separation necessitate the establishment of a Palestinian state for the following reasons:

- Israeli disengagement from the Palestinians will be granted international legitimacy only if it is perceived by the international community as a step that enables the Palestinian people to realize their right of self-determination. It is also hoped that disengagement will lead to international recognition of Israel’s borders. Israel, a state that since its inception has never had recognized borders, fully understands the importance of such recognition. This was the reason for the Israeli decision to have the United Nations delineate the line of withdrawal from southern Lebanon, and later for its decision to withdraw *fully* from the Gaza Strip rather than keeping a strip of land along the northern border, a step that makes much sense from a purely military point of view.
- The need to have a responsible party on the other side of the border. Even after disengagement Israel needs a contact on the other side of the border, even if only to address accusations or complaints. Somebody must have responsibility for the territory.
- It is better to be engaged in border skirmishes or even war with a neighboring state than to occupy another people. Israel will continue to be perceived as the occupier of the Palestinians as long as a Palestinian state is not established.
- The establishment of a Palestinian state will put an end to the idea of establishing a unified Israeli-Palestinian state, a notion that is still alive and is considered the biggest threat to the security of Israel because of the implications of its demography on Israel’s character as the democratic state of the Jewish people.

Israel and the Palestinians have actually undergone a complete role reversal on this issue. In 1999 the hottest topic in Israel and among the Palestinians—and a source of concern to Israel—was the possibility that the Palestinian Authority would unilaterally declare Palestinian statehood (after the passing of the five years stipulated in the Oslo accords to bring about a permanent status agreement). Today more and more Israelis engaged in national security thinking believe that the establishment of a Palestinian state is a fundamental Israeli interest. On the Palestinian side, however, the collapse of

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the Oslo process, and the intifada reinvigorated the idea of the so-called one democratic state that would include Israel and the Palestinians. The best example of this role reversal is the development of the idea of a Palestinian state with provisional borders, which is so central to the Quartet's road map for peace. The idea was actually developed by former foreign minister Peres and his team and presented to the Palestinians in talks that were held between Peres and Abu Ala during 2001, which led to a draft agreement that included this idea. It was then marketed to the Quartet, which incorporated the idea into the road map.¹⁶ Israel had many reservations about this document but not about this idea. The Palestinians, however, have opposed a provisional state, preferring to establish their state only after all Israeli-Palestinian issues have been resolved.

The wish to separate from the Palestinian population, shared by the vast majority of Israelis, does not necessarily imply support for the establishment of a Palestinian state. Some argue that this state, if created, would be an irredentist state bent on destroying Israel and would have the capabilities of a state in the service of this goal. Another argument used by opponents of a Palestinian state is the problem of viability. They maintain that it is going to be a dysfunctional state that is not economically or politically viable, and that it will not be able to contain its problems within its own borders; they will spill over into Israel.

The Nature of the Palestinian State and Its Relationship With Israel

Israeli proponents of the establishment of a Palestinian state can be roughly divided into two groups. The first group overlaps with the proponents of a negotiated settlement with the Palestinians. They believe that Israel can have a positive influence on the shape and conduct of the Palestinian state by aligning with the forces on the Palestinian side that share the wish to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict peacefully. This group would like to see a peaceful, demilitarized Palestinian state with strong economic links to Israel. An arrangement of this sort implies a necessary flow of goods and people across the border between the two states. They acknowledge that this border will have to be fenced and well controlled to defend against violent Palestinian opposition groups, which most likely will continue to initiate terrorist attacks even in this scenario. Proponents of this school of thought, however, believe it will be possible to contain the violence through a combination of controlled borders and security cooperation between the two states.

The other group, presently the dominant one, overlaps with the proponents of comprehensive unilateral disengagement. They have a bleaker outlook of the likely developments in the Palestinian state. They assume, based on the history of the past decade, that the range of realistic scenarios runs from a dysfunctional state in a constant state of anarchy, in which independent armed militias proliferate, to an irredentist, rejectionist state ruled by Hamas. They do not believe that Israel can do anything to alter these scenarios, and therefore envision an adversarial relationship between the two states, without any links, even in the economic arena. One can find indications of this conception in the language of the Israeli government resolution on the disengagement plan from June 6, 2004: "In the longer term, and in line with Israel's interest in encouraging greater Palestinian economic independence, the State of Israel expects to reduce the number of Palestinian workers entering Israel, to the point that it ceases completely." They look at Israel as a "fortress state," surrounded by fences and fortifications and having limited connections, if any, with its close neighbors. This school of thought is dominant because of the effects of the collapse of the Oslo process and the five bloody years of intifada that followed it. Lack of trust in the Palestinians is prevalent.

Another issue on which proponents of the establishment of a Palestinian state differ is the territorial delineation of this state. Those who believe the Palestinian state can be viable and have a good relationship with Israel support what seems to them a "fair" settlement with the Palestinians that will create a Palestinian state on territory based on the

1967 lines, with slight modifications enabling Israel to annex the major concentrations of settlements along this line while compensating the Palestinians with an equal amount of territory from inside Israel. This approach is exemplified by the Geneva agreement, which was supported by a substantial number of former security officials, including former chief of staff General Amnon Shahak and former Shin Bet chief Avraham Shalom. They assume that a settlement of this kind will create a contiguous state with a better chance of viability while also creating the psychological impact and goodwill needed to establish a positive relationship between the two states.

The pessimistic school of thought argues that Israel should unilaterally determine its borders based only on its security and other interests, assuming that it will have an adversarial relationship with the Palestinian state. That means that the border should generally follow the contour of the separation barrier that is presently being erected. That implies annexation of between 8 and 20 percent of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the settlement blocs of Ariel and Maale Adumim. The difference in percentage relates to the fate of the Jordan Valley. Many supporters of this approach think that Israel should retain control over the Jordan Valley—possibly a remnant of the “defensible borders” arguments of the sixties and seventies.

How Do We Get to a Palestinian State?

The collapse of the Oslo Process led many Israelis to believe that a Palestinian state will not be established through a negotiated agreement. The continued disarray in the Palestinian Authority after the death of Arafat and the Hamas victory in the parliamentary elections increased these doubts. There is, however, still a general awareness of the advantages of a negotiated agreement as opposed to a unilateral disengagement that would create a de facto Palestinian state. In the latter case,

- a. The Palestinians may refuse to establish their state and may argue that the occupation continues because Israel is still controlling them by other means.
- b. Israel’s new borders at the end of the disengagement may not attain international legitimacy.
- c. Israel’s relationship with the newborn entity will probably be marked by confrontation and lack of cooperation.
- d. The new Palestinian entity will not take upon itself any commitments to which it will be held accountable.

As a result, Israelis who accept the establishment of a Palestinian state are divided into two groups that generally coincide with the optimistic and pessimistic schools of thought mentioned in the previous section. The first group thinks that negotiations should be given another try. This could be achieved by following the road map, that is to say, by negotiating the establishment of a Palestinian state with provisional borders and only later negotiating with this state the permanent status agreement, or alternatively by skipping the second stage of the road map and starting with permanent status negotiations.

The other, dominant group (as the scope of support for the new Kadima party indicates) does not believe that Israel has a credible partner for negotiations on the Palestinian side, and therefore argues that Israel should create a Palestinian state by unilaterally disengaging from the West Bank, leaving contiguous territory under Palestinian control. According to this conception, there will be a difference between the disengagement from the Gaza Strip and the disengagement from the West Bank. Whereas in the Gaza Strip Israel withdrew to the 1967 lines, in the West Bank Israel needs border modifications, even in permanent status arrangements, and should therefore retain the areas that it wants to annex to Israel in the framework of a permanent status agreement (mostly the settlement

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blocs close to the 1967 line) and some other areas of strategic importance that will be used as bargaining chips in future negotiations. It seems that this unilateralist group also includes those who do not want negotiations with the Palestinians because they assume that no Palestinian will be willing to accept the territorial arrangements being suggested and that Israel should therefore determine its postdisengagement borders unilaterally.

There is also a difference between the two groups in their approach to the first stage of the road map. The first group is aware of the disarray on the Palestinian side but thinks that Israel should have realistic expectations of the Palestinians, and that if the Palestinians succeed in keeping relative and partial security based mainly on cooptation and dialogue with the armed groups, this would be sufficient to start negotiations. This would create the context for security cooperation between Israel and the Palestinians and would gradually strengthen the capabilities and legitimacy of the Palestinian security organs, leading eventually to the disarming of the militias. The second group demands that the Palestinians dismantle the infrastructure of the terrorist groups as stage one of the road map. Part of this group believes that successful negotiations cannot take place as long as there is no security (i.e., security before peace). Others are using the demand as an excuse because they know that the Palestinians cannot comply in their present state.

For many in the two groups the most urgent need is to separate from the Palestinians; therefore, many who belong to the first group will eventually be willing to support unilateral disengagement if negotiations are restarted and fail again. This kind of thinking was already manifested in 2005 before the disengagement from the Gaza Strip. Only the support of the political movements that prefer a negotiated settlement enabled Sharon, who faced stiff resistance in his own party, to realize his plan. Actually, this reflects the fact that many of the unilateralists choose this path not because they think final status talks are undesirable but because they are not feasible at present, especially when Israel faces a Palestinian Authority, governed by Hamas, that favors Israel's destruction. Most Israelis see unilateralism as a default option because of the perceived lack of a partner for permanent status talks. As Prime Minister Olmert has said, "We prefer to reach an agreed settlement with the Palestinians. That is our wish and our intention, but we will not wait indefinitely for the Palestinians. If the present situation continues Israel will determine our borders unilaterally and the Palestinians will lose immensely."¹⁷

The Role of Third Parties

Another important development in Israeli security thinking in recent years is the growing acceptance of the role of third parties—both states and nongovernmental organizations—in the Israeli-Palestinian theater.¹⁸ The Israeli security community understands that anarchy on the Palestinian side could be much worse without third-party involvement. This is leading to reconsideration of the various roles that third parties can fulfill in establishing a Palestinian state and in security arrangements between Israel and a Palestinian state. This is true in both a negotiated process and a unilateral process. During the Camp David negotiations in 2000, Israel was willing to establish an international force in the Palestinian territory to fill various security roles in the framework of a permanent status agreement. The most interesting recent example is the agreement, reached after Israel's withdrawal from Gaza, on the operation of the Rafah crossing with Egypt, which established a third-party monitoring mechanism manned by the European Union. The new role of the United Nations in enforcing the cease-fire in Lebanon also reflects this changing Israeli attitude.

However, this new thinking is competing with the traditional suspicions and concerns that have characterized the Israeli outlook toward third-party involvement for many years. These include skepticism about their role during crises, when they are most needed, and the general belief that any third-party involvement will be counter to Israel's interests

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because of third parties' tendency to side with the weaker party. Israelis who belong to the pessimistic school of thought and do not believe in the possibility of a constructive Israeli-Palestinian relationship are also more prone to the old security thinking on third-party involvement. The experience on the ground with the present third-party involvement will determine how much the new, more open thinking develops. So far, the experience has been mixed. The arrangements at the Jericho prison for third-party wardens to monitor those responsible for the assassination of Israeli Tourism Minister Rehavam Zeevi ultimately collapsed when the wardens were pulled out by their government following Palestinian violations. In contrast, the Rafah arrangements are functioning reasonably well.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Israeli national security thinking has reached a point in which disengagement from the Palestinians is considered the central security interest. The establishment of a Palestinian state is a necessary end result of the disengagement process and may help Israel realize the goals of disengagement while at the same time realizing the Palestinians' right of self-determination. In mainstream Israeli national security discourse the two-state solution is becoming a genuine Israeli interest and not simply something Israel should do as a favor to the Palestinians or because of pressure from the international community. Although the parties are now deeply mired in a stalemate, this change in Israeli national security thinking is likely to contribute to an accelerated resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This change is contributing much to the realignment of the Israeli polity that former prime minister Sharon started by forming the new Kadima party.

The questions that remain open and debated in Israeli discourse pertain to the nature of this state, namely, its territorial delineation, the status of its borders, the level of economic and security cooperation between the two states, and the circumstances under which this state is established. What is the real road map that will lead to the realization of this goal? The answers to these questions will determine the nature of the future Israeli-Palestinian relationship. Will the two states live peacefully side by side, maintaining the kind of links that normal states have, or will they be hostile states in constant confrontation? A completely unilateral process will probably bring about the latter scenario because it will be perceived as dictated by Israel, which will undermine the legitimacy and viability of the nascent Palestinian state. At the same time, future scenarios are not dependent solely on the answers to these questions; Palestinian domestic developments also will affect the chances of a peaceful Israeli-Palestinian settlement. Many in Israel and the international community are concerned that the election of a Hamas government is the kind of development that could nullify the positive effects of this evolution in Israeli thinking. Nonetheless, the possibilities arising from this evolution imply that efforts should be made to increase the probability that a Palestinian state will emerge in a more positive atmosphere, while being aware of and prepared for its emergence in a negative environment.

The United States has an interest in the end of the Arab-Israeli conflict, which has the Palestinian question at its core. This development would create a more favorable atmosphere for other U.S. policy interests in the region. In spite of the greater Israeli willingness to accept a Palestinian state, its establishment is not guaranteed even after a full Israeli disengagement, because the Palestinians may see it as in their interest to maintain the "occupation" by not establishing their state. Even the establishment of a Palestinian state itself will not end the conflict if Israel's relationship with the new state is more confrontational than cooperative. Hence, U.S. interests require not only establishing a Palestinian state, but bringing it about in such a way that the new state will live in peace with Israel. This can be done only by a continuous effort to reconstitute a negotiating process that will lead to a negotiated settlement. It is not an easy task, especially

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when developments on the Palestinian side make negotiations difficult, but ultimately it is in the interest of the two parties and the United States.

It is difficult to analyze the long-term implications of the Hamas victory for a negotiated settlement, but the short-term implications are clear. Hamas objects to negotiations with Israel and to a permanent status agreement that will recognize Israel's existence, while Israel is reluctant to negotiate with Hamas, its bitterest enemy. However, the dissonance between Hamas's ideology and political positions and its responsibility as elected leaders for the welfare of its people may lead to a change in Hamas positions that in the long term will increase the prospects for a negotiated solution.

In many cases, U.S. involvement can make the difference and turn a completely unilateral Israeli process into a cooperative or even negotiated process. The best example is the success of Secretary of State Rice in bringing about a negotiated agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority in November 2005, on the reopening of the Rafah crossing to Egypt and the operation of the other transit points into and out of the Gaza Strip. Although this agreement serves the interests of the two parties, they were nevertheless incapable of reaching it without U.S. involvement, because of deep mutual distrust.

As noted, there is also greater acceptance in Israeli national security circles for third-party arrangements. The United States could initiate and lead these third-party mechanisms even if its role in their implementation is limited by commitments elsewhere. The Rafah arrangement is a useful model; it was mediated by the United States but implemented by the European Union.

The United States already has several instruments available for managing a higher level of involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian process: the Quartet, the road map, and the security coordinator. The U.S. administration may also consider nominating a political coordinator as well, since the secretary of state cannot fulfill this role full-time.

Although the road map has many weaknesses, including an unrealistic timetable, too many unresolved questions, and too much room for alternative interpretations, it remains the only initiative accepted by all the parties. The United States can reenergize the road map by integrating a series of coordinated unilateral steps that each of the parties has an interest in implementing, putting forth its own interpretation of the road map's disputed points, and pressing the two parties to implement their commitments according to the U.S. interpretation. In this way, the United States could form a bridge between unilateral steps and a negotiated process and make the Israeli process of disengagement a more cooperative process—or even a negotiated one.

The United States will have to develop a policy that will reconcile the wish to restart Israeli-Palestinian negotiations with the reality of a Hamas government. For that purpose, a nuanced, cautious engagement policy that will facilitate a process of change in Hamas may be the best option.¹⁹

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The Future Evolution of Israeli Thinking

As this study has shown, events in Israel, the Palestinian territories, and the region have shaped and reshaped Israeli national security thinking over the past forty years and will inevitably continue to do so. One can imagine several scenarios in which the evolving Israeli national security thinking on Palestinian statehood will play an important role:

- In the first scenario, internal developments in the PA will enable the renewal of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. For instance, a Palestinian national dialogue could lead to an agreement between Hamas and Fatah, leading to a policy shift coordinated between Abu Mazen and the Hamas government. In this scenario, the Israelis may wish to establish a Palestinian state as soon as possible through the road map—that is, by establishing a Palestinian state with provisional borders—because this would allow movement toward a Palestinian state and an accelerated negotiation process while postponing some of the sticky issues involved in the permanent status agree-

ment. In this framework, based on its new thinking regarding the Palestinian areas, Israel would probably be willing to withdraw from substantial parts of the West Bank. It is also possible that going through this interim stage will serve Hamas's interest by postponing a final agreement, allowing the group time to adjust and modify its ideology, which currently rejects a negotiated final agreement. This scenario may lead to a relatively calm and stable situation, and possibly to permanent status negotiations.

- In the second scenario, negotiations with the Palestinians will not take place, because of a perceived lack of a credible Palestinian partner. This could result if the ruling Hamas party does not give up its radical positions or if the Palestinian Authority slides into anarchy. Based on its new security thinking, Israel may decide on some form of disengagement in the West Bank that will be completely unilateral. The probability that the Israeli government will choose this option has been reduced as a result of the Israel-Hezbollah war and the continued violence emanating from the Gaza Strip even after Israel's withdrawal. Nevertheless, unilateral disengagement may reemerge because it is still popular among a segment of the Israeli elite that deals with the Israeli-Palestinian question and because Israel most likely will be frustrated in future attempts to engage and reach agreements with the Palestinians, leading it back to the unilateral approach. It is more likely to emerge if the new arrangements in southern Lebanon laid out in UN Resolution 1701 prove stable and resilient. In this case, Israel's perspective on the Hezbollah war may change, leading to renewed support for unilateral options. Still, this scenario is not without problems, because although this partial disengagement will include evacuation of settlements, the presence and activities of the IDF are unlikely to change. Even if Israel withdraws the IDF from parts of the West Bank as part of the disengagement, the lack of adequate Palestinian security control will probably lead to terrorist attacks on Israeli cities that will draw the IDF back into the West Bank. Israel cannot bear in the West Bank incidents that are a daily event in the Gaza Strip, such as the launching of rockets, because of the proximity of the West Bank to Israel's main cities.
- The third scenario is a mixed one. It would involve a dialogue between the two sides but not necessarily formal and comprehensive negotiations. In this scenario, the two parties will establish a process of mutual coordinated unilateral steps and partial agreements leading gradually to more stability, less violence, and a buildup of mutual trust. Although this process may also include some stages of the road map, such as establishing a Palestinian state with provisional borders, it will involve less formal negotiations, more coordinated unilateral acts, and a less rigid timetable. Nevertheless, it could build a bridge to a new political process and eventually a permanent status agreement.

Of these three scenarios, the mixed scenario presents the best combination of feasibility and desirability. Although it would be a slow process, its main advantage lies in the fact that it builds on the evolution in Israeli national security thinking without overburdening it with unrealistic expectations.

Notes

1. Throughout the study I assume that an Israeli willingness to accept the establishment of a Palestinian state is genuine. I am aware that, based on the limitations that some Israelis want to put on the attributes of sovereignty of a future Palestinian state, some observers think it is not a real acceptance, but I disagree. I believe that arrangements can be reached that would prevent the Palestinian state from posing a security threat to Israel and still allow for a viable, sovereign state.
2. Basic Law: Jerusalem the Capital of Israel, Knesset Web site, www.knesset.gov.il/.
3. Another school of thought in the Labor party during these years was the “functionalist” school, advocated by Moshe Dayan, which suggested a division of authority that would give broad autonomy to the Palestinian population, with citizenship rights in Jordan, while Israel would continue to hold responsibility for security. This “functionalist” thinking is still alive today, for instance, in the approach of Shimon Peres, now in the Kadima party.
4. Yigal Allon, “Israel: The Case for Defensible Borders,” *Foreign Affairs* October 1976: 38–53.
5. Although some settlements in Palestinian-populated areas were initiated during Labor governments, they started as unapproved, illegal settlements, and only later did the government yield to heavy political pressure from the settler movement to accept them. Kiryat Arba and Elon Moreh were established in this way.
6. The nomination of Josef Burg—the leader of the National Religious Party, which gave birth to the settlement movement—to head the Israeli delegation to the autonomy talks reflected this lack of commitment. In his opening statement at the talks, Burg said, “We are met with the goal of reaching agreement on the establishment of an elected administrative council in order to provide full autonomy for the Arab inhabitants of Samaria, Judea, and the Gaza district.” The use of the terms “Arab inhabitants” and “Samaria and Judea” indicate the continued nonacceptance of the Palestinian right of self-determination, and the wish to continue to control and settle the occupied territories.
7. The last two points were best illustrated by the Israeli chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Dan Shomron, in June 1989, when he said, “Everyone who wants the intifada eliminated must understand that there are only three ways to do this: by transfer, starvation, or physical elimination, that is, genocide.” www.passia.org/palestine_facts/chronology/19891990.htm.
8. Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin, eds., *The Israel-Arab Reader* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 542–46.
9. Although these events are little known or remembered outside Israel, they had a great impact at the time because they were not initiated by organized terrorist groups. They were initiated by Palestinian individuals and thus represented the depth of the population’s frustration.
10. See, for example, Rabin’s speech after the terrorist attack at Beit Lid on January 23, 1995: “There is no other alternative. We will achieve peace, for this is the solution for the long term, and to the terrorism, even if it is difficult for us now. I am convinced that the path the Government has taken, is the path which will lead to the end of control over another people.” www.nmmc.net/Guide/rabinI.html.
11. Some believe Sharon’s support was disingenuous, but the mere fact that he was prepared to pay a significant political price for his position suggests that it was a firm conviction. Sharon accepted that disengagement may lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state, but he preferred a state with limited sovereignty.
12. In July 2006 Hezbollah gunmen crossed the border, attacked an IDF position, and kidnapped two Israeli soldiers. Israel responded with a month-long air and ground campaign in Lebanon designed to destroy Hezbollah’s ability to strike Israel with rockets. Israel’s reaction was based on its belief that it had the right to respond because Hezbollah had initiated the fighting by launching an unprovoked attack across an international border.
13. Arnon Sopher, “Demography Will Do the Work,” *Haaretz*, June 29, 2004; Arnon Sopher and Yevgenia Bistrov, “The Demography of Israel 2004–2020,” Haifa University, October 2004.
14. Yossi Alpher, “The Future of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict,” USIP Special Report 149, September 2005; Asher Arian, “Israeli Public Opinion on National Security 2003,” Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies Memorandum No. 67, October 2003, 7.
15. See, for example, Tzipi Livni’s interview to Nahum Barnea: “I came to understand that I cannot have it all, that Jabotinsky’s ambition that ‘the son of Arabia, the son of Nazareth [Christians], and my son could live in comfort’ cannot happen, no matter how painful it is.... This is what I think. If we want to uphold democracy and a Jewish majority here, there is no way to avoid dividing this land.” Nahum Barnea, “This Isn’t the Only Way,” *Yedioth Aharonot* (Leshabat Supplement), March 11, 2005.
16. Yossi Verter, “Peres Will Try To Market His Agreement with Abu Alaa to the Public,” *Haaretz*, February 11, 2002; Aluf Benn, “Peres Acts To Integrate the Understandings with Abu Alaa,” *Haaretz*, March 1, 2002; Nathan Gutman, “Has Someone an Idea What to Do with This Conflict in the Middle East,” *Haaretz*, February 11, 2002.

17. Roni Sofer, "The instruction for the terror attack came from Damascus," www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3242018,00.html, April 21, 2006.
18. Alpher, "Future of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," 9–10.
19. Shlomo Brom, USIPeace Briefing, March 2006.

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