

## **Impact of the Disengagement Plan on the One-State Threat**

### **The Re'ut Institute – Policy Product**

#### **Abstract**

1. This paper analyzes the impact of the Disengagement Plan on preserving the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. It argues that success of the Disengagement Plan is crucial to counteracting the threat of the One-State Solution (hereinafter "the One-State Threat"), a proposal to replace the State of Israel with a bi-national Palestinian-Jewish state in the Gaza Strip, West Bank and Israel-Proper.
2. A primary goal of the Disengagement Plan is to end Israel's "responsibility" over Gaza. Achieving that goal will counteract the One-State Threat and promote a Two-State Solution by:
  - a. ending Israel's responsibility over 1.3 million Palestinians in Gaza, thereby reducing the demographic threat;
  - b. introducing attributes of sovereignty to Gaza, thereby advancing a nascent and separate Palestinian state;
  - c. reducing the perception that "time is on the Palestinians' side," a belief, on the Palestinian side, that has undermined the capacity to promote the Two-State Solution through negotiations;
  - d. differentiating between the political status of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, complicating the efforts to realize the One-State Solution.
3. Furthermore, the Disengagement Plan represents an attempt by Israel to create a strategic alternative to what may seem to be an impasse in terms of Israel's capacity to resolve its disputes with the Palestinians through negotiations.
4. Hence, successful implementation of the Disengagement Plan will reinforce Israel's capacity to advance its interests via additional unilateral moves. Failure will force Israel to return to the negotiation table as a party that does not have a credible alternative off the table. For these reasons, the forces that promote the One-State Solution converge to foil the Disengagement Plan through violence and political means.

5. This paper argues, further, that, gaining international legitimacy for the claim that Israel will no longer be responsible for the Gaza Strip following the withdrawal of its military forces and civilian presence will be crucial to the success of the Disengagement Plan. This is due, to a large extent, to the fact that the Disengagement Plan is primarily a unilateral Israeli action.

6. Finally, this paper presents a number of recommendations of ways to advance the Disengagement Plan's goal of ending Israel's responsibility over Gaza:
  - a. relaxing one or more of the constraints of the Disengagement Plan in its current form;
  - b. involving international organizations in the disengagement process;
  - c. presenting an effective and unified Israeli "narrative" in support of the plan; and
  - d. involving "stakeholders" in the plan – e.g., Egypt as a security broker, private companies to invest in Gaza industries, etc.

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#### **Scope**

1. This document analyzes the impact of the "**Disengagement Plan**" on preserving the character of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, currently under challenge by forces seeking a "**One-State Solution**" to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (hereinafter the "**One-State Threat**") and acting to undermine a "**Two-State Solution**" to the conflict.
2. This document assumes that success of the Disengagement Plan will be measured largely by whether it results in an "**End of responsibility**" of Israel over the "**Gaza Strip**".
3. This document identifies "constraints" in the Disengagement Plan in its current form that may make it more difficult to achieve an end of Israeli responsibility over Gaza, and offers recommendations of steps Israel might take to enhance the effectiveness of the plan in ending Israel's responsibility over Gaza.
4. The document further concludes that obtaining international legitimacy for the Disengagement Plan will be crucial if Israel is to be treated as having ended its responsibility for the Gaza Strip and, hence, for success of the plan.

#### **Document Structure**

5. This document consists of the following five sections:
  - a. Background
  - b. How the Disengagement Plan Counteracts the One-State Threat
  - c. How Proponents of a One-State Solution Seek to Derail the Disengagement Plan
  - d. The Importance of International Legitimacy
  - e. Conclusions and Recommendations

## **Background**

### **Primary Goal of the Disengagement Plan and Constraints on Its Implementation**

6. A primary goal of the Disengagement Plan is to end Israel's "[responsibility](#)" over the Gaza Strip.<sup>1</sup> Without achieving that goal, the Disengagement Plan would result in a withdrawal of settlers and a redeployment of military forces, but not necessarily in a change in the fundamental contours of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
7. At present, the Disengagement Plan is subject to four constraints: (i) it is unilateral<sup>2</sup>; (ii) it provides for continuing Israeli control over the "[Perimeter of the Gaza Strip](#)"<sup>3</sup>; (iii) it rejects transfer of control over the Gaza Strip to any third party<sup>4</sup>; and (iv) it does not accept the establishment, at this stage, of a Palestinian State to fill the vacuum that will be created in the Gaza Strip following the withdrawal of Israeli forces.
8. Without relaxing one or more of these constraints, Israel may find it difficult to persuade Palestinians or the world community that it has ended its responsibility for the Gaza Strip. Furthermore, even if one or more of these constraints are relaxed, reducing Israel's responsibility for Gaza cannot be taken for granted. For further elaboration, see Re'ut Institute document: "[The Political-International Challenges of the Disengagement Plan](#)".

### **The One-State Threat**

9. The "One-State Threat" is an interplay of forces, expressed both through public discourse and actions, pushing toward a "One-State Solution" and undermining a "Two-State Solution" to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.
10. These forces advance a One-State Solution through a form of "[Anti-Zionism](#)" that relies on liberal political theory, coupled with demographic trends, to deny the right

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<sup>1</sup> See Government Resolution Regarding the Disengagement Plan, Addendum A, 1, Six (June 6, 2004) ("The completion of the plan will serve to dispel the claims regarding Israel's responsibility for the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.").

<sup>2</sup> I.e., it involves no negotiation with the Palestinians over the terms of the disengagement.

<sup>3</sup> Control of the "Perimeter of the Gaza Strip" refers to the control of the "[airspace](#)" and "[maritime space](#)" of the Gaza Strip and the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt (known as "[the Philadelphi Strip](#)"), as well as all "[Entry and Exit Points](#)" (seaport, airport and border crossings). See Government Resolution Regarding the Disengagement Plan, Addendum A, 3, One, (1) (June 6, 2004) ("The State of Israel will guard and monitor the external land perimeter of the Gaza Strip, will continue to maintain exclusive authority in Gaza air space, and will continue to exercise security activity in the sea off the coast of the Gaza Strip.").

<sup>4</sup> Under the plan as currently formulated, Israel does not allow any third party to assume control over territory from which Israel disengages.

of Jews to self-determination in their own state (see "[The Contemporary One-State Argument](#)").

11. At the same time, various forces, often acting in uncoordinated fashion, seek to derail a Two-State Solution through the strategic use of terrorism, impeding the emergence of Palestinian statehood, setting unattainable expectations for negotiations with Israel while, and claiming that a Two-State Solution is no longer feasible (see "One-State Threat").
12. The forces that advance the One-State Threat have been pushing for a "[Moment of Inversion Toward Palestinian Statehood](#)" ("Moment of Inversion"), the point when the formal Palestinian position would change from demanding a right of self-determination in an independent Palestinian State to demanding equal political rights, premised on the principle of one-person-one-vote, within a single political entity in "[Mandatory Palestine](#)", i.e. in "[Israel-Proper](#)", the Gaza Strip and the "[West Bank](#)", where non-Jews would be a majority.

### **How the Disengagement Plan Counteracts the One-State Threat**

13. Successful implementation of the Disengagement Plan would counteract the One-State Threat in a number of ways. Most significantly:
  - a. **Reducing the demographic threat** – By ending Israeli responsibility for 1.3 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, the Disengagement Plan will significantly extend the time until the Palestinian population under continuing Israeli control constitutes a majority, thereby undermining a key component of the One-State Threat.
  - b. **Conferring attributes of Palestinian sovereignty on Gaza** – By ending permanent Israeli civil and military presence and turning over to the Palestinians control of internal affairs of the Gaza Strip, the Disengagement Plan will promote a "[Nascent State](#)" or "[State in the Making](#)", thereby conferring attributes of Palestinian sovereignty on Gaza and demonstrating the possibility of a Two-State Solution.
  - c. **Reducing the perception that time is on the Palestinians' side** – Successful implementation of the Disengagement Plan may reduce the perception that the Palestinians have a "[Leverage of Time in Negotiations](#)", a belief that historically has delayed negotiations and impeded a Two-State Solution.
  - d. **Confirming the availability to Israel of multiple options for achieving a Two-State Solution** – Successful implementation of the Disengagement Plan would demonstrate that Israel has an effective "[Off-the-Table Strategy](#)" i.e., an option that is not based on Palestinian consent, to secure its future within the Two-State Solution. At the same time, such success would undermine those forces on the Palestinian side that believe that Israel has only an "[Across-the-Table Strategy](#)" (i.e., negotiation option), which the Palestinians can veto, thus strengthening Israel's bargaining position should negotiations with the Palestinians resume.

- e. **Differentiating Gaza and the West Bank** – A successful Disengagement Plan effectively would differentiate between the political status of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, complicating the efforts of the One-State advocates to create a single political Palestinian-Jewish entity in the Gaza Strip, West Bank and Israel Proper (See also "[West Bank and Gaza Strip as a Single Territorial Unit](#)").

### **How Proponents of a One-State Solution Seek to Derail the Disengagement Plan**

- 14. Forces seeking a One-State Solution and opposing a Two-State Solution have converged (see "[Convergence Phenomenon](#)") on the Disengagement Plan. Those forces, often working in an uncoordinated fashion, have used a number of methods to attempt to derail the plan, including:
  - a. **Strategic use of terrorism to prevent Israeli redeployment** – Certain Palestinian factions use violence and terrorism e.g. firing Kassam rockets from the Gaza Strip into Israel to prevent Israel from withdrawing its forces from Gaza.
  - b. **Advancing arguments that the Disengagement Plan will not end Israeli responsibility for the Gaza Strip and therefore does not change the dynamics of the conflict** – Examples include a recently published legal position paper by the "[Negotiation Support Unit to the PLO](#)" and arguments that the Gaza Strip will not be “viable” following the Disengagement Plan (see "[The Concept of 'Viable Palestinian Statehood'](#)").
  - c. **Opposing third party involvement in implementation of the Disengagement Plan** – Some Palestinians work to impede efforts to enlist third parties to facilitate disengagement. For example, the Palestinian side recently declined to meet with representatives of the World Bank, as Israel did, to formulate a constructive role for the World Bank and other possible actors in Gaza after disengagement.
  - d. **Framing the Disengagement Plan as an Israeli conspiracy** – A narrative has been emerging that frames the Disengagement Plan as Israel's way of locking Gaza in "jail" and furthering Israel's occupation of the West Bank. Statements such as those by Dov Weisglass, former Chief of Staff of the PM, are viewed as "proof" of Israel's bad faith.
  - e. **Obstructing the emergence of a central power in Gaza** – Some elements on the Palestinian side have attempted to create disorder in Gaza to prevent the emergence of responsible leaders and institutions that could control Gaza following disengagement.

## **The Importance of International Legitimacy**

15. Legitimacy by the international community is a key factor in assuring the sustainability and effectiveness of political actions in the international arena.
16. An agreement signed by Israel and the "**PLO**", as an express embodiment of the wills of both sides, would likely gain automatic legitimacy.
17. However, because the Disengagement Plan is an off-the-table strategy, it has not and will not gain automatic international legitimacy. Therefore, Israel will need to take concrete steps to gain legitimacy for the Disengagement Plan.<sup>5</sup>
18. Israel has framed the purpose of the Disengagement Plan as bringing an end to its civic and economic responsibility for the Gaza Strip (see footnote 1 above and "End of Responsibility"). At the other extreme, some claim that the Disengagement Plan, even if fully implemented and expanded to include Israeli withdrawal from the Perimeter of the Gaza Strip, will not end Israeli responsibility for the Gaza Strip.
19. It likely will fall to the court of world opinion to decide how to resolve this "**Clash of Framings**". Israel's challenge will be to persuade the international community that its framing is correct – i.e., that the Disengagement Plan will, in fact, result in an end of Israeli responsibility over Gaza.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

20. A successful Disengagement Plan will support the preservation of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state by not only counteracting the One-State Threat but also by improving Israel's bargaining position should the parties return to negotiations.
21. Conversely, failure of the Disengagement Plan would constitute a strategic setback for Israel. Among other things, failure of the Disengagement Plan would:
  - a. Weaken Israel's claim to have an Off-the-Table Option for resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and support the view that the only way to resolve the conflict is through negotiation, over which the Palestinians have a veto;
  - b. Embolden proponents of a One-State Solution to pursue their efforts;
  - c. Likely damage Israel's credibility in the international community.

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<sup>5</sup> Ideally, international legitimacy would be accorded to the Disengagement Plan because "...it is a step in the right direction..." bringing parties closer to "**Permanent Status**" of Israeli-Palestinian relations. However, in light of the dynamics of current international politics, it is unlikely that the Disengagement Plan will receive international legitimacy without a significant effort on Israel's part.

22. Among the steps Israel might consider to increase the likelihood of success of the Disengagement Plan and its acceptance by the world community are:
- a. **Relaxing one or more of the Disengagement Plan's constraints** –
    - 1) Unilateralism – While the Disengagement Plan is, by definition, an Off-the-Table Strategy, Israel may have opportunities to work cooperatively with Palestinian authorities to implement the plan, thereby softening its unilateral quality;
    - 2) Control of the Perimeter – As implementation of the plan proceeds, Israel may be able to relax some of the currently contemplated controls over the perimeter;
    - 3) Transfer of Controls to Third Parties – see (d) below;
    - 4) Palestinian Statehood – Israel could consider accepting the coming into being of a Palestinian state to fill the vacuum that will be created in the Gaza Strip following the withdrawal of Israel's forces and civilian presence.
  - b. **Involving international organizations** – Israel should continue to consider ways to involve international organizations, such as the World Bank, in developing economic, political and other infrastructure in Gaza.
  - c. **Presenting a uniform and effective narrative in support of the plan** – Israel should formulate a narrative explaining how the Disengagement Plan results in an "[End of Occupation](#)" and an End of Responsibility, and how it is consistent with the "[Quartet Roadmap](#)". Israel should coordinate this effort to ensure a consistent message.
  - d. **Introducing additional stakeholders** – Israel should consider ways to create stakes for additional entities in the well-being and development of Gaza. For example, incentives might exist for Egypt to act as a policing force in Gaza or for U.S. or European companies to invest in Gaza.

End.