



Beyond the Impasse

International Intervention and the Israeli–Palestinian Peace Process

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Summary points

- Diplomatic efforts aimed at bringing Israel and the Palestinians back to the negotiating table, however concerted, are not sufficient by themselves to change the underlining dynamics of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. They need to be accompanied by swift progression to implementation, with international monitoring, training and support.
- The deployment of a robust international peacekeeping presence in the West Bank and Gaza is increasingly considered a key part of creating and maintaining momentum towards realizing positive change on the ground.
- An international peacekeeping mission would primarily work in partnership with the Palestinian Authority to assist in the rebuilding of its governance capacities. Containing both military–security and civilian components, it would serve as a bridge until trust is rebuilt between Israel and the Palestinians and would transform the broader conflict environment.
- International intervention should not be seen as inimical to Israel’s strategic concerns and security interest. It can assist Israel in meeting many of the security challenges it currently faces, facilitate Israeli–Palestinian security cooperation and monitor Palestinians’ compliance on their commitments to combat terrorist operations against Israel.
- Any form of international intervention would demand the sustained commitment of the contributing nations, in terms of both political support and material costs. It would also need to be considered as part of a broader policy initiative, which could act as a catalyst for a change in Israel’s overall security environment and its broader strategic concerns.

Introduction¹

The call for a robust and sustained diplomatic engagement to resolve the Israeli–Palestinian conflict has been accompanied in recent years by growing discussions about the need to deploy an international peacekeeping force to reinforce any diplomatic initiatives which may emerge, and indeed to assist in the very emergence of a new dynamic towards a peace settlement. This paper aims to contribute to that discussion. It highlights the strategic potential that an international peacekeeping mission could bring to transforming the conflict environment, as well as acting as a catalyst for the revival of an Israeli–Palestinian peace process.

Given that the idea of an international peacekeeping force has traditionally been given short shrift by Israeli policy-makers, this paper focuses primarily on Israeli concerns and strategic interests in respect to international intervention. Israeli views of the value of a third-party role have nevertheless been shifting in recent years. After a decade of fighting the Palestinian insurgency, the degeneration of the Palestinian political environment and the recent military campaigns in Lebanon and Gaza, a debate has emerged within Israeli security circles over the possible introduction of an international force as part of future efforts to secure, and implement, an agreement with the Palestinians. This paper explores the potential strategic space for international peacekeeping missions from an Israeli perspective and discusses possible areas where Israel might be receptive to an international military presence in order to further its own political and strategic objectives. But it does not aim to present the views of the Israeli security community or the Israeli government; rather, it identifies potential areas within which Israel might be receptive to an international military presence to further its political and strategic objectives.

A security presence in the West Bank and Gaza would commit the international community to assuming a direct responsibility in enhancing the security environment for

Israel and the Palestinians. This is no small undertaking, but it is consistent with the long-held international position that a two-state solution is essential for wider regional peace and stability. This paper will therefore also evaluate the challenges the international community would face in sending a peacekeeping mission to the region.

The concept of international intervention should not be seen as a policy in itself but rather as part of a package of policy initiatives that also address Israel's broader security concerns and strategic environment. The paper concludes by proposing a series of measures aimed at enhancing Israel's security that the international community would need to consider in conjunction with sending an international peacekeeping force.

International intervention and the Israeli–Palestinian peace process

The idea of a third-party presence that would underwrite a resolution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict has gained increasing attention over the past decade, and has thus found a place on the political agenda. The Clinton Parameters of December 2000 spoke of the introduction of an international force in the wake of an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza, stating, 'Palestine will have an international force for border security and deterrent purposes.'¹ It was also anticipated that international monitors would be deployed to oversee any agreement reached over the Temple Mount/Haram Al-Sharif. The Road Map of April 2003 also assigned a role for outside parties. In Phase I it proposed that 'Quartet representatives begin informal monitoring and consult with the parties on the establishment of a formal monitoring mechanism and its implementation'.² With the transition to Phase II of the process, the Road Map called for an 'enhanced international role in monitoring transition, with the active, sustained, and operational support of the Quartet'.² A third-party role is also envisaged in

1. This paper draws on two Chatham House workshops with leading Israeli and international experts held in March and September 2009. The author is grateful to Dr Orit Gal for leading those workshops, for her support and friendship and for all her feedback in developing many of the ideas in this paper. The paper also draws on an earlier co-authored Chatham House study; see Joel Peters and Orit Gal, 'International Intervention for Conflict Management and Resolution' in Mark A. Heller and Rosemary Hollis (eds), *Israel and the Palestinians: Israeli Policy Options* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2005), pp. 73–99. The ideas presented in this paper reflect the views of the author alone, and not those of the participants in the two workshops.

the Geneva Accord. This called for an International Verification Group (IVG) ‘to facilitate, assist in, guarantee, monitor, and resolve disputes relating to the implementation of an agreement and [for] a multinational force [to] be established to provide security guarantees to the parties.’ The annexes to the Accord, published in September 2009, outline at length the mandate, command structure and operational functions of such a peacekeeping force.³

With the outbreak of the al-Aqsa intifada in September 2000 and the escalating spiral of violence between Israel and the Palestinians, there were growing calls for the international community to assume control of the West Bank and Gaza and establish an international trusteeship for Palestine, similar to the role it played in East Timor and Kosovo.⁴ In the lead-up to Israel’s disengagement from Gaza in August 2005, the idea of dispatching an international force to monitor the transition in the wake of Israel’s withdrawal was also raised. Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qurei called on the international community to send an international force to Gaza to help the Palestinian Authority resume control and rebuild its security forces. Concerns about a political vacuum also led to calls from several quarters in Israel for the dispatching of an international force to maintain order once Israel left Gaza.⁵

The idea of dispatching a NATO force to the West Bank and Gaza has attracted a number of prominent advocates. Outlining a new set of foreign policy priorities in the Middle East for the incoming Obama administration, former US National Security Advisors Brent Scowcroft and Zbigniew Brzezinski envisaged ‘deploying an international peacekeeping force, such as one from NATO, which could not

only replace Israeli security but train Palestinian troops to become effective’.⁶ General James Jones, who served as Condoleezza Rice’s Special Envoy for Israeli–Palestinian security issues before his appointment as President Obama’s National Security Advisor, has reportedly also favoured sending a NATO-based international force to the West Bank to facilitate Israel’s withdrawal and oversee the security provisions of an Israeli–Palestinian peace treaty.⁷

In recent years, Israel’s security community has become increasingly open to the idea of seeking international assistance to meet the security challenges it faces. The original Gaza disengagement plan presented by Ariel Sharon made reference to the potential role of a third-party presence. The plan stated: ‘Israel agrees that, in coordination with it, advice, aid and instruction will be given to Palestinian security forces for the purpose of fighting terror and maintaining public order by American, British, Egyptian, Jordanian or other experts, as will be agreed upon by Israel.’ The disengagement plan also spoke of the possibility of a foreign security presence, to be coordinated with and agreed on by Israel. It also called for ‘the presence of an international body that will accept proprietorship of the real-estate assets of the settlements’.⁸

Israel’s decision to withdraw its military forces from the Philadelphi corridor on the Gaza–Egypt border led, belatedly, to the idea floated among some Israelis of turning to the international community, and specifically to NATO, to take control of the border.⁹ Although Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza was carried out unilaterally, its subsequent negotiations with the Palestinian Authority led to the signing in November 2005 of an Agreement on Movement and Access (AMA) for goods entering and leaving Gaza. As part of this agreement, the two parties agreed that the European Union

2. Details of the Clinton Parameters and the Road Map can be found at <http://www.cfr.org/publication/7736/middle-east.html>.

3. For details of the Geneva Accord and the Annexes see <http://www.geneva-accord.org/>.

4. See Martin Indyk, ‘A Trusteeship for Palestine?’, *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2003.

5. See Gilead Sher, ‘A stabilizing force headed by the USA’, *Ha’aretz*, 15 June 2003; and Pinchas Meidan-Shani, ‘An international force for Gaza’, *Ha’aretz*, 29 January 2004.

6. Brent Scowcroft and Zbigniew Brzezinski, ‘Middle East priorities for Jan. 21’, *Washington Post*, 21 November, 2008. See also Thomas Friedman, ‘Land for NATO’, *New York Times*, 13 September 2006.

7. At the end of February 2009, it was reported the United States was developing a plan for sending NATO troops. See ‘Israel, US discuss W. Bank NATO troops’, *Jerusalem Post*, 28 February 2009. Reports of Jones’s interest in dispatching NATO troops to the region resurfaced with his appointment as National Security Advisor at the end of the year. See Aluf Benn, ‘Candidate for U.S. security adviser wants NATO force in West Bank’, *Ha’aretz*, 23 November 2009.

8. Details of the original and revised disengagement plan can be found at http://www.knesset.gov.il/process/docs/DisengageSharon_eng.htm

9. Interview with Israeli official, Jerusalem, 17 November 2008.

would send a small force to monitor operations (including security and customs) at the Rafah crossing point on the Gaza–Egypt border. The EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM Rafah) was established on 30 November 2005. Although it was short-lived and ceased all operations in June 2007 following Hamas’s takeover of Gaza,¹⁰ its establishment created an important precedent for third-party involvement in supporting arrangements between Israel and the Palestinians on border crossings.

Israel has also been receptive to the United States and the European Union working directly with the Palestinian Authority to reform the Palestinian security forces. In March 2005 the United States created the office of the United States Security Coordinator (USSC), currently headed by Lieutenant General Keith Dayton, with the aim of coordinating external assistance for the rebuilding of the Palestinian security forces, and of facilitating the resumption of Israeli–Palestinian security coordination.¹¹ Between January 2008 and March 2009, General Dayton’s team was responsible for the training of four National Security Forces (NSF) battalions and elements of a Presidential Guard battalion, totalling some 2,100 men, all of whom were trained at the Jordan International Police Training Centre near Amman. In May 2008 the newly trained Presidential Guard and NSF battalion were deployed to Jenin, a West Bank city long dominated by lawlessness and armed militias. Their deployment has been viewed as an important contributory factor behind the rapid transformation of the security environment and the economic redevelopment of Jenin.¹²

At the end of 2005, working in parallel with the efforts of the Dayton team, the European Union Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories (EUPOL-COPPS)¹³ was established, operating out of Ramallah. The prime function of EUPOL-COPPS has been to enable the Palestinian Authority to take on greater responsibility for law and order in the occupied Palestinian terri-

tory by improving its civil police and law enforcement capacity, and through the training of Palestinian police officers. In June 2008, the EU convened the Berlin conference in support of Palestinian Civil Security and Rule of Law, which resulted in an expansion of the EUPOL-COPPS mandate to include a criminal justice component and the provision of training to Palestinian judges, prosecutors and court administrators.

The strategic context for an international peacekeeping mission

Any future diplomatic initiative aimed at resolving the Israeli–Palestinian conflict needs to take into account the changes in the political and social environment that have occurred since the collapse of the Oslo process at the end of 2000. The protracted Israeli–Palestinian conflict has become deeply embedded within both societies. Within such an environment, strong reactive patterns feed into its destructive internal dynamics, rendering it more resistant to outside intervention. At the most fundamental levels, the past ten years of violence have led to a complete breakdown in trust between Israelis and Palestinians who, before the outbreak of the al-Aqsa intifada, had worked closely on a variety of issues. There was ongoing engagement in the field of security cooperation and extensive efforts towards deepening cooperation between the respective civil societies. The return to violence and the separation between Israel and the Palestinians has led, however, to a re-evaluation of the nature of the conflict, of the perceptions held by civil society, and of the possibility of true progress in the near future. The multiplicity of voices, agendas and social groupings that were encouraged to act during the early years of the Oslo process have slowly been overtaken by a more simplistic and homogeneous set of views and narratives about the roots and prolongation of the conflict. As a consequence, continual strife is increasingly seen as inevitable.

10. For further information about EUBAM Rafah see <http://www.eubam-rafah.eu/portal>.

11. The US Security Coordinator’s Team (USSC) also comprises officers from Canada, the United Kingdom and Turkey. See Jim Zanotti, ‘U.S. Security Assistance to the Palestinian Authority’, *Congressional Research Service*, 24 June 2009; and Yezid Sayigh, ‘Fixing Broken Windows: Security Sector Reform in Palestine, Lebanon, and Yemen’, *Carnegie Papers No. 17*, Carnegie Middle East Center, October 2009.

12. See Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, ‘Jenin: from terror capital to model of peace’, *Ha’aretz*, 25 September 2008.

13. COPPS stands for Coordinating Office for Palestinian Police Support.

The most important change needs to be understood in the context of the anticipated, two-state solution. Throughout the Oslo process, this had been the underlying rationale in Israeli, Palestinian and international policy circles. At the formal level, a two-state solution remains the intended outcome of a renewed peace process and, despite growing disillusionment, is still supported and accepted by the majority of both Israelis and Palestinians. But Israeli and Palestinian actions (and inactions) have created new realities on the ground and altered perceptions that challenge the sustainability of this logic.

“An international peacekeeping mission should not be viewed as a substitute for a political process, nor as an alternative to the governing authority in the oPt”

The continued cycle of violence has shattered each side’s belief in the other’s integrity. Each now questions whether the other is truly committed to a two-state solution. In Israel, many are questioning the Palestinians’ desire for a resolution and their capacity to establish a stable political entity living peacefully next to Israel. The passivity (if not refusal) of the Palestinian Authority with regard to taking effective measures to constrain terrorist operations against Israeli civilians, the political weakness of Fatah and the rise of public support for Hamas have led many Israelis to see the struggle as existential. For Palestinians, Israel’s unfettered settlement expansion, its actions in and around East Jerusalem, the construction and route of the separation fence and moves towards unilateral measures all call into question its proclaimed support for the creation of a Palestinian state.

The ongoing political impasse, loss of public confidence in the attainability of a peace agreement, and structural changes on the ground threaten the viability of a two-state solution. Diplomatic efforts aimed at bringing the two sides back to the negotiating table,

however concerted, are not sufficient by themselves. Future efforts need to be accompanied by the deployment of a robust international peacekeeping presence in the West Bank and Gaza as the most effective way of breaking out of the negative dynamics now shaping the conflict. An international peacekeeping mission should not be viewed as a substitute for a political process, nor as an alternative to the governing authority in the oPt. Instead it would work in partnership with the Palestinian Authority to assist in the rebuilding of its governance capacities, and ensure that the necessary reforms in its security, administrative, judicial and economic institutions are implemented. Such a peacekeeping mission – containing both military-security and civilian components – would serve as a bridge to rebuild trust, transform the broader conflict environment and act as a catalyst to revive the peace process.

International missions – defining the strategic space

The role of the international mission can be divided into three interrelated functions: capacity-building and coordination; supervising and mentoring; and peace enforcement. These functions differ in operational scope and in their degree of local intrusiveness. The international community would need to commit to guiding the peace process through three consecutive stages: rebuilding Palestinian governing capacity; negotiations towards permanent status arrangements; and the implementation phase of a peace treaty.

International peacekeeping missions to the oPt have only been seriously considered as part of the implementation phase of a comprehensive Israeli–Palestinian peace agreement, after such an agreement has been concluded by the two main parties. However, given the current intractable nature of the conflict, such intervention has now become a necessary condition for the transformation of the conflict environment to enable any diplomatic breakthrough that would lead to a durable and actionable agreement.

An international mission cannot be deployed without the consent of both Israel and the Palestinians. As such, its operational space will be determined by two factors: that

neither side believes it can achieve its objectives without outside assistance; and that neither side views an international presence as impinging upon its own interests.

Gaza

Israel's short- to mid-term objectives differ in respect of Gaza and the West Bank. The strategic space for an international mission with real transformative potential remains quite limited for Gaza. Israel would like to see an end to Hamas's rule there and has no interest in any international initiatives that will enhance Hamas's capacity to deliver public goods and services and bolster its popular support. It is unlikely, however, that the Israeli government would be willing to pay the political price of engaging in a full-scale military operation aimed at overthrowing Hamas and reoccupying Gaza.

Given this reality, Israel's immediate strategic interests in Gaza are twofold: to prevent the rearmament of Hamas, and limit its capacity to launch attacks against Israeli towns; and to prevent the socio-economic collapse of Gaza. In this respect Israel's interests converge with those of the international community, without whose direct involvement and assistance Israel cannot achieve either of these limited objectives. International support can be envisaged in three areas: monitoring the Egypt–Gaza border and preventing smuggling; facilitating the easing of Israel's economic blockade of Gaza; and monitoring the compliance of any future ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas.

Limiting Hamas's military capacity requires stopping weapons being smuggled into Gaza. Since Israel no longer has troops patrolling the border, it is dependent on both Egyptian and international assistance to prevent this. For the past year, the United States has been assisting Egypt with the supply and installation of below-ground sensors capable of detecting sound or movement, to prevent the smuggling of arms through the myriad of tunnels along the border. An increase in the level of international support in the broader monitoring and prevention of smuggling

routes needs to be considered. Such assistance should focus not only on the border itself but also on the regional routes along which the weapons are brought in, the supporting organizational infrastructure and the material resources involved. Thought should be given to the possible deployment of the European Maritime Force (EUROMARFOR), which currently operates as part of the Maritime Task Force (MTF) linked to UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon). Just as the MTF replaced the Israeli naval presence along the Lebanese coast after the 2006 conflict, EUROMARFOR could serve a role in relieving Israel's security concerns along the Gaza coast.

Since Hamas took control of Gaza in 2007, Israel has imposed an economic blockade, preventing the export of goods from Gaza and limiting the import of a narrowly restricted number of basic humanitarian supplies. In March 2009, the international community pledged \$4 billion to assist reconstruction in Gaza and support the Palestinian economy, but little of this money has been spent. Israel has not permitted the entry of materials needed for the reconstruction of Gazan infrastructure destroyed in the Israeli military operation in December 2008–January 2009.

Israel has an interest in preventing a full-scale humanitarian crisis from developing in Gaza. Accordingly it allows through some humanitarian supplies and relies on the efforts of international aid organizations currently working there. But, under the prevailing political conditions, Israel is unlikely to facilitate economic recovery programmes that would bring about real economic development for Gazans, for fear that Hamas would claim the credit. Specifically, it is concerned that Hamas would use construction materials to rebuild its military infrastructure. This creates a dilemma for Israel with respect to any initiatives aimed at facilitating the access and movement of goods in and out of Gaza. The international community has become increasingly critical of the economic blockade.¹⁴ The pressure on Israel likely to increase, especially if a

14. In her first address on the Middle East to the members of the European Parliament on 15 December 2008, the new European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, called for the immediate lifting of Israel's blockade of Gaza (<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/09/584&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>). In his annual report on Israeli practices in the occupied territory, issued on 15 November 2008, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called for the lifting of Israel's boycott (<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32967&Cr=palestin&Cr1>).

Palestinian prisoner exchange for the release of Gilad Shalit is secured.¹⁵ The continuation of the current situation is untenable and Gaza's ongoing economic crisis will soon require a response by Israel. An international presence between Israel and Gaza could offer an important bridge between Gaza's socio-economic needs and Israeli security concerns. International monitors and the establishment of security procedures at the crossing points between Gaza and Israel are an essential component of easing the socio-economic conditions in Gaza while also attending to Israeli security conditions over the entry of specific goods and materials.

Finally, prolonging the current informal ceasefire requires some kind of ongoing communication between Israel and Hamas. Here again, since neither side is willing to engage directly, there is a requirement for third-party assistance. Should future diplomatic efforts lead to the formalization of the current ceasefire, an international presence would be critical not only to monitor but also to enforce compliance with the terms and conditions of any agreement. The capacities and local authority of an international presence would, however, have to be negotiated with the Israeli government in advance and would need to be greater than that of EUBAM Rafah, which had only a limited reporting and monitoring role, but no operational remit.

The West Bank

The West Bank offers greater opportunities than Gaza, in the short to medium term, for an international peace-keeping force to bring about a significant transformation of the conflict environment. Israel's expressed willingness to work towards improving socio-economic conditions there allows for the possibility of a diverse set of tools, both direct and indirect, to be deployed through an international intervention. This could gradually dissolve the current diplomatic impasse and lead to the emergence of new political horizons across several axes at once. The aim of such a mission would be to transform the conflict dynamics by launching new and locally focused

processes, be they strengthening of local law and order, economic development (rather than simply humanitarian support), or reinvigorating community support and civil society activities. The West Bank is not lacking in international assistance from various governmental and non-governmental organizations. Their impact, however, whether focusing on the Palestinian economy or the governing institutions, has been highly constrained by lack of coordination and the weakness of the Palestinian Authority's governing capacity. Above all, the development of Palestinian institutions for self-government and statehood requires a sustained improvement in the security environment to enable the easing (and eventual removal) of Israeli control over freedom of movement and access of goods and people in the West Bank.

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The impact of the newly trained Palestinian National Security Forces and Presidential Guard battalions highlights the potential of targeted third-party assistance in promoting reform of the Palestinian security sector. The positive experience of the Dayton mission in the Jenin area has drawn praise for restoring a greater degree of law and order and hence local economic development, and offers an important model that could be applied throughout the West Bank. In similar fashion, the mentoring and training offered by EUPOL-

15. Corporal Gilad Shalit was captured on 25 June 2006 in a cross-border raid and has been held a prisoner in Gaza by Hamas. Israel has made any discussion on improving the socio-economic conditions conditional on his release.

COPPS could be expanded in its intensity, scope and direct funding.

The successes of the Dayton mission and EUPOL-COPPS have resulted in an enhanced capacity in the Palestinian Authority to maintain a greater degree of internal law and order by itself. The real litmus test, however, will be the confidence of Israel in the capacity and, more critically, the commitment of the Palestinian security forces to prevent terrorist operations. This will require a reinvigorated effort to professionalize these forces through more robust training in the use of small arms, body armour and light-armoured vehicles. An international force would be required to monitor and manage this transfer of arms and equipment. A third-party role would also be needed to coordinate renewed security cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian security forces, establish clear criteria for intelligence-sharing, and facilitate the latter's freedom of manoeuvre and action within the West Bank. It will also require defined procedures for compliance and the enforcement of any security arrangements, as well as transparent rules of engagement in the event of the failure of Palestinian security forces to take preventative measures against potential terrorist attacks against Israel.

Any renewed diplomatic process would have to be accompanied by easing Israel's military control of Palestinian life in the West Bank, such as removing roadblocks and streamlining the screening process at checkpoints, in addition to the transfer of autonomy and security responsibility to the Palestinian Authority. An easing of Israeli military control, and the eventual withdrawal of Israeli forces from the West Bank, would nevertheless risk creating a security vacuum, which an international peacekeeping mission could help to fill. By operating alongside the Palestinian security forces and monitoring their performance, such a mission could serve as an important, if not vital, confidence-building mechanism, thus facilitating the process of a full Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank.

Challenges and risks

An international mission would face considerable organizational and political challenges in terms of

force composition, leadership requirements, operational capabilities and legitimacy. It would require a clear mandate, with specific tasks allocated the appropriate resources and authority. From the outset, a clearly defined set of purposes for the different facets of the mission would be essential to foster legitimacy and to manage expectations, which should also not be set too high. The mandate needs to take into account the capacity of any international force to alter the strategic landscape of the West Bank and Gaza and to effect political, economic and social change. Any form of international intervention would require the sustained (and potentially long-term) commitment of the contributing nations, in terms of both political support and material costs. Only a few countries such as the United States, EU member states, Canada and Australia possess sufficient capabilities to contribute to a major civilian and/or military peacekeeping force. But these countries are already overstretched in peacekeeping operations around the globe, commitments that their own domestic publics are increasingly questioning. As such, the mandate of an international mission would need to reflect the resources available, the degree of political commitment and the political risks the contributing parties would be willing to take. Accordingly, the appropriate force structure and resources (personnel and financial) would need to be determined and guaranteed before deployment of the mission.

An enhanced international security presence in the West Bank (and on the borders of Gaza) would afford the international community not only a greater stake in promoting stability in the region but also a commitment to, and direct responsibility for, enhancing the security environment for both Israel and the Palestinians. From Israel's perspective, this would mean the international force ensuring that the Palestinians honour their commitments to preventing violence and terrorism directed against Israel and its citizens, and helping the Palestinian security apparatus to carry out effective operations against groups engaged in terrorism and dismantle terrorist infrastructure and capabilities. Above all, the international force would need to possess

the capacity and the political authority to take action, if necessary, to prevent potential terrorist attacks against Israeli targets. From a Palestinian perspective, an international presence would need to ensure that Israel would not interrupt or undermine the reconstruction of its governance capabilities, nor undertake any unilateral measures that might prevent the emergence of a viable contiguous Palestinian state.

In such a situation an international mission would need to be headed by a strong political figure with the kind of political independence and authority to resolve disagreements and demand compliance – and, when needed, to undertake enforcement operations. The mission’s political centre of authority thus needs to be sufficiently autonomous to reside with its locally based leadership without having to refer back in detail to the national capitals of the participating countries. Participating countries in any peacekeeping mission would therefore have to be prepared to relinquish control over local decision-making and the day-to-day actions of the mission. To be effective, any international mission would require appropriate combat and intelligence elements capable of defeating Palestinian terrorist operations should the Palestinian security forces fail to act. It would also need the capacity to detain and interrogate individuals engaged in terrorist activities. Since the mission would be likely to face serious opposition – and even physical attack – from both Palestinian radicals and Israeli settlers seeking to undermine its legitimacy and authority, it would require clear and robust rules of engagement for self-defence.

The mission would also have to communicate its strategies to multiple audiences on each side: the political leaderships, the security apparatuses and civil society. It would need to show itself as impartial and address both Israeli and Palestinian security concerns. For Israel, perceptions of ineffectiveness and, in particular, the failure to respond to potential terrorist operations (should the Palestinian security forces fail to act) would lead to a loss of legitimacy and potential friction with the Israeli army and public opinion, especially if Israel feels compelled to take independent

military action. At the same time, the mission would need to show a Palestinian audience that it was taking effective measures to ensure Israeli compliance with agreements reached with the Palestinian Authority. In particular, any direct action taken by an international mission against Palestinian targets runs the risk of undermining the legitimacy of the Palestinian security establishment and of losing the support of the local population. Such actions could lead to accusations by Palestinian radicals that the international community was substituting an international occupying force for direct Israeli military control, and that it was acting at the behest of Israel. Above all, any international peacekeeping mission needs to be seen as facilitating a political process and not as maintaining the status quo on the ground.

International involvement in the West Bank and Gaza is already among the most extensive in the world and is likely to increase with a renewal of the peace process. Third-party assistance in the area of security reform in the West Bank (and potentially in Gaza) would certainly represent an important contribution to transforming the conflict environment. However, it would need to be directly coordinated with international efforts aimed at expanding the provision of local public goods and services, such as education and health services, and at reinvigorating local entrepreneurship and trade for the Palestinians.

What is required is a comprehensive approach that rationalizes the roles of the myriad international agencies and actors operating on the ground. Without such harmonization, there is a risk that individual efforts will be counterproductive and only delay the capacity-building of the Palestinian state. The current absence of coordination by donors and sector-wide coordination on the ground impedes the setting of clear and consistent objectives and priorities, and leads to the inefficient allocation and distribution of resources. The result is lopsided development. It has frequently been noted that coordination by international actors is difficult to achieve. Consequently the harmonization of international efforts cannot be left to ad hoc, informal arrangements. The mix of security, political, economic, humanitarian and state-building elements

in the conflict must be reinforced by a more consciously coherent approach to optimize the effectiveness of international assistance. Creating such an institutional framework would require significant preparation, communication and coordination by members of the international community.

Israeli concerns

Israeli policy-makers have traditionally given short shrift to the idea of an international peacekeeping force stationed in Gaza and the West Bank, rejecting it as a measure that would undermine Israel's autonomy of action and security interests. The very concept that foreign troops might be able to meet Israel's security needs, even partially, runs counter to the central tenet of self-reliance within Israel's security doctrine.

Given the performance of international peacekeeping forces in other conflict zones, many Israelis question the capacity and the commitment of international forces to fight terrorism effectively. In addition, the stationing of foreign troops in the West Bank and Gaza is seen as severely limiting Israel's freedom of operational manoeuvre in undertaking both preventive action and retaliatory measures against potential terrorist targets. Of equal concern is the fear that the international community will accept the Palestinian narrative and overlook Israeli security concerns.¹⁶ Israelis are mistrustful of the international community's willingness to pressure the Palestinians sufficiently to ensure that they undertake the necessary security and administrative reforms and abide by their commitment to dismantle the terrorist infrastructure. They also doubt the resolve of the international community to commit the necessary resources and personnel to ensure successful completion of the mission's mandate, especially if it were to suffer casualties.

Israeli views of the value of a third-party role are nevertheless shifting. Although the public has not been calling for international intervention, it would not necessarily be hostile to the idea, especially if it were presented as

part of an overall package aimed at bringing stability and disengagement from the Palestinians. Recent polls also show a growing willingness to consider such options. A survey in 2009 revealed that almost two-thirds of Israeli Jews supported sending NATO troops to the West Bank in a peacekeeping capacity.¹⁷ Accepting the deployment of an international peacekeeping force in the West Bank and Gaza would mark a radical departure for Israel. It would amount to an explicit endorsement of the internationalization of the Israel–Palestinian conflict. Such a policy shift would not only give the international community a stake in promoting stability in the region but also entail a responsibility to enhance Israel's perceptions of its overall security.

International intervention is not a policy in itself. It has to be considered as part of a broader policy initiative – one that is not confined to the immediacy of the current situation or the need to facilitate an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza, but that must also address Israel's broader strategic environment. The introduction of a peacekeeping force needs to be a catalyst for a fundamental change in Israel's overall security planning and perceptions. International intervention is not without risk for Israel. The strategic gains from such a step need to be discernible to the Israeli security establishment and to the Israeli public, and cannot be confined solely to inchoate arguments about the importance for Israel of developing viable Palestinian institutions and the socio-economic development of the Palestinian territories.

The international community needs to be responsive to Israel's security concerns and its doubts over such intervention, and attend to the feelings of besiegement and diplomatic isolation among the Israeli public. It must be prepared to upgrade, individually and collectively, the level of political dialogue and security cooperation with Israel. The European Union and NATO have an important role to play in this respect. Security guarantees offered by the EU as part of any peace agreement should comprise a qualitative upgrade in security cooperation and bilateral

16. See Pinhas Inbari, 'The Risks to Regional Security from International Forces in Gaza', *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs Papers*, Vol. 7, No. 5, June 2007. The Israeli perception of an international bias in favour of the Palestinian narrative has been further reinforced with the publication of the Goldstone Report on the Gaza conflict. The report was condemned across the Israeli political spectrum as presenting a one-sided and incomplete picture of Israel's military operations in Gaza between December 2008 and January 2009.

17. See 'Jewish Israelis favor NATO Peacekeepers', *Jerusalem Post*, 22 April 2009.

ties. Similarly, regardless of whether NATO troops are directly involved, the dispatch of a peacekeeping mission should occur in parallel with upgraded security cooperation, and Israel needs to be incorporated more fully in NATO structures. The deployment of an international force would need to be accompanied by a set of measures aimed at reshaping current regional dynamics. The Arab world has an important role to play in this respect: it needs to show that it accepts Israel as a legitimate part of the region and to take concrete measures towards normalizing relations. Here the Arab Peace Initiative offers an important framework for consideration and future action.

Conclusion

This paper has focused primarily on Israeli concerns and strategic interests. However, an international force needs to be credible and acceptable to both parties and to receive the endorsement of their respective publics. A peacekeeping force needs to address the strategic priorities, fears and concerns of both Palestinians and Israelis. Any third-party presence will fail, and prove counter-productive to prospects of long-term stability, if it is seen as ignoring the interests of one side at the expense of the other. Nor can an international presence be imposed. International intervention requires the convergence of Israeli and Palestinian expectations over the mission's strategic purpose. To that end, it is important to bring Israelis, Palestinians and leading international actors together to consider alternative operational designs. Local interdependencies and constraints need to be examined with the aim of reaching a joint understanding concerning the potential deployment of one or several international missions.

An international peacekeeping force will not end the conflict. But it will allow for the gradual rebuilding of trust between Israel and the Palestinians, the reconstruction and development of effective Palestinian governing institutions, the orderly management of an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank, and attending to the myriad security and political challenges involved in bringing about a peaceful resolution to this conflict.

‘The current political impasse demands a more robust response by the international community than simply seeking to re-engage the two parties in a diplomatic process’

The proposed action would not be without risk and political cost, including for the contributing nations. Yet the current political impasse demands a more robust response by the international community than simply seeking to re-engage the two parties in a diplomatic process. International intervention should be considered an integral component of the diplomatic toolkit needed to revive the prospects for a renewed Israeli–Palestinian peace process. If carefully planned and judiciously introduced, it could make a valuable contribution to the stabilization of the current situation and help move Israel and the Palestinians back along the path to a peaceful settlement and towards the realization of a two-state solution.

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