

# Aqaba, Geneva, Gaza – Approaches to Peacemaking in the Middle East

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In late April 2003 the so-called »road map« was officially presented to the parties of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict by representatives of the Middle East »quartet« (USA, EU, UN and Russian Federation). The road map envisages a final and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict by 2005 through a two-state solution to be achieved in three stages.<sup>1</sup> At the June 2003 Aqaba summit US President George W. Bush, Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon, and Palestinian prime minister Mahmud Abbas committed themselves to implementing the plan, although Israel had expressed reservations. After almost three years of violent confrontations the formal reentry to a new peace process was achieved. However, the renewed escalation of violence only one week later signaled the lack of serious commitment on all sides to implementation of the plan. Consequently, the road map process has not proved to be a way out of the cycle of violence, let alone to a renewal of official peace negotiations.

Nevertheless, in early December 2003 a draft of an Israeli–Palestinian peace agreement was publicly unveiled in Geneva. The so-called »Geneva Accords« had been worked out by Israeli and Palestinian politicians, civil society representatives, and experts under the auspices of Oslo architect and former Israeli justice minister Yossi Beilin and former Palestinian information minister and Arafat intimate Yasir Abed Rabboh. It is a blueprint for a final status agreement that details solutions to the outstanding complex issues of Israeli–Palestinian relations. The momentum triggered by the Geneva Accords, mounting criticism of Israeli government policies – in Israeli society as well as by the security establishment – and growing international pressure on the Israeli prime minister to fulfill his country's obligations under the road map, led Ariel Sharon to announce his own

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1. A performance-based roadmap to a permanent two-state solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict by the quartet (EU, USA, Russian Federation, UN), April 30, 2003, <http://ue.eu.int/pressData/en/declarations/75591.pdf>.

way of dealing with the crisis: »unilateral disengagement«, that is, a long-term interim solution not negotiated with the Palestinians, in which Israel and Palestinians are separated from each other through a limited evacuation of settlements and the continued construction of a security barrier.

Without a much more intensive and sustained engagement on the part of the international community, building on the initiatives emanating from the region, an end to violence and the renewal of a meaningful peace process are unlikely to be achieved. International engagement is becoming ever more urgent as developments on the ground lead fast to a situation that will effectively prevent the realization of a viable two-state solution.

## **The Middle East Quartet's Plan: on the Road Again?**

The road map envisions a final and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict by 2005 through a two-state solution to be achieved in three stages.<sup>2</sup> In each of these stages, both parties will have to take steps towards: improving the economic and humanitarian situation in the Palestinian territories; comprehensive reform of Palestinian government and security institutions; security cooperation and the fight against terrorism; and negotiations about final status. Progress on the Israeli–Palestinian track should also enable the revival of the multilateral peace process, the relaunch of the bilateral negotiations between Israel and Syria, as well as Israel and Lebanon, and thus the early achievement of comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

The road map is based on a comprehensive approach containing three main elements: simultaneousness, parallel steps, and international monitoring. This approach makes the road map different from earlier initiatives – such as the Mitchell Report and the Tenet Ceasefire Plan – that aimed first at a ceasefire and only later, following a cooling-down phase, at a relaunch of the diplomatic process. The road map envisages that both parties comply with their respective requirements at the same time and without preconditions (*simultaneousness*). This aims to break the pattern according to which both sides have time and again justified their own fail-

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2. Phase 1: ending terror and violence, normalizing Palestinian life, and building Palestinian institutions (up to May 2003); Phase 2: transition (June 2003–December 2003); Phase 3: permanent status agreement and end of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (2004–2005).

ings in terms of the failings of the other side. Also, progress in all areas of Israeli–Palestinian relations will occur at the same time (*parallel steps*) as it has become obvious that a durable ceasefire cannot be reached without a realistic prospect of conflict settlement and an end to occupation. Critically, the international community will judge the progress made and decide whether to enter into the next phase of the process (*international monitoring*). The quartet has established four committees to monitor and evaluate progress in different areas.

### Deficits in the Plan's Architecture

The quartet initiative claims to be embarking on a »goal-oriented« process. In reality, it focuses strongly on the first phase while important questions regarding the second and third phases remain unanswered: Where will the »provisional borders« be established? Who will control them? What is meant by »some attributes of sovereignty« that the Palestinian state would acquire in phase two? Above all, the destination of the road is not spelled out clearly enough; the principles on which a permanent solution should be based are not revealed. Referring solely to relevant UN Security Council resolutions is inadequate as they remain subject to differing interpretations. This is particularly true of issues related to the territory of the future Palestinian state, Jerusalem, and Palestinian refugees.

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The road map's timetable was already outdated by the time it was handed over to the parties concerned. In any case, the dates mentioned should be regarded as guidelines rather than binding deadlines. Entry into subsequent phases of the process hinges on the unanimous assessment of the quartet that the parties have fulfilled the demands of the previous phases. Given the expected attempts to derail the process on the part of the enemies of peace on both sides, the peace plan effectively gives potential trouble-makers enormous veto power – ignoring the lessons of the failure of the Oslo process – because it does not provide for any mechanism guaranteeing implementation of the agreement in the face of attempts to sabotage it. The only sanction is to delay or break off the process, something feared least of all by those interested in preventing progress towards a two-state solution.

In general, the role of the international community is not spelled out clearly enough. The quartet is to monitor, accompany, and assess progress made by the parties, but it is so far limited to a role as a facilitator. There is no provision for arbitration by a third party to resolve disputes. Nor has the international community made any political or military guarantees for a final solution. In addition, the plan neglects the populations of both sides: confidence building between the peoples, the handling of war crimes, and the treatment of individual and collective trauma are not part of the plan; nor is adherence to the rule of law in the fight against terrorism.

### Obstacles on the Road to Implementation

Severe problems surfaced while the process was still getting under way. The Israeli government announced 14 reservations with regard to the road map.<sup>3</sup> Most significantly, Israel has since insisted that it will reenter diplomatic negotiations only if, on the one hand, the Palestinian leadership fights terrorism effectively and dismantles Palestinian »terror groups« and, on the other, it recognizes Israel's right to exist as a Jewish State, renouncing the right of return of Palestinian refugees to the State of Israel. In addition – and contrary to the road map text – Israel wants the question of settlements and of Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem to be addressed only in the negotiations on a final settlement. Finally, Israel has said that the US should be the sole party responsible for the peace process and its monitoring. The American administration signaled to Israel that its reservations would be taken into account while implementing the road map. Thus, the demands of the road map process on both sides were altered and its three main principles watered down, so that practically we find ourselves brought back to a »security first« approach.

The Israeli side engaged in security cooperation with the Palestinians and some confidence-building measures, such as a (limited) troop redeployment (in the Gaza Strip and in Bethlehem), the evacuation of some unauthorized settlement outposts, and the release of some Palestinian prisoners. It did not, however, stop its military incursions into Palestinian cities, its raids, arrests, and killings of suspected militants, and its house demolitions, nor did it lift the closure of the Palestinian territories and the siege on Palestinian cities and villages. On the Palestinian side, prime

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3. »Israel's road map reservations«, in *Haaretz Internet Edition* (May 27, 2003).

minister Abbas committed himself to putting an end to the armed Intifada and to disarming Palestinian militant groups, but neither had the means nor the necessary backing of the population to do so.

## The Geneva Initiative: Blueprint for a Two-State Solution

In mid-October 2003 a draft for an Israeli–Palestinian peace accord was leaked to the press which had been worked out by both parties’ experts and politicians over the course of roughly two years.<sup>4</sup> In this, they had started out from the December 2000 Clinton Parameters and the state of negotiations reached in Taba in January 2001.<sup>5</sup> For the first time, the Geneva Accords present a draft that settles all the contentious issues of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict hitherto deferred to a later stage: territory and status of the Palestinian entity, Israeli settlements, Jerusalem, the refugee question, and mutual security arrangements. In early December 2003, the unofficial document was presented to the public in Geneva. Simultaneously, a campaign was initiated aimed at a broad discussion of the Accords in both societies, based on distribution of the text to households and its publication in local newspapers.<sup>6</sup>

### Main Points of the Accords

- ▶ A two-state solution: The draft foresees the settling of the conflict through the establishment of an independent Palestinian State next to

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4. For a more detailed analysis see Muriel Asseburg, *Die Genfer Vereinbarung. Blaupause für eine Zwei-Staaten-Lösung in Nahost*, Berlin (November 2003), [http://www.swp-berlin.org/pdf/swp\\_aktuell/swpaktu\\_43\\_03.pdf](http://www.swp-berlin.org/pdf/swp_aktuell/swpaktu_43_03.pdf).

5. After the break-down of negotiations in Camp David in July 2000 and the outbreak of the Second Intifada in September that year, US President Bill Clinton in December 2000 presented the parties with a bridging proposal for a final status agreement. See »President Clinton’s Proposals«, in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, <http://MondeDiplo.com/focus/mideast/a3271>. On this basis, in January 2001, the parties went back to negotiations on a final status in Taba and achieved a narrowing of the gaps, particularly with regards to the territorial question. However, due to the imminent Israeli elections, the Israeli prime minister broke the talks off. For an account by the European Union peace envoy Miguel Moratinos see the so-called »Moratinos Document«, first published by Akiva Eldar in *Haaretz Internet Edition* (February 14, 2002), <http://www.arts.mcgill.ca/MEPP/PRRN/papers/moratinos.html>.

6. »The Geneva Accord«, in *Haaretz Internet Edition* (October 20, 2003).

Israel. The Palestinians, for their part, recognize not only the de facto existence of Israel, but also the Jewish people's right to self-determination in the State of Israel.

- ▶ Territory and settlements: Borders between the two states will in principle be based on the situation of June 4, 1967, and border corrections on equal land swaps. Israeli settlers finding themselves outside Israeli territory after border adjustments will be resettled inside Israel. The West Bank and the Gaza Strip will be connected by a permanently open corridor.
- ▶ Jerusalem: The draft aims at preserving the special character of the Holy City and at guaranteeing freedom of religion. At the same time, Jerusalem will be the capital of two states, with sovereignty being territorially divided. As set out by the Clinton Parameters, Israel will have sovereignty over the neighborhoods mainly inhabited by Jews, Palestine in those areas with a majority Palestinian population. With regard to the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, the plateau will be under Palestinian sovereignty, while the Western («Wailing») Wall will be under Israeli sovereignty. There will be a multinational presence on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif.
- ▶ Refugees/right of return: The agreement will constitute a final settlement of the refugee problem, without the possibility of any further claims. In principle, refugees will be compensated for loss of property, as well as for their refugeedom. Independently of any compensation, each refugee will be able to choose between five options for his or her permanent place of residence: 1) inside the Palestinian State; 2) in areas that will be part of the Palestinian State after the land swap; 3) in third countries; 4) inside Israel; and 5) in the current host state. While all refugees will have the right to settle in the future Palestinian State, permanent settlement in third states is subject to the sovereign decision of the host state. This arrangement can be seen as a pragmatic formula for a settlement to the refugee question that aims at improving the living conditions of refugees without endangering the »demographic balance« in Israel. The question remains, however, whether such a compromise, which neither makes Palestinians explicitly renounce the right of return, nor makes Israelis acknowledge their responsibility in the creation of the refugee problem, can form the basis of a process of reconciliation between the two societies. Characteristically, the compromise on the refugee issue has drawn most of the criticism from both sides.

- ▶ Security and international presence: Palestine will be a non-militarized state with restricted and internationally supervised weaponry. There will be a multinational presence on Palestinian territory in order to protect the state's integrity and to oversee the (staged) withdrawal of Israeli troops.
- ▶ International monitoring, mediation, and arbitration: The draft foresees the establishment of a so-called »implementation and verification group« that will oversee implementation of the Accords. The group will establish a mechanism for mediation and will actively mediate in case of conflict. There will be a process of conflict resolution involving several stages. In this, lessons from the failure of the Oslo process have been drawn with regard to the necessity of procedural safeguards and the involvement of a third party.

## The Relevance of the Geneva Initiative

The Geneva Accords do not constitute a formal, official agreement, but rather a blueprint for a peaceful settlement. In this way the negotiating teams have presented a concrete and constructive proposal against a backdrop of ongoing violence and widespread lack of prospects and hope in both societies. They have offered a realistic alternative to the claims of extremists that are often religiously or ideologically legitimized. The Geneva Accords neither contradict the vision of two states formulated by US President Bush in June 2002 nor clash with the road map. To the contrary, they complement the road map with the political perspective that is lacking in the plan by detailing what a final status could look like. There are still open questions and missing paragraphs on such questions as the sharing and management of water resources, border regimes, and economic cooperation. Particularly concerning Jerusalem, many issues remain unresolved, and other details and procedural questions to be contained in the annexes need to be worked out. However, already at this stage the draft outlines a viable settlement to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

## **Unilateral Disengagement: A Step towards Peace or the End of the Two-state Solution?**

Ariel Sharon accused the Geneva Initiative's Israeli participants of »collaborating with the enemy« in order to undermine the Israeli government

and of endangering the imminent victory over Palestinian terrorism, as well as the implementation of the road map. At the same time, the Israeli government came under pressure to show Israeli society and the international community that it had a strategy of its own. Consequently, in December 2003 Israel's prime minister announced his intention of unilaterally disengaging from the Palestinians. In April 2004, Sharon presented a disengagement plan that envisaged an Israeli withdrawal from those areas in which no Israelis would be living anyhow after the signing of a final status agreement. According to the plan, Israel will continue construction of the separation barrier in the West Bank, evacuate all settlements and military installations in the Gaza Strip by the end of 2005, and evacuate four settlements (Ganim, Kadim, Sa-Nur, and Homesh), as well as military installations located in the northern West Bank.<sup>7</sup> Existing Israeli–Palestinian agreements will in principle remain in place. Israel will also continue to supply electricity and water. At the same time, Israel will retain control of all land and maritime borders, as well as the airspace above the Gaza Strip, and asserts its right to carry out military operations in all evacuated areas. Initially, Israel intends to retain control of the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt (the »Philadelphi Route«) and to widen the border strip if deemed necessary. Neither the Gaza seaport nor the airport will be reopened in the short term. The Gaza Strip is to be a demilitarized area, and an international presence can be deployed only with Israeli consent. After the withdrawal, Israel will regard its occupation of the Gaza Strip as terminated and will reject any further responsibility for the local population. In return for these withdrawals, as it were, the disengagement plan announces Israel's intention of holding on to certain areas in the West Bank, even after a final agreement has been signed. These areas include large settlement blocs and security zones, as well as areas of particular interest to Israel.

In May 2004, Likud members rejected the plan in a referendum. However, Sharon – backed by a strong majority of the population<sup>8</sup> – was still able to push the plan through the cabinet. After fierce controversies, the Israeli government adopted a modified version of the disengagement

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7. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Disengagement Plan. General Outline (April 18, 2004), <http://www.mfa.gov.il/>.

8. Polls indicate 60–70 percent support among the Israeli population. See Ephraim Yaar and Tamar Hermann, Peace Index May 2004, Tel Aviv (June 2004), <http://www.tau.ac.il/peace>.



plan and agreed to start preparations for its implementation. According to the modified plan, settlements in Gaza and the northern West Bank will be evacuated (and housing consequently destroyed) in four phases – if, and only if, the cabinet votes in favor of each of the withdrawals. Furthermore, implementation of the plan will no longer be completely unilateral, as Egypt is to assume a supporting role.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, the first steps have been taken to prepare for the plan's implementation. However, this does not guarantee that actual withdrawals will take place, partially or fully. In the months to come, we should rather expect controversies in the cabinet over each withdrawal, as well as further resignations by ministers and a series of no-confidence votes. Following the resignation of right-wing ministers from the government, Prime Minister Sharon has had to rule with a minority government. Negotiations with, amongst others, the Labor Party for a unity government are likely to begin seriously after the summer recess – but even early elections are a realistic scenario.

### Reviving the Peace Process?

Sharon's plan does not constitute a step towards reviving the Middle East peace process and solving the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Unilateral measures such as those envisaged by the plan, along with Sharon's statements that its implementation would definitely stifle Palestinian aspirations to statehood, do little to build confidence. Even basic coordination with the Palestinians is not provided for. Unilateralism also runs counter to the road map's approach, which requires both parties to carry out their obligations in parallel and simultaneously. Furthermore, Israeli withdrawal of its settler population and military personnel does not amount to an end of the occupation of the evacuated territories, since Israel still retains all essential prerogatives.

Of particular concern is the issue of territorial contiguity. The construction of the separation barrier (although declared temporary), with its deep incursions into the West Bank, carves up the Palestinian territories in a dramatic fashion. Large sections of farmland and water resources are already, or will become, inaccessible to the local Palestinian population. After completion of the separation barrier's western part, Israel will

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9. For the revised disengagement plan see Aluf Benn, »What's been approved, what's changed«, in *Haaretz Internet Edition* (June 7, 2004).

de facto have annexed around 20 percent of West Bank territory. If the Jordan valley also remains under Israeli control, as foreseen, around 45 percent of the West Bank will de facto be annexed. In addition, once construction of the separation barrier is completed, East Jerusalem as an important social, cultural–religious, economic, and service center, as well as the traffic junction between the northern and southern parts of the West Bank, will be completely isolated from its surroundings. The Sharon plan is thus diametrically opposed to the establishment of a viable Palestinian state, and therefore to the realization of a durable two-state solution.

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Another major problem with the disengagement plan is its likely failure to substantially improve living conditions for the Palestinian population in the Gaza Strip. Naturally, it will come as a relief for Palestinians living in the Strip no longer to have to face checkpoints and roadblocks and to enjoy free movement within the Strip's 365 square kilometers. Of much greater importance to the 1.3 million inhabitants, however, is an improvement in their socio-economic situation. Presently, around 30 percent of the population is unemployed, around two-thirds live below the poverty line, and a large proportion is dependent on international aid shipments. This is largely a consequence of Israeli closure policy as Gaza inhabitants depend on employment in Israel and on foreign trade in commodities. Open access to world markets is essential, especially for perishable agricultural exports, and open borders to neighboring countries and – at least as long as no peace agreement has been signed – a proper seaport and airport are needed. The disengagement plan, however, does not provide for any of this. On the contrary, the Israeli minister of industry and trade, Ehud Olmert, has decided to close the Erez Industrial Zone until it can be handed over to an international body – eliminating another 4,000 jobs for Gaza residents.

### The Palestinian Authority, the Opposition, and Egypt's Role

The Palestinian Authority (PA) has denounced the unilateral nature of the Israeli plan, as well as the construction of the separation barrier on Palestinian territory. At the same time, it has commenced preparations for an

eventual Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and for the taking over of responsibilities there. In particular, Palestinian protagonists are aware of the dangers of violent power struggles in the wake of an Israeli withdrawal. Armed confrontations with Israel have weakened the PA, strengthened militants, and caused a groundswell of support for Islamist groups such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Consequently, the PA has set up a national dialogue aimed at preventing civil strife and at finding a power-sharing arrangement which would involve its militant rivals in governmental responsibilities.

Egypt already serves as a mediator in the national dialogue and cease-fire talks between Palestinian factions. An enlarged Egyptian role in withdrawal preparations, as envisaged by the Israeli government, would also include involvement in Palestinian security sector reform, training and oversight of Palestinian security personnel, and controlling the Egyptian side of the border with Gaza. Egypt has conditioned its involvement on several factors essential for success: both sides are to refrain from violence against each other; Israel is to withdraw completely from the Gaza Strip, including from the Philadelphi Route, to guarantee abstention from all military operations in the evacuated territories, and finally to establish safe passage between Gaza and the West Bank. Egypt expects the Palestinian Authority (PA) to restructure its complex security apparatus into three branches under the interior minister's authority and to substantially empower the Palestinian prime minister.

However, these conditions are unlikely to be met. The Israeli government insists on control of all land and maritime borders of the Strip, as well as the airspace, and it has asserted its right to carry out military operations in all evacuated areas. And while in mid-July 2004 the Palestinian president finally announced the consolidation of the security forces into three branches and reshuffled senior security positions, these overdue moves triggered massive violent protests by members of the Popular Resistance Committees first in Gaza and then in the West Bank, as well as a series of resignations, ranging from the prime minister (whose resignation was later withdrawn) to several heads of security services. The protests not only indicate the PA's loss of control and its inability to effectively provide for law and order, but also illustrate the demand for much more comprehensive reform, clean leadership, and more inclusive policies, if legitimacy is to be regained.

The involvement of Egypt in Gaza security carries considerable risks: first, the danger of Palestinian–Egyptian tensions, Israeli–Egyptian tensions, and, last but not least, the conflict spilling over into Egypt. Pales-

tinian factions have clearly voiced their opposition for fear that Egyptian and (in the West Bank) Jordanian involvement in the security sector will effectively limit the PA's competencies and endanger the sovereignty of a future Palestinian state. Second, it is very doubtful whether the Egyptian security forces are in a position to train their Palestinian counterparts in anti-terrorism measures that are not only effective but also compatible with international human rights standards.

## **Peacemaking in the Middle East – Challenges for European Policy**

The European Union (EU) should definitely support Sharon's efforts to evacuate settlements and troops from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank. Despite any reservations, the evacuation of settlements is a positive step. It might also be an opportunity to demonstrate to the Israeli public that settlements in »Judea and Samaria« can be evacuated without causing a civil war within Israel. And it might lead to growing pressure from the Israeli public to withdraw from other areas. These developments will make it easier for any future Israeli government to evacuate settlements on a larger scale, and ultimately to put an end to the occupation. The EU should also seize this opportunity to bring new momentum to the deadlocked road map process, instead of merely continuing to insist on the relevance of the quartet's plan as the sole means for solving the conflict. This will require, however, that Europeans not only demand that the parties to the conflict deliver on their commitments, but also assess how they can meaningfully contribute, beyond declaratory politics, to transforming the Sharon plan's unilateral approach into a success story. Egypt surely can help (as it is already doing) by mediating in the national dialogue and ceasefire talks between the Palestinian factions, and it can act as a go-between in the withdrawal preparations of Israelis and Palestinians. But we should not succumb to the illusion that the Egyptian government has the capacity and power to create the complex conditions necessary for a successful withdrawal and a resumption of the peace process.

### **Supporting the Withdrawal from Gaza**

Initially, this entails insisting on immediate preparation and execution of the withdrawal, to be carried out as speedily as possible. The cabinet

plan's fall 2005 deadline leaves a period of more than one year in which both Palestinian militant groups and the Israeli government will try to claim victory with the withdrawal and thus continue escalating the violence. Also, the more radical settlers will use that time to mobilize massively against a withdrawal. The deadly confrontations and house demolitions in the Gaza Strip witnessed in May 2004, as well as the clashes between Palestinian militants and the PA in July/August 2004, have served as a warning of escalations to come.

The challenge will then be to spell out in detail the arrangements for the withdrawal and the handover of security and infrastructure control to the PA. To this end, Israel and the PA will have to work out a plan that sets a timetable for withdrawal and transfer of power, clarifying what capacities can reasonably be assumed by the PA itself after a handover, and what kind of support must be provided by the international community. Coordination with the PA is paramount in this regard in order to prevent chaos and to keep self-declared victors from rising to power. The quartet should oversee the drawing up of this plan and monitor its implementation.

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Moreover, the EU can contribute to making the withdrawal a tangible success for the local population by generously supporting reconstruction of the evacuated areas and kick-starting economic development by way of substantial investment. This, however, can succeed only if the Gaza Strip is no longer economically isolated. Therefore the Israeli government will need to assume responsibility for creating the necessary conditions: above all, access to international markets by land, sea, and air must be assured, and permits for Gaza residents to work in Israel – at least in the short to medium term – need to be significantly increased. In the medium to long term, jobs could also be created by setting up joint ventures in the Gaza Strip or on the Egyptian border.

On top of the economic aspects, three main issues will make or break the Palestinian population's support for withdrawal: internal security, legitimacy of the political leadership, and the prospect of a solution to the conflict and the end of occupation. Security cannot be interpreted solely

as Israel's security, to be realized through counterterrorism measures. Security also entails implementing law and order and ending the reign of gangs and militias in parts of the Palestinian territories. That, however, requires the restoration of a monopoly of power, as well as the transparency and accountability of the security services. It will also mean involving the young guard of Fateh, moderate Islamists, and other opposition groups in the political process and in sharing responsibilities – thus giving the PA the legitimacy it needs to enforce law and order. The international community should therefore support the national dialogue and urge the PA to hold elections, particularly at the local level, in the near future. The participation of the Palestinian population in the political decision-making process should no longer be subordinated to progress in the peace process, or made dependent on a favorable outcome.

At the same time, international support for the Palestinian security apparatus is crucial for breaking the cycle of violence. The training of security forces already under way is not sufficient. There is also a need for an international presence on the ground. A key task for such a military presence would be to disarm the population in tandem with the PA and to act against groups that continue to engage in attacks against Israel. Only if this is done successfully will Israel cease to carry out preventive or retaliatory military operations. Such a presence would be welcomed by a majority of the Palestinians – provided it is perceived as a means to ending the occupation and not as a tool for its continuation. This, however, will not be the case as long as nothing more than a long-term interim situation is on the horizon.

### Reviving the Road-map Process

Primarily, the EU will therefore have to work towards getting US policy to make good in a responsible manner on its support for the disengagement plan pledged by George W. Bush in April this year. This involves integrating the Gaza withdrawal into the road map process, that is, making it a first step to be followed by further steps towards a viable and mutually acceptable two-state solution. These steps need to be part of a realistic and binding timetable. It also involves spelling out the road map's third phase in order to give clear direction to this process. Europe should urge the quartet to lay down the principles for a solution to the conflict, which would then serve as the basis for negotiations between Israel and the PA on the details of a two-state arrangement.

In this respect, Europeans should also continue financially and technically to support track-two activities – such as the Geneva Initiative – in which different options and positions are worked out by experts and academics of both sides to prepare for final status negotiations. On top of this, the EU should offer concrete and generous support for solving complex issues such as the refugee question. For example, the EU and its member states should offer to make a substantial financial contribution to a fund for taking over compensation and rehabilitation costs for refugees. They should also offer substantial quotas for immigration of refugees, for example, from Lebanon, to EU member states.

Current developments on the ground work against the realization of a viable two-state solution. The destructive erection of the separation barrier deep inside the West Bank, in combination with a newly enhanced settlement effort, is leading to an ever stronger »bantustanization« of the future Palestinian State's territory and is cutting it off from access to resources, workplaces, and markets. The violent conflict, at the same time, undermines the PA's capacity to govern and to provide law and order, while Palestinian society's militarization is increasing. Only if the international community is willing to engage much more intensively than at present and to insist that the commitments made by both parties to the conflict under the road map process are fulfilled, will we see the reinvigoration of a meaningful peace process. Without such an active international involvement, the implementation of Sharon's disengagement plan – if it takes place at all – will not lead closer to peace, but rather contribute to the prevention of a durable and mutually acceptable two-state solution.

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