

A Plan for Comprehensive Unilateral Withdrawal In Coordination With the International Community

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I. The Proposal

1. In coordination with the United States Israel would develop a plan for its unilateral withdrawal from all of the Gaza Strip and most of the West Bank. In the West Bank the withdrawal would be largely to the green line with border adjustments to allow for 75% of the settlers to remain. Land within Israel would be designated for a 1 to 1 territorial swap for land retained.
2. Israel would unilaterally undertake this withdrawal only if the United States was able to obtain a commitment from the international community (e.g. the United Nations Security Council) that once this withdrawal was made:
 - a) These would become Israel's permanent borders, fulfilling on the Palestinian front (except for the issues of Jerusalem and refugees) Israel's obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 242.
 - b) Within these borders, Israel would be recognized as a Jewish State.
3. Israel would commit, that following this withdrawal, if and when a Palestinian State emerged that exercised a monopoly of force within the territories, Israel would be prepared for mutual recognition between the two states and for negotiations of Jerusalem, refugees, security, economic cooperation and other end of conflict issues.

Comment: Although this is a proposal for unilateral Israeli action, and does not depend upon any actions or agreement by the Palestinians, the proposal will generate a process of dialogue between Israel and the international community, as well as with the Palestinians. It can be expected that before members of the Quartet or the Security Council will agree that the Israeli withdrawal ends the territorial dimension of the conflict, they will consult with both the Arab states and the Palestinians. The United States will serve as a key player in this dialogue, seeking to develop a map that wins the assent of both Israel and the international community.

II. Public Support For This Proposal Within Israel

In June 2004, the Steinmetz Center of Tel Aviv University, in conjunction with the University of Maryland, examined the degree of public support for this proposal.

Among Israeli Jews a majority was found to support this proposal (54.4% favor, 29.6% oppose, 16.1% don't know). This was an increase from April in which, a clear plurality of support was found, (47.7% favor, 35.9% oppose, 16.4% don't know).

Respondents were asked:

“ The government recently decided to unilaterally disengage from the Gaza Strip. What is your opinion of a similar unilateral disengagement from the West Bank under the following conditions:

- The new border will approximate the Green Line with minor modifications so that Israeli sovereignty will include territories on which 75% of the Judea and Samaria settlers now live.
- In return for territories annexed to Israel, The Palestinians will receive from Israel territories on the same scale.
- This unilateral action will only take place if the United States is able to obtain from the UNSC recognition of Israel as a Jewish State within these permanent borders.
- Negotiations over Jerusalem, Refugees and other issues will take place at later stage.

Do you support or oppose such a unilateral disengagement from the West Bank under these conditions?”

Results were as follows:

	Israeli Jews
Strongly Support	23.5
Support	30.9
Oppose	10.4
Strongly Oppose	19.2
Don't Know	16.1

Analysis by party affiliation reveals that the proposal has surprisingly strong support across the political spectrum except for the far-right. Among Likud supporters (not just Party members) 45.6% supported and 37.4% opposed. The breakdown was as follows: [April]

	Support	Oppose	Don't Know

Likud	45.6%	37.4%	17%
Shinui	56.1%	26.8%	17.1%
Labor	69.8%	17.5%	12.7%
Meretz	77.8%	11.1%	11.1%
National Union	11.1%	77.8%	11.1%
Shas	10.0%	75.0%	15.0%
NRP	12.5%	75.0%	12.5%

III. Advantages of This Proposal Compared to The Limited (e.g. Gaza) Withdrawal of Prime Minister Sharon

1. The Gaza withdrawal gives up land but gets nothing in exchange. This proposal will obtain two objectives from the international community: (a) recognition of the new border as the end of valid Palestinian territorial claims, (b) recognition of Israel as a Jewish State within the new boundary.
2. The Gaza withdrawal will represent a victory for Hamas. This withdrawal, with international recognition of Israel as a Jewish State within fixed boundaries, will represent the most basic strategic failure of Hamas in its effort to eliminate Israel as a Jewish State.
3. The Gaza withdrawal will unify Palestinians around the most violent elements, and serve to recruit young Palestinians to push Israel out of the West Bank. This proposal, by withdrawing from the West Bank, with territorial swaps that provide Palestinian with the equivalent of 100% of the West Bank, will divide Palestinians into the majority that is prepared to live at peace with Israel in a state of their own, and the extremist minority that seeks no accommodation with Israel.
4. The Gaza withdrawal maintains Israel as an occupying power. In the face of continuing violence, Israel will not have the sympathy of the international community, and will remain limited in its ability to use its forces in self-defense. This proposal, because it pulls Israel fully out of the West Bank and Gaza, and obtains international recognition of Israel's permanent boundary, places the onus for further violence squarely on the Palestinians. Once Israel has withdrawn, a Palestinian state will emerge in the West Bank and Gaza, and Israel will be more fully able to influence it through the traditional means of state to state relations (e.g. deterrence and economic incentives).
5. The Gaza withdrawal will not change the nature of the separation fence in the West Bank. It will remain a source of tension with the Palestinians and of criticism from

the international community. This proposal, by establishing a recognized international border will involve a readjustment of the path of the separation fence so that it conforms with this border. Doing so, however, will transform the international reaction to the fence from hostility to acceptance.

6. The Gaza withdrawal as envisioned by Prime Minister Sharon represents a plan for Israel to hunker down behind barriers and wait. On this proposal, with the territorial issue, except for Jerusalem, resolved, the structure will be in place for the central compromise that remains: Israeli concessions on Jerusalem in exchange for abandonment of the project of Palestinian return to Israel.

IV. This Proposal in Comparison to a Fully Negotiated, Geneva-type Agreement.

If one assumes a) that it is possible to reach a comprehensive end of the conflict agreement with the Palestinians, b) that this can be attained within the near term, and c) that such an agreement will be faithfully implemented – then such a course of action is to be preferred above all others, including this proposal.

The case for comprehensive unilateral withdrawal rests on the conclusion that these three conditions do not presently exist, and are unlikely to exist any time soon:

- Today, there is no pressure from any quarter for negotiations. Rather, there is at least verbal consensus on the Roadmap which imposed preconditions for negotiations. In particular, the precondition that the Palestinian Authority must dismantle the terrorist infrastructure is unlikely to be met. Thus movement towards negotiations is frozen.
- The current Israeli government does not want comprehensive permanent status negotiations. And even if there were a different government in Israel, it is unclear that a negotiated solution to the conflict would be within reach. In particular, polling supports the view that agreement on the two issues of Jerusalem and refugees will be extremely difficult to reach. Even with the best of intent, negotiations might only have a limited success, essentially on the issues of territory dealt with in the above proposal.
- Given the general lack of interest on the part of the Israeli public in moving quickly to comprehensive permanent status negotiations, there is little likelihood that a political party that focuses on this approach will come to power in the near term.
- Given the increased popularity of Hamas, and its refusal to view agreements reached with Israel as valid, a Palestinian state that comes into being through negotiations with Israel will face a continuing challenge to its legitimacy. This in turn will make implementation of a negotiated agreement particularly difficult, especially one in which the Palestinian make major concessions on refugees.

This plan for comprehensive unilateral withdrawal seeks to a) resolve the central territorial issue, b) give rise to a Palestinian state and c) set the stage for future negotiations once a consolidated state has been achieved. It draws on the strong mood within Israel for unilateral action, yet implicitly engages the Palestinians on the key issue around which agreement can presently be reached: territory.

If this broad disengagement comes to pass, with Israel having left both the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, it can be expected that the PLO will proclaim a Palestinian State. To gain international recognition this entity will have to demonstrate that it in fact has the key attribute of statehood: that it exercises a monopoly of power within a recognized territory. Under these circumstances it is likely that Hamas will accommodate itself to a necessary evolution into a political party, rather than use force to resist the state's monopoly of power. This is made more likely by the fact that Palestinian statehood will have emerged unilaterally rather than through negotiations with Israel. Over the long run, it is this normalization of the Palestinian polity into the world of states that is most thoroughly in Israel's security interests. Achieving this transformation is of more importance than a negotiated document within which a Palestinian partner makes commitments that it is unable or unwilling to carry out. Once Palestinian nationalism has moved from the phase of "liberation struggle" to a nation state with national interests to protect, Israel will find that it has many traditional tools ranging from economic incentives to military deterrence, with which to affect the behavior of the Palestinian state.

V. MK Reshef Cheyne Proposal

On October 1, 2004 the Boston Globe published an op-ed piece by Reshef Cheyne, MK from the Shinui Party. The article, entitled "A Plan to Fix Israel's Borders," proposes Israeli action along the lines of the above proposal -- a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from most of the West Bank provided that there is international recognition of that withdrawal as establishing Israel's permanent boundary. Reshef Cheyne is the Chairman of the Shinui Party faction.

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