

## Concept

# Shelf Agreement

### Definition<sup>1</sup>

The term 'Shelf Agreement' is an agreement with symbolic significance whose implementation can be postponed.

### Background

The term 'Shelf Agreement' originated in the business world. Within the political context, its contents and scope can vary according to different circumstances. In this way, a 'Shelf Agreement' between Israel and the Palestinians can either be a full, general or detailed Agreement of Principles<sup>2</sup>.

There are a number of reasons why a Shelf Agreement is useful:

- **An incentive for an authentic political progress** – Within the 'Shelf Agreement' framework, the negotiators are not official representatives of the sides. The significance of signing such an agreement is mostly symbolic / declarative and serves to encourage those negotiators with the authority to achieve an official agreement. As an example, there are those that claim that the Disengagement Plan<sup>3</sup> from Gaza was indirectly caused by the Geneva Initiative<sup>4</sup>, a non governmental proposal<sup>5</sup>.
- **A 'Model for an Agreement'**- A model for a permanent agreement which can later be utilized as a framework for the political system. In this way, a recent report<sup>6</sup> claimed that the Prime Ministers Office has shown an interest in the Beilin- Abu Mazen Document<sup>7</sup> which was formulated in 1995.
- **Creating a 'Declaration of Intent' and the appearance of political progress** - The Israeli and Palestinian leaders may reach the conclusion that the implementation of an agreement is not possible or desirable at the current time. Therefore, a 'Shelf Agreement' may project a 'Declaration of Intent' and create the appearance of a political horizon, with the hope that future political conditions will ripen to allow the achievement of a 'real' agreement.

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<sup>2</sup> In this context, the [Agreement of Principles](#) offers [Outstanding Issues](#) between Israel and the Palestinians; these issues include amongst others the status of Jerusalem, the Palestinian refugee issue and the permanent borders of the future Palestinian state.

<sup>3</sup> See [Disengagement Plan](#)

<sup>4</sup> The [Geneva Initiative](#) is a non-governmental proposition for a permanent status agreement, initiated in light of the standstill in the political process during 2000-2003. The initiative suggests solutions to Outstanding Issues which include the status of Jerusalem, the Palestinian refugees and the permanent borders.

<sup>5</sup> For an interview with Dov Weisglass by Ari Shavit, click [here](#); In addition, see Nadir Tzur, Disengaging from the Strip, *Tzviomim*, 2006, pp.120-121.

<sup>6</sup> See Ravid, Issacharoff and Benn, [Haaretz](#), 9/11/2007 (In Hebrew)

<sup>7</sup> [Beilin- Abu Mazen Document](#) (10/95) is an unofficial proposal formulated by Israeli and Palestinian representatives on various parameters for an Israeli - Palestinian permanent agreement.

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The possibility of reaching a Shelf Agreement has recently been mentioned several times in the Israeli media. According to one of the suggestions<sup>8</sup>, Israel could sign a permanent agreement with the Palestinians whose implementation is indefinitely postponed in order to create a political horizon and strengthen Palestinian moderates.

End.

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<sup>8</sup> Ravid and Benn, [Haaretz](#), 7/25/2007.