

Policy Product

Israel's Political Options Vis-à-vis the Palestinians

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Executive Summary

In this Policy Paper, prepared for the 2006 Sderot Conference, the Reut Institute presents the political options that are currently available to Israel vis-à-vis the Palestinians.

1. This document defines the political options available to Israel vis-a-vis the Palestinians at the present time, given the difficulty of ending control over the Palestinians and the instability of the status quo.
2. Israel's "three demands" policy, along with the absence of a political agenda, is liable to bring about a strategic "surprise" in the form of the collapse of the Palestinian Authority (PA), its dissolution, a third Intifada, a new political initiative, or the escalation and intensification of military activity in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.
3. The possible ramifications of such a change are the increase of the military, economic and civil burden imposed upon Israel and the threat to its national security.
4. Therefore, Israel has an interest in formulating a political agenda aimed at ending control over the Palestinians, which will mitigate the damage to its national security and receive international legitimacy.
5. Stabilizing the system is a prerequisite for any political option. It is based upon the cessation of violence, the strengthening of moderate elements, and the reconstruction of the PA as a political address. These measures are not necessarily conditional upon a specific political framework.
6. This document presents a number of considerations for examining Israel's political options: the political rationale, the security rationale, the potential for Palestinian partnership and international legitimacy. On the basis of these considerations, this document examines seven political options that are derived from three possible approaches to the conflict:
 - a. **Conflict Resolution** – According to this approach, the political objective is end of conflict and finality of claims between Israel and the Palestinians. Its implementation means the establishment of a Palestinian state and resolution of all outstanding issues between Israel and the Palestinians in the framework of a permanent status agreement.
 - b. **Conflict Management with the Political Goal of Ending Responsibility** - According to this approach the political goal is end of occupation prior to the end of conflict, and its transformation from a conflict between 'conqueror' and 'occupied' to a borders dispute. The possible options are the (1) establishment of a Palestinian state prior to a final status agreement (2) implementation of the Convergence Plan and upgrading the political status of the PA towards statehood (3) establishment of an international trusteeship.
 - c. **Conflict Management with no Political Goal** – according to this approach, the level of conflict should be reduced without fundamentally altering its basic elements. The possible political options are: (1) stabilization of the system (2) redeployment by agreement (3) unilateral re-deployment.

7. The conclusion of the Reut Institute is that among the possible approaches and goals, the preferred options are:

a. **Conflict Management with a Political Goal of Ending Responsibility:**

1. **The Establishment of a State prior to a Permanent Status Agreement** – Although the establishment of a Palestinian state prior to a permanent status agreement carries a security risk, it will yield Israel a significant political achievement. It will end Israel's responsibility over the Palestinians and will allow Israel to divide the permanent status agreement into smaller agreements as well as, ostensibly, diluting the refugee issue.

This option requires a combination of bilateral agreements and unilateral actions. On the one hand, understanding that Israel has a sustainable unilateral option is likely to urge the Palestinians to strive for a political agreement. On the other hand, only negotiations that are conducted in good faith and fail, may allow Israel to unilaterally implement the Convergence Plan and to upgrade the political status of the PA to that of a state.

2. **International Trusteeship** – Ostensibly, this is the only option that has the potential to reach the goal of End of Responsibility while also maintaining the principle of a de-militarized Palestinian entity.

- b. **Conflict Management without a Political Goal: Redeployment by agreement** – This goal does not carry a significant political achievement; however, it may achieve a balance between reduction of the level of confrontation and violence and the need for efficient security control.

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However, The Re'ut Institute is solely accountable for the content of this document.

Introduction

1. The objective of this document is to define the political options available to Israel vis-a-vis the Palestinians at the present time, given the difficulty of ending control over the Palestinians and the instability of the status quo. This document consists of the following:
 - a. A presentation of the quagmire of the political process that makes it difficult for Israel to end its control over the Palestinians by means of negotiations or unilateral steps.
 - b. A presentation of the considerations used for examining Israel's political agenda.
 - c. A presentation of three possible approaches for the continuation of the political process with the Palestinians, and seven political options that derive from them.

Background

2. **The erosion of the Palestinian Authority's capacity to govern** – Since Hamas' electoral victory (1/06) Israel has conditioned the removal of the economic boycott on the PA, upon Hamas recognition of Israel, re-affirmation of existing agreements, and cessation of violence (hereinafter, "three demands"). Moreover, Israel has been arresting Hamas ministers and representatives in the Palestinian Legislative Council.
3. This policy has brought about a continuous erosion of the PA's capacity to govern,¹ even though Israel is not interested in either the collapse of the PA or in a humanitarian crisis.
4. Consequently, voices calling for the [dissolution of the PA](#) are intensifying, and there are indications of its possible collapse due to internal Palestinian conflicts.
5. The combination of the inability to bring Hamas to accept the "three demands" together with the possible collapse of the PA, raises questions over the effectiveness of the policy of "the three demands".
6. **There is no agenda vis-à-vis the Palestinians** – Currently, Israel has no political agenda vis-à-vis the Palestinians:
 - a. **Negotiation is not an option: no Palestinian "partner"** – even before Hamas' victory, Israel doubted if there was any basis for negotiations due the lack of a Palestinian partner that was capable and willing to make decisions and implement them.² Israel's doubts increased with the rise of Hamas to power.
 - b. **Unilateralism is not an option: Convergence Plan is "frozen"** – The recent War in Lebanon and the firing of Qassam rockets have worn down Israeli popular support for unilateral action.³
7. The combination of the "three demands" policy along with the absence of a political agenda create instability and is liable to bring about a strategic "surprise" in the form of the collapse

¹ The [institutional dysfunction](#) of the PA as well as the continuous violent clashes between Fatah and Hamas has lead to a significant erosion in the PA's capacity to govern.

² Even before Hamas' victory, Israel and the Palestinians arrived at a political deadlock in the path to implementing the Roadmap. The Disengagement Plan was based on the premise that there is no Palestinian partner for negotiations. In addition, the influence of the PLO, Israel's official partner in the political process, has eroded in the past years. See: [The Roadmap leads to a Political Deadlock](#).

³ See Olmert's remarks that the Convergence Plan is "no longer on the agenda," (**Haaretz**, 8/18/06 - in Hebrew).

of the PA, its self-dissolution, a third Intifada, a new political initiative, or the escalation and intensification of military activity.

8. Israel has only limited influence on Palestinian internal politics. However, after the internal conflict in the PA is stabilized, Israel may find itself under constant international pressure to renew the political process.
9. Hence, it is in Israel's interest to formulate a political agenda before the crystallization of international pressure or the introduction of a political initiative that does not serve Israel's interests.

First part: The Predicament of the Political Process

10. Due to demographic trends, ending the responsibility over the Palestinians is in Israel's existential interest. However, there are differences of opinion in Israel regarding the method for ending the responsibility, the structure of the political process, and the content of the political agreements.
11. A number of structural predicaments prevent Israel from implementing a strategy based on either negotiations or unilateral steps (see: No Easy Way to End Israel's Control over the Palestinians).

On the one hand, the predicaments of the unilateral option⁴ hurt Israel's ability to change the political reality without Palestinian consent. Therefore, **the unilateral option, essentially "pushes" Israel to the negotiating table.**

On the other hand, the quagmires of negotiation⁵ prevent Israel from reaching an agreement with the Palestinians, and **"push" Israel back to the unilateral option.**

Therefore, Israel finds itself moving back and forth from the negotiating table to the unilateral path without being able to obtain a significant political achievement.

12. Ostensibly, these paths contradict each other. However, under certain circumstances, they may be complementary:
 - a. On the one hand, recognizing that Israel holds a viable unilateral option may urge the Palestinians to reach a negotiated agreement. Without a unilateral option, Israel's maneuvering capability around the negotiating table may be severely compromised.
 - b. On the other hand, only negotiations that are conducted in good faith and fail, may grant Israel the international legitimacy it needs to pursue unilateral steps.

Second part: Considerations for Examining the Political Options

13. The Re'ut Institute proposes a number of considerations for examining the different political options:
 - a. **Potential for Palestinian Partnership**

⁴ Unilateralism strengthens radical groups, makes it difficult to obtain international legitimacy, and is rejected by a number of elements in the international community.

⁵ The quagmires of negotiations include: the widespread Palestinian perception that time is on their side (see: Leverage of Time in Negotiations); the weakness of the Israeli and Palestinian political systems that make it difficult to achieve complex political goals; the permanent resistance of some Palestinian factions to any political process by means of violence; and the disagreement on the outline for the permanent status agreement and its basic principles.

- 1) **In the negotiation path**, the relevant considerations are the degree of Palestinian delivery capability⁶ and "will" for becoming a viable partner on a specific issue.⁷
 - 2) **In the unilateral path**, the relevant consideration is the delivery capability of the PA (and not necessarily its "will") as the object of a certain political move which is not directly coordinated with it.
- b. **The Security Rationale** refers to Israel's ability to prevent hostile elements from trespassing into its territory, from re-arming, and from carrying out high-trajectory fire against Israel. This capability depends on Israel's degree of control over the Palestinian territories, over the PA's external perimeter,⁸ the border regime⁹ and the Palestinians' capability and "will" to fight terror.
 - c. **The Political Rationale** refers to Israel's ability to end its control over the Palestinians, to ensure political separation, and to reduce the one-state-threat.
 - d. **International Legitimacy** refers to the expected support from main international actors for a political move. These include, first and foremost, the United States, the European Union, and the leading Arab states.

The greater the level of agreement between Israel and the Palestinians and the more comprehensive the political move, the greater the international legitimacy will be.

Third part: Policy Options: Israel's Political Aims

14. The Re'ut Institute identifies three possible approaches for dealing with the conflict, and seven political options deriving from them:
 - a. **Conflict Resolution**¹⁰ – According to this approach, the goal is to reach end of conflict and finality of claims, through a permanent status agreement that establishes a Palestinian state and resolves the outstanding issues between the two sides.
 - b. **Conflict Management**¹¹ **with the Political Goal of Ending Responsibility** - According to this approach, end of occupation will be prior to end of conflict. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict will be transformed from a conflict between 'conqueror' and 'occupied' to a borders dispute. The possible options include: (1) establishment of a Palestinian state prior to permanent status agreement (2) implementation of the

⁶ Carrying capacity includes the following components: the availability of material resources, international and internal legitimacy, judicial-constitutional maneuvering space and the institutional capacity of branches of the government to cooperate and implement the government's policies and its laws.

⁷ A partnership is examined through three fundamental questions: What is the object of the partnership? What is its time frame? And, what type of mandate does the partner have?

⁸ The external perimeter refers to the entrance and exit points along the border of the Palestinian entity, including aerial and sea space, and the border crossings between the Palestinian entity, Israel, Egypt and Jordan.

⁹ The physical interfaces between Israel and the Palestinian entity, along the external perimeter, and at entrance and exit points, that influence the system that regulates the movement of people, merchandise and services.

¹⁰ Conflict resolution refers to a process aimed at ending a conflict between parties, by means of settling all the disputes between them.

¹¹ Conflict management refers to striving towards reducing the intensity of a conflict by controlling its generators, in light of a party's lack of will or ability either to overcome its opponent or to resolve the conflict.

Convergence Plan and upgrading the political status of the PA towards statehood (3) establishment of an international trusteeship.

- c. **Conflict Management with no Political Goal** – This approach aims at reducing the level of the conflict without fundamentally altering its basic elements. The possible political options are: (1) maintenance of a stable system (2) redeployment by agreement (3) unilateral re-deployment.

Involvement of an International Force

15. In any political scenario, whether via negotiations or unilateralism, there is a possibility that an international force will be involved. This document does not deal with the specifications of international involvement, such as scope, identity of the forces, or their mandate.
16. From Israel's perspective, there are several "generic" interests favoring the involvement of an international force:
 - a. **Transferring the burden of responsibility** to the international community. Since the PA is a "failed entity", the international community will be able to hold the powers and authorities that Israel transfers to it as the guardian of the Palestinian nascent state.¹²
 - b. **Preparing the Ground for a Palestinian entity** with the capacity to govern and to effectively control its territory.
 - c. **Creating a buffer force between Israel and the Palestinians** – An international force with an extended mandate is likely to have the potential to become a security buffer between Israel and the Palestinians (such as the 'Lebanon Model').
17. It is highly unlikely that an international force will arrive in order to "maintain the status-quo" if a political horizon does not exist.¹³ The higher Israel's political goal, in the sense that it aims towards conflict resolution, the greater the prospects for international involvement.

Stabilizing the System and Creating a Palestinian "Address"

18. Stabilizing the system and the existence of a Palestinian "address" is a fundamental requirement for any political option.
19. Stabilization is based on the cessation of violence, the strengthening of moderate forces and the reconstruction of the PA as a political address – without a necessary linkage to the political process or the changing of the basic components of the conflict.
20. Israel should work to stabilize the system because the current situation is unstable and dangerous for Israel (see below) and because the existence of a Palestinian address – which provides services to its citizens and prevents terror – is in Israel's interest in every respect.
21. Israel has only limited influence on Palestinian internal politics. However, it can contribute to the efforts for stabilizing the system in several aspects:

¹² The Agreement on Movement and Access (Rafah Agreement) reflects Israel's desire to renounce the burden of responsibility towards the Palestinians. In this agreement, Israel renounced its complete control over the external perimeter of Gaza and transferred the responsibility to Egypt and the PA, under the observation of an EU Border Assistance Mission. Israel's goal was to advance its argument that it is no longer responsible for Gaza.

¹³ See the following articles: Camille Mansour, "Not Without a Political Horizon"; Yossi Alpher, "Toward Trusteeship" in **Bitterlemons.org**, September 18, 2006 Edition 37.

- a. Funds – Changing the policy of the "three demands" and establishing arrangements that will provide the PA accessibility to funds.
- b. Movement provisions – Reopening the Rafah crossing in accordance with the Agreement on Movement and Access, considering the implementation of the "Dayton Plan"¹⁴ at the Karni crossing, expanding plans for additional crossings and considering the option of activating the Safe Passage between Gaza and the West Bank.
- c. Territory – An action that includes IDF withdrawal from highly populated Palestinian cities in the West Bank to 9/28/00 lines or to other security lines.
- d. Releasing prisoners as a gesture.

Conflict Resolution

22. According to this approach Israel and the Palestinians will reach end of conflict and finality of claims by resolving the outstanding issues and establishing a Palestinian state.

End of Conflict and Finality of Claims

23. End of conflict and finality of claims can only be reached through a **permanent status agreement**. The outstanding issues between Israel and the Palestinians cannot be resolved through unilateral steps. Thus, this path requires Palestinian consent.
24. **Partnership Potential** – Although Abu Mazen has repeatedly offered to engage in negotiations towards a permanent status agreement,¹⁵ several obstacles stand in the way of this option:
 - a. **Fundamental Disagreement** – Israel and the Palestinian face fundamental disagreement regarding the outstanding issues, such as refugees and Jerusalem.¹⁶
 - b. **The Quagmires of Negotiations** – Negotiations over a permanent status agreement expose Israel to the quagmire effect of negotiations (see above).
 - c. **Crisis of Palestinian Representation** – The crisis of Palestinian representation stems from internal conflict regarding the identity of the political entity that should represent the Palestinian people in general,¹⁷ and the inhabitants of Gaza and the West Bank in particular. This crisis undermines the carrying capacity of the Palestinians.

¹⁴ The Dayton Plan is designed to regulate the passage of merchandise and people through the Karni crossing by placing a force of 90 international supervisors and 30 assistance staff, on the Palestinian side of the crossing. According to the plan, Abu Mazen's Presidential Guard will participate already in the early phases of the checks. The plan will allow for export from the Gaza Strip at a scope of around 400 trucks a day. The plan has been accepted in principle by Israel and the PA, but it has not yet been implemented.

¹⁵ "Abu Mazen: an international congress that will promote direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians must be gathered immediately" (**Ha'aretz**, 4/26/06 - in Hebrew).

¹⁶ For more on this subject, see: [The Roadmap Leads to a Political Deadlock; No Easy Way to End Israel's Control over the Palestinians](#).

¹⁷ In the past years, the status of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian People has been gradually eroded as a consequence of the strengthening of the PA, and as a result of the rise of Hamas, which is not represented in the PLO, to power.

Moreover, in permanent status, it is expected that a relationships will be formed between the Palestinian State, the Jewish citizens of the State of Israel, and Israel's Arab citizens. This triangle of relationships will likely be subject to many tensions due to a combination of forces and trends. It is unlikely that the parties will be able to arrive at a formula for a permanent status agreement that addresses these tensions.

25. However, an early agreement between Israel and the PLO on the principles of permanent status may assist in "bypassing" the predicaments of the political process.
26. **The quagmires of negotiations undermine the prospects of reaching a permanent status agreement. If resolving the conflict is not within reach, Israel may have to strive to manage it.**

Conflict Management with the Political Goal of Ending Responsibility

27. According to this approach, Israel should seek to abate the conflict while acting to end its responsibility over the Palestinian population. Thus, Israel will have to further withdraw from territory in the West Bank and cease its control over the West Bank's external perimeter.

In this context, the possible options are: (1) negotiations with the PLO on the establishment of a Palestinian State with Provisional Borders (PSPB) in accordance with the second phase of the Roadmap (2) Israeli unilateral action which includes implementation of the Convergence Plan and upgrading the political status of the PA to that of a state (3) Israeli, Palestinian, and international agreement for the establishment of an international trusteeship.

A Palestinian State with Provisional Borders

28. The goal of this option is to establish a **PSPB before a permanent status agreement** is signed, while officially ending Israeli occupation and responsibility in Gaza and the West Bank.

Thus, an agreement between Israel and the PLO will regulate the end of occupation and the establishment of a PSPB in accordance with the second phase of the Roadmap.¹⁸

29. **Partnership Potential** – Abu Mazen rejected the establishment of PSPB labeling it a "trap" (2/05).¹⁹ However, since making that declaration, Hamas has won the elections and the PA's capacity to govern has eroded significantly.

Hamas may agree to the establishment of a PSPB since the idea of such a state does not contradict the Phased Plan and the rationale of the permanent resistance against Israel. Hamas's spokesmen have expressed in the past their consent for the establishment of a "long term Hudna"²⁰ in exchange for the establishment of a Palestinian state within 1967 borders.²¹

¹⁸ In this context, see Egypt and Saudi Arabia's initiative calling for the establishment of permanent borders of the Palestinian state before the consolidation of a comprehensive political agreement. According to this proposal, the Arab Peace Initiative (3/02) will be the foundation for a political agreement under the leadership of the UN Security Council. In any case, The Re'ut Institute does not see such a step as a contradiction of the rationale of the Roadmap, which states that a Palestinian state is to be established *before* permanent status agreement.

¹⁹ Abu Mazen stated that a Palestinian State with Provisional Borders is a "trap" and called for the establishment of a back-door channel to discuss the permanent status agreement while engaging in negotiations over the Roadmap (**New York Times**, 02/14/05); the Central Committee of the Fatah (6/30/05) decided to postpone the idea of a Palestinian State with Provisional Borders and supported the establishment of a Palestinian state that holds full sovereignty in Permanent Status; Abu Ala declared: "We will not establish a state with a racist separation fence, there will be no state with violent settlements and no state will be established without achieving all of the Palestinian people's rights including the Right of Return" (**Ynet**, 7/26/05 - in Hebrew).

²⁰ The concept "Hudna" stems from the Arab-Muslim tradition and refers to a reciprocal truce under agreed conditions and for a specified period of time. In the context of Israeli-Palestinian relations, the concept refers to a suggested framework for achieving a cease-fire between the two sides. However, the conditions for declaring Hudna, its purpose, and its binding status are unclear.

If the Palestinians believe that Israel possesses a viable unilateral option, they may be motivated to reach a political agreement with Israel. Conversely, if Israel does not possess such an option, its maneuvering ability in negotiations may be hurt.

30. **International Legitimacy** – Currently, the Roadmap, which calls for the establishment of a PSPB in its second stage, is the framework agreed upon by Israel, the Palestinians and the international community. Thus, in the absence of any other alternative, Israel's insistence on the Roadmap may hurt the Palestinians' ability to resist it.

Israel should coordinate the structure of negotiations and the criteria for its failure with the United States. Likewise, Israel needs to receive American guarantees for its support in unilateral action if the negotiations fail. Such coordination may motivate the Palestinians to reach a political agreement.

31. **Political Rationale** – Above all, the Israeli interest for the establishment of a PSPB derives from its potential to remove Israel's responsibility over the Palestinians and to erode the one-state threat.

Moreover, the establishment of a PSPB will likely enable Israel to fragment the permanent status agreement into several smaller agreements between the two states, thus, dismantling the all-or-nothing approach of Oslo. In addition, the establishment of a PSPB will make it possible to dilute the refugee issue.²²

32. **Security Rationale** – Theoretically, a Palestinian state will enjoy the right to an army, self-defense, and the signing of military treaties.²³ Such a state will constitute a threat if it becomes a hostile or a "failed" state, which gives the resistance movements a free hand to operate and does not control its territory. Moreover, the absence of political progress may maintain the pretext for continuation of the fighting.

On the other hand, a PSPB may become a political address with the capability and the will to prevent hostile activities from its territory.

Moreover, the establishment of a PSPB will enable Israel to claim that a number of security issues are to be resolved only through permanent status agreement. Thus, Israel may still be able to control some aspects of the external perimeter, such as Palestinian aerial space.²⁴

33. **In conclusion, the option of a PSPB entails a security risk but provides a substantial political achievement. Palestinian recognition that Israel holds a viable unilateral option may motivate them to reach a political agreement.**

²¹ Prime Minister Haniyeh declared that his organization will be ready to establish a long-term Hudna in exchange for an Israeli withdrawal to 1967 borders, a resolution to the refugee problem, and the establishment of a Palestinian state (Ismail Haniyeh, **Washington Post**, 7/11/06).

²² Due to the weakness of the two political systems it is structurally logical to fragment the permanent status agreement into smaller agreements. See: The Roadmap and the Future of a Palestinian State.

²³ The Re'ut Institute contends that the demilitarization principle, according to which the Palestinian entity will be demilitarized, has gradually eroded, especially following the Disengagement. The collapse of this principle will constitute a radical change for Israel's national security approach regarding the Palestinians. See: A Militarized Palestine State.

²⁴ In the context of the Roadmap, Israel has already declared that the powers and authorities of the Palestinian State with Provisional Borders would be limited due to Israel's right to self-defense.

Implementation of the Convergence Plan and Upgrading the Political Status of the PA towards Statehood

34. According to this option, Israel will implement the Convergence Plan and will upgrade the political status of the PA by delegating authorities and powers, in order to receive official unilateral recognition of the PA as a state.
35. Israel can carry out a series of unilateral steps, coordinated with third parties but not necessarily with the Palestinians, in order to sever its interfaces with the PA. For example, Israel can withdraw from the external perimeter of the PA, cut the services it provides to the territories from which it withdrew, remove the customs envelope, and define the territories as "foreign territories" and their border crossings as international borders.
36. The considerations that should be taken into account when implementing this option are similar to those related to the establishment of a Palestinian state through an agreement that is not permanent (see above). However, the unilateral component has additional significance, as will be explained below.
37. **Security Rationale** – Ostensibly, Israel could continue to control territories or maintain authorities that are vital for its security, without Palestinian consent. However, Israel will not be able to continue keeping full control over the external perimeter and it will have to consider the possibility of the involvement of an international force.

Moreover, unilateral recognition is liable to bring about the establishment of **a hostile entity to Israel**. Israel was forced to return to Gaza less than a year after the Disengagement due to Qassam rocket firing. The prospect of similar danger from the West Bank to Israel's central cities becomes a major obstacle for a similar withdrawal from the West Bank.

38. **Political Rationale** – Israel's interest in establishing a PSPB derives above all from the prospect of removing its responsibility over the Palestinians.

Furthermore, unilateral recognition may be preferable, as negotiations on a PSPB will likely lead the Palestinians to expand the agenda as to include reference to the permanent status issues.

Moreover, since the Roadmap is the agreed upon political framework, unilateral recognition may compel the Palestinians to explain to the world why they are not a state. The more this move is accompanied by the transfer of greater powers, authorities, and territories, the more it will challenge the Palestinians ability to resist it.

However, due to Hamas' presence in the parliament and the government, such a move may be interpreted as Israeli recognition in an entity that openly calls for its extermination.

39. **International Legitimacy** – The international community is generally more responsive to negotiated agreements than unilateral moves. Therefore, Israel will have to recruit a "critical mass"²⁵ of international support in order to turn this move into a viable one.

International legitimacy depends on the exhaustion of the negotiation option. Therefore, Israel must aim at coordinating the structure of negotiations and benchmarks for their failure together with the leading international states, and above all with the United States.

²⁵ Israel must gain the support of the United States and other countries in order to achieve a critical mass of international support for unilateral recognition. This support can be expressed by recognizing the PA as the Palestinian state together with complementary steps such as establishing embassies in the PA or inviting the PA to establish diplomatic representations abroad instead of the current representations that are identified with the PLO. It should be noted that in any case, the Palestinians cannot be forced to become members of the UN.

40. **As previously stated, the establishment of PSPS will provide Israel with a significant political achievement. However, unilateral recognition is complicated, both politically and militarily, and will therefore be considered only as the last resort. Only negotiations with the Palestinians that are held in good-faith and fail, may provide Israel with the needed international legitimacy for such a step. The more Israel transfers powers and authorities to the PA, enlarges its territory, ensures its continuity and withdraws from its external perimeter, the higher the prospects for the success of this move.**

International Trusteeship

41. The goal of an international trusteeship²⁶ is to prepare the ground for the establishment of a Palestinian state by taking responsibility for the security issues and civil administration of the Palestinian population in the West Bank and Gaza for a limited period of time.
42. The basic objective of the trusteeship is to rehabilitate the Palestinian system of governance so that it will be able to bear the responsibilities for the security of the population, economic stability, and the people's well-being.
43. **Partnership Potential** – There is a wide-spread Palestinian perception that the actions taken by Israel and the international community are actually a conspiracy against the Palestinians (the "Mu'amara" perception). Therefore, an international force may be viewed by the Palestinians as the continuance of the occupation by different means.

However, if the current anarchy in the PA continues, the Palestinians may voluntarily agree to international involvement, or it could be forced upon them.²⁷

44. **Security Rationale** – Israel's experience with international involvement raises difficult questions regarding its effectiveness. The international force deployed at the Rafah crossing proved to be ineffective at maintaining order and preventing the smuggling of arms into Gaza.

Nevertheless, a trusteeship could work towards maintaining order and the demilitarization of Gaza, minimizing the friction between Israel and the Palestinians, and aiding in building institutions for the future Palestinian State that could effectively deal with terrorist organizations.

45. **Political Rationale** – International involvement will be part of a wider political arrangement. Thus, even if Israel strives to limit the force's activities to Gaza, it is reasonable to assume that the international community and the Palestinians will demand to expand it into the West Bank.

However, Israel's main interest in the trusteeship derives from its ability to help Israel end its control over the Palestinians.

46. **In conclusion, an international trusteeship carries the potential of assisting Israel in ending its responsibility over the Palestinians while maintaining the demilitarization of the Palestinian entity. However, the establishment of an international trusteeship is a**

²⁶ In 2003 Martin Indyk, US former ambassador to Israel, suggested to establish an international trusteeship for building the Palestinian state in order to advance a sustainable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on the two-state solution. See: Martin Indyk, "A Trusteeship for Palestine?", **Foreign Affairs**, May 2003.

²⁷ The main criticism of the trusteeship system is that it infringes upon the right to self-determination and essentially violates the sovereignty of the state. Therefore, in order to create a viable trusteeship, it is important to establish a large degree of internal and external legitimacy.

Legitimacy to create a trusteeship arises from voluntary assumption of the trusteeship, from situations where state disintegration threatens peace, and when humanitarian threats to the population are involved.

very complicated option since it may be conditioned on Palestinian consent. Furthermore, no international organization or state has yet expressed its readiness to participate in such a task.

Conflict Management with no Political Goal

47. According to this approach, Israel should aim at minimizing the conflict's intensity through limited political steps that do not change the basic parameters of the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians. Therefore, Israel can aim at preserving the stability of the system (see below) and implementing an agreed upon or unilateral redeployment.

Re-deployment by Agreement

48. Israeli re-deployment will minimize Israel's civil and military presence in the West Bank without changing the **political** status of the PA or of the status of the territories from which Israel withdraws. It is intended to create a viable separation between Israel and the Palestinians.
49. Israel and the Palestinians can agree to implement the Third Further Redeployment in accordance with the Interim Agreement (9/95) or create a new agreement.
50. According to the Interim Agreement,²⁸ after the Third Further Redeployment, the parties will enter negotiations on permanent status. This option will allow Israel to transfer territories in the West Bank to the PA, excluding settlements, security areas and territories linked to permanent status issue. This move, however, does not have the intention of influencing Israel's responsibility, the PA's status, or the outstanding issues.
51. Ostensibly, a **potential for Palestinian partnership exists** over an agreement that is limited in scope and that does not "undermine" the permanent status principles. However, such an agreement must be perceived as part of a comprehensive political process so that it is not understood as a "license" to continue the occupation.
52. **Political Rationale** – Israel could withdraw from territories in the West Bank and thus minimize its responsibility over the Palestinians there. After such a move, Israel could implement the Interim Agreement or sign a number of "smaller agreements" that will address all interfaces between the PA and Israel, including economic and security issues. These smaller agreements would seemingly enable the parties to bypass the weakness of their political systems.
53. **Security Rationale** – In this type of agreement, Israel will be able to retain its control over the external perimeter, maintain an agreed upon border regime, and receive a Palestinian obligation to combat terror.
54. **In conclusion, this option provides for a limited political achievement but serves the security rationale.**

Unilateral Re-deployment (North Samaria Model)

55. Israel can unilaterally withdraw from territories in the West Bank without transferring powers and authorities to the PA, ceasing control over the external perimeter or changing the legal status of the territory.

²⁸ See: Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "The Third Phase of the Further Re-deployment Process: Legal Aspects", www.mfa.gov.il.

56. The scope of such a withdrawal may vary. The "minimum" that is expected from Israel is dismantlement of illegal outposts. However, the withdrawal can also include dismantlement of veteran settlements depending upon Israel's political carrying capacity, on one hand, and Israel's aspirations to satisfy the international community, on the other hand.
57. Israel can consider altering the route of the security fence or of Jerusalem's municipal perimeter, including dealing with the issue of citizenship of East Jerusalem Arabs.
58. **Potential for Palestinian Carrying Capacity** – Currently, there is no Palestinian address that can fill the political vacuum that would be created following an Israeli withdrawal. Therefore, this option is likely to be relevant only after the PA is stabilized.
59. **Security Rationale** – During redeployment, Israel is not "required" to withdraw its military forces from the Palestinian territories or to renounce its security control over the external perimeter. Therefore, it seems that Israel is not required to pay a high security price.
60. **Political Rationale** – Even if re-deployment entails reducing Israel's responsibility over some of the Palestinian population, Israel would not be able to claim end of responsibility. Therefore, the political achievement of this move would be limited.
61. **International Legitimacy** – In principle, the international community opposes unilateral action. However, unilateral action that promotes an Israeli-Palestinian separation and does not harm the "agreed" principles of permanent status, is not likely to face harsh opposition.
62. **In conclusion, it seems that unilateral redeployment entails a small security risk, though its political achievement is likely to be even smaller than that of a negotiated redeployment.**

Maintenance of a Stable System

63. As previously stated, stabilizing the system is a prerequisite for any political option.
64. Ostensibly, Israel may be satisfied by simply stabilizing the system through actions aimed at strengthening the moderate forces in the PA and rehabilitating the PA 's carrying capacity.
65. Ostensibly, Hamas might be interested in stabilizing the system and diminishing violence. In the past, the organization has already declared a unilateral Tahdiah²⁹ (quieting, pacification).
66. However, **although stabilizing the system may lead to a decline in violence, it will not fundamentally alter the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians. Without a political horizon, the status quo may be short-lived.**

Conclusions

67. This document presented three central approaches to dealing with the conflict, seven political options that derive from them, and four considerations for evaluating them.
68. The stabilization of the system and the existence of a PA that is able "to deliver" are the minimum requirements for any political goal and strategy.
69. The analysis showed that there exists a tension between Israel's security and political rationales. Thus, the more Israel aims at political separation, the less it can maintain its security control over the territories, and vice versa.

²⁹ The meaning of the Arabic word Tahdiah is "calm, pacification". The word has no traditional or obligatory context, and its meaning is purely literal. In this aspect, Tahdiah is distinct from Hudna, which has the recognized meaning of a reciprocal truce under agreed-upon conditions for a limited time period, and its obligatory status is based on Arab-Muslim tradition.

70. The conclusion of the Reut Institute is that among the possible approaches and goals, the preferred options are:

a. Conflict Management with a Political goal of Ending Responsibility:

- 1) **The establishment of a Palestinian state prior to a permanent status agreement** – The establishment of a Palestinian State prior to permanent status agreement carries a clear security risk, but it will yield Israel a significant political achievement. It will allow Israel to end its responsibility over the Palestinians while fragmenting the permanent status agreement into a number of smaller agreements.

This option requires a combination of bilateral agreements and unilateral actions. While Palestinian recognition that Israel has a sustainable unilateral option is likely to encourage them to reach a political agreement, only a true negotiation process that is conducted in good faith and fails, may allow Israel to promote a PSPB through unilateral actions.

- 2) **International Trusteeship** – Ostensibly, this is the only option that has the potential to reach the goal of End of Responsibility and also to maintain the demilitarization of the Palestinian entity.

b. Conflict Management with no Political Goal: redeployment by agreement – The realization of this goal will not bring a significant political achievement, but it may enable Israel to abate the Palestinian terror and violence.