

**Ehud Olmert's “Convergence” Plan for the West Bank
and U.S. Middle East Policy**

by Caroline B. Glick

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Executive Summary

Israel's incoming Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has announced his intention to implement what he refers to as "the convergence plan," which involves an Israeli pullout from some 90-95 percent of the West Bank and from several neighborhoods in Jerusalem by the end of 2007. Mr. Olmert is scheduled to visit Washington in May 2006 to present his plan to the Bush Administration and Congressional leaders in the hope of securing U.S. monetary and policy support for his plan.

Olmert's convergence plan entails the expulsion of between 50,000-100,000 Israeli civilians from their homes in the West Bank and the destruction of between 50-100 Israeli towns and villages in the area. It further requires the withdrawal of Israeli military forces to garrisoned locations in proximity to Israel's security barrier which will encompass the remaining 5-10 percent of the West Bank territory located along the 1949 armistice lines that constituted Israel's national boundaries until 1967.

Olmert maintains that implementation of his plan will enhance Israeli security and regional stability by lessening the daily contact between Israelis and Palestinians and by safeguarding Israel's demographic durability as a democratic Jewish state. He further maintains that an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank will enhance U.S. and Israeli interests by improving Israel's political posture internationally.

Upon scrutiny, however, it is clear that Olmert's plan will do none of the above. An Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank will effectively cause the area to be transferred to the control of the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority. As experience from Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in September 2005 has shown, the area will likely become a base for global terrorists allied with Iran and other terror-supporting states.

In fact, terrorists operating in the relinquished areas will be capable of conducting missile attacks against Israel's major cities, its international airport and other strategic locations in Israel. They will constitute a destabilizing force that could lead to the fall of the Hashemite regime in Jordan. Mass expulsions of Israeli civilians will destabilize Israeli society and will manifest a serious blow to the morale and retention levels of the Israeli military's combat officer corps. Also, an Israeli pullout from the West Bank will likely make it easier for terrorist forces to

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execute infiltrations of Israel for the purpose of conducting large-scale bombing attacks in Israeli population centers like Tel-Aviv, Jerusalem and Haifa and mobilizing the Israeli Arab minority in the cause of jihad against the Jewish state.

From a U.S. perspective, the implementation of Olmert's convergence plan will damage American efforts in the Global War on Terror in the Middle East and throughout the world on several levels. Jordan and Israel are the United States' most stable allies in the region and their likely destabilization in the aftermath of the operation will both motivate and facilitate the operations of those fighting the U.S. in Iraq and other places in the region. The Palestinians are supported by terror supporting states such as Iran, Saudi Arabia and Syria. The destabilization of Israel and Jordan will be perceived as a victory for these supporters of the Palestinians and they will be strengthened at the expense of America, which is perceived as Israel's sponsor.

Indeed, in a manner even more significant globally than the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, which brought Hamas to power in the Palestinian Authority, an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank will be perceived as a strategic victory for Global Jihad. Recruitment efforts by organizations like al Qaeda worldwide and particularly in Europe, Turkey, India and Indonesia will be greatly strengthened.

Moreover, U.S. efforts at mobilizing support against jihadist groups and efforts in these states as well as in Iraq, the Persian Gulf region generally and the greater Middle East will be significantly weakened. Individuals, political leaders and civil society organizations throughout the region and the world that are overtly sympathetic to the U.S. and its goals of defeating global jihadist forces and democratizing the Middle East will be substantially and perhaps irreversibly weakened.

Although an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank and the dismantlement of Israeli communities there seems consonant with traditional American policies in the Middle East, in light of the radicalization of Palestinian society, as evidenced by Hamas' electoral victory in January 2006, it is unclear how an Israeli withdrawal today will align with U.S. national security interests and goals. Unfortunately, it seems evident that an Israeli retreat from the West Bank will empower the terror supporting, anti-American *de facto* Palestinian state and will create a new base for global terrorism.

In light of all this, the Bush Administration and the congressional leadership would be well-advised to refuse Olmert's requests for U.S. support for his convergence plan while backing alternative policy options that will serve to strengthen U.S. allies in the Global War on Terror, while weakening those opposed to U.S. efforts. Such alternative policies will be the subject of an additional Center for Security Policy report that will be released in the near future.

Introduction

Israel's incoming Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is scheduled to meet with President George W. Bush next month when he arrives in Washington on his first official visit as prime minister. While in Washington, Olmert intends to present his strategy for Israel to the Bush Administration, Congressional leadership, and Jewish leaders with the aim of securing their support for his planned moves.

Olmert has dubbed his strategy "the convergence plan." Convergence is defined by Olmert as a plan to consolidate Israeli settlements in the West Bank into a few concentrated blocs of Israeli communities that will take up no more than 5-10 percent of West Bank territory adjacent to the 1949 armistice lines that made up Israel's boundaries from 1949-1967.

The Convergence Plan

Olmert has laid out the following contours of his plan:

1. *Jewish population concentration.* Olmert plans to expel between 50,000-100,000 Israeli civilians from their homes in the West Bank and to destroy the 50-100 communities in which they now live.
2. *Palestinian territorial contiguity.* The areas of the communities set for destruction and the surrounding lands will be abandoned by Israel and thus by default be transferred to Palestinian Authority control. Beyond the settlements, Israel will relinquish its military control over the vast unpopulated areas of the West Bank. After the Israeli military withdrawal, these areas too will be controlled by the Palestinian Authority. Thus, the Israeli withdrawal will establish Palestinian Authority territorial contiguity in the West Bank by geographically connecting all Palestinian-controlled areas in the West Bank.
3. *Redeployment of Israeli military forces to limited areas of operations and security zones abutting the 1949 armistice lines.* Today, the Israel Defense Forces exercise effective control over the West Bank through the distribution of their forces in the area in a manner that enables Israeli control over the main roads and controlling heights of the West Bank. With the destruction of Israeli civilian communities in the West Bank, IDF forces will redeploy or "converge" to specific garrisons located mainly in immediate proximity to the security barrier that will physically cut-off the settlement blocs and the rest of Israel from the West Bank. Israel may, at least for an interim period, retain a security presence in the Jordan Rift Valley which borders the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.
4. *Static defense through the security barrier.* The convergence plan is predicated on the completion of Israel's security barrier. The final barrier route will include all Israeli communities and blocs of communities that are not destroyed in the convergence plan. As noted above, these areas will comprise some 5-10 percent of the West Bank. With the completion of the displacement of the Israeli citizens from their communities and the destruction of those communities, Israel will declare the barrier route its interim political border. There will be no Israeli civilian presence outside the boundaries of the barrier, although there will likely be residual Israeli military presence outside the boundaries.

5. *Israeli withdrawal from Arab neighborhoods in Jerusalem.* Israel will retreat from and abrogate its claims to sovereignty over a number of Arab neighborhoods located in southern, northern and eastern Jerusalem.

In an interview with *The Wall Street Journal*¹, Olmert stated that he expects his convergence plan to cost some \$10 billion, although Israeli economists have argued that it will more likely require at least twice that amount.² Olmert hopes that during his upcoming visit to the U.S. he will secure a U.S. commitment to underwrite these costs. Olmert further seeks U.S. government acceptance of the to-be-revised barrier route as Israel's political border.³ As currently conceived, the route will place on the Israeli side 5-10 percent of the West Bank and some neighborhoods in Jerusalem that were taken by Israel in the 1967 Six Day War, including the Temple Mount.

Olmert maintains that his plan will advance Israel's national interests and the interests of the international community led by the U.S. in the following ways:

1. *Strengthen Israeli democracy.* Olmert claims that according to current population forecasts, by 2015 Jews will be a minority in the area that includes sovereign Israel and the West Bank. On strength of this population projection, which is based on a census carried out by the Palestinian Authority in 1997, Olmert argues that the convergence plan will enable Israel to secure its Jewish majority.
2. *Enhance regional stability.* Olmert argues that by removing Israelis from the overwhelming majority of the West Bank, he will contribute to the stabilization of the region and the diminishment of terror levels. His assessment is based on the assumption that the transfer of Israeli-free land to the Palestinians will mitigate their desire and the desire of their state-supporters to attack Israel, and will strengthen forces of moderation in Palestinian society.
3. *Ending Israeli "occupation."* By vacating the vast majority of the West Bank and Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem, Israel will end its partial control over the Palestinian population in those areas and thereby enable them to live independent of Israeli control. The end of the so-called occupation will mitigate European and Arab criticism of the United States and Israel that is based on their rejection of Israel's right to exert any control over Palestinian Arabs and so enhance American and Israeli standing in the international arena.

¹ Karby Leggett, "Olmert to Call for Global Support Of Israel's West Bank Pullout Plan, *The Wall Street Journal* April 12, 2006; Page A6; http://online.wsj.com/public/article/SB114478799929023245z5h3vpz27D62V5Bixr5EIOyqfFQ_20060512.html?mod=tff_main_tff_top

² Sever Plocker, "Flawed pullout predictions should make Olmert rethink his plan," *Ynet*; April 16, 2006; www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3240374,00.html

³ Lally Weymouth, "'We Are Ready to Change,' Israel's Ehud Olmert on his bold plan for a new border" April 17, 2006, *Newsweek*, www.msnbc.msn.com/id/12223150/site/newsweek/; and Romesh Ratnesar, "Is Ehud Olmert felling lucky?" April 9, 2006; *TIME*, www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1181672,00.html

Precedents

Olmert, like Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz and other Left and Center-Left Israeli political leaders, has pointed to the precedents of Israel's withdrawal from South Lebanon in May 2000 and to Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and northern Samaria in September 2005 to defend the convergence plan. They note that since Israel vacated South Lebanon and Gaza only three Israelis have been killed in South Lebanon and none has been killed in the Gaza Strip.⁴ They further maintain that international pressure on Israel and the United States to end Israel's occupation of those areas abated since Israel's withdrawal. In light of this, they believe that international pressure on Israel and the U.S. due to Israel's military and civilian presence in the West Bank will subside after Israel withdraws from the West Bank and converges into areas that are heavily populated by Israeli Jews and that are territorially contiguous with the 1949 armistice lines.

Conceptual Drawbacks of Olmert's Convergence Plan: The Gaza Precedent

Olmert's defense of his convergence strategy suffers from several conceptual defects. First among these is its failure to grapple with the lessons of the Gaza withdrawal. This withdrawal, like the historical record of Israeli withdrawals since the start of the Oslo Israeli-Palestinian peace process in 1993, suggests that handing territory to the Palestinian Authority will not enhance democratic institutions either in Israel or among Palestinians, and that it will destabilize, rather than stabilize the conflict.

In touting the convergence plan for the West Bank, Olmert attempts to avoid this conclusion through the tautological use of precedents. He and his associates argue that no Israelis have been killed in Gaza since Israel withdrew from Gaza and that only three Israelis have been killed in South Lebanon⁵ since Israel withdrew from south Lebanon. Yet this statement is largely insignificant. Obviously, if Israel vacates an area of all Israeli presence then it will be impossible to attack Israelis in that area. The larger question is whether these areas represent a greater security risk to Israel and its allies now that Israel has vacated them. This question is not addressed by Olmert and his associates.

Olmert and his allies plug the convergence plan as a unilateral Israeli move which – unlike the conduct of negotiations toward peace – is purportedly wholly independent of events in Palestinian society specifically, and in the Arab and Islamic world more generally. Because Israel can enact withdrawals without Palestinian cooperation, Olmert and his colleagues argue that it is unnecessary to consider the impact of the proposed withdrawal from the West Bank on the Palestinians or on any other state or non-state actors.

⁴ Hannan Greenberg, "Mofaz: Iran gave millions to terrorism," Ynet; March 21, 2006; <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3230629,00.html>.

⁵ IDF soldiers Avi Avitan, Omar Suwaid and Benny Avraham were ambushed by Hizbullah fighters while on patrol on the Israeli side of the Israel-Lebanon border on October 7, 2000 and spirited to South Lebanon where they died of their wounds. Their bodies were returned to Israel in exchange for Israel's release of over 400 terrorists from its prisons in January 2004. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Israelis abducted and held in Lebanon, 2000-2004," http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/2000_2009/2001/2/Israelis%20Held%20by%20the%20Hizbullah%20-%20Oct%202000-Jan%202004.

By ignoring all parties other than Israel, Olmert's convergence plan suffers from the conceptual flaw of assuming that Israel is the only non-static actor in the region. An Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank, while nominally unilateral, in fact constitutes a *de facto* handover of the area to the Palestinian Authority. Olmert has stated his hope that an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank will spur the Authority to act in a moderate fashion and use the opportunity afforded it by Israel's retreat to build a sovereign, responsible state.⁶ Yet the outcome of Israel's withdrawal from Gaza indicates that such hope is misplaced and that basing Israel's entire strategy on such a hope is ill-considered. In the wake of Israel's "unilateral" withdrawal from Gaza, Gaza has descended into anarchy. Institutions of self-government have been weakened as have forces of moderation in Palestinian society; leadership of the Authority has been taken over by Hamas; and terrorist groups in Gaza have been strengthened.⁷

Former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon dubbed his Gaza and northern Samaria withdrawal plan "disengagement." His notion was that by retreating from Gaza and northern Samaria, Israel would be able to disengage from the Palestinians living within Gaza. As a result, the Palestinians would no longer be able to garner support for their attempts to hold Israel responsible for their welfare or to claim that Israel's presence in Gaza justifies their terrorist attacks on Israeli citizens.

Sharon and his advisors argued that, in the aftermath of the withdrawal, the international community led by Washington would hold the Palestinians alone responsible for their behavior. Partially as a result of this accountability and partially as a result of their own presumed desire to build a state, Sharon and his advisors contended that the Israeli retreat from Gaza would induce the Palestinians to moderate their behavior and use the opportunity afforded them by the Israeli withdrawal to transform Gaza into a modern and ordered territory that would form the basis of the future Palestinian state.⁸

Sadly, Sharon's assumptions regarding Gaza were wrong on all points. Israel has not been able to disengage from Gaza. The Gazan economy remains dependent on Israel and the international community led by the U.S. State Department has forced Israel to act on its responsibility for the economic welfare of Gaza. This it has accomplished by forcing Israel to open the land borders between Gaza and Israel for Gazan trade to Israel, the West Bank and through Israeli ports to the rest of the world. The United States has further pressured Israel to allow Gazans to work inside of Israel.⁹ It also forced Israel to relinquish all security control over the international terminal at Rafah – the official border crossing between Gaza and Egypt.

Israel is constrained in its military operations against terrorist forces due to international pressure for it to protect the lives of Gazans, just as was the case when Israel retained its military control over Gaza. Because Israel remains the party that the Palestinian Authority and the U.S.-

⁶ Leggett, Weymouth and Ratnesar, op. cit. at 1 and 3.

⁷ Plocker, op. cit. at 2.

⁸ Ari Shavit, "The Big Freeze," Interview with Dov Weisglass; *Haaretz* Friday magazine; October 8, 2004; www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/485929.html.

⁹ Amos Harel, "Haaretz probe: Israel has little say at Rafah crossing," *Haaretz*, February 8, 2006, www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/680116.html.

led international community views as responsible for the welfare of Gaza's population, it has failed to disengage.¹⁰

Israel's retreat from Gaza did not strengthen forces of moderation in Palestinian society. To the contrary, it radicalized Palestinian society and strengthened the most fanatical sectors of that society. Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood's terror organization in Gaza and the West Bank was swept into power in the Palestinian elections on January 25, 2006. Its victory was in large part due to the pervasive Palestinian perception of Hamas as a competent, ideologically driven and professional organization that, like Hizbullah before it, effectively uses terrorism against Israel to drive Israel from "occupied" land.¹¹ In opinion polls taken since Sharon first announced his pullout plan in December 2003, some 80 percent of Palestinians have consistently maintained that Israel's decision to retreat from Gaza was due to Palestinian terrorism, and that the only way to get Israel to give up more land is to continue to attack Israel and Israeli citizens.¹²

The Gaza Withdrawal: Consequences for Israel's National Security

Sharon and his associates touted the redeployment of IDF forces outside of Gaza as a tactical gain for Israel. They argued that the withdrawal would lower the threat level to Israel and that Israel's defensive lines would be shortened. However, quite the opposite has eventuated.

Israel's withdrawal from the international border between Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula enabled the linkage of Palestinian terror forces in Gaza with Egyptian and international terror forces in the Sinai. The immediate impact of this union has been the inundation of Gaza with advanced terror weaponry and the penetration of Gaza by global terror forces such as al Qaeda, Iranian Revolutionary Guards units and Hizbullah.

Israel's withdrawal from northern Gaza has brought the city of Ashkelon within range of Palestinian rockets and mortars. This has exposed some of Israel's most sensitive national infrastructures, including the Ashkelon-Eilat oil pipeline and the electrical grid that serves all of southern Israel, under continuous attack.

The withdrawal has forced the IDF to defend the communities bordering Gaza from within those communities. This compulsory defensive posture has handed the terrorists the power to initiate and control their clashes with Israeli forces.

When Israel controlled Gaza militarily, its 240 kilometer (150 mile) border with Egypt was left largely unmanned. In contrast, since its retreat, the IDF has been forced to send crack combat troops to the border. The calm that characterized the Israeli-Egyptian border prior to

¹⁰ Lt. General Moshe Ya'alon, "The truth and reality of disengagement," *Ma'ariv* online (Hebrew), February 24, 2006, <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART1/052/317.html>

¹¹ Lt. General Moshe Ya'alon, "The Security Implications of a Hamas-Led Palestinian Authority," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, Policy Watch 1080, February 16, 2006, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=2444>.

¹² Palestinian Public Opinion Poll No. (19) conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, April 19, 2006, www.pcpsr.org/survey/polls/2006/p19etables1.html and see generally PCPSR polls of Palestinian residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip on website during relevant time period.

Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip had been secured through Israel's control of the ten kilometer long Gaza-Sinai border. That control effectively separated Palestinian terror forces in Gaza from Egyptian, pan-Arab and pan-Islamic terror forces operating in the Sinai Peninsula.

When Israel withdrew from that narrow border, its absence was exploited immediately by terror forces on both sides. Gaza was inundated with foreign terrorist forces. Al Qaeda, Hizbullah and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards set up forward operating bases in Gaza.¹³ Advanced weaponry including Katyusha missiles, shoulder launched anti-aircraft missiles and advanced anti-tank missiles were brought into Gaza. Munitions and personnel have continued to move between Gaza and Sinai unimpeded.¹⁴

Once united, terror forces from Gaza and Egypt immediately capitalized on Israel's loosely defended open border with Egypt. They formed operational ties with Israeli Bedouin crime families that have used this border in recent years to smuggle prostitutes and narcotics, (and occasionally arms and personnel) from Egypt to Israel. Since the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, these crime families have intensified their previously loose association with these terror elements. They assist both groups in ferrying terrorists and munitions across the Israeli-Egyptian border. Once inside of Israel, these terrorists and terror armaments are moved to Israeli towns or to the West Bank.¹⁵

Before the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, the three Israeli communities in northern Gaza provided a buffer zone that protected the adjacent Israeli city of Ashkelon from Palestinian rocket attack by keeping the city out of range of these munitions. Additionally, IDF forces operating in Gaza used their bases adjacent to these communities to launch operations in Palestinian populated areas next to them like Beit Hanoun, to prevent the terror forces from amassing significant arsenals of such weapons systems and from extending their range. Similarly, IDF forces operated within Gaza to limit terror forces' ability to freely attack other Israeli communities that border Gaza.

Today, IDF forces are deployed inside of Israeli communities in the Western Negev adjacent to Gaza where they work to protect these communities from the constant barrage of rockets and mortar shells that terrorists lob at them from Gaza every day. The terror forces – both Palestinian and foreign – have exploited the absence of Israeli ground forces in Gaza to amass arsenals whose sophistication and size present would have been unimaginable before Israel's withdrawal from the area. They have also succeeded in extending the range of their rockets.

The IDF's post-withdrawal attempts to prevent these attacks through artillery fire, and

¹³ "IDF Intelligence: Al-Qaeda Already Operating in Gaza," *Maariv* (Hebrew), October 17, 2005; and Maj. General (res.) Yaacov Amidror, "The fruits of disengagement," *Ynet*, January 26, 2006, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3207698,00.html>

¹⁴ "Mofaz blames Egypt and PA for increased smuggling," *The Jerusalem Post*, January 11, 2006, www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1136361060437&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull

¹⁵ Reuven Paz, "Al-Qaeda's Search for new Fronts: Instructions for Jihadi Activity in Egypt and Sinai" Global Research in International Affairs (GLORIA) Center, THE PROJECT FOR THE RESEARCH OF ISLAMIST MOVEMENTS, (PRISM), OCCASIONAL PAPERS, Volume 3 (2005), Number 7 (October 2005), and Caroline B. Glick, "The Cost of Incompetence," *The Jerusalem Post*, December 1, 2005, <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1132475665968&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

aerial attacks has met with failure. The IDF's attempt to mitigate the damage caused by these rocket and mortar attacks by installing early-warning systems in the communities and towns bordering Gaza has also been ineffective. The IDF currently has no means of neutralizing the projectile threat to southern Israel aside from a land invasion of Gaza.¹⁶

Israeli withdrawals also adversely impact the stability of its peace treaty with Egypt. Egyptian security forces in the Sinai refuse to control their border area with Israel.¹⁷ Israeli military commanders and defense officials believe that Egypt hopes to use the instability of the Sinai and the Sinai-Gaza border to induce Israel to abrogate the demilitarization clauses of the 1979 Israel-Egypt peace treaty. This would allow the Egyptian military unlimited deployment rights in the Sinai. Such remilitarization of the Sinai will cause an immediate destabilization of the region by making the specter of regional war with Israel all the more tangible.¹⁸

In addition, Israel's withdrawal from Gaza strengthened Islamist forces within Egypt. The Muslim Brotherhood's successful run in Egypt's parliamentary election in December 2005 was in due in large part to the perception that Hamas had forced Israel out of Gaza. Mubarak is an aging dictator, the survivability of his regime after his death is an open question. If Israel enables an Egyptian remilitarization of the Sinai today, it may well be faced with the prospect of the ascension to power of a radical Islamist regime in Cairo with Egyptian military forces – that have for the past ten years been training for war against Israel¹⁹ – deployed along Israel's border, with a global terror base in Gaza.²⁰

Also troubling are the recent reports which have noted that al Qaeda forces in Gaza and the Sinai, in cooperation with Palestinian terror forces in the areas are interested in targeting the U.S. Multi-Force Observer Battalion stationed in the Sinai and the Egypt-Israel gas pipelines in the Sinai. There are also indicators that the Iranian regime is using its new presence in Gaza to foment the destabilization of the Egyptian regime through acts of terror in the Sinai carried out by Palestinian forces from Gaza.²¹

Finally, Israel's retreat from Gaza has been represented to the Islamic and Arab world as a great victory for jihad. It has instilled in the hearts of many adherents to radical Islam hope in America's eventual retreat from Iraq and other theaters. Since Israel is perceived by the Muslim

¹⁶ Alex Fishman, "Mofaz expects terror wave," *Ynet*, December 21, 2005, <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3187803,00.html>; Yuval Azoulay, "Ashkelon gets rocket warning system," *Haaretz*, December 20, 2005; Hillel Fendel, "Former Defense Minister Moshe Arens: 'Northern Gaza must be recaptured,'" *Israel National News*, April 25, 2006, <http://www.israelnn.com/news.php?id=102518>.

¹⁷ Op cite at 13.

¹⁸ Caroline B. Glick, "Arik and the tooth fairy," *The Jerusalem Post*, May 26, 2005, <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost/JPostArticle/ShowFull&cid=1117074328919&p=1006953079897>; Glick, "Irrelevant visions," *The Jerusalem Post*, June 24, 2005,

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?pagename=JPost/JPostArticle/ShowFull&cid=1119493346703&p=1006953079897>

¹⁹ Since 1995, Egypt's annual joint forces war game, "The Bader Exercise" has been devoted to fighting a war against Israel. Shawn Pine, "The Egyptian Threat and Prospects for War in the Middle East, Ariel Center for Policy Research, *Policy Paper No. 110*, 2000, <http://www.acpr.org.il/publications/policy-papers/pp110-xs.html>.

²⁰ Ya'alon, op. cite at 10.

²¹ Paz, op.cite at 15 and "Islamic Republic of Iran's plans for creating chaos in Jordan," *Iran Press News*, <http://www.iranpressnews.com/source/012311.htm>, April 24, 2006, the April 26 attacks on MFO forces – the second such attack in recent months, is a clear indicator that these forces, led by a U.S. battalion are indeed seen as important targets.

world as an American proxy, an Israeli retreat is perceived as an American retreat.²²

For the 38 years that Israel controlled Gaza, even when hostility levels were at their peak, at no time did Gaza constitute anything more than a security nuisance for the Jewish state. However, in the months since Israel's retreat from Gaza, the area has been transformed into a serious security threat to Israel for which Israeli political leaders and military commanders have yet to find any remedy.²³

Conceptual Drawbacks of Olmert's Convergence Plan: Democracy and Demographics

Mr. Olmert has pledged that by the end of 2007 he will oversee the completion of Israel's security barrier and the expulsion of between 50,000-100,000 Israeli civilians from their homes and the destruction of some 50-100 Israeli communities in the West Bank. He argues that the implementation of his plan will secure Israel's future as a democratic Jewish state for years to come. In arguing the merits of his plan, Olmert devotes the majority of his attention to asserting that it will mitigate the demographic dangers to Israel's identity as a Jewish state and safeguard Israel's position in the international community. Due to the emphasis that Olmert places on both issues, they deserve specific investigation.

Olmert claims that today there are some 3.8 million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. According to these figures, together with the 1.3 million Arab citizens of Israel, the Arab population west of the Jordan River would be 5.1 million — almost equal to the Jewish population of 5.4 million in the same area. Olmert's demographic projections, which are widely accepted in Israel, claim that by 2015, Arabs will comprise the majority of the overall population west of the Jordan River.

Olmert and his associates assert that these population projections render an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank a political necessity. The longer there is a commingling of Jewish and Arab populations in the West Bank, they argue, the more grave the danger to Israel's identity as a democratic Jewish state.

Yet, the democratic/demographic arguments unravel upon closer examination. First of all, even if the demographic projections were correct — and as we shall see, *they are not* — the growing Palestinian Arab population would merely render it impossible for Israel to remain a Jewish state while fully incorporating the West Bank and Gaza into the democratic Israeli polity. Yet nothing prevents Israel from sharing rule in the West Bank and Gaza with a self-governing Palestinian Arab authority or any other party. Thus, the size of the Palestinian population in either the Gaza Strip or the West Bank should be of no concern to those who wish to safeguard Israel's Jewish majority so long as they do not wish to declare Israel the sole sovereign in the region and incorporate all Palestinian residents in the areas as citizens of Israel.

²² Ya'alon op. cite at 9.

²³ Ari Shavit, "Olmert's arrogance," *Haaretz*, March 14, 2006, www.haaretz.com/hasen/pages/ShArtVty.jhtml?sw=olmert++settlers&itemNo=694172

To be sure, military governance is by its nature not fully democratic, and absent a near-term ability to resolve the ultimate status of the disputed West Bank, Israel can enhance its own democratic institutions by transitioning institutions in the West Bank to more democratic rule. And, indeed, since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1994, Israel has sharply restricted military authority in the West Bank and yielded nearly all civilian responsibility and control over the Palestinians to an elected Palestinian Authority.

Palestinian lack of free press, free exercise of religion, economic freedom, rights to fair trials, impartial justice and police, and the like stems not from Israel, but from the anti-democratic character of the parties ruling the Palestinian Authority (previously Fatah, and now Hamas).²⁴ This fact suggests that the enhancement of democracy in the West Bank will not be facilitated though the further empowerment of the Palestinian Authority, but rather by developing different Palestinian partners for Palestinian self-rule or shared rule with Israel.²⁵

At the same time, Olmert and his associates have been basing their policies for separating from the West Bank and Gaza Arabs on population statistics compiled by the PA's Central Bureau of Statistics in a census it published in 1997. These numbers have long been accepted by Israeli demographers without question and have formed the basis of the demographic projections on which Olmert and his associates maintain their insistence on the need for Israel to withdraw from the West Bank.²⁶

In 2004, however, a group of American and Israeli researchers examined the Palestinian numbers.²⁷ Their findings, released in January 2005, found that the numbers and the population projections were based on false data, incorrect assumptions and incorrect population counts that inflated the Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza by some 50 percent. The Palestinian Authority double-counted 200,000 Arab residents of Jerusalem. The Palestinian Authority counted some 400,000 Arabs who live abroad. They projected net immigration every year for the Palestinian Authority while since 1995, the Authority has experienced net emigration every year. Birth rates were inflated and death rates were deflated.

The research team found that there are today some 2.5 million Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza. Today, Jews constitute 81 percent of Israel's population and will most likely make up 77 percent of the population in 2025. Jews make up 67 percent of the population of Israel and the West Bank and will most likely make up 63 percent of the population of these areas in 2025.²⁸

²⁴ "President Bush calls for new Palestinian Leadership," June 24, 2002, www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/06/20020624-3.html

²⁵ Dan Diker and Pinchas Inbari, "Re-energizing a West Bank-Jordanian Alliance," *The Middle East Quarterly*, Spring 2006, pp. 29-36.

²⁶ Lilly Galili, "A Jewish demographic state," *Haaretz*, June 26, 2002, <http://www.haaretzdaily.com/hasen/pages/ShArt.jhtml?itemNo=181001>

²⁷ Bennett Zimmerman, Roberta Seid and Michael Wise, "'Doomsday' falsehoods," *The Washington Times*, April 25, 2006, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/op-ed/20060424-094708-9465r.htm>; Caroline B. Glick, "The demographic bomb is a dud," *The Jerusalem Post*, January 14, 2005.

²⁸ www.pademographics.com. The study has been endorsed by prominent American demographer Nicholas Eberstadt and its findings have been presented to Congress.

Israel's Arab population is growing faster than its Jewish population while the West Bank's Jewish population is growing faster than its Arab population. Consequently, abandoning potential Israeli claims to the West Bank, if anything, accelerates the day when Israel's ethnic makeup will pose a threat to its democratic stability.

Although Olmert and his associates have been presented with the new data, they have never acknowledged the problematic nature of the Palestinian data on which they have based their policy of separating from the West Bank Arabs.²⁹ The policy implications of the new data, of course, are unmistakable. If Israel is not in danger of losing its Jewish majority even if it retains control over the West Bank, then Israel may retain all options on the table for ultimate resolution of the conflict -- from yielding the territory to a peaceful Palestinian neighbor through power-sharing in the areas to full incorporation of the areas into Israel.

In the meantime, however, removing Israeli civilians from the West Bank and empowering the Palestinian Authority do nothing to improve democracy in the area. The Israeli withdrawals will not add or detract from the overall number of Israelis and Palestinians. While the potential for Palestinian democracy is theoretically enhanced as a result of Israeli withdrawals, the historical record shows that the reality will be quite different — Palestinians in the West Bank will likely lose democratic rights as the Palestinian Authority gains greater power.³⁰

Conceptual Drawbacks of Olmert's Convergence Plan: International Support

Olmert's argument that Israeli withdrawals will strengthen Israel's position in the international community, and thus from an American perspective, lower criticism of the U.S. in the Arab world and Europe for its support of Israel, does not stand up under scrutiny, either. Although Sharon received fleeting accolades at the UN General Assembly's opening session in late September 2005, Israel's position in international areas was not strengthened.³¹ Israel's defensive operations against the rocket and mortar attacks on southern Israel from Gaza have been met with international condemnation. U.S. Ambassador to the UN John Bolton has been forced to threaten an American veto of draft condemnations of Israel in the UN Security Council.³²

The Palestinian Authority's Hamas government has not been isolated by the international community. Russia, Turkey and China have all met with Hamas leaders since their election and have recognized the government. Egypt, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have all announced their intention to fund the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority, as, of course, has Iran. France, Italy and Norway have expressed a willingness and desire to meet with Hamas leaders.

²⁹ The team presented its findings to the Knesset and the Israeli government repeatedly since January 2005. Since the new study's initial publication, Arnon Sofer, Israel's leading demographer, who spearheaded the demographic campaign for Israeli withdrawals from the West Bank, Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, reduced his Palestinian population figures by some 1 million persons.

³⁰ Haetzni, "In Arafat's Kingdom," *Commentary*, October 1996, pp. 42-48.

³¹ Shavit, op. cite at 20.

³² "U.S. stops UN criticism of Israel," UPI, April 13, 2006, <http://www.upi.com/InternationalIntelligence/view.php?StoryID=20060413-063843-5517r>

On other issues of vital importance to Israel, international opinion has not shifted in its favor since the Gaza withdrawal. This is most evident in the continued unwillingness of the EU, Russia and China to take any effective measures against Iran's nuclear program.

In sum, Israel's withdrawal from Gaza has neither led to an increase of international support for Israel nor to an international isolation of the Palestinian Authority. At the same time, Israel and the U.S. are themselves isolated for calling for the international community to isolate the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority.

As with the Oslo Accords of the previous decade, temporary accolades for Israeli concessions have merely served as the prelude for international endorsement of escalating Palestinian demands and diminishing diplomatic Israeli freedom of action.

Security Implications of West Bank Withdrawal on Israel

If Olmert's principal rationales for implementing the convergence plan do not stand up under scrutiny, the issues which he refuses to address – namely, the proposed withdrawal's impact on Israel's national security, regional stability, the fight against Islamofascism and the promotion of U.S. national security interests all will likely be materially and adversely affected if his plan is implemented.

Should Israel withdraw its civilians and military forces from 90 percent of the West Bank, Israel's national security will suffer three immediate blows:

- First, Hamas and its jihadist partners Hizbullah, Iran and al Qaeda will fill the vacuum left by Israel and use their control over the area to place Israel's population centers and national infrastructures under missile and mortar threat and to increase their suicide bombings inside of Israel.³³ These terror forces, armed with the munitions they will smuggle in from Jordan,³⁴ Egypt, and Gaza, will be capable of launching missile attacks against Israel's population centers in the Dan Region, including Tel-Aviv, Netanya, Hadera and Afula. Jerusalem will also be within missile, rocket and mortar range. Israel's cities will be increasingly targeted with suicide bombings.³⁵

Ben-Gurion International Airport will be within range of Palestinian rockets and missiles, and thus all civilian air traffic entering and leaving Israel will be exposed to projectile threat. Israel's major highways – including the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem highway, the trans-Israel Highway, the Tel Aviv-Haifa coastal highway and the highway linking Tiberias and Tel Aviv

³³ Dore Gold and Jonathan D. Halevi, Al-Qaeda, "Zarqawi, and Israel: Is There a New *Jihadi* Threat Destabilizing the Eastern Front?" *Jerusalem Viewpoints* No. 538, January 1, 2006, <http://www.jcpa.org/jl/vp538.htm>.

³⁴ "Jordan Accused Hamas of gun-running," AP, April 19, 2006, <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1143498876588&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

³⁵ Ariel Cohen, "Israel is weaker now," *TCS Daily*, April 4, 2006, <http://www.tcsdaily.com/article.aspx?id=040406H>

through Wadi Ara – will be within missile, rocket and mortar range.³⁶ The security barrier which Olmert intends to complete before the implementation of his withdrawal plan provides no protection from projectile fire.

Although the partially constructed security barrier has been credited with Israel's success in recent years in limiting the volume of suicide bombings in Israeli cities, according to IDF commanders, the contribution made by the barrier to the decrease in suicide bombings has been limited. Senior military commanders claim that while the barrier has contributed to the drop in suicide bombings, it was Israel's reassertion of military control over the Palestinian cities and towns of the West Bank since mid-2002 and *not* the security barrier that has prevented the majority of planned suicide bombings from being carried out.³⁷ These commanders warn that Olmert's proposed withdrawal of these forces from the areas, and the relinquishment of Israeli military control and counter-terror initiative will empower the terror groups in the areas to reignite their suicide bombing offensive in Israeli cities.

- Second, the Islamic takeover of the West Bank will cause a radicalization of Israeli Arabs. Polls have shown that since 2000, these citizens of Israel have ceased to define themselves as Israelis in favor of a Palestinian identity. The jihadist penetration of the Israeli Arab minority will place Israel's continued sovereignty over the Galilee and the Negev in danger.³⁸
- Finally, the forced expulsion of tens of thousands of Israelis from their homes and communities in the West Bank will cause a major fragmentation and destabilization of Israeli society. While such an unraveling of the Israeli body politic would have numerous disastrous consequences, its direct impact on the IDF is worthy of specific note. Today, the West Bank settler population makes up some 50 percent of cadets in combat arms officer training courses in the IDF. The expulsion of the settler population in Gaza in August 2005 caused a severe alienation of this population group towards the state. This alienation has been marked by a significant decrease in volunteerism among its youth in IDF combat units and command courses. A massive expulsion of Israeli civilian populations in the West Bank is liable to break the back of the IDF officer population, particularly in junior and mid-level command positions up to and including battalion task forces in combat units.³⁹

Security Implications of a West Bank Retreat on Jordan

On August 17, 2005, as the IDF was completing the expulsion of the 8,000 Israeli civilians from the Gaza Strip, al Qaeda launched a Katyusha rocket at Israel's international

³⁶ Gideon Alon and Reuters, "Security sources fear anti-aircraft missile attacks," *Haaretz*, March 29, 2005, www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/558376.html

³⁷ Maj. General (res.) Yaakov Amidror, "The Unilateral Withdrawal: A Security Error of Historical Magnitude," Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, *Strategic Assessment*, Vol. 7., No. 3, December 2004, www.tau.ac.il/jcss/sa/v7n3p3A.html

³⁸ Dan Diker, "Lessons from the Or Commitment: Rethinking the ideological and religious dimensions of the Israeli Arab riots of October 2000," *Jerusalem Viewpoints*, No. 512, February 1, 2004, <http://www.jcpa.org/jl/vp512.htm>; On April 19, 2006 two days after a suicide bomber killed 9 Israelis in Tel Aviv, a delegation of Arab Israeli members of Knesset met with Hamas members of the Palestinian legislative council in a show of solidarity with Hamas. Roi Nachmias, "MK Talab a-Sanna, 'Israel's policies towards Hamas are unbalanced,'" *Ynet*, (Hebrew), April 19, 2006, <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3243273,00.html#n>

³⁹ Rabbi Zalman Melamed, "After the expulsion we must review our relationship with the army," *Besheva* (Hebrew), September 22, 2005.

airport in Eilat from its sister city of Aqaba in Jordan. In the aftermath of the attack, Israel's Airport Authority began raising the possibility of closing the Eilat airport.⁴⁰ The al Qaeda strike on Israel from Jordan was the product of a large and growing al Qaeda presence in the Hashemite Kingdom. Abu Musab Zarqawi, al Qaeda's commander in Iraq, is a Jordanian national and has pledged to overturn the Hashemite regime. In November 2005, al Qaeda cells in Jordan carried out simultaneous bombings in two hotels in Amman. The increased al Qaeda activity in Jordan coupled with al Qaeda's establishment of bases in Gaza and the West Bank in the aftermath of the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and its large and growing presence in the Sinai Peninsula has caused Jordanian officials to register deep concern over the potential consequences of an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank for the survivability of Jordan's regime.⁴¹

The Hashemites today represent between 20-30 percent of the population of Jordan, with Palestinians comprising the rest of Jordan's citizenry. In a video broadcast on April 25, 2006, Abu Musab Zarqawi renewed these threats and declared his commitment to destroying Israel. Zarqawi's threats echoed those voiced by Osama bin Laden in an audiotape broadcast on April 23, 2006. There he directly linked al Qaeda to Hamas by stating that the U.S. and EU suspension of direct aid to the Hamas-led Palestinian Authority was an act of war against Islam.⁴² To date, Israel's military control of the West Bank has mitigated threats from the area to the stability of the Hashemite regime. An Israeli retreat from the West Bank will directly threaten the survivability of the Hashemites in Jordan.⁴³

Security Implications of West Bank Withdrawal for the United States

Traditionally, it has been argued that the Arab and Islamic conflict with the Jewish state is unrelated to the Arab and Islamic conflict with the United States and the rest of the Western world. Yet, in truth Israel's fortunes are directly linked to those of America in its quest to combat the forces of global jihad and anti-Western hostility in the Arab and Muslim world. This is the case both because of Israel's tangible strategic ties to the U.S. and because of the strongly perceived link between the U.S. and Israel in the minds and hearts of the Arab and Muslim world.

As previously noted, the implementation of an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank is likely to destabilize both Israel and Jordan. The destabilization of these two U.S. allies will directly impact America's national security in the following ways:

- First, it will endanger U.S. military assets warehoused in both countries. It will endanger the land supply routes to U.S. forces in Iraq. One of the supply routes currently serving U.S.

⁴⁰ "Media report: Palestinian planned suicide bombing at Israeli nuclear reactor," *Israel Insider*, <http://web.israelinsider.com/Articles/Security/7433.htm>

⁴¹ Gold and Halevi, op. cite at 33; Diker and Inbari, op. cite at 25.

⁴² Salah Narawi, "Al-Zarqawi video mocks U.S.," Associated Press, April 25, 2006, http://www.thestar.com/NASApp/cs/ContentServer?pagename=thestar/Layout/Article_Type1&c=Article&cid=1145962620107&call_pageid=968332188854&col=968350060724; and Michael Slackman, "Bin Laden says West is waging war against Islam," *The New York Times*, April 24, 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/24/world/middleeast/24binladen.html>

⁴³ Gold and Halevi, op. cite at 33; Diker and Inbari, op. cite. At 25.

military forces in Iraq is the overland route from Israel through Jordan. Both materiel and petroleum are transferred to U.S. forces in this manner. In addition, Iraqi forces receive training in Jordan. The destabilization of Jordan and the exposure of Israeli roads and ports to increased terror threat will endanger these activities.

- Since the U.S. led invasion of Iraq, terrorist forces have infiltrated Iraq mainly from Syria, Iran and Saudi Arabia where they have also been training for their missions. Their connection with Palestinian terror forces has been largely coordinated by Damascus and Tehran and by Hizbullah leaders in south Lebanon. Although Palestinian terrorists have taken part in hostilities against U.S. forces in Iraq, these Palestinian terror elements have largely been based in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq itself.

An Israeli retreat from the West Bank would enable the terror forces combating the U.S. in Iraq to establish training bases and political indoctrination centers in the West Bank. Such bases would operationally link the Palestinian campaign against Israel with the terror war against the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq and their Iraqi allies.

- Politically, an Israeli retreat from the West Bank would enhance the prestige of the states and political/terror factions and movements that sponsor Palestinian terror groups. Specifically, Iran, Syria, their client Hizbullah and Sunni radicals in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Turkey, Egypt and throughout the Persian Gulf and central Asia will be strengthened politically by the Israeli withdrawal. All of these forces also comprise the backbone of the international Islamofascist forces currently engaged in war against the U.S. and its other allies around the world.⁴⁴
- It has recently been suggested that the enhancement of Iran's international prestige together with the establishment of an Iranian operational base in the West Bank could induce Teheran to take steps to block U.S. naval traffic in the Straits of Hormuz. This threat to U.S. naval control of the Persian Gulf, together with the destabilization of U.S. supply routes through Israel and Jordan, could have severe repercussions for U.S. national security interests and economic interests.⁴⁵ Clearly, when taken together with Iran's current nuclear brinkmanship and its intensified attempts to destabilize Iraq and demonize pro-Western elements in Iraqi society, the empowerment of Iran by an Israeli pullout from the West Bank constitutes a direct blow to U.S. national security interests.
- On an operational level, an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank will also strengthen the terror-supporting *de facto* state of Palestine bordering Israel, Jordan and Egypt. This *de facto* state, together with its allies Syria, Iran and Hizbullah, will provide a training, logistics and information warfare base for terrorist groups currently at war with the United States. In short, an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank will enable the establishment of a new base of

⁴⁴ Caroline B. Glick, "The rise of the Islamist axis," *The Jerusalem Post*, April 6, 2006, <http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1143498814103&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

⁴⁵ Mark Helprin, "After Diplomacy Fails," *The Washington Post*, April 13, 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/12/AR2006041201659.html>

operations for global terrorism along the model of Lebanon in the 1970s in the best case scenario, and along the lines of Taliban-led Afghanistan in the worst case scenario.

Since one of the declared aims of the War on Global Terror is to deny bases of operation to terrorists, the establishment of just such a base will constitute a major defeat for the United States. The fact that such a base will be established in an area of strategic importance to America will translate into a significant threat to U.S. forces and interests in the region.

- No less important for the fortunes of the U.S.-led war on global terror than the actual strengthening of terror-supporting regimes and terrorist organizations is the perception of their strength and of U.S. weakness that will be engendered by an Israeli retreat from the West Bank. Today, in the absence of a free press and an open deliberative political process in the Arab and Islamic worlds, public opinion is molded through the propaganda organs of the pan-Arabic media like Al Jazeera television, terror media like Hizbullah's Al Manar television, and state-controlled media organs. It is also molded through indoctrination conducted in radical mosques throughout the region and the world.⁴⁶

The perception engendered by these propaganda organs is one of U.S., Israeli and Western venality. The purpose of these propaganda organs is to cultivate and mobilize public support for the Islamic war against the U.S., Israel and the rest of the non-Muslim world. The success of such propaganda in fostering support and mobilizing resources and recruits for the global jihad are directly influenced by the perception of U.S., Israeli and general non-Muslim strength.⁴⁷

The U.S. government has repeatedly acknowledged that the international campaign against the forces of global jihad is as much a fight for the hearts and minds of the Arab and Muslim world as it is a fight on the regular battlefields of war. From Paris and London to Karachi, to Ramallah to Teheran, U.S. officials are seeking ways to encourage those who respect liberal values of the rule of law, the emancipation of women, freedom of religion and of religious dissent, to speak out against the forces of global jihad.

The psychological and ideological impacts of an Israeli retreat from the West Bank – which is the cradle of Jewish civilization – on the forces of global jihad on the one hand, and the voices of moderation and liberalism in the Arab and Islamic worlds on the other will likely be dramatic and counterproductive. Just as was the case with Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in the summer of 2005, the Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank will be perceived, not – as Olmert has claimed – as an invitation for moderation, but as a victory for global jihad. The consequence of this perception for the United States will be equally profound.

Nourished on conspiracy theories, anti-Semitic and anti-American myths for more than a

⁴⁶ Barry Rubin, "What's wrong? The Arab liberal critique of Arab society," *The Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vo. 9., no. 4 December 2005, <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/2005/issue4/jv9no4a5.html>

⁴⁷ Andrew Harvey, Iran Sullivan and Ralph Groves, "A Clash of Systems: An Analytical Framework to Demystify the Radical Islamist Threat," *Parameters*, Autumn 2005, pp. 72-86; <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/U.S.awc/Parameters/05autumn/harvey.htm>

generation, the Arab and Muslim world believes that Israel is a satellite of the U.S. Whether they believe that Israel controls the United States or that America controls Israel, the conspiracy-mongers who control Arab and Islamic political perceptions believe that an Israeli defeat is an American defeat. They will surely present an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank as a major Israeli defeat. Directly affected by this perception will be U.S. efforts to mobilize governments, individuals and groups throughout the Arab and Islamic world to fight the forces of global jihad in their midst.⁴⁸

Governments that are currently wavering between supporting the United States and supporting the jihadists – from Paris to Jakarta to Cairo to Islamabad – will be forced to reassess their options in light of the perceived victory of the global jihad against Israel and the Hashemites.

The Way Ahead

Traditionally, the U.S. government has supported Israeli bids to make peace with the Palestinians based on the paradigm of land for peace. The guiding notion behind this paradigm, which has been the prominent goal of U.S. Middle East policy since the 1970s is that it is possible to end the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and defuse the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole by Israeli appeasement of the Palestinians. Unfortunately, it is now clear that, in light of the radicalization of Palestinian society, it is impossible for Israel to appease the Palestinians into becoming true “partners for peace” and there is no possibility of renewing negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian leadership.

The U.S. government has also traditionally opposed Israel's control of the West Bank and the establishment of Israeli settlements in the area. The U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv, in conjunction with radical Israeli political groups like Peace Now, seek to prevent all construction inside these Israeli communities and to block all expansion of the Jewish presence in the West Bank, be it by extending communities or by building roads to serve their residents.⁴⁹

And yet, in light of the radicalization of Palestinian society, its intent to annihilate Israel,⁵⁰ and its extreme anti-Americanism,⁵¹ it is unclear what U.S. national security interest is served by promoting the Palestinians' claims of sovereignty in the West Bank over Israel's claims. It is also far from clear what U.S. national security interest is served by supporting a policy of mass expulsions of Israeli civilians from their homes given the adverse impact such a policy would have on: the stability of Israeli society; the continued war-fighting capabilities of the IDF; and the U.S. policy of supporting a Palestinian state that will accept Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state and guarantee the human rights of its citizens and residents.

⁴⁸ Caroline B. Glick, “For a new international community,” *The Jerusalem Post*, April 21, 2006,

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1143498887566&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

⁴⁹ “U.S. may rebuke Sharon over failure to evacuate outposts,” *Haaretz*, AugU.S.t, 8, 2004, www.haaretzdaily.com/hasen/spages/460759.html

⁵⁰ Nazila Fathi, “Iran's leader calls Israel a ‘constant threat,’” *The New York Times*, April 14, 2006,

[http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/14/world/middleeast/14cnd-](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/14/world/middleeast/14cnd-tehran.html?_r=1&hp&ex=1145073600&en=48f87dcb8a269e94&ei=5094&partner=homepage&oref=slogin)

[tehran.html?_r=1&hp&ex=1145073600&en=48f87dcb8a269e94&ei=5094&partner=homepage&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/14/world/middleeast/14cnd-tehran.html?_r=1&hp&ex=1145073600&en=48f87dcb8a269e94&ei=5094&partner=homepage&oref=slogin)

⁵¹ See for instance Palestinian Media Watch compilation of Palestinian anti-Americanism at <http://www.pmw.org.il/>.

On its surface, Olmert's convergence plan appears to align with U.S. national security interests by seeming to enhance both the traditional American support for a land-for-peace formula that will bring about the establishment of a peaceful Palestinian state, and the traditional U.S. opposition to Israeli settlement of the West Bank. However, when the convergence plan is examined critically, it becomes clear that if the U.S. government lends its support to the plan's implementation, it will undermine its most important interests in the Middle East – namely the defeat of jihadist forces and the fostering of security, freedom, democracy and liberal values throughout the Arab and Islamic world.

There are a number of alternative policies that Israel could advance that would have a greater possibility of realizing a just and durable peace between Israel and its neighbors, increasing the stability of Israeli society, strengthening the Hashemite regime and weakening terror-supporting regimes like Iran and Syria while defeating their terror clients in the West Bank and Gaza. These alternative policies would enhance the political influence of the moderate elements in Palestinian society at the expense of forces like Hamas and Fatah.

All of these policies, however, require Israel to acknowledge that it is *not* the only dynamic force in the region – and an acknowledgement by *both* Israel and the United States that their fortunes in the Global War on Terror are directly linked. Some of these policy options have been presented publicly⁵²; some have yet to be presented to the public. An upcoming Center for Security Policy report will analyze several of the most promising of these alternative approaches in the near future.

In the spirit, though, of the first rule of medicine -- "First do no harm" -- in the immediate term it must be recognized that policies such as Olmert's convergence plan serve to exacerbate U.S. and Israeli weaknesses vis-a-vis the forces of Islamofascism, rather than enhance their respective and joint strengths. This fact should be made clear to Olmert when he presents his policy in Washington, DC next month.

⁵² Yuval Steinitz, Dore Gold, Yaakov Amidror and Meir Rosenne, "Defensible borders for a lasting peace," The Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, June 27, 2005, www.defensibleborders.org; Binyamin Elon, "The right road to peace," www.therightroadtopeace.com; and see Diker and Inbari, op. cite at 25.