# Seeking no war – achieving no peace: *How Israel and the Palestinian Authority could maintain sustainable non-violent relations*

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# Introduction

**2**013 marks the twentieth anniversary of direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations for a final status accord. The bright future perceived on the White House lawn on 13 September 1993 has evolved into a foggy present and an unclear future for the Middle East. Twenty years of attempts by the international community, and the parties themselves, to solve the conflict have made some progress but have also failed, so far, to resolve the core issues of the conflict, namely water, settlements, refugees, security, borders and the fate of Jerusalem. Trends in Israeli and Palestinian public opinion, as shown in recent polls, convey a sense of minimal belief that a solution can ever be found to the conflict.[1] Recent developments in the Arab world, commonly referred to as the 'Arab Spring',[2] add to the growing and popular sense of instability and uncertainty, which endangers the political manoeuvring necessary for any final status agreement (i.e. an agreement finalising all the core issues of the conflict, with no further claims nor demands by any party). Final status negotiations based on the premise of 'Two States for Two Peoples', still regarded as the appropriate solution to the conflict, are slowly making room for a range of other options. For all of these reasons, it seems that the time is right to look for an alternative path, albeit a temporary one, to direct negotiations – a path which might represent the only possibility for maintaining a sustainable, non-violent relationship between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) for the foreseeable future.

This paper presents ideas and methods which have the potential to create a diverse and evolving relationship benefitting both Israel and the PA. They cover the three major fields which are essential for any bilateral relations between the two political entities: Politics, Security and Economics. Within each field, I describe the current status of relations, vis-à-vis the political standstill in negotiations, and elaborate on the actions which could be taken by the parties, with assistance from the international community, to enable the establishment of a non-violent and sustainable atmosphere in the absence of talks. I focus mainly on the West Bank, due to the current political and military status of the Gaza Strip (including Hamas' control of the area, the absence of PA control over Palestinians there, the Israeli government's decision not to negotiate with Hamas, and the Middle East Quartet's declarations regarding international conditions for legitimising Hamas).[3] It is important to stress that the ideas I present here do not advocate an absence of negotiations, nor do they reject the need for a final agreement based on the 'Two States for Two Peoples' principle. I believe that this remains the right way to resolve the conflict and to better the lives of Israelis and Palestinians. However, I also believe that as long as this remains difficult to achieve, the ideas that I present here would help to maintain normalcy until all the parties are ready to tackle the core issues. Based on multiple interviews with policymakers, security experts, scholars and journalists covering the conflict, I have established a set of proposals which very well could be the only

relevant infrastructure of a non-violent relationship between Israel and the PA
– with the aim of seeking no war and (so far) achieving no peace.

# Politics

I srael and the PA have been involved in direct negotiations since 1993. The
goal – as described in the initial Declaration of Principles (September 1993), the
Road Map for Peace (June 2002) and the Annapolis Statement resuming direct
negotiations between the Government of Israel and the PA (November 2007) – was
to reach an agreement that would enable the establishment of a self-governing
Palestinian entity, bordering the State of Israel.[4] What later became known as the
'Two-States Solution' has remained an elusive goal for all parties – Israel, the PA
and the international community. Truthfully, what was once in Israel an outcast notion
of the far left has achieved across-the-board political consensus: from right-wing
leaders such as Benjamin Netanyahu and Avigdor Lieberman to far-left parties,
the Two-States Solution has become the popular solution to the conflict. However,
at the same time that this solution became a popular trend, the course of direct
negotiations reached a dead end. From the last round of direct negotiations in 2009
to the present day, no direct negotiations between the Government of Israel and the
PA have taken place. There were attempts during 2010 and 2011 to resume indirect
talks between Israeli and Palestinian officials, which were aimed at enabling the
resumption of direct talks, but this only led to more stagnation.[5]

The halt in direct talks brought new ideas to the table, including the 'One-
State Solution', or the existence of only one state between the Jordan River and the
Mediterranean where all Israelis and Arabs alike would live (thus erasing symbols of
nationalism and religion); the dismantling of the PA as a governing entity; unilateral
Israeli actions to annex blocs of settlements; and unilateral efforts to obtain
legitimacy and acknowledgment of the Palestinian State (outside of negotiations).
'This deadlock could be very dangerous', MK Ronnie Baron, chair of the Israeli
Knesset's Security and Defence Committee, said in a recent interview for this paper.
'The stagnation creates frustration and frustration may lead people to violence'.[6]

The current Israeli election process, taking place at the time of writing, does
not offer great hope for this trend being altered. 2012 was characterised by many
in Israeli politics as the year when the peace process stopped interesting the Israeli
public – and thus Israeli decision makers as well.[7] Trends in Israeli society, as shown
in opinion polls, illustrate that domestic issues are on the minds of the Israeli people
much more than the conflict with the PA.[8] Tzipi Livni, the former Vice Prime Minister,
Foreign Minister and Leader of the Opposition, who was one of the most vocal and
prominent supporters of direct negotiations based on the Two-State Solution, was
removed from power within her party. The Labor party, which historically has led the
'Peace Camp', decided (under the leadership of Chairwoman Shelly Yehimovich)
to focus on a socio-economic platform and shift away from the conflict. The lack of
hope and belief in the Two-State Solution led to an election process in which, until
November 2012 (with the late entry of Tzipi Livni into the political arena), the conflict

was not even on the political agenda of the main parties. Early polls indicate that the elections will result in a right-wing government continuing to rule Israel for the next four years, and there is a good chance that this government will stick to the same policies as the current government regarding the PA. The absence of negotiations – one of the main elements of the past four years – may very well characterise the next four years as well.

Tony Blair, the Middle East Quartet's special envoy to the region who reports to the major international actors involved in the Middle East (US, EU, UN, Russia), stated recently that 'if progress won't be made on the political track between Israelis and Palestinians, faith in the Two-State Solution will diminish in the years ahead'.[9] Public comments by Palestinian officials in the past couple of years, especially by the PA's chief negotiator, Dr. Saeb Erekat, convey a sense of despair (for example, saying that without confidence in Israel's will for a solution, the PA should seek other alternatives to the Two-State Solution, including the dismantling of the PA).[10] This would mean that Israel would need to bear the burden and cost of more than 2.5 million Palestinians who would come under its direct rule and responsibility. International actors involved in the conflict, the UN in particular, echo these comments.[11] It is clear that for the success of any mechanism, such as those suggested in this paper, a political horizon of negotiations for an agreement which will lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state must be valid, believable and trusted. Without the belief that both leaderships still seek this aim, there are very few guarantees or motivations for any kind of sustainable relationship that can prevent violence.

Tzipi Livni, who was also the former chief Israeli negotiator in talks with the PA, said in an interview that 'the problem of the last four years is the complete elimination of trust between the leaders and the parties of the conflict. This lack of trust has created the instability of the foundations of any talks, and created an image in which each step taken by either side is another obstacle for the resumption of the talks. This is also why indirect talks didn't lead to direct talks'.[12] Lack of trust is the fundamental problem in all aspects of bilateral relations between Israel and the PA, and it is also the main challenge we need to overcome if we want to create real mechanisms which can prevent the deterioration of relations and violence in the absence of talks. With this in mind, we need to examine the main principles that would enable sustainable non-violent relations between Israel and the PA.

The absence of negotiations and the wish to prevent any further eruption of violence between the parties creates the need for Conflict Management (rather than Conflict Resolution). In practical terms, the two sides need to create a continuous political maintenance programme which could maintain (and hopefully increase) some trust in the process while creating, over time, more and more political assets that neither side would want to risk or jeopardise with deterioration and violence. The PA's clear interest, like any other political entity, is to survive and stay in power. Given the political battle with Hamas, it is clear that the PA faces serious challenges with respect to public opinion, international support and finance, and keeping relations

with Israel on an even keel, without negotiations. Conflict with Israel, particularly a violent one, would seriously jeopardise the mere existence of the PA and its international support. Israel, for its part, has what I believe to be a clear interest in maintaining and achieving the Two-States Solution. As it wishes to remain both a Jewish and a democratic state, the division of the land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River and the finalising of its borders are both necessary. This notion is understood and accepted by right-wing and left-wing leaders alike. The need to maintain some relations with the PA is valid.

Israel should take the dismantling of the PA and any steps to promote the One-State Solution as a direct threat to its interests. Without the PA, Israel would gain control of and responsibility for more than 2.5 million Palestinians in the West Bank. 'This is a price Israeli governments don't want to pay, and rightfully so', said MK Baron.[13] The One-State Solution would ultimately bring an end to the Jewish majority in that piece of land, and thus eliminate the Jewish national definition and identity of Israel. The interests of both sides should thus remain in any political solution which would bring about two states for two peoples.

In order to achieve this goal, I have come up with the following list of actions which are both politically affordable and important enough to be productive in bringing about meaningful and positive change.

- **Political Prospects – The Horizon:** Israeli and Palestinian leaders must continue with statements conveying their will to solve the conflict, end the occupation, prevent violence as a means of achieving political goals and create better futures for both Israelis and Palestinians. These statements have been made over the twenty years of negotiations and must continue to be made in the present and near future. It is true that the more speeches and statements are made without any real progress on the ground, their effectiveness and credibility decreases – but without such public statements there will be no firm belief in a peaceful solution on either side, and the seeking of alternatives to the Two-States Solution will create worse scenarios for all parties. Israelis must believe there are still those within Palestinian society who believe in a peaceful solution, respect Israel's security concerns and are interested in long-lasting neighbourly relations – whilst on the other hand, Palestinians must believe that Israel is serious in its intentions to enable the establishment of a Palestinian state, to end the occupation over the West Bank and to start cooperating with the Palestinians as a neighbouring country. These beliefs will never exist without any actual statements, made by leaders and statesmen on both sides, abstracting this vision. This is the first and most crucial conditional step.

- **Bilateral Meetings:** In accordance with this shared aim, both governments must undertake all efforts to continue to hold bilateral meetings to resolve day-to-day issues which have very little to do with the core issues of the conflict, which need to be discussed in negotiations. Economic problems, water usage,

agricultural challenges, security coordination and many other issues that affect the daily lives of both Israelis and Palestinians can, and should, be discussed in such professional meetings. As these meetings continue, so will the solutions to these daily problems, and this coordination will help to restore trust and foundations for future co-existence.

- **People-To-People Programmes:** These were established as a way to bring together people who shared common objectives after the Oslo Accords in 1993. It was felt that such initiatives should be encouraged and supported (financially and publicly) by both local governments and the international community as a means of creating sustainable relations. Realistically, these programmes alone will not solve the conflict, but encouraging and maintaining them sends a clear and positive message for the future whilst also encouraging good relations with the grassroots on both sides of the conflict.

- **Easements Policy:** As far as the security situation allows, the Israeli government should continue with its policy of economic and social easements in the West Bank (such as opening roads for the transfer of people and commerce) in order to maintain sustainable relations. The lifting of blockades and checkpoints, when possible, has proven to be effective and significant for the Palestinians and does not contradict the stagnation of the political process.[14]

- **International Gatherings to Discuss Political Prospects:** Conferences that allow influential Israeli and Palestinian figures to convey their opinions within the framework of a peaceful dialogue – rather than on the battlefield – are very important. These initiatives do have a positive impact and should be endorsed by all sides of the conflict.

- **Israeli-Arab Initiatives:** These should not necessarily focus on the Israeli-Palestinian track but should include Arabs from all countries neighbouring Israel, as it is important to create a supportive atmosphere in the region as a whole for relations between Israel and the PA. Relations between Israel and Egypt and/or Jordan (Arab nations that have signed peace treaties with Israel) and relations between Israel and other Arab nations that do not hold official diplomatic ties with Israel (such as Qatar and Oman) are extremely important and every effort that can be made to enhance them – by Israel or the international community – should be made.

All in all, these steps would add further support to public statements conveying the hoped-for political prospects for any future relations between Israel and the PA. They would grant them both reliability and credibility. It is clear that the absence of hope for a better future – more than the absence of negotiations themselves – can very

quickly lead to deterioration, violence and the search for alternatives to the Two-State Solution. Any of these alternatives are dangerous for both the PA and Israel, as well as the people of the region. If the political interest in direct negotiations is still not strong enough to enable their occurrence, then maybe the basic interest in avoiding violence can bring both sides to take the steps described here to maintain a sustainable and non-violent relationship.

# Security

**O**f the three fields this paper considers, the security field holds the strongest foundations on the ground, as the absence of negotiations – which surely affects the scope of activities in the political and economic fields – has not had the same effect on the security field. Security cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority Security Forces (PASF), as agreed in the Oslo Accords, continues and has actually strengthened over time.

Since the forming of Salam Fayyad's government in 2007, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and the PASF have coordinated on a daily basis all around the West Bank. The main, but not sole, aim is to thwart attacks from Palestinian-controlled areas in the West Bank against Israeli targets both inside and outside the West Bank. This includes sharing intelligence, arresting wanted Palestinians (such as members of terror cells still operating in the area) and even battling Hamas, Islamic Jihad, DFLP and PFLP members who operate in the West Bank. Official General Security Services statistics show that between 2007 and 2011, Palestinian attacks from the West Bank against Israelis have decreased substantially, by 500 per cent.[15]

The IDF and PASF operate in different parts of the West Bank, as it was divided in the Oslo Accords into three areas. Area A is controlled solely by the PA, which has complete civilian and security authority (PASF). Area B covers areas in the West Bank in which control over civil affairs belongs to the PA and security control belongs to Israel. Areas A and B combined consist of 40 per cent of the West Bank geographically but over 98 per cent of the population. Area C is controlled solely by Israel, which has complete civilian and security authority (this makes up the remaining 60 per cent in area but holds only 2 per cent of the population). The PASF are also productive in protecting and escorting Israeli citizens who enter Area A – thereby avoiding any IDF incursions into the area – and in civil police chases or tracking down stolen property from Israel. Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad declared that 'the government is committed to the continued modernisation and professionalisation of the Palestinian Security Services' under the banner of 'One Homeland, One Flag, One Law', and reaffirmed that 'the safeguarding of our pluralistic and democratic political system is absolutely dependent on an effective and efficient state security apparatus'.[16] The PASF believe that through tight coordination with the IDF they are able to successfully provide a crucial sense of security to the Palestinian residents of the West Bank. They also believe that the effectiveness of the PASF is a true sign of the PA's governing capabilities and a crucial and necessary step towards statehood. On the other side of the coin, it also enables Israel to lower the number of its incursions into Areas A and B and to some extent even enables the continuation and enlargement of economic and security easements by Israel.

Brigadier General Yoav Mordechay, the IDF's Chief Spokesperson and a former commander of the Israeli Civil Administration in the West Bank (thus in charge of all relations between the IDF and the PASF), said in an interview that the three years between 2009 and 2012 have been the most effective in terms of coordination between the IF and PASF. Despite political stagnation, the level of intimacy in sharing intelligence, delivering security responsibilities for potentially violent events, and cooperating in thwarting terror activities and the smuggling of weapons and illicit money transfers reached the highest levels since 1994, when the interim agreements were signed.[17] Furthermore, with Israel's full support, the United States and the European Union (EU) trained battalions of Palestinian forces in order to professionalise the Palestinian security apparatus under the rule of Prime Minister Fayyad. The results were immediate: in 2007 there were 658 shootings and explosive attacks in the West Bank; in 2011 these fell to 22, and there were fewer than 20 in 2012.[18] Yaakov Amidror, Director of Israel's National Security Council, said 'the PA remembers clearly what Hamas did in Gaza in 2007, when it violently took over the Gaza Strip and eliminated any Fatah control over Gaza's cities. They understand that without some cooperation with the IDF, Hamas will take over the West Bank'.[19] Indeed, in the past three years, the PASF uncovered approximately 200 terror infrastructures and cells in the West Bank and arrested more than 5,000 members of Hamas and Islamic Jihad. In 2010, the IDF commander in the West Bank declared that coordination with the PASF was one of his ultimate missions, as it contributed hugely to thwarting attacks on Israeli targets.[20] IDF Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Gabi Ashkenazi explained that 'the more they [PASF] do, the less we [IDF] have to do'.[21]

However, the last six months of 2012 were characterised by stagnation in political talks between the PA and Israeli leadership, especially in light of the PA's decision to move forward unilaterally with their UN bid for non-member status, and Israel's approval of more housing units in West Bank settlements in response. As a result, the level of cooperation with the PASF decreased. One of Israel's top publicists, Nahum Barnea of Yedioth Ahronoth, who has close contact with commanders of the PASF, described the current status of relations between them: 'The security coordination between the IDF and the PASF stands on three legs: political prospects, daily maintenance, and Fatah members' need to survive. Today, the first two legs are chopped off'.[22] The area of Jenin, whose transformation from a hotbed of terrorism to a safe and flourishing city was the Quartet's most symbolic achievement, returned to its previous state of instability, with armed groups violently seizing land and property and assassinating the PA's representative.[23] It is clear that the absence of political gains affects the advancement of this successful cooperation. 'At the very least, the PASF needs Israel to provide a fabricated prospect for the future', Barnea said.[24]

In order to consider the measures needed to restore and enhance coordination and cooperation between Israeli security forces and the PASF, we first need to examine the main problems these relations have faced in recent years. While there

were no direct negotiations between 2009 and 2012, Salam Fayyad and PASF commanders maintained relations with their Israeli counterparts. On the political level, Fayyad kept a channel continuously open with Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak; at times, their meetings became public. My interviews with Israeli officials who took part in these meetings, in addition to statements made by Prime Minister Fayyad, enable the elaboration of two key problems the PASF conveyed regarding security relations with Israel:

1.  IDF operations inside Area A, which were carried out from time to time when the IDF felt it could not share intelligence with the PASF or wanted to interrogate the detainee in an Israeli facility (not a Palestinian prison), badly hurt the image of the PASF among Palestinians. They were described by the PA's political rivals as 'Israel's collaborators/sub-contractors against the Palestinians' and 'no more than another Israeli security agency (by executing activities which in the past were carried out by the IDF)'. According to Fayyad, this damaged the moral basis of the PASF, the motivation of its forces and even its ability to recruit. 'We need to operate ourselves in order to create a sense of Statehood', Fayyd told Barak.[25]

2.  The PASF feel their authority is limited even within Area A and especially within Area B. They claim their ammunition and vehicles are insufficient or are old and dysfunctional. They have asked Israel's permission to allow Armoured Personnel Carriers (APC) inside the area and equipment to disperse demonstrators. Israel's security concerns, which result from incidents where Palestinian policemen have used their weapons against Israeli citizens and soldiers, have delayed approval.[26] Furthermore, PASF police capabilities are restricted to geographical spheres.[27] They can fully operate in Area A and somewhat in Area B, but cannot in Area C. Thus, if a suspected Palestinian criminal committed a crime in Area A but managed to escape to a Palestinian village in Area C, the Palestinian police cannot go in and arrest him.

The solution to these problems, and a means of strengthening security relations between Israel and the PA, lies in what I call **Combined Graduated Pilots**. Based on research and interviews with IDF officials in civil administration (i.e., the department in charge of relations between the IDF and PASF) and the IDF's Central Command (i.e., the command in charge of the West Bank), I outline a list of projects which, I believe, would gradually enhance coordination, strengthening the PASF's independence without jeopardising Israel's security concerns. They would also assist in creating the atmosphere and mechanisms crucial for the prevention of violence, especially at times of political stagnation.

•   **Establishing extra police stations in Areas B and C:** Currently the PASF has a very limited visual presence in Area B and none in Area C. This is important

for the PASF to feel and look independent and so as not to contradict the PA's civil rule over its areas. More police stations would not change the judicial status of the areas in which Palestinian police operate, in terms of the peace process, and personnel would not carry any ammunition or capabilities which would jeopardise the security of the IDF in these areas. The IDF and PASF would form a timeline for the routes and areas in which these police stations could be established, starting in villages and towns located far from Israeli settlements and military bases and over time (if successful) opening new stations closer to settlements and bases, in coordination with the IDF. In addition to increasing the number of police stations, a sense of momentum would be sustained. According to officials, this programme would take two years to implement. The UN and the Quartet's office have both stated that they are willing to find resources for such a programme.[28]

- **Police cooperation on civil incidents:** The Palestinian and Israeli police in the West Bank can strengthen their cooperation on civil incidents in Area C, such as car accidents, forensic tests, car thefts, etc. These are all fields where the Palestinian police do not have any authority (not even any kind of visual involvement) and over time such cooperation would be beneficial for both sides. Palestinian car accidents could be examined by Palestinian police, Israeli car accidents by Israeli police, and the information shared. There would be no direct security threat from a coordinated police effort to minimise civil hazards in Area C and it would show goodwill on Israel's side.

- **Emergency services:** Israel has significant experience here (for example, with fire marshals, earthquake awareness and flooding) and it should share some of this knowledge with the very disadvantaged Palestinian emergency personnel. An earthquake in the West Bank would affect both Israelis and Palestinians and joint drills and exercises would be beneficial for both sides. This obviously applies to all emergency scenarios. Cooperation is important not only for practical reasons but also as a foundation for good relations.

- **Joint 'War Room':** The IDF and PASF should form a joint 'War Room' – a situation room hosting officers from both sides, sitting together and handling all sorts of security events taking place in the West Bank. Such 'War Rooms' have been opened in the past on special occasions (e.g., for massive demonstrations threatening to infiltrate Israel) and the existence of a joint situation room would inevitably strengthen cooperation and would be very effective in solving on-the-spot problems in Areas B or C. With respect to the military aspect, the IDF and PASF could gradually enhance their coordination in joint missions.

- **Transfer of intelligence:** Israel can decide to transfer intelligence to the PASF in order for them to take action, and if successful then more operations carried

out by the PASF (but started by the IDF) could be conducted. If there were a leak of information or if the PASF did not act, then Israel would gain more legitimacy for carrying out operations itself. Past experience proves that this transfer of information

can be beneficial both to the IDF (by lowering the risks for its soldiers in the West Bank) and for the PASF (by increasing their control over the West Bank).

- **'Possible Proximity':** Israel could decide to operate in the West Bank according to a 'Possible Proximity' test, meaning the IDF would only take action when there is a direct and imminent danger from the area. Without a 'possible proximity', the PASF would take action instead. This would ultimately lower the number of IDF incursions into the West Bank (one of Prime Minister Fayyad's concerns), allow Israel to focus its forces on other missions, and enhance security relations. This could be gradual, tested over time, increased and decreased, and if both sides knew the rules it would strengthen the level of trust between them and affect their reactions. Successful military cooperation would directly affect Israel's attitude towards PASF requests for APCs and ammunition, and possibly increase the chances of supplying the necessary means for the PASF, which would enlarge their scope significantly. It should be noted that any military cooperation would need to be kept 'underneath the radar' to be successful.

Symbolic pilot projects, or visual actions conveying a sense of sovereignty for the Palestinians, can also be considered. The problem with such steps is their political significance, which is very important for the Palestinians but may create political problems in Israel and cannot be considered a replacement for negotiations. Some steps have been tried previously but stopped in light of violence, such as:

- **PASF presence at the Allenby Crossing:** While Israel cannot accept a Palestinian Border Police authority on its border with Jordan (although it is in the West Bank), it could allow the PASF to check the passports of those going into Area A from the crossing (most people crossing here are heading to the PA). A passenger travelling to Israel would cross only through the Israeli border police station. If the destination was the PA, the traveller would cross through the Israeli border police station (as Israeli authorities must check everyone who enters its borders, even if they are not staying in Israel proper) then before exiting the crossing their passport and details would be checked by a PASF representative as well. (The PASF representative would not stamp the passport – a sign of sovereignty – but the process would still include the PA). This was the process in the first years after the Oslo Accords, and it could gradually recommence as a sign of goodwill and a method for enhancing security relations.

- **Tourism Police:** As the PASF is a police force, it could allow the PA to form a tourism police force in the West Bank, which would not jeopardise security interests or undermine political understandings with Israel while serving as a symbolic step for the PA on its way to statehood. The Quartet's office has been pressuring Israel on this and, over time and in the absence of negotiations, this could be considered as an Israeli gesture which has no real costs for Israel.

These gradual pilot schemes could be a very influential way to enhance security relations between Israel and the PA. They are low-cost, both financially and politically, and beneficial for both sides. In light of the need to keep some sort of political horizon and make sure that relations are sustainable, these steps as well as other steps in the same direction could create real leverage on both sides which would force them to rethink the cost of violence. It would show both the leadership and the people that both sides have a lot to lose in the event of any deterioration, especially a violent one.

# Economics

**T**he economic field is one of the most important areas for Israeli-Palestinian cooperation. In the words of Tony Blair, 'Without real progress on both the political and micro-fiscal fronts, faith in the two-states solution will diminish in the years ahead'.[29] In order to understand what mechanisms might be effective here, we need to examine current economic relations and trends. Generally, the framework of economic relations between Israel and the PA was agreed in Paris in April 1994. The agreement determined all economic aspects of the Oslo Accords, especially in the areas of tax, movement of merchandise and customs.[30] As the PA does not control any land, aerial or naval ports, Israel exports and imports the PA's merchandise, and thus controls more than 75 per cent of PA tax income – making the PA economy, in many ways, dependent on Israel. When the agreement was signed in 1994, almost 50 per cent of all Palestinian employees worked in Israel, but today (2012) approximately 60,000 Palestinians – only 1.5 per cent of the Palestinian population – work in Israel. Trade between Israel and the PA is evaluated at over $2 billion (USD) annually, and Palestinian imports from Israel accounted for approximately 65 per cent of Palestinian purchases in 2012.[31] In the words of Mohammad Mustafa, Chairman of the Palestinian Investment Fund, 'The central problem for the Palestinian economy stems from politics — the overwhelming Israeli role in Palestinian economic matters that will continue until the Israeli-Palestinian relationship is redefined in a future political settlement'.[32]

Toward the end of 2012, the PA reportedly faced a severe fiscal crisis, with substantial arrears owed to the private sector and suppliers, a rise in unemployment, over NIS 620 million owed to the Israeli Electric Corporation, and continuous difficulties in paying monthly salaries of the public sector. The economic slowdown in the West Bank (5.4 per cent growth rate) poses a major challenge to PA financial and institutional stability. The reasons for this difficult situation include a shortfall in donor aid, overspending of the 2011 budget and lack of sufficient easements by Israel (as declared by the international community through the AHLC forum).[33] This situation resulted in the eruption of public protests which could easily have turned violent – not only against the PA, but also Israel. The Israeli government understood the potential danger of this situation and took steps to ease the fiscal tension, thus demonstrating how the economy is clearly related to the prevention of violence.[34]

In the absence of negotiations, the economic needs overwhelming the Palestinian street, encouraged by popular uprisings taking place in several Arab nations across the Middle East also resulting from an economic crisis(the "Arab Spring"), could easily transform into political uprisings which are potentially violent. In addition, a continuous fiscal crisis such as that seen in 2012 in the West Bank could result in the bankruptcy of the PA, inevitably laying the burden of the economic situation of 2.5 million Palestinians on Israel. These two economic threats are clear

to Israeli decision-makers. The Chair of the Knesset's Defence and Foreign Affairs Committee, MK Roni Baron, explained that these threats are 'a ticking time bomb Israel must neutralise'.[35] In order to do so, I believe that the focus should be kept on the three domains of the Palestinian economy that cross and coincide with Israel's economy: 1) Inside Palestinian-controlled territories of the West Bank (Areas A and B); 2) Israeli-controlled territories of the West Bank (Area C); and 3) Between the West Bank and foreign markets (Israeli and international).

## Areas A and B: Palestinian-controlled territories

Areas A and B, which make up 40 per cent of the West Bank and contain 98 per cent of the Palestinian population, are currently under the civil control of the PA.[36] It is in these areas that the Palestinian market is relatively thriving, as they hold the most substantial economic infrastructure. At a time of no negotiations, these areas are the first that come to mind when thinking about boosting the Palestinian economy, as in recent years they have been the focal point for money transfers, investments and financial initiatives in the West Bank. Based on previous experience, especially the past four years of no negotiations, the fields which are crucial for the advancement of the Palestinian economy and the enhancement of economic relations with Israel are the basic infrastructures of the West Bank. With this in mind, several steps should immediately take place:

- **International aid for the private sector:** Israel should encourage international involvement and support private initiatives which assist the PA in major economic projects such as industrial parks, affordable housing, tourism, banks and communication facilities. The Quartet office emphasises the current potential in the development of more mobile telephone companies in the West Bank, for example.[37]

- **The city of Rawabii:** The internationally recognised project for the new Palestinian city, Rawabii – backed by the Portland Trust and other foreign partners – has faced several difficulties recently and could become a symbol of necessary efforts in the economic field. The advancement of such projects, which should be addressed as important test cases for the 'Bottom-Up' approach (i.e., building Palestinian statehood on the ground, not only politically), resembles the internationally recognised and Israeli-backed project of Jenin. This city, previously viewed by Israel for many years as the capital of Palestinian terrorism, became the first special project of the Quartet's representative to the region. Shortly after, major investments were channelled to Jenin and it blossomed into a business centre and less of a hotbed for terror.[38] These projects cannot succeed without a constant flow of foreign money into the West Bank.

- **Donors appeal to the PA:** The donors appeal to the PA, which holds a significant source of income for the PA budget, must continue and with stronger

commitments that should be implemented rather than just announced. In light of the Arab Spring, Arab donors should realise that it is in their most basic interest not just to avoid violence, but to make sure that the PA, as a secular Sunni regime, will not collapse and be swept away by a religious political movement backed by their political rivals. Israel, for its part, understands it has no interest in the collapse of the PA. It revealed this during 2012 when it allowed the early transfer of Palestinian tax revenues in order to avoid bankruptcy.[39]

- **Israeli easements:** Israel can and should also publicly endorse these efforts by easing hardships on the transfer of money and access/movement of goods, merchants, workers and investors around (and into) the West Bank.

- **Law enforcement:** The PA, for its part, should continue with professional processes it has taken upon itself to improve its methods of tax collection and law enforcement capabilities.[40] Reports of corruption within the PA, which are still heard every now and then,[41] put foreign investors off and jeopardise donations, thus affecting the entire market and its advancement. Fighting corruption and maintaining law and order in the West Bank is an essential condition for growth and prosperity, which will assist in preventing deterioration and violence.

## Area C

Less than 2 per cent of the Palestinian population in the West Bank resides in Area C, which consists of Israeli settlements and military bases. All major economic trends for Palestinians living there are determined by Israel, which approves any proposed economic development there. Recent years have seen Israeli demolitions of unauthorised or illegal structures built by Palestinians without proper permission, and access to agricultural land (which usually neighbours Israeli posts and settlements and has been used to launch violent actions against Israelis) has been controlled and sometimes restricted by Israel.[42] Attempts to advance in the economic field cannot avoid action in Area C. Proposed actions which do not pose security hazards and could rapidly improve the situation include the following:

- **Government and business facilities:** The options here range from the opening of more PA schools, clinics, post offices and electricity stations, to the opening of new trade centres and industrial parks.

- **Tourism in Area C:** There are many opportunities for the advancement of tourism in Area C, including the northern Dead Sea and the Jordan River and Valley.

Israel's support for these projects is crucial for their success and some easements on the access and movements of people and merchandise would be extremely helpful.

Since 2011, Israel has approved 328 projects in Area C, conveying its understanding of the importance of such projects and their potential effect on relations.[43] Generally, Israel is publicly supportive of such efforts and assists international actors involved in Area C, such as the Quartet and the EU. The security situation in Area C must enable the steps needed for economic advances to be made. Violent activities against Israel and Israelis do not help in nurturing the necessary environment. Any extension of civil authority of the PA in Area C would remove some of the burden now on Israel, and a gradual process of change of authority could lower political tensions connected to the absence of negotiations and enable the PA to broaden its reach in all of the West Bank. On a long-term basis, effective civil control of parts of Area C which do not jeopardise Israel's security could turn into Palestinian security control; this would be essential for progress on the ground and the mechanisms needed to prevent violence.

## Between the West Bank and Foreign Markets

In the first quarter of 2012, GDP in the West Bank amounted to $1.115 million (USD), constituting a 5.4 per cent growth rate, led by the services and retail trade sectors (both of which grew by approximately 12 per cent). Overall, this was a result of the continued expansion of public-funded services and private telecommunication initiatives, and a decline in activity in construction and agriculture.[44] This clearly shows that the West Bank as a whole has the potential to boost the Palestinian economy if more businesses flourish there. If the international community sees this potential, and Israel supports it, the encouragement of trade options between the West Bank and foreign markets is a viable method for success. It would increase the PA's revenues (thus preventing its collapse) through economic efforts disconnected from the **political process**. These efforts should focus on the following:

- **Trade with Israel:** Israel alone, as a foreign market, trades with the PA market at more than $2.9 billion (USD) annually, comprising approximately 65 per cent of all Palestinian commerce. Therefore, Israel clearly understands the benefits of the West Bank market and views its growth as a target.[45]

- **Trade with the EU:** EU trade with the PA has totaled €13.4 million in the past four years. Most of the West Bank's exports to the EU are agricultural products and raw materials which are in high demand in Europe. The EU exports mostly machinery, chemicals and transport materials to the West Bank, which are also much needed.[46] Until now the EU has linked the political situation with the amount of trade it initiates with the PA. If it changes this policy, in the absence of negotiations, it could significantly increase its trade with the West Bank. Politically, the EU has a clear interest in supporting regional free trade initiatives and industrial zones which could lower their rate of trade with Asia and the Arab world, as the West Bank and Israel are geographically closer. This also suits Asian markets, which have few trade connections with the PA and could, if the

international community decided to make efforts here, be used to increase the economy of the West Bank.

The goal of increasing the PA's revenues through economic efforts has great potential and would be crucial for the prevention of any deterioration or violence. This aim is shared by all international actors who can, with their minds and investments, achieve success for the sake of the stability of the region and, subsequently, the stability of the world economy.

# Conclusion

Looking at the past four years of stalled Israeli-Palestinian negotiations – during which violence continued in Gaza and unilateral actions were taken by both Israelis and Palestinians – leaves little hope for the resumption of direct negotiations in the near future. Ironically, these four years (2009-2013) will be remembered in the history books as the period in which the Two-States Solution became a popular trend and even reached political consensus in the Israeli political system, as the leaders of the right-wing Likud Party publicly endorsed it. However, these years will also be remembered for feelings of despair, as a lack of hope in the process became dominant among more and more Palestinians in the West Bank and Israelis inside Israel. The events of the Arab Spring resulted (as of the time of writing) in the rise of Islamist regimes who do not support a peaceful atmosphere or serve as valuable conduits for those who are seeking peaceful solutions to this century-old conflict.

Nevertheless, one assumption remains relevant, true and strategic: both the PA and Israel have a lot to lose from the elimination of the Two-States Solution. As Tzipi Livni has said, 'In the Middle East, leaders always have to choose between bad options. The lesser of all evils is usually the best'.[47] With that in mind, despite the understandable fears and challenges stemming from realities in the region, Israel and the PA must do whatever possible to avoid violence and maintain a sustainable relationship.

Dennis Ross, former Middle East advisor to American Presidents Clinton, Bush and Obama, was quoted recently as saying, 'If we're going to give peace a chance, if we're going to move on peace, we need not just a political process, we need to change the dynamic in a way where we restore belief'.[48] This paper, backed by the experiences of officials who contributed their knowledge, expertise and public materials in discussing the problems posed in recent years, aims to provide sensible tools to enable such a relationship. It is clear that each of the three fields discussed – Politics, Economics and Security – are necessary to achieve the above-stated goal. The parties cannot move forward without a political horizon backed by political actions – which can still be made in times of no negotiations. People in the streets of Ramallah, Nablus and Jenin need to feel that some progress is being made on the ground and that, while negotiations are lacking, their economy grows and their day-to-day lives improve through cooperation with Israel. They also need to feel that they have too much to lose if violence erupts. Israelis, who need to believe that peace is still possible (or at least an agreement is still an option), will always insist on not jeopardising their own security, and if they feel that coordination and cooperation with Palestinian forces in the West Bank assists in achieving security, they will have grounds to believe that they still have a partner for a long-lasting, non-violent future.

All these fields are crucial for success; neglecting even one would surely lead to failure.

Past experience also proves that these fields are interconnected – while separate in many ways, they mix, influence and shape one another. If the absence of negotiations becomes a given fact for both the PA and Israel, the need for creative and practical solutions will rise and become urgent. In addition to the methods and options offered in this paper – as separate mechanisms which individually can better the situation and enable trust and some hope – a broader plan which touches upon all three fields is available to decision-makers, one which is politically and militarily viable and would offer benefits for the aims of this paper. This plan is discussed within several branches of the security and political echelons, and is now described here as an overall interim solution to the problem of no negotiations, in light of the need to create progress and avoid deterioration.

This plan, known as the **'big/small triangle'**, can be easily seen on the West Bank map and could be carried out within months (map attached).[49] The 'small triangle' is formed by three points representing major Palestinian cities in the West Bank: Jenin in the north, Nablus in the southeast and Tulkarm in the southwest. These three cities (or districts) contain more than 478,100 Palestinian citizens. While the Palestinian cities and their close vicinities are considered Area A, Areas B and C between them consist of a significant amount of land but very few Israeli settlements and military bases. The settlements in this area are relatively small and most of their residents are Israelis who chose to live there for financial reasons rather than ideological motivations. Their representatives have said more than once in recent years that given governmental compensation, they would be ready to leave the settlements on their own and move somewhere else.[50] The military bases which are there originated with the existence of these settlements and the need to protect them. According to all maps describing Israel's peace offers to the Palestinians, the area of this triangle will not remain a part of Israel if and when a final status agreement is signed.

Given all these facts, if Israel decides, as an independent interim step, to enable PA sovereignty over Areas B and C in the triangle (mainly allowing the PASF to operate in these areas and the PA's civil departments to give full services to the Palestinians living there), the triangle can very rapidly become a de facto Palestinian-controlled area with no Israeli presence. Israel's decision should include compensation to the small number of settlers living in the triangle; polls show that the vast majority, if not all, would accept compensation and leave the area.[51] The IDF bases would then no longer be necessary as well. And so, with just one decision, the PA could gain full power and control over a significant amount of the West Bank.

The international community, assisted by Israel, should invest in the triangle, develop it, open more industrial centres, schools, police stations and much more. It would be somewhat of a pilot for the Palestinian state, without any significant concessions from both sides. Israel would not have given up any major security assets, nor determined its borders. Core issues such as refugees, Jerusalem and settlements are not part of this equation. Israel would not have to give up parts of

land which it hopes to keep in negotiations. The PA, for its part, would gain more power and effectiveness over more land in the West Bank without wavering on what it considers its assets in negotiations. The borders of the Palestinian state are not finalized by this, the core issues were not dealt with and Palestinian assets haven't been diminished by this act. The PA can expand its governing capabilities and test its functioning on a contiguous part of the West Bank. This 'pilot state' could be monitored for a couple of years – and even if it failed, the foreseeable price and consequences for either side are bearable.

If this pilot succeeds, however, it could lead to a further step: the 'big triangle', adding the city of Qalqilya and its surroundings (including 46,000 more Palestinian citizens) to the PA's full control, and enabling more Israeli settlers in this area to follow the steps of their peers in the northern West Bank settlements. In the big triangle as well, despite the difference in the amount of land discussed, the risks are calculated and the benefits are significant. Here as well, the facts which would be made on the ground would not contradict any final status agreement. Either the big or the small triangle would prove to the peoples that a political prospect is tangible and that the price of violence and deterioration is too high.

The methods offered in this paper, as well as the triangle plan, are not substitutes for serious direct negotiations between Israel and the PA. They will not form a Palestinian state, they will not determine Israel's borders, and they will not finalise the claims of either side. They will, however, enable both sides to maintain a sustainable relationship and hopefully minimise the chances of violence.

The American novelist James Baldwin once said, 'The most dangerous creation of any society is the man who has nothing to lose'.[52] The PA and Israel should feel that whatever is at stake, they each have a lot to lose. They must believe that any option is better than any form of violence. If the mechanisms offered in this paper are implemented, they will form the strongest foundations needed for a long-lasting coexistence between the conflicted parties. Sometimes we need to agree on what we do not want before we can agree on what it is that we do want. Interim solutions are reasonable when we cannot absorb the price and meaning of final solutions. The proposals offered in this paper can serve as a decent start for both Israelis and Palestinians – a start based on the belief that more violence in the Middle East is the last thing we all need.

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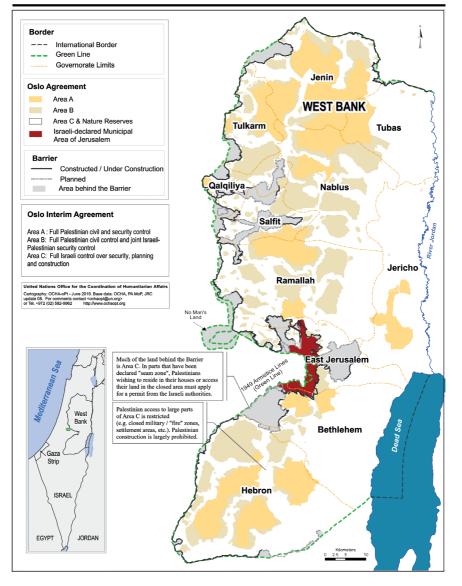52 'First Thoughts', http://first-thoughts.org/on/James+Baldwin/ [accessed 10 December 2012]
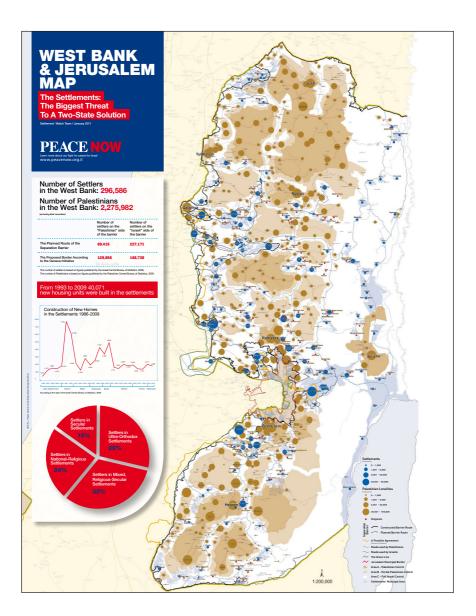
# Annex: Unocha map

## Restrictions on Palestinian Access in the West Bank

CAP 2010 - Consolidated Appeal Process

June 2010

**Border**
- – – – International Border
- – – – Green Line
- ......... Governorate Limits

**Oslo Agreement**
- Area A
- Area B
- Area C & Nature Reserves
- Israeli-declared Municipal Area of Jerusalem

**Barrier**
- ——— Constructed / Under Construction
- - - - - Planned
- Area behind the Barrier

**Oslo Interim Agreement**

Area A : Full Palestinian civil and security control
Area B: Full Palestinian civil control and joint Israeli-Palestinian security control
Area C: Full Israeli control over security, planning and construction

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
Cartography: OCHA-oPt - June 2019. Base data: OCHA, PA MoP, JRC update 08. For comments contact <ochaopt@un.org> or Tel. +972 (02) 582-9962    http://www.ochaopt.org

Jenin

**WEST BANK**

Tulkarm

Tubas

Qalqiliya

Nablus

Salfit

River Jordan

Ramallah

Jericho

No Man's Land

East Jerusalem

1949 Armistice Lines (Green Line)

Much of the land behind the Barrier is Area C. In parts that have been declared "seam zone", Palestinians wishing to reside in their houses or access their land in the closed area must apply for a permit from the Israeli authorities.

Palestinian access to large parts of Area C is restricted (e.g. closed military / "fire" zones, settlement areas, etc.). Palestinian construction is largely prohibited.

Bethlehem

Dead Sea

Mediterranean Sea

West Bank

Gaza Strip

ISRAEL

Hebron

EGYPT    JORDAN

Kilometers
0  2.5  5        10

28

# West Bank Triangle map

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