

**LFI Policy Focus**  
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*Beyond Annapolis*

**Part I: A role for international  
military engagement?**  
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## Introduction

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It has been more than seven years since the beginning of the Second Intifada and for the first time since the Taba Round of negotiations in December 2000<sup>i</sup> Israelis and Palestinians are formally discussing Permanent Status issues. While the re-launch of negotiations in Annapolis has stirred some cautious excitement, expectations on all sides have been kept low. The negotiations are carried out by two weak leaderships, with strong and well organised spoiler parties active on both sides, and perhaps most importantly in a non-supportive and suspicious public atmosphere. Yet there are still sparse notions of hope, mainly fuelled by the fear that the remaining window of opportunity for achieving a two-state solution, whether due to demographic, political or economic trends, may end up being missed.

The emerging potential for peace, however modest, has been seized by the international community, especially by the Americans and Europeans in an attempt to encourage both sides to come to an agreement. This re-energised hands-on approach also calls for a reassessment of the role of the international community in promoting a peace agreement.

International assistance to the peace process can be channelled through three avenues: (i) *Diplomatic facilitation* whereby leading international actors can play a key role in structuring and facilitating negotiations; (ii) *Economic assistance*, through which the international community can finance, design and coordinate Palestinian institution building and economic development projects; and (iii) *Military deployment* whereby international military missions can be deployed within the conflict environment with the aim of temporarily easing the situation on the ground so as to enhance the leverage for both diplomatic and economic efforts.

While the first two avenues have been generously utilised since the Oslo Accords,

the avenue for a significant on-the-ground military deployment has yet to be fully strategically considered by the international community. On this topic, this paper will offer some considerations in answer to the following questions;

- Under what circumstances could international military missions be deployed?
- What could be the strategic objectives of an international deployment?
- Who could carry out such a mission?
- And what could be the expected risks and challenges involved?

## Changing attitudes towards international intervention

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In the past, support for some kind of military deployment in the Palestinian Territories has been articulated in vague terms by the Palestinians, particularly under Arafat's rule. Israel has generally opposed the notion, perceiving it as a Palestinian ploy to curtail Israel's capacity to defend itself. Although there is still great scepticism on both sides, the conflict environment of 2008 is significantly different now to what it has been during previous rounds of negotiations. This may present new opportunities for reassessing the potential role for a possible third party military deployment.

Recent trends in the conflict environment have diminished both sides' confidence in their own capacities to improve their position, both in the short and the long term. This could encourage more openness towards previously dismissed solutions, such as an international military deployment. On the Palestinian side, the Fatah leadership has been significantly weakened, losing its political monopoly over Palestinian affairs as well as its geographical control of Gaza. On the Israeli side, seven years of fighting Palestinian insurgency has not only failed to bring about a strong political partner for peace, but has resulted in the degeneration of the Palestinian political environment to such an extent that

the emergence of such a partner seems further away than ever.

From an Israeli perspective it is also important to note the impact that Israel's war with Hezbollah in Lebanon in 2006 had on the public image of international forces. The old United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon [UNIFIL] force that had been stationed there since the Israeli withdrawal in 2000 was perceived by many Israelis as impotent at best and a collaborator with Hezbollah at worst. The deployment of an expanded UNIFIL force in southern Lebanon at the end of the 2006 conflict provided Israel with a much needed exit strategy and despite its weaknesses and limited mandate, it has managed to achieve partial successes since its deployment. While there remains real scepticism over UNIFIL's overall long-term effectiveness, it has managed to build a reasonably constructive relationship with both the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) and the Israeli Government. Its partial successes so far have helped highlight to the Israeli establishment the potential positive effect that an international deployment could have.<sup>ii</sup>

From an international perspective, it would seem as though the willingness to become involved in another conflict is limited. Western military forces are already stretched across the world, while Iraq has left little appetite for new adventures, particularly in the Middle East. Yet, as seen during the planning of the renewed UNIFIL mission in 2006<sup>iii</sup>, there remains a considerable readiness to engage militarily in stabilising the region when necessary.

There are still many Israelis, Palestinians and members of the international community who do not think that third party intervention is a good idea and do not welcome debate on the subject. However at the start of 2008 there is greater willingness than before within all parties to consider the use of third party deployment as a tool towards resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This paper argues that there could be a need for such a deployment, and that the

necessary cross-party support for it could emerge in two particular contexts: (i) progress being made towards a Permanent Status Agreement (PSA) or (ii) a deterioration of the situation in Gaza. These scenarios are in no way mutually exclusive, but they would require different forms of intervention with different goals, priorities and mandates, and will therefore be examined and considered separately.

### **Context One: third party presence and a Permanent Status Agreement (PSA)**

It could seem that Israeli-Palestinian negotiations are carried out within a kind of contradiction, as the end-point is widely understood by all but still no agreement can be reached. Many would assert that the idea of a divided Jerusalem no longer shocks the average Israeli, while concepts of land swaps and refugee return into a Palestinian state are familiar to most Palestinians, even if the political discourse on both sides declares otherwise.<sup>iv</sup>

If there is substantial support on both sides for the expected principles of a PSA, it could be argued that the real obstacle preventing active support for peace lies in a deep lack of belief in the other side's ability to implement a deal. Moreover, this deep-seated scepticism and passivity among the majority on both sides has allowed spoilers – mainly Hamas and the settler movement – to dominate the public debate as well as dictate events on the ground. *Public confidence in the ability to carry out the details of a peace agreement, rather than acceptance of painful historic concessions, may be what determines the future trajectory of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.*

Since Oslo, a number of international missions with very narrow and limited mandates have been sent to the area in an attempt to bridge this gap in public confidence. Such missions were intended to mitigate or pacify the conflict environment but failed due to limited capacities and a lack of authority resulting from their limited

mandates. The Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) for example was setup in 1994<sup>v</sup> to monitor Israeli-Palestinian arrangements in Hebron, but was unable to make any significant impact on the volatile Jewish-Palestinian relations in the town. The EU Border Assistance Mission to Rafah (EUBAM)<sup>vi</sup> was set up following Israeli disengagement from Gaza in 2005 primarily to monitor the Rafah crossing into Egypt. It was hoped that the success of EUBAM would set a precedent for future deployments, but in practice the force was not effective. EUBAM, like TIPH lacked any real authority and was forced to abandon its mission when Hamas seized Gaza in June 2007. Experience has shown that merely *monitoring* the implementation of a deal without being able either to uphold or enforce its completion does not produce positive results and serves to de-legitimise the use of international forces in general.

Any future international deployment should go beyond merely *monitoring* the implementation of a peace deal and instead *provide assurances for the implementation* of a PSA. If real progress is made towards concluding a peace deal, (i.e. if the two sides reach a level of negotiations that aims to outline details for implementation), then integrating as part of these details, plans for an international presence to ensure the implementation of the terms of an agreement could be crucial. It could play a vital role in bridging the mistrust between the parties and thereby enable each side to make the additional concessions necessary for finally concluding a PSA.

#### Mandate and Objectives

For an international force to help overcome the present barriers to reaching a PSA, it could potentially have to play a role in almost every Israeli-Palestinian interface that would arise in the context of a final status deal including: border management, governance of Jerusalem, security cooperation and shared ecological concerns. While only the Israelis and Palestinians themselves can reach an

agreement regarding the *principles* that will govern each interface, the *implementation* of these principles on the ground is another matter and may require international involvement. If left to the Israelis and Palestinians alone, the existing lack of trust between them, as well as the existing lack of security and policing capacities on the Palestinian side, could impede their ability to administer effectively the necessary day-to-day operations along these interfaces.

Each interface between Israelis and Palestinians carries a different set of logics and would require a uniquely designed international mission embodying varying levels of intervention (whether assisting, monitoring, managing or enforcing the agreement). The particular nature and role of the forces deployed in each of these contexts will only be decided through a process of detailed negotiations. It is not possible to prejudge the outcome of such negotiations and therefore unhelpful to try and outline precisely the role or nature of each of the forces that may be deployed in the cases described below. However it is possible to outline some of the questions that may be considered when deciding the terms of the deployment specific to each particular circumstance.

In terms of **borders** for example, the border between Israel and the future Palestinian state will be physically constructed and will require the detailed management of goods and people crossing it. Yet questions of implementation are pertinent, especially in light of the urgent need to protect Israel against terrorist attacks across its borders. There could be scope for significant international involvement in helping to decide on issues such as who will patrol and secure the border? Who will decide what goods or people can go through? And who could monitor this decision process to make sure no hidden political agendas or corruption is involved?

In the case of **Jerusalem**, the experience of the past seven years has diminished hopes for an open city in Jerusalem in the near future.

If an agreement is reached, many people expect that part of the deal will involve dividing the city into three areas: a Palestinian capital under Palestinian sovereignty, an Israeli capital under Israeli sovereignty and the Holy Basin under some kind of joint/international sovereignty. Whilst this solution is still a highly sensitive matter for many religious factions and ideologues, there is plenty of merit in discussing the practical implications of such a plan. Translated operationally, this requires two border regimes and an internationally endorsed governing regime for the Holy Basin. In this case, there could be a potential role for an international deployment in helping overcome some of the main questions surrounding implementation such as: will the Holy Basin hold a Vatican-like status requiring its own security force? Who will decide who and what goes in and out of the area? Which police force could apprehend criminal offenders in each of the three zones? Who will ensure the accessibility to the holy sites as well as the safety of their visitors?

Another key interface will be **security cooperation**. Israelis and Palestinian security apparatuses will have to cooperate against terrorist cells aiming to derail the peace. However, after seven years of conflict, such full and open cooperation may not be able to take the form of joint patrols and informal passing of intelligence information as carried out during the 1990s. A new kind of mechanism for security cooperation may have to be designed to be able to bridge the gap of trust and lack of formal collaboration procedures. Similarly, demilitarisation is expected to be another major hurdle in negotiations as Israel fears the danger of a gradual accumulation of weapons within the West Bank and Gaza, just like on its Lebanese border. An international force could prove vital in answering the question of how to ensure such a trajectory does not emerge.

Last but not least are **ecological concerns**. Although the territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea will be divided into two sovereign entities, it still

constitutes one ecological system requiring day-to-day monitoring and cooperation across multiple issue areas such as the use of limited water resources, agricultural disease and waste disposal. The lack of trust between the sides could mean that also on these issues, both sides may feel the need for an objective monitoring force and impartial facilitator to help mediate between the two parties.

### Challenges

#### *(i) Timescale*

The first challenge is the *timeline* for implementation. As any final status agreement will inevitably involve the removal of Israeli settlements, absorbing Palestinian refugees into a new Palestinian state and establishing new security arrangements, the process of implementation of a PSA can be expected to last over several years. This will require a significant commitment of financial and political resources by the international community (especially as the “fruits of peace” will take time to ripen). Moreover, the implementation will be accompanied by intense spoiler activities aimed at derailing the process. Under such circumstances, international forces could become a target themselves and would need to demonstrate resilience and commitment in order to be able to continue their mission under such threats and challenges.

#### *(ii) Multiple interfaces and multiple actors*

In order to raise as much public legitimacy and political backing as possible, any international force deployed should be *multinational* in nature. In terms of leading the force, whereas US support for such a mission is imperative due to the delicate standing of the American armed forces in the region, their role on the ground can be expected to be limited. The EU’s experience with deploying forces in the region, specifically in the Palestinian Territories, and their relatively untainted public image among both parties, makes them the most likely candidates to lead such a mission. The UK could be expected to take a lead role within

this EU-led force in order to consolidate the efforts being made by the UK to support economic and diplomatic efforts to engage the international community in the peace process. While the Arab league could be invited to participate, their involvement in security tasks is less likely as Israel would be too apprehensive.

Another challenge is the *multiple interfaces* requiring multiple task missions, each with a different operational objective, resources and mixture of participating forces. The diverse actors involved will mean that there needs to be one overall body coordinating all international military operations, in much the same way that economic development and institution building efforts are coordinated by the Quartet. Any international military operations will most likely need an equivalent body to the Quartet to coordinate their actions to ensure that they are coherent and well integrated with the wider international effort towards the peace process, such as those focusing on economic development.

## **Context Two: an invitation to Gaza**

The current security situation in Gaza is perhaps a more immediate context in which an international force may be considered useful. The effect on the Israeli public psyche of the deterioration of the security situation in Gaza is very significant because developments in Gaza are often seen as a litmus test of things to come throughout the Palestinian territories. Since Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005, Palestinian rocket attacks on southern Israeli towns have escalated, reaching a new height of around four hundred rocket and mortar attacks in January 2008 alone. While the rockets themselves are quite primitive, they have caused several fatalities, grave psychological damage and much destruction, with disastrous long-term effects to the towns and people living within range of the weapons. The Israeli government has responded with targeted air attacks aimed at rocket launching

cells, but this has not succeeded in minimising the threat and comes at the price of widespread international criticism over the killing of innocent bystanders. The Israeli government has therefore come under increased pressure from the Israeli public to launch a wide-scale military ground operation into Gaza.

Notwithstanding the growing public pressure, Israel may not actually possess a long-term military solution to the security threats emanating from Gaza. Yet, in order to address its security concerns, Israel could nevertheless still be pushed into a wide-scale military operation in Gaza, tantamount to reversing the disengagement of 2005. Once there, Israel could seek an international military deployment as a viable exit strategy that would ensure Israel's security while allowing Israel to fully disengage from Gaza, a move recently hinted at by both Prime Minister Olmert and Foreign Secretary Livni<sup>vii</sup>. From a Palestinian perspective, an international deployment in Gaza could also serve the interests of the Fatah-led PA leadership whose aim is to re-establish its governance in Gaza. Public legitimacy would be drawn from the fact that an international deployment will help get the Israeli army out of the Strip.<sup>viii</sup> With such a convergence of interests between Israel and the Fatah-led PA, it is possible that both parties may issue a joint call upon the international community to assist.

### *Mandate and Objectives*

The aim of any international mission to Gaza would be to prevent security threats to Israel and to reconstruct the Palestinian Authority's public institutions. However it is unlikely that either of these aims could be achieved without instigating a deep transformation of the Gazan environment.

A military solution to rocket attacks launched by small operating cells will be hard to achieve even by the most robust international force, just as much as it is for the IDF. Moreover, it is precisely for this reason that it could become the target for attacks by any

opposition spoiler groups. Similarly, the conditions that have brought about the dismantling of the Palestinian Authority's institutional control over Gaza, namely the strength of Hamas and its alternative public institutions, cannot be expected to change significantly simply due to an international military presence on Gaza's borders.

The real power to transform Gaza both socially and politically, would most likely come through a significant economic transformation that is only possible with the opening up of Gaza to the outside world. The mandate of any international force deployed in Gaza should therefore include the authority to manage (rather than monitor) the crossings into Egypt and administer a Gaza air and sea port. This would succeed in meeting Israeli concerns that arms and militants are not smuggled into Gaza through these crossing points, while at the same time igniting the beginning of the crucial process of economic development. It should be remembered that unlike the West Bank, Gaza's economic development could be more easily encouraged. It can be directly connected to outside markets (without going through Israel) and already possesses the agricultural infrastructure and know-how to start producing export-oriented goods quite rapidly. Opening Gaza up would set off multiple motions that could lead to the reorganisation of its socio-political power structures, creating potential for real change.

A mission to Gaza cannot be undertaken by a single third party but would need to be done by an international coalition. Such a coalition will most likely be European-led, as an American force will be seen as too supportive of Israeli interests. Yet the Americans could play an important role in ensuring stability on the Sinai side of the border as their forces are already deployed there as part of the peacekeeping force designed following the Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement. The Egyptians will also play a significant role within this context, especially in redesigning the management of their own border<sup>ix</sup>.

### Challenges

There remain significant challenges to such a deployment in Gaza. Due to the fear of a *Lebanonization* of Gaza, (the flow of arms and ammunition to insurgent groups, first and foremost Hamas) Israel can be expected to object to a mandate giving an international force the authority to allow goods and people in and out of Gaza. At the same time the Palestinians can be expected to object to international control over all entry/exit points in the area due to local political power struggles and the perceived loss of symbols of sovereignty.

However, if in the future the IDF feels forced to redeploy inside Gaza to curb militant activities and rocket attacks, the urgent need for a viable exit strategy through an international deployment could provide the international community with significant leverage to set the terms for the mission.

### Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

Third party military intervention is still in its early stages of inception. There are those who dismiss the notion entirely out of hand, but increasing attention amongst policy makers and opinion formers is being given to some of the suggestions made in this paper and other policy documents of a similar nature. The international community has invested much time, money and political attention towards resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but it might need to go the extra mile for peace to become reality. If there is the political appetite for such military missions, the international community and the UK in particular, would have to ensure that any future engagement at the military level is constructive and effective. This would require them to (i) play an active leadership role on the ground if and when such a force was deployed and (ii) to constructively engage in the process of designing the specific missions leading up to its deployment.

○ *Participating on the ground*

The EU and UK can be expected to take a leading role in any multinational military deployment in the region. The EU and UK would provide an alternative power base to the US military which is too involved in Iraq at present and too closely linked with Israel to play a significant military role in this case. The UK should take a leading role within this EU-led effort because of the precedent it has established for itself as a key player in the diplomatic and economic avenues of international engagement in the region. A strong UK presence in any third party military deployment would build on the positive experience of the UK in peace building efforts so far and would help consolidate its constructive role at the forefront of all economic and diplomatic aspects of the peace process.

○ *Planning and designing the mission*

Considering its vital function towards resolving the conflict as well as the relative predictability of the end-game, the international community in general and the EU/UK in particular should take the lead in planning and designing the international mechanisms to be deployed whether in the context of Gaza or within a PSA framework. In this manner, once the right context emerges, their design will already embody the required strategic logic to ensure their success, rather than being construed hastily as part of a rushed ad hoc political bargain.

***In the case of Gaza:*** a task team should be set up to contemplate and provide guidelines for the design of an internationally governed border regime. Such guidelines should address issues of mandate, authority, organisational structure, required capacities and relations with other local and international actors.

***In the case of PSA:*** a similar endeavour should be taken on for each of the expected Israeli-Palestinian interfaces - borders, Jerusalem, ecological concerns - as well as the supervising structure overseeing all operations. While such experimental design should be an international initiative, the international community should also consider and acknowledge the attitudes and concerns of Israelis and Palestinians, as well as other parties with vested interests in the region.

The product of such an effort would be a uniquely tailored international toolbox of resources ready to be employed in the Israeli-Palestinian environment when necessary. Such a military, multilateral force could also help facilitate or bolster diplomatic developments and negotiations. The various ideas for international missions could be introduced to the parties as new solutions, to bridge distrust and lessen political risks concerning the prospects for implementation – seen by many as the primary obstacle to peace.

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i The Taba summit was a round of talks between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, held from January 21 to January 27, 2001 at Taba in the Sinai peninsula. They were peace talks aimed at reaching the “final status” negotiations to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and came closer to reaching a final settlement than any previous or subsequent peace talks yet ultimately failed to achieve its goals.

ii See for example, Arutz Sheva, ‘UNIFIL working harder to prevent weapons moving south’, January 12, 2008; Jerusalem Post “Overall, the officials stressed, the IDF had a very good working relationship with UNIFIL, and OC Northern Command Maj.-Gen. Gadi Eizenkot spoke regularly with his UN counterpart, Italian Maj.-Gen. Claudio Graziano. Last month diplomatic officials in Jerusalem reported major improvements in UNIFIL’s performance...”, January 10, 2008.

iii Originally, UNIFIL was created by the Security Council in 1978 to confirm Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, restore international peace and security and assist the Lebanese Government in restoring its effective authority in the area. Following the July/August 2006 crisis, the Council enhanced the Force and decided that in addition to the original mandate, it would, among other things, monitor the cessation of hostilities; accompany and support the Lebanese armed forces as they deploy throughout the south of Lebanon; and extend its assistance to help ensure humanitarian access to civilian populations and the voluntary and safe return of displaced persons.

iv See for example, “December 2007 joint Israeli-Palestinian poll: Over two thirds of all Israelis and Palestinians say they would support full reconciliation efforts in case of a peace agreement”, The Geneva Initiative, 25 December 2007, available at

v Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) is a group of civilians observing the situation in the West Bank city of Hebron. It is staffed by personnel from Denmark, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey. Its main task is to “assist in monitoring and reporting the efforts to maintain normal life in the City of Hebron, thus creating a feeling of security among Palestinians in the City of Hebron”.

vi The European Union Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing Point (EUBAM Rafah) was established on 25 November 2005. The mission was established on the basis of the ‘Agreement on Movement and Access’ (AMA) reached between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) on 15 November 2005 and following an invitation by the PA and the Government of Israel. EUBAM Rafah was established in the framework of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) and provides a third party presence at the RCP on the Gaza-Egypt border.

vii See for example, Jerusalem Post, “Livni push for international force in Gaza”, December 7, 2007; or, “Olmert calls for an armed international force in Gaza”, June 12, 2007.

viii See for example, IMRA, “PA Condemns Israel’s Attack on Gaza - demands international force enters Gaza”, January 15, 2008 – “Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ryad al-Malki...demanded an international force to enter Gaza to protect Palestinians from the Israeli army attacks.”

ix This may require the redeployment by Egyptian forces along the Israeli /Palestinian border, i.e. redefining the Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement.



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