



Felix Dane is Resident Representative of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Ramallah.



Dr. Lars Hänsel is Resident Representative of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Jerusalem.

NATO IN THE MIDDLE EAST?

DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE ROLE OF NATO IN SECURING AN ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN AGREEMENT

Felix Dane / Lars Hänsel

Having been suspended for over a year, direct negotiations were restarted between Israelis and Palestinians on September 3, 2010 following pressure from President Barack Obama. Expectations and the chances of success are rather low on both sides. A crucial question for lasting peace is security. For Israel, it is not a question of Palestinians being prepared to use force. Rather, it is a matter of regional security. Radical Islamic groups, such as Hamas or Hezbollah from Lebanon, are seen as independent groups promoted by Iran, which threaten Israel. Strategic challenges are also increasing from a regional perspective. Israel can no longer overcome these with classic military force or superiority.

However, the Palestinians also see an agreement as being in their own security interests. For them, it is vital that they can take security matters into their own hands in a sovereign Palestinian state. If nothing else, they are aiming for a withdrawal of Israeli forces, as the Palestinians see these as a means and symbol of Israeli occupation.

In this context, how realistic is it that NATO troops would be able to secure an Israeli-Palestinian agreement stationed on the sensitive borders with Israel and Jordan, amid settlements that have to be vacated, or even in the densely populated Gaza Strip? Which requirements would have to be met for them to succeed in their mission? This article aims to discuss different approaches and stimulate discussion about a potential NATO mission.

CLINTON, FRIEDMAN, JONES: ONE IDEA, MANY FACES

Besides the contentious issues of settlements, borders, Palestinian refugees, Jerusalem and Israel's status as a Jewish state, the issue of security is one of the main reasons Israel and Palestine have failed to agree up to now. Opinions are particularly divided in this area – irrespective of the fact that the security environment is subject to constant change, which has implications for resolving security issues as part of an agreement in the future. In the past, negotiations and violence were closely linked. At the end of the 1990s, the stagnation in implementing the Oslo Agreement was caused by increasing numbers of suicide attacks being carried out by radical Palestinians. When the Camp David negotiations broke down in 2000, the second intifada immediately broke out, which was a burden on the peace process for many years. The division of the Palestinian Territories as a result of Hamas' electoral victory in 2006 and its seizing control of the Gaza Strip in June 2007 led to a renewed escalation in violence, which hampered the Annapolis peace talks since the end of 2007. The idea of using international security forces has become increasingly popular in view of the links between a lack of implementation for agreements, an enormous loss of trust, and outbreaks of violence.

In the past, negotiations and violence were closely linked. At the end of the 1990s, the stagnation in implementing the Oslo Agreement was caused by increasing numbers of suicide attacks being carried out by radical Palestinians.

Such an international military presence in the Palestinian territories, which cover the West Bank and the geographically-isolated Gaza Strip, has already been suggested by former American president Bill Clinton. With the so-called Clinton Parameters, he made a last-ditch effort to find a compromise that was agreeable to both sides following the breakdown of negotiations at Camp David.¹ For the first time ever, international troops were given a prominent role. Their main duties were to protect the borders of a newly created Palestinian state and to act as a deterrent, aimed at preventing an escalation of violence or rash actions by either side. The operation would only end when both sides

1 | The full text of the Clinton Parameters is available on the website of the American Embassy in Israel at <http://www.usembassy-israel.org.il/publish/peace/archives/2001/january/me0108b.html> (accessed August 7, 2010).

had agreed to a withdrawal. At the same time, Israel was allowed to deploy its own troops. This applied particularly to the Jordan Valley on the Jordanian border, which is strategically important and where Israeli soldiers would have been allowed to be stationed for a further thirty-six months. This was designed to allay fears that weapons and fighters would otherwise be smuggled across this border. The arrest of several Hamas members in Jordan, who were alleged to have planned attacks on Israeli and Jordanian targets, fueled this mistrust further during the following years.²

The columnist Thomas L. Friedman caused a bit of a stir shortly before the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 when he made the case in the *New York Times* that 30,000 NATO troops should occupy Gaza and the West Bank and – similar to what happened in Bosnia-Herzegovina – partially assume the duties of the Palestinian state.³ He argued that Israel would lose its status as a Jewish democracy if its occupation continues. At the same time, he claimed, Israel cannot withdraw unilaterally without leaving behind an uncontrollable power vacuum. The last point in particular showed a good understanding of the political situation as he foresaw developments surrounding the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and Hamas' rise to power. When his critics argued that this was not possible for various reasons, he laconically stated: "[T]his is not a perfect solution. [...] But perfect isn't on the menu anymore."⁴

**"This is not a perfect solution. But perfect isn't on the menu anymore."
(Thomas L. Friedmann on a possible
NATO mission in Gaza and the West
Bank)**

- 2 | Cf. also „Hamas denies Jordan attacks plot," *BBC News*, May 12, 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4764301.stm (accessed August 7, 2010).
- 3 | Cf. Thomas L. Friedman, „A Way out of the Middle East Impasse," in: *The New York Times*, August 24, 2001, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/08/24/opinion/foreign-affairs-a-way-out-of-the-middle-east-impasse.html> (accessed August 8, 2010).
- 4 | Cf. Thomas L. Friedman, „How About Sending NATO Somewhere Important?," in: *The New York Times*, September 4, 2001, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/04/opinion/foreign-affairs-how-about-sending-nato-somewhere-important.html> (accessed October 19, 2010).

After the experience of the retreat from the Gaza Strip and increased Qassam rocket attacks and longer-range missile-firings, as well as the war against Hezbollah in Lebanon in the summer of 2006 and Operation "Cast Lead" against Hamas in the Gaza Strip at the turn of 2008/09, Israel saw a change in the security environment. Regional components became increasingly important. Israel agreed to the deployment of UN troops in accordance with Resolution 1701 of the UN Security Council mainly to secure the border and prevent Hezbollah from rearming in Southern Lebanon. Prior to this, there was a great deal of skepticism within Israel about the deployment of international forces for Israel's security. Acceptance of Resolution 1701 signaled a change within the Israeli government and among the political elite in terms of the role of international troops for Israel's security. A decisive factor must also have been the fact that Israel did not believe itself capable of deterring enemies that increasingly resembled guerrilla fighters and not traditional armies.⁵ The prime minister at the time, Ehud Olmert, and his foreign minister, Tzipi Livni, declared themselves open to a discussion about the role of international troops – particularly NATO – in negotiations with the Palestinians as part of the Annapolis process.

Acceptance of UN Resolution 1701 signaled a change within the Israeli government and among the political elite in terms of the role of international troops for Israel's security.

James Jones also seized on the proposal to deploy international troops. Following his time in office as NATO Supreme Allied Commander in Europe (SACEUR), he served two U.S. presidents. During George W. Bush's presidency, he was appointed as a special envoy for all security issues relating to the Middle East conflict. His plan for a security agreement in Jenin was merited by both sides. This security agreement was instrumental in helping Palestinian troops guarantee security and order in former terrorist strongholds and meant that the Israelis could withdraw to a large extent.⁶ Jones expressed the idea of sending international forces

5 | Cf. Kevin Peraino, „NATO in the West Bank,“ in: *Newsweek*, December 06, 2008, <http://www.newsweek.com/2008/12/05/nato-in-the-west-bank.html> (accessed September 15, 2010).

6 | Cf. Helene Cooper, „National Security Pick: From a Marine to a Mediator,“ in: *The New York Times*, November 29, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/29/us/politics/29jones.html?_r=1 http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/29/us/politics/29jones.html?_r=1 (accessed October 19, 2010).

to the West Bank, which was based in part on these experiences, while working for the former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. However, she discarded the proposal following Israeli resistance.⁷

Until this autumn, Jones has worked as the National Security Advisor for President Obama. He continues to stand by his proposal for a third-party military presence.

The deployment of NATO troops in the West Bank following a peace agreement would prevent a power vacuum from developing in the time between an Israeli withdrawal and the adoption of an effective and constitutional Palestinian security apparatus.

The deployment of NATO troops in the West Bank following a peace agreement would prevent a power vacuum from developing in the time between an Israeli withdrawal and the adoption of an effective and constitutional Palestinian security apparatus. Since Obama's inauguration, the idea of such a compromise, which the USA has introduced into negotiations, has been discussed several times. Obama has asked a group of former national security advisors to past presidents to come up with proposals in this regard.⁸ Members of this group include Brent Scowcroft and Zbigniew Brzezinski, who have both previously spoken out in favor of deploying international troops, particularly NATO forces, to secure a peace deal.⁹ An U.S.-sponsored "bridging proposal" is not known yet, but it continues to be a possibility should the talks, which began in September, falter or fail.

Just how realistic, though, is it that international troops – particularly NATO forces – will be deployed in the West Bank? Which are the necessary requirements that must be met before a NATO operation can take place?

7 | Cf. Geoffrey Aronson, „The Obama Administration talks tough,” <http://www.fmep.org/reports/archive/vol.-20/no.-2/the-obama-administration-talks-tough> (accessed September 12, 2010).

8 | Cf. Helene Cooper, „Washington Memo: Weighing an Obama Plan to End a Mideast Logjam,” in: *The New York Times*, April 08, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/08/world/middleeast/08prexy.html> (accessed September 16, 2010).

9 | Brent Scowcroft and Zbigniew Brzezinski: „Middle East Priorities for January 21,” in: *The Washington Post*, November 21, 2008, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/11/20/AR2008112003008.html> (accessed September 16, 2010).

PREREQUISITES FOR A NATO OPERATION

Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, the first NATO Secretary-General to declare publicly that the alliance may have a role to play in the Holy Land, stipulated three conditions for an operation. Firstly, a comprehensive peace agreement must be reached between Israel and Palestine. Secondly, the parties involved must agree. And as a final *conditio sine qua non* he has stated that a United Nations' mandate would be required for NATO involvement. He himself, as de Hoop Scheffer remarked in a speech in Tel Aviv in January 2009, was not averse to such an idea in principle. However, he went on to say that deployment of troops in Gaza is out of the question at present.¹⁰

Currently, both parties seem to be miles away from reaching any form of peace accord. The next stages of the talks are open.

1. Peace Agreement

Currently, however, both parties seem to be miles away from reaching any form of peace accord. The next stages of the talks are open.¹¹ Although the continuation of a settlement building freeze beyond September 2010 is a prerequisite for the Palestinians remaining at the negotiating table, this might just be the acid test for Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition. This applies to the other side as well, since Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas enjoys neither the popularity nor the charisma of his predecessor, Yasir Arafat. He has not been able to reach an agreement with the revisionist organization Hamas, which rejects negotiations.

Recently, it has become increasingly clear why previous negotiation efforts have failed. The talks between Abbas and Netanyahu in Washington reflected this: while for Israel it is a matter of resolving the conflict once and for all, the Palestinian focus is on ending the occupation and creating a sovereign state. At the moment, both things are impossible

10 | Speech by Jaap de Hoop Scheffer at a Meeting of the Institute for National Security Studies and the Atlantic Forum of Israel in Tel Aviv on January 11, 2009, <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2009/s090111a.html> (accessed August 09, 2010).

11 | Cf. Avi Issacharoff, „US Warns Abbas: Direct Talks or Lose Backing for State,“ in: *Haaretz*, July 27, 2010, <http://haaretz.com/print-edition/news/u-s-warns-abbas-direct-talks-or-lose-backing-for-state-1.304255> (accessed August 10, 2010).

for either sides. Israel does not consider it possible to sign an agreement, which guarantees full Palestinian sovereignty, including security issues, and continues to retain some of its influence. By the same token, Abbas and the Palestinian leadership have not been able to guarantee an end to the conflict. Not just because their influence is limited by the division in the Palestinian Territories, but also because they cannot recognize the existence of a Jewish nation state themselves at this point.

It seems unlikely that any agreement will be reached at the moment. Should there be accord, however, there is still the second question of whether both sides would accept a NATO mission.

2. Agreement on Both Sides

a) Palestinian Position

According to unconfirmed press reports, President Abbas would be in favor of a NATO operation.¹² His foreign minister Riyad al-Malki also expressly welcomed

such an idea at a talk organized by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Ramallah. The fear that the new troops would merely act as an extended Israeli arm – or even as new occupiers – seems to be less realistic, at

In everyday encounters within the West Bank the Palestinians show that they do not immediately believe every foreigner to be an automatic devotee of Israel's position.

least in the West Bank. In everyday encounters within the Palestinian Territories – from the former terrorist heartland in Jenin and Nablus via the cosmopolitan city of Ramallah to the conservative municipality of Hebron – the Palestinians show that they do not immediately believe every foreigner to be an automatic devotee of Israel's position. Instead, they recognize that many have a sympathetic ear for the woes and plight of residents. This has been confirmed by a joint survey, which was carried out in June 2010 by the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace and the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR). The survey revealed that forty-one percent of those Palestinians asked supported the security principles

12 | Cf. Article "PA Seeks Future NATO Presence", May 19, 2010, in: *Jerusalem Post*, <http://jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=175908> (accessed August 10, 2010).

set down in the Clinton Parameters.¹³ This number is surprising since the paper not only mentions the deployment of international security forces but it also gives the Israelis the right to use Palestinian airspace for training purposes and to erect two long-term early warning stations in the West Bank. Were it not for these far-reaching concessions towards Israel, one could safely assume that this number would be even higher in relation to an external security presence. During the peace talks, which were resumed in September, the Palestinian side showed a renewed propensity to accept a NATO mission in the West Bank and the strategically important Jordan Valley. At the same time, it was pointed out that the Israeli Army would have to leave the Palestinian territories.¹⁴

During the peace talks the Palestinian side showed a renewed propensity to accept a NATO mission in the West Bank and the strategically-important Jordan Valley.

b) Israeli Position

The experiences involving the deployment of United Nations' troops following the war in Lebanon has been particularly important in shaping the attitudes of Israel's political and military elite towards international forces. Current Israeli opinion believes that the UN forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL) are not systematically tackling the rearmament of Hezbollah. UNIFIL has not been able to prevent weapons smuggling across the Syrian border or the rearming of Hezbollah with any great success. UNIFIL is seen, therefore, as being incapable of guaranteeing Israel's security, as many – including the former head of the research division of the Israeli military secret service, Major-General (res.) Yaacov Amidror – pointed out.¹⁵ Finally, Israel enjoys a fractious relationship with the United Nations as a

13 | Cf. Joint Israeli Palestinian Poll, June 29, 2010, Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR), <http://pcpsr.org/survey/polls/2010/p36ejoint.html> (accessed August 24, 2010).

14 | Cf. Avi Issacharoff, "Palestinian Source: U.S. Pressuring Abbas to Continue Talks Even If Settlements Expand," in: *Haaretz*, September 3, 2010, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/palestinian-source-u-s-pressuring-abbas-to-continue-talks-even-if-settlements-expand-1.311830> (accessed September 16, 2010).

15 | Cf. Yaacov Amidror, "The Risks of Foreign Peacekeeping Forces in the West Bank," in: *Israel's Critical Security Needs for a Viable Peace*, Jerusalem, 2010 (forthcoming), 80-82.

result of the majority situation in the various UN organizations, such as the Human Rights Council, which favors Arabic and non-aligned states. Therefore, UN troops are out of the question for Israel.

In contrast, how is NATO seen? Relations with NATO have improved steadily since the NATO Mediterranean Dialog¹⁶ was launched in 1994. Since then, this forum of cooperation has been strengthened several times setting up, among other things, an institutional substructure.¹⁷ Even though Israel is not a member of the NATO Program "Partnership for Peace" (PfP), the country still uses this opportunity to cooperate with NATO. In 2005, de Hoop Scheffer was the first NATO Secretary-General to visit Israel. In the same year the first-ever joint military training exercises with NATO and members of the PfP Program took place in the Red Sea and Macedonia respectively. Today, Israel has close ties with NATO military operations, to such an extent that Israel sends a liaison officer to NATO Naval Headquarters in Naples in order to support Operation *Active Endeavour* in the Mediterranean.¹⁸

Today, Israel has close ties with NATO military operations, to such an extent that Israel sends a liaison officer to NATO Naval Headquarters in Naples in order to support Operation "Active Endeavour" in the Mediterranean.

There are two schools of thought within Israel concerning the country's attitude towards NATO. The first sees NATO primarily as a security instrument that is dominated by the USA. Within these circles, moves to align the country closer to NATO are viewed positively. NATO's role in securing a future peace treaty is also not ruled out. The other school of thought considers NATO to be too heavily influenced by the European states. Israel's complex relationship with Europe means that NATO is accepted less readily and there is a tendency to view the organization negatively. The Israeli public seems more inclined towards the former view. A survey carried out by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in

16 | This comprises the seven non-member states of Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.

17 | Cf. Thomas Papenroth, "Der NATO-Mittelmeerdialog. Istanbul und danach," in: *SWP-Aktuell* 28, 2004, http://swp-berlin.org/common/get_document.php?asset_id=1411 (accessed August 10, 2010).

18 | Cf. Shlomo Ben Ami, "Israel and NATO – Between Membership and Partnership," Working Paper in preparation for the Herzliya Conference 2010, http://www.herzliyaconference.org/_Uploads/3045israelNato.pdf (accessed August 10, 2010).

April 2009 in Israel on Israeli attitudes towards Europe¹⁹ found that fifty-four percent of respondents could envisage Israeli membership of NATO. Fifty-four percent of those surveyed (sixty-two percent of Jewish Israelis and twenty-four percent of Arab Israelis) declared that they would be in favor of NATO involvement in the West Bank.

Critics of a NATO mission, and these are mainly drawn from the Israeli security sector, point to the principle that Israel should only rely on itself to defend its existence. Experiences of previous NATO operations are used to analyze this particular instance.²⁰ Here,

the decisive factor relates to experiences of the rules of engagement and the question of whether NATO troops may only use force in self-defense or whether the use of force can actively prevent acts of aggression. As a consequence, NATO would be drawn into the conflict directly. Would NATO also actively pursue terrorists within a new Palestinian state? The nature of the role a UN mandate would play is also decisive. In Bosnia, NATO forces could only intervene after the United Nations had given its consent, and they were not able to prevent mass murders. What intervention options would be open to Israeli security forces in cases where NATO soldiers were not able to prevent attacks on Israel? How can NATO prevent Israeli security forces from taking security matters into their own hands again?²¹

The nature of the role a UN mandate would play is also decisive. In Bosnia, NATO forces could only intervene after the United Nations had given its consent, and they were not able to prevent mass murders.

In this context, there are discussions within Israel about the question of national conditions (so-called "caveats").²² In Afghanistan, where forty-one nations have provided troops

19 | Cf. http://www.kas.de/proj/home/pub/24/1/-/dokument_id-16236/index.html (accessed September 12, 2010).

20 | Cf. Amidror, Risks, 84 et sqq.

21 | Florence Gaub of the NATO Defense College points out that NATO has no experience in dealing with resurgent violence between warring groups – groups which it is supposed to keep apart – such as the Israelis and Palestinians or the different Palestinian factions. Gaub does not place much store by a NATO mission for operational reasons and believes it to be downright "irresponsible." Cf. Florence Gaub, "NATO: Peacekeeping in the Holy Land? A Feasibility Study," Research Paper, NATO Defense College, Rome, No. 57, March 2010.

22 | Cf. Arnaud De Borchgrave, "Caveats' neuter NATO allies," in: *The Washington Times*, July 15, 2009, <http://washingtontimes.com/news/2009/jul/15/caveats-neuter-nato-allies> (accessed September 12, 2010).

Amidror called for demilitarization prior to the deployment of international and NATO peacekeeping forces and demanded a security arrangement capable of preventing any foreign army from setting foot on the soil of a Palestinian state.

as part of the NATO-led ISAF, the only troops without operational restrictions are those of the USA, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. There are seventy restrictions that limit the mission.²³ Richard Kemp, former commander of the British forces in Afghanistan, also indicated at the security conference in May 2010 in Jerusalem that in his experience NATO partners faced a multitude of restrictions during an operation.²⁴ This gives critics particular cause for concern. Thus, Amidror called for demilitarization prior to the deployment of international and NATO peacekeeping forces²⁵ and demanded a security arrangement capable of preventing any foreign army from setting foot on the soil of a Palestinian state. Similarly, no governmental or non-governmental military organization should be allowed to be founded in this area and all forms of weapons smuggling should be precluded. If one of these conditions is not met (any longer), Israeli security forces would have the option to intervene. It is unclear whether or not this could form part of an agreement acceptable to the Palestinian side. Palestinian negotiators have again rejected demands for a demilitarized future Palestinian state.

In principle, there are some members of the political elite in Israel that view NATO favorably and do not rule out NATO involvement in the West Bank – but there are also a number of critical voices. Much will therefore depend on how NATO's role and the operation are defined in an agreement with the Palestinians and whether or not it will meet Israeli and Palestinian security interests.

3. United Nations' Mandate

There is still a third requirement: to obtain a mandate from the United Nations. One could assume to achieve a majority in the Security Council if the aforementioned provisions were met. Owing to the unanimous line within

23 | Cf. *ibid.* and Amidror, *Risks*, 86.

24 | Cf. Richard Kemp, "Would IDF W. Bank withdrawal mean safe haven to extremists?," in: *Jerusalem Post*, August 24, 2010, <http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=185757> (accessed September 12, 2010).

25 | Cf. Amidror, *Risks*, 88.

NATO, three of the five veto powers would already be on board. A Russian veto could be avoided if the country was consulted early enough as part of the Middle East Quartet, which comprises the United Nations, EU, USA and Russia. It also seems unlikely that China would be interested in causing the whole Middle East mission to fail, since the resource-hungry People's Republic has an interest in stabilizing the oil and gas region. Following this, NATO's North Atlantic Council would then have to decide about an operation. To this end, it can draw on the Preamble to the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949. Therein the United Nations' Charter is defined as the framework for NATO missions. Nevertheless, there are still national hurdles for legitimizations. In Germany, for example, the Federal Parliament must agree to foreign deployments of the *Bundeswehr* due to parliamentary prerogative. Furthermore, NATO is governed by the principle of unanimity. Thus, consultations at both national and NATO level necessary for achieving consensus should have taken place long before a UN Resolution is obtained.

POSSIBLE CONFLICT SCENARIOS

The multitude of potential conflicts within the Palestinian Territories can clearly be seen in two exemplary instances in December 2009. The Israeli settler Meir Hai was gunned down on his way back home in his car in a drive-by shooting carried out by Palestinian militants at the end of the month. A few days before, a mosque in the Palestinian village of Yasuf was vandalized with Hebrew graffiti and set ablaze. These acts are just two links in a long chain of attacks, which have taken place for a while now in the northern parts of the West Bank.²⁶ On the Palestinian side, not only houses of God and dwellings, but also olive trees, vitally important for Palestinians both economically and culturally, are being targeted.²⁷ This type of politics – known

26 | Cf. Isabel Kershner, "West Bank Is Tense After Arson at Mosque," in: *The New York Times*, December 14 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/14/world/middleeast/14/mideast.html> (accessed: August 8, 2010).

27 | Cf. also Avi Issacharoff, "No-One Saw, No-One Heard: 300 Palestinian Olive Trees Uprooted," in: *Haaretz*, April 15, 2010, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/no-one-saw-no-one-heard-300-palestinian-olive-trees-uprooted-1.284278> (accessed August 8, 2010).

as “price tags” – which is being adopted by young extremists, who punish Palestinian civilians for every Israeli action carried out against their own settlement or outpost, is viewed with increasing concern by the Israelis. Following the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the announcement by the Israeli government that the settlement building program would be suspended for ten months, small groups of settlers, particularly the “hilltop youth,” have become radicalized. In the event of further settlement withdrawals, Israel fears that they would resist with force.

NATO troops stationed in the Palestinian Territories would not only have to tackle rocket-firing Palestinian militants, who could, at the same time, also be members of the official security forces, violent Palestinian protesters or

Even if the Hamas government in the Gaza Strip principally follows a local and national agenda, it agrees entirely with Iran about the destruction of Israel.

Islamic splinter groups, but also – in certain circumstances – Israeli citizens. There is also the threat of a future Palestinian government allying itself with states or forces, which are hostile towards Israel. Already, Iran exerts considerable influence on Israel’s immediate neighbors, particularly with the support of Hezbollah and Hamas. Even if the Hamas government in the Gaza Strip principally follows a local and national agenda, it agrees entirely with Iran about the destruction of Israel. For Israel, the Gaza Strip is a “terrorist entity that is financed by Iran.” In future, the aim must be to prevent other regions, from which Israeli security forces have withdrawn, becoming a similar threat to Israel.

HOW A NATO MISSION MIGHT BE ORGANIZED

A large number of voices critical of a NATO mission in the Palestinian Territories believe that it will ultimately be a struggle against local insurgents, who are supported by a mixture of Al Qaeda fighters, groups armed by Iran, and international jihadists. This would then be a *counterinsurgency* campaign, or COIN. Petraeus and Amos describe this type of operation as a mix of offensive, defensive and stabilization tactics, characterized by striking the correct balance between military and non-military elements. Compared with a traditional war mission, the non-military components play a particularly crucial role in this instance.

These include, among other things, establishing state institutions, training local security forces, creating a national infrastructure, supporting local government forces, and promoting structures based on the rule of law.²⁸ Contrary to what the name suggests, the center of this approach is not insurgency. Instead, it is about controlling and protecting the population. The same can be said of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.

If an operation in the Palestinian Territories is seen in terms of COIN, this then has a considerable impact on the scope and nature of a UN mandate. Fifty thousand security forces would be required for the West Bank (not including East Jerusalem) and thirty-two thousand for the Gaza Strip. These numbers are based on the much-quoted ratio of one soldier to every fifty civilians, as recommended by Quinlivan.²⁹ It assumes that there are 2.5 million inhabitants in the West Bank and 1.6 million in Gaza.³⁰ However, troop numbers also include local security forces, as it is assumed that these will pursue the same aims. The (official) Palestinian security force currently consist of twenty-five thousand police officers and paramilitary members.³¹ In addition, there are also thousands of security forces, which are under Hamas control in the Gaza Strip. Thus, thirty-five thousand soldiers and police would be needed for the West Bank, where fifteen thousand Palestinian security forces are already on patrol. At the same time, a robust mandate is just as important as the soldiers' nationalities. In order to preclude any alleged partisanship on either side, a multinational unit must be composed, which includes

Thirty-five thousand soldiers and police would be needed for the West Bank, where fifteen thousand Palestinian security forces are already on patrol. At the same time, a robust mandate is just as important as the soldiers' nationalities.

28 | Cf. David H. Petraeus and James F. Amos, *Counterinsurgency* (Washington DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, 2006, Vorwort), <http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-24.pdf> (accessed August 8, 2010).

29 | Cf. James T. Quinlivan, "Force Requirements in Stability Operations," in: *Parameters*, Vol. 25 (Winter 1995-1996), No. 4, 59-69.

30 | Cf. CIA World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/we.html> (West Bank, July 2010) and <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gz.html> (Gaza Strip, July 2010), (accessed August 8, 2010).

31 | Cf. Florence Gaub, "Soll die NATO ins Heilige Land?," in: *Internationale Politik*, 2010, No. 4, 90-97.

significant troop contributions from the USA, Europe and Muslim nations, such as Jordan or – when relations with Israel return to normal – Turkey. Instead of treating the 1:50 ratio as sacrosanct, Quinlivan’s study, which is often just accepted blindly, should be carefully questioned and expanded upon.³² Case studies demonstrate that success can also be achieved with a lower ratio (Allied Forces in Germany after 1945) whereas even missions with a higher ratio can fail (France in Algeria). It is much more important to consider local circumstances in Palestine and to draft a mandate accordingly.

It is important to consider local circumstances in Palestine and to draft a mandate accordingly. It may also be helpful to consider both the military and the civil components of comprehensive NATO and UN hybrid missions in Kosovo after the war in early 2009.

It may also be helpful to consider both the military and the civil components of comprehensive NATO and UN hybrid missions in Kosovo after the war in early 1999.³³ From a territorial perspective, both areas – Kosovo of 1999 and the Palestinian Territories – are of a limited size. The population of both areas predominantly consist of Muslims, who consider themselves to be oppressed by a non-Muslim country and seek independence. The majority group in both countries is present in both territories and is considered occupying power. Furthermore, this external power justifies its presence, among other things, on the grounds of protecting religious places. In both areas there are also well-armed paramilitary forces, which fight against the external power and do not shy away from even the most heinous of crimes. Even if the mission constantly encountered setbacks, such as bloody demonstrations and riots against the Serbian minority, this operation can be considered successful, since Kosovo is now a sovereign nation and the Republic of Serbia has accepted this fact.

32 | Cf. Peter J. P. Krause, “Troop Levels in Stability Operations: What We Don’t Know,” *MIT Security Studies Program: The Audit of Conventional Wisdom*, 2007, http://web.mit.edu/cis/pdf/Audit_02_07_Krause.pdf (accessed August 8, 2010).

33 | Cf. Security Resoultion 1244 of the United Nations from June 10, 1999, available on the United Nations’ website, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N99/172/89/PDF/N9917289.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed August 8, 2010).

WHY A HYBRID MISSION WOULD BE MORE PREFERABLE THEN A COIN CAMPAIGN

The situation in the Palestinian Territories is the most persuasive argument in favor of a hybrid configuration – consisting of troops from NATO and the European Union – as opposed to a contingent mainly responsible for counter-insurgency operations. This can by no means be compared to the situation in Afghanistan, where whole sections of the country are not under government control.

The Security Situation

In the West Bank, the security situation has improved noticeably during the past few years. As a result, there has not been a single suicide bombing against Israel in more than two and a half years.³⁴ The deadly attack on settlers at the start of negotiations in Wahington on September 6, 2010 was a set back. Hamas claimed responsibility for this. At the same time, the level of violence in Gaza remains high. However, this is not solely due to Hamas. There are also radical Salafi groups, which have been formed over the last few years in the Strip. They continue to attack Israel and it is not clear the extent to which they are instruments of Hamas. One such group is the *Jund Ansar Allah*, "Army of the Supporters of Allah," which does not just call for continued fighting against Israel, but also clashes sporadically with Hamas. Such radicalization must be seen as a reaction to the Hamas coup in June 2007 and the war between Hamas and Israel at the turn of 2008/09. Both events led to an intensification of the Israeli blockade against Gaza and caused living conditions there to deteriorate considerably. The resultant feeling of unconscious hopelessness means that such groups find it easier to recruit young men.

There are also radical Salafi groups, which have been formed over the last few years in the Strip. They continue to attack Israel and it is not clear the extent to which they are instruments of Hamas.

The situation in the West Bank, which is controlled (politically) by Fatah, is more positive, though. During the whole of 2009, only three Israeli civilians and two members of

34 | Cf. data from the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Terrorism-+Obstacle+to+Peace/Palestinian+terror+since+2000/Suicide+and+Other+Bombing+Attacks+in+Israel+Since.htm> (accessed August 11, 2010).

the security forces were killed in Palestinian attacks, which had been planned in the West Bank.³⁵ This is worth noting because during the first years of the Second Intifada, which broke out in the fall of 2000, there were dozens of suicide attacks carried out by Palestinians each year and hundreds of deaths on both sides. This progress is directly

The general improvement in the security situation in the West Bank is due to the increased operational capabilities of the civilian police force as a result of the EU mission EUPOL COPPS and collaboration with Israeli security forces.

linked to the now prospering economy in the West Bank and the substantially improved quality of the Palestinian security apparatus. However, it is also the result of better Israeli intelligence, increased Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation, and physical blockades, such as checkpoints and barriers. The general improvement in the security situation in the West Bank is also due to the increased operational capabilities of the civilian police force as a result of the EU mission EUPOL COPPS, which began in January 2006.³⁶

The Domestic Political Situation

The economic successes of the past few years are predominantly the result of one man's efforts: Salam Fayyad, who has spearheaded the government in the West Bank since June 2007. In August 2009, he presented a two-year plan, which aims to satisfy the institutional requirements for creating a Palestinian state. The plan's cornerstones include ending economic dependency on Israel, creating a consistent legal system, reducing the government apparatus, and improving housing and education.³⁷ Over the past years, the government has already been able to

35 | Cf. also Amos Harel and Avi Issacharoff, "Full Plate in the West Bank," in: *Haaretz*, December 25, 2009, <http://haaretz.com/print-edition/news/full-plate-in-the-west-bank-1.1426> (accessed August 9, 2010).

36 | Cf. Mission Overview of EUPOL COPPS No. 17 from May 2010 on the website of the Council of the European Union, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/missionPress/files/100506%20FACTSHEET%20EUPOL%20COPPS%20-%20version%2017_EN.pdf (accessed August 13, 2010).

37 | Cf. Palestinian National Authority, *Palestine. Ending the Occupation, Establishing the State. Program of the Thirteenth Government*, 2009, http://www.mop-gov.ps/web_files/issues_file/090825%20Ending%20Occupation,%20Establishing%20the%20State%20-%20Program%20of%20the%2013%20government.pdf (accessed August 9, 2010).

implement sweeping reforms, reduce corruption to some extent, enforce law and order in the West Bank, and stimulate the economy.

Palestinian democracy, however, is not in such good shape. In June, the Palestinian government canceled the local elections that had been planned for July 17, 2010. This was the third time since 2009 that elections were postponed, and a new date has not been set.

The terms of the president, parliament and local councils have expired and these institutions are now suffering from a considerable legitimacy deficit.³⁸ Against this backdrop, an operation in the West Bank could quickly draw fire from opposition forces, claiming that it was intended to solidify domestic power relationships. Instead of merely treating Fatah and Prime Minister Fayyad as bulwarks against Islamic groups and thereby ignoring the authoritarian developments that have taken place, the international community should focus its efforts on achieving reconciliation between the different Palestinian groups.

Palestinian democracy is not in such good shape. In June, the Palestinian government canceled the local elections. This was the third time since 2009 that elections were postponed, and a new date has not been set.

In spite of all the hurdles, a NATO operation in the West Bank – and in the Gaza Strip, if reconciliation between the Palestinian groups can be achieved – would be very similar to the NATO mission in Kosovo. The *Palestine Force* (PFOR), just as its sister in Kosovo, should be responsible for maintaining a ceasefire, disarming militias, training security forces, and protecting the borders. Although the tasks involved in a COIN campaign would be very similar on paper, the focus of such a campaign is clearly a military one. Instead of a temporary stabilization mission, the aim would be an offensive and defensive operation and the focus would be on controlling the population. In terms of the PFOR, however, the civilian aspect, which could be tackled by the EU, comes to the fore. To this end, the soldiers would be a form of reassurance but they would need a robust mandate in order to tackle any trouble-makers of all shades.

38 | Cf. "Palestinian Democracy: Under Threat From All Sides," in: *The Economist*, August 12, 2010, <http://www.economist.com/node/16793370> (accessed August 13, 2010).

However, what objections would the numerous critics raise, who would be skeptical of such a mission's success from the outset?

THE BEIRUT ARGUMENT

Critics of a PFOR often draw an historical comparison: Beirut 1982-1984. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982, which sought to drive out Arafat's PLO from the border regions, quickly turned into a war, where Israeli troops advanced right into the capital of Beirut. Following an agreement between the parties, which had been mediated by the USA, in August, the *Multinational Force* (MNF) of American, French and Italian soldiers began to monitor the withdrawal of PLO fighters and Syrian troops. The PLO had completely withdrawn from Beirut by September, so the MNF also stood down. However, following the massacre of Palestinian civilians by Christian militias, which happened shortly afterwards, the MNF returned to the country. During the next few months, it became embroiled in the Lebanese civil war, which had broken out in 1975. There were skirmishes with various militias and, in October 1983, two suicide bombers from a Shiite militia targeted American and French soldiers. Nearly three hundred were killed. While Beirut experienced some of the worst fighting of the entire civil war, the MNF had withdrawn completely by March 1984. The civil war only ended in 1990. Israel withdrew its troops from Southern Lebanon ten years later. In the summer of 2006, Israel and Lebanon were again at war. Even today, there is still tension along the shared border.

Following the massacre of Palestinian civilians by Christian militias, the Multinational Force returned to Lebanon. During the next few months, it became embroiled in the Lebanese civil war.

Against this, however, it can be said that the conditions today are completely different. At the time, Lebanon was in the midst of a long civil war, while the West Bank is comparatively safe. The size of and the mandate for the MNF had not been designed to take account of local conditions. That meant there were never more than one thousand eight hundred American marines involved in the mission. What is more, these were only able to use their weapon in self-defense. No one ever assumed that the MNF would be drawn into the civil war. The MNF saw itself as a neutral mediator at a time when Israeli soldiers stood in

the heart of Lebanon and there was no agreement on total withdrawal. In fact, the Americans in particular were under the illusion that their presence alone would be enough to intimidate the militias.³⁹

How would a more realistic scenario appear and under what circumstances could a PFOR withdraw again?

THINKING OF CONFLICT SCENARIOS AND DEVELOPING EXIT STRATEGIES

Currently, a number of scenarios can be envisaged, which would influence a potential NATO mission. Four of these are briefly described here:

1. The peace treaty between the Palestinians and the Israelis generates a stable status quo

If all points of contention are able to be regulated in a peace accord in a manner that is satisfactory to all parties, one can assume that a NATO operation would have the support and backing of a large majority of Palestinians and would probably be accepted by the Israeli side, provided that the rules of engagement were appropriate. Such a deployment could be achieved in the case of a mutually acceptable settlement between Fatah and Hamas, even in Gaza. The main duties of NATO would consist of monitoring the security situation, protecting the borders of a new Palestinian state, training security forces, and sharing intelligence with local agencies in order to cooperate with local troops to tackle troublemakers. When all Israeli settlers and soldiers have withdrawn from Palestinian territory and the Palestinian security forces are in a position – both quantitatively and qualitatively – to carry out the role of the PFOR themselves, NATO could stand down. Realistically, one must assume that this would only happen after five to ten years, even if significant parts of the contingent could withdraw before.⁴⁰

39 | Cf. John H. Kelly, "Lebanon: 1982-1984", in: Jeremy R. Azrael and Emil A. Payin (ed.), *U.S. and Russian Policymaking With Respect to the Use of Force*, Rand Corporation, 1996, 85-104, http://www.rand.org/pubs/conf_proceedings/2007/CF129.pdf (accessed August 10, 2010).

40 | Gaub, NATO, 6, reckons that for at least the first five years, the possibility of a renewed outbreak in hostilities will be at its highest. She points out that the duration of the operation has a major impact on its success.

2. Radical Palestinian forces carry out attacks on the National Authority, Israel and/or NATO

NATO collaboration with Palestinian security forces would be imperative in the case of Palestinian attacks. This might be conceivable right from the start, since the starting situation is much better than the one in Kosovo in 1999. In

An escalation in violence following an attack against Israeli settlers could only be prevented if there was seamless collaboration with Israel, and if the Palestinians could convincingly assure Israel that they would deal with the perpetrators quickly and consistently.

the case of attacks on NATO, the self-defence rule would apply and in the case of attacks on Palestinian targets, it would be in the basic interest of local troops to tackle the militia. An escalation in violence following an attack against Israeli settlers could only be prevented if there was seamless collaboration with Israel, and if the Palestinians could convincingly assure Israel that they would deal with the perpetrators quickly and consistently. Support for militants from among the civilian population only seems likely if there had not been substantial improvements in living conditions – measured in terms of prosperity, security and confidence in the future. The second pillar of the hybrid arrangement would be primarily responsible for this and would create institutions and infrastructure, ensure good governance (at the local and federal level), and promote the rule of law, democracy and the social market economy. Shortcomings in the latter areas, however, would draw out the duration of the operation incalculably.

3. An escalation in violence, which stems from Israeli extremists

There would be a similar situation as above, albeit the other way around, in the case of attacks carried out by militant Israelis. In this instance, NATO would need to collaborate with Israeli security forces. In any event, these should only withdraw after the settlers. The Israeli security forces already once demonstrated that they were able to resolutely deal with their own citizens. That was in 2005 when the Israeli settlements were vacated in the Gaza Strip. Furthermore, it would be necessary for the NATO mission to possess a robust mandate. This must include preventative measures against settlers and Palestinians. It would definitely be insufficient to have a mandate, which only allowed the use of force in self-defense. It is

unlikely that the length of the operation or the withdrawal conditions would change as a result of such attacks, since militant settlers are in the minority and the current attacks on Palestinians have not yet led to a spiral of violence.

4. A regional escalation destabilizes the situation in the Palestinian Territories

An intensification of the regional security situation could have various causes and perhaps represents the greatest danger – definitely the greatest challenge – for NATO troops. Should it not be possible to achieve reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas, the latter may torpedo the peace accord from Gaza with the help of Iran. If there is no such agreement, the international community must make it clear to Israel that an escalation in violence in Gaza would by no means be a justification for operations in the West Bank. What would happen, though, if there was renewed conflict at Israel's northern border with Lebanon? Or a war with Iran? These circumstances do not automatically have to lead to the death of the peace treaty. During the Second Israeli-Lebanese War in 2006 and the Gaza conflict at the turn of 2008/09, the situation in the West Bank remained relatively stable. On both sides, the rational interest in achieving peace would increase as more of the peace treaty was implemented. Long-lasting regional destabilization would, however, result in a protracted operation, as this scenario is definitely the greatest threat to achieving the goals of the peace agreement.

It has been suggested many times that Arab troops also be deployed under NATO control not only to increase the acceptance of NATO troops among the Palestinian population, but also to bind Arab nations to the responsibility of ensuring stability in the region.

It has been suggested many times that Arab troops also be deployed under NATO control not only to increase the acceptance of NATO troops among the Palestinian population, but also to bind Arab nations to the responsibility of ensuring stability in the region. However, this would probably cause mistrust on the Israeli side.

Much will, therefore, depend on the nature of the NATO mandate, the effectiveness of cooperation between the Palestinians and the Israelis, and the civilian contribution to the operation. The fear that the Palestinians would see the PFOR as a continuation of Israeli occupation and ally

themselves with extremists and jihadists in revolt – or even in order to wage a holy war⁴¹ – seems less likely in the West Bank at least, and fails to recognize the complexity of the Palestinians and the positive economic developments of recent years, which most of them are not likely to set at risk.

SUMMARY

The idea of deploying NATO troops to implement an Israeli-Palestinian peace treaty and to guarantee security is being discussed more and more. It is at the same time coupled with conditions. The requirements set down by the NATO Secretary General – a peace treaty, the backing of both sides, and a UN mandate – have not yet been met. Above all, it is unclear at this stage whether the resumed talks will be successful. The conditions relating to such an operation, which have to date been stipulated by various parties, are tough and it does not seem likely that all of them will be met. There are still many open questions and few have been addressed yet, i.e. the question of whether or not NATO troops should also include Turkish forces or even forces of non-NATO countries, such as Jordan. The exact formulation of a possible mandate and the rules of engagement are equally vague.

A robust mandate seems essential for ensuring wholesale Israeli withdrawal because such a mandate would give the troops flexibility and the power to fend for themselves, while at the same time still encompassing the civilian element.

A robust mandate based on Chapter VII of the UN Charter seems essential for ensuring wholesale Israeli withdrawal because such a mandate would give the troops flexibility and the power to fend for themselves, while at the same time still encompassing the civilian element. Being able to draw from its experiences in the Balkans, the European Union should be involved, particularly in relation to the civilian tasks. Furthermore, U.S. leadership is crucial for ensuring Israeli acceptance.

41 | Cf. Robert Kagan, "Can NATO Patrol Palestine?," in: *The Washington Post*, April 18, 2002, <http://carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=957> (accessed August 11, 2010).

Discussions about NATO's role should be continued even if there is no sign of a peace agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians. A possible starting point for this might be the current debate surrounding a new alliance strategy for NATO, which is set to be presented at the NATO Summit on November 19, 2010 in Lisbon. It is not sufficient to let the Palestinians and the Israelis do all the talking. NATO members should also consider possible scenarios and find an unanimous line for a mission in the Middle East. This is necessary to ensure that theory can be turned into reality.

The authors wish to thank Mr Jörg Knocha from the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Ramallah for his extensive support in producing this article.

Paper written on September 20, 2010.