

Olmert's Unilateral Option: An Early Assessment

by [David Makovsky \(/experts/david-makovsky\)](/experts/david-makovsky)

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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In-Depth Reports

In March 2006, while campaigning for the post of Israeli prime minister, Ehud Olmert surprised many by pledging, if elected, to dismantle the majority of Israel's West Bank settlements. Dubbing his plan "convergence," he outlined a strategy that would involve evacuating Israeli settlers from most of the West Bank. Olmert's proposal comes at a time when many Israelis are seeking to reconcile their distaste for occupation with their distrust of Palestinians -- a sentiment heightened by the electoral victory of Hamas, whose own ascent to power has made the concept of true partnership impossible. Having failed to achieve the goals of Oslo or the Roadmap, many Israelis support decisive steps taken outside the framework of bilateral negotiations if they could strengthen Israeli security.

In the latest addition to the Policy Focus series, Institute senior fellow David Makovsky tackles the many unanswered questions surrounding Olmert's unilateralist approach. Does the new prime minister envision a civilian disengagement alone or a full-scale withdrawal that includes redeployment of the Israel Defense Forces? If the latter, how will Israel deal with the threat of Hamas and other terrorist challenges within the West Bank? And how might political turbulence in the Palestinian Authority (and, potentially, Israel itself) affect disengagement on the ground? By addressing these and other key issues, Makovsky lays out the terms under which West Bank disengagement can actually advance the prospects for future peacemaking. If implemented wisely and given ample support from the United States, he argues, Olmert's plan has the potential to lay the foundation for an eventual two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

- **48 pages**

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