

Point of View No. 69

Is Israel preparing for a failure at the Annapolis summit?

At the opening of the Knesset winter session, PM Olmert said that Abu Mazen and Salam Fayyad are the best Palestinian partners Israel has, and warned that if they fall, Hamas will take over the West Bank (**Ha'aretz**, 10/9/07).

Israel must prepare itself for the possible failure of the process, and develop a strategy for 'the day after.' In addition to a Hamas takeover of the West Bank, the failure of the summit may deal a fatal blow to the principle of the Two State Solution and Israel's international status.

What is the Issue?

- Although the Israeli and Palestinian negotiation teams are trying to formulate a joint statement that will be presented at the Annapolis Summit, both sides disagree on the type and scope of the issues to be included in the statement.
- Due to this disagreement, members of the Palestinian negotiation team are pessimistic regarding the Summit's chances of success and fear that its failure will signal the end of Abu Mazen's political career (**Ha'aretz**, 10/10/07).

Why is this Important? Why Now?

- During the Oslo process, Israel, the Palestinians and leading international bodies, accepted the 'Two State principle' as a basic premise.
- However, due to the political deadlock since the failure of Camp David, various bodies have begun to doubt this principle's feasibility: besides the disagreement between the sides regarding the core issues, some claim that the reality on the ground prevents the possibility of establishing a Palestinian State alongside Israel.
- Furthermore, prior to the Hamas takeover of Gaza, there have been Palestinian calls to return full Israeli control to the West Bank and Gaza and to dismantle the Palestinian Authority (See: Dismantling the PA - an Emerging Trend). These calls expressed:
 - The growing despair within Palestinian society from the political and security chaos within the PA;
 - The rise of a radical 'resistance' movement that advances the idea of dismantling the PA for ideological purposes. It believes that this dismantlement would place the full economic and political burden of the occupation back on Israel and may lead to its internal collapse, as occurred in South Africa (See Logic of Implosion).

Renewed contacts between Israel and Abu - Mazen have halted these trends for the time being.

- However, the failure of the political process may deal a fatal blow to the moderate Palestinian camp and the Principle of Historical Compromise. **The failure is likely to revive these aforementioned trends and may even lead to a strategic inversion within the Palestinian National movement's objectives: From a struggle to end the occupation and establish a Palestinian state, to a struggle against ending the occupation and the demand for a One State solution.**
- **The combination between the failure of the political process, Abu- Mazen's disappearance from the political map and a Palestinian demand for One State, is also likely to accelerate the inversion of leading states and international organizations' positions towards the conflict; from supporting a two state solution to adopting a One State solution, on the basis of 'one man one vote.'**

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Policy Options

- The collapse of the political process would constitute a weak spot in Israel's national security. Israel must prepare for this scenario.
- This preparation should include the reinforcement of the institutions of the PA in order to help it 'survive' a possible failure of negotiations and the consolidation of the principle of separation between Israel and the Palestinians through unilateral or agreed - upon steps in parallel to the negotiation process.

End