

Point of View No.76

Israel's Bargaining Chips for achieving its Security Demands

Israel is seeking to reach understandings with the US over the protection of its security interests in a Permanent Status Agreement with the Palestinians. Israeli sources state that it is "important that negotiations be conducted properly, such that Israel can stick to its security demands." ([Ha'aretz](#) 1/3/08).

The Palestinians are expected to oppose Israel's security demands. The Reut Institute suggests that Israel try and design an alternative negotiation agenda that can facilitate a different 'give and take' dynamic that may allow Israel to achieve its security demands.

What is the issue?

- To protect its security interests, Israel seeks to restrict the sovereignty of the future Palestinian State. Among other things, Israel is calling for its demilitarization, control over its airspace, supervision over its border crossings and the long term presence of a small IDF force in the Jordan valley.
- Similar Israeli demands that were raised during the Camp David negotiations (1999-2001), encountered Palestinian opposition, although Israel *did* reach a series of understandings on some of these issues with the Clinton Administration.
- While rejecting Israel's security arguments, the Palestinians are simultaneously claiming a series of demands involving their 'intrusion' into Israel's sovereignty, such as the issue of safe passage (that did not exist before the 1967 war), and desalinization plants for residents of the West Bank.

Why is it important? Why now?

- **According to international law, sovereign states have inherent rights and duties** that include, among other things, the right to maintain an army for self defense, as well as sovereignty over its territory, water and airspace – without an inherent obligation to allow another state's 'intrusion' into these areas.
- **Oslo's working assumption: Palestinians would agree to limited sovereignty** – Israel's security demands rested on the assumption that the Palestinians would agree to pay a high price for a state, and would even be satisfied with some type of 'diluted sovereignty.'
- **No Palestinian State 'at any price'** – In recent years however, more and more Palestinians have begun to oppose the establishment of a state unless it is guaranteed permanent borders, full attributes of statehood and full inherent rights according to international law. (See Ahmad Khalidi, [Guardian](#) 12/13/07).

The clearest indication of this process is reflected in the Palestinian inversion towards a Palestinian State with Provisional Borders. While the Palestinians had previously aimed to establish a state (even with provisional borders), since February 2005, Fatah and the PLO have rejected this alternative, calling it a "trap".

Policy Options

- **Traditional negotiation agenda traps Israel** – The way the negotiation agenda is defined and the working groups are divided, influence the nature of negotiations and the chances for their success, as each working group creates its own 'package' of 'give and take'.

During the Oslo process, mutual Israeli and Palestinian demands to use one another's sovereign space were dealt with by different negotiating groups. For example, while the Palestinian demand for safe passage was discussed in the 'territorial group', Israel's demand for control over Palestinian airspace was discussed in the 'security group'.

- **Designing a different agenda** – Israel can 'leverage' Palestinian claims to 'intrude' into its sovereign territory as a 'bargaining chip' in negotiations to obtain Palestinian concessions on other issues. This can be achieved by designing a different negotiation agenda that creates a different set of 'give and take' relationships according to which Israeli security demands would be weighed against Palestinian demands for infringements into Israel's sovereign territory, such as safe passage or desalinization facilities.

For more on this subject, see Reut Institute document [Agenda of Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations on Permanent Status](#).

End.