

Initiatives for Diplomacy and Statecraft in the Arab-Israeli Context

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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On January 24, 2007, Washington Institute senior fellow and director of the Project on the Middle East Peace Process David Makovsky addressed the [Seventh Annual Herzliya Conference \(http://www.herzliyaconference.org/Eng/Articles/Article.asp?CategoryID=33&ArticleID=1596\)](http://www.herzliyaconference.org/Eng/Articles/Article.asp?CategoryID=33&ArticleID=1596) on the balance of Israel's national security. The following is a rapporteur's summary of his remarks.

What has the United States done to maintain Arab support for Iraq and the destabilizing situation in Iran? The United States wants support of the Arab regimes and does not want to isolate itself from the more moderate Arab countries.

Arab states share their anxiety of a growing Iran and want to work with the United States in quieting this threat.

Advancing Palestinian-Israeli dialogue can preserve talks and support efforts for the United States in the region and support for eliminating the threat of Iran.

Israel is not being asked to make concessions as payment to cement the U.S. interests in the region.

The United States has a commitment to the region. The United States has a commitment not to leave Iraq unsettled and leave behind larger Shiite-Sunni violence that might threaten surrounding states. The United States has another commitment not to let Iran succeed in its nuclear ambitions.

The United States denies that Israel is being made to pay a price for the advancement of U.S. interests in the region. Israeli foreign minister Tzipi Livni sees this point as an Israeli interest and not just a U.S. interest of continuing talks with the Palestinians. Israel needs to know as much of the end game before making concessions. Livni has stated that Palestinian statehood can be achieved if the idea of the right of return is relinquished.

On a positive note, no Arab state officials that we have met with has wanted a process with the current Damascus government; they all want to see a regime change before talks with Syria continue because of their radicalism and support of terror. These Arab officials feel Israel can only handle one track at a time and therefore the Palestinian route will be marginalized if the talks with Syria continue at the current moment.

Israel needs to see engaging the Palestinian effort as a broader interest for Israel and United States. This cannot be seen as a linkage policy.

The Arab regimes will seek to go against Iran anyway without U.S. support, and it is in the Israeli interest as well to

stabilize the region

Everyone and not just Israel has an interest in how the internal Palestinian struggle comes out. Increased violence between the Palestinians works in no one's interest, but instead only works to radicalize and put peace talks on the shelf.

Why should Israel see continuing engagement of Abbas as in its interests? Passivity is seen as a declaration, and if nothing is done Hamas will consolidate its control in Gaza and the situation will deteriorate; Israeli military action is not attractive.

Next week will mark a one-year anniversary of the quartet statement calling on Hamas to recognize Israel and to stop violence and withholding money to put pressure on Hamas. We have held sanctions for a year with support of Europe and we continue to seek to pressure Hamas in the future. It is not enough to see the departure of Hamas, we need to empower the moderates to bring their citizenry also on the path of moderation

Can Fatah rejuvenate itself? Everyone has a stake and interest in its revival. Israel not only has a stake in Fatah coming out on top, but it also needs to see that the violence fails and moderation triumphs

Iran is a very serious threat to Israel and, the United States and the West should not permit this regime to gain power on its doorstep while it makes such declarations of eradicating Israel and the West.

Israel has every right to secure itself, but it should make a clear effort to make a distinction between Palestinians who support Hamas and those who push for the more moderate voice. We must embrace the moderate voice to work for a lasting peace. ❖

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