

Israel's Upcoming National Elections
Major Parties' security and political Platforms

Report No. 4

A Palestinian State

The main political issue being debated is the creation of a Palestinian state. Both factions, right and left, hold fundamentally opposing view on the subject. The Likud “totally rejects the establishment of an Arab Palestinian state on the opposite bank of the Jordan River”; it offers Palestinians “self-government but not an autonomous and independent state”. These adamant objections to a Palestinian state are expressed in the warnings concerning a one-sided declaration of its establishment, an act that would instigate the “nullification of the Oslo Agreements and the Wye Memorandum”, as well as the initiation of “grave and immediate measures”.

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One Israel does not deny the possibility of establishing a Palestinian state. However, it views “the establishment of a Palestinian-Jordanian federation, based on the mutually agreement of the two parties, as preferable in terms of Israel’s interests. A Palestinian state is not and will not be one of Israel’s objectives. Nevertheless, to the degree that a Palestinian state represents the outcome of a permanent settlement, we must guarantee that the ensuing agreed-upon security and political conditions reflect the fundamental interests of the State of Israel”. While One Israel demurs from any one-sided declaration of the establishment of a Palestinian state, it attaches no sanctions to such an announcement, and confines itself to a statement of “non-agreement”.

The position taken by the Center Party leans toward that of One Israel although it has abstained from making any sweeping statement to that effect within its platform: “Israel will assess Palestinian interests, including their desire for a national entity, solely within the framework of negotiations”.

Terrorism

All the political parties agree on the need to combat Palestinian terrorism, although the question of whether to continue the peace process in the event of terrorist acts has received a different response from each. For the Likud, the Palestinian Authority’s actions against terrorism are viewed as a fundamental obligation to be fulfilled prior to implementing any agreement reached by the two sides. The Center Party has issued a similar statement: “The Palestinians have committed themselves to completely disbanding the terrorist factions found within its territory. We consider such acts to be a necessary condition for the continuation of the political dialogue while recognising that there will always be some extremist groups who will attempt, by terrorist means, to undermine the process and its initiators”.

Borders

The debated waged over the borders to be in effect upon concluding the permanent status negotiations with the Palestinians remains clouded. In effect, all the parties agree to a territorial compromise, which has become a political reality de facto. The Likud, One Israel, and the Center Party both agree not to return to the 1967 borders. The Likud and One Israel are in conformity with respect to the Jordan River as Israel’s eastern frontier.

Settlements

Serious disagreement separates the right from the left on this issue. The Likud promises to prevent the removal of settlements. One Israel pledges that “according to any agreement reached, the majority of settlers residing in the blocs of settlements located in the occupied territories will continue to live under Israeli authority”. The Center Party ignores this point: “Israel will strive to retain blocks of settlements under Israeli sovereignty and to preserve the territorial continuity connecting those settlements to Israel”. The term “bloc of settlements” may allude to the possibility of relocating settlers for the purpose of concentrating them in limited territorial space. This formulation is murkier than the position taken by One Israel and thus may be more moderate.

Jerusalem

Total agreement prevails among all the political parties with respect to Jerusalem. Greater Jerusalem is regarded as Israel’s permanent (“eternal”) capital. The Likud is more unbending and explicit in its pronouncements: “Israel will not negotiate over Jerusalem...We will not permit any diplomatic activity to

take place at Orient House...Israel's police presence will be augmented in East Jerusalem...the Jewish presence in East Jerusalem will continue and Israeli sovereignty in these areas will be intensified".

Syria

The debate over the Golan Heights distinguishes the right from the left on matters of principle. One Israel openly discusses the possibility of a withdrawal whereas the Likud prefers to reiterate Israel's sovereignty over the area. Nonetheless, when compared to its position concerning a Palestinian state, which it "rejects a priori", the Likud appears to be less forceful on the issue of a withdrawal. It confines itself to promising "to act to renew the negotiations with Syria without prior conditions".

One Israel has adopted the position taken by the Rabin government, according to which "the magnitude of Israel's withdrawal will be commensurate with the degree of the peace achieved". One Israel has asserted that any withdrawal will be determined by the Syria's response to seven key items: Control over water resources, the war against terrorism, the problem of Lebanon, security, early warning systems, normalisation, and economic co-operation. The Center Party's position, which is similar to that of One Israel, emphasises that in reaching an agreement with Syria, "great importance will be placed on all matters connected with Israel's position on the territorial issue".

Lebanon

The three parties concur on the need to withdraw from Lebanon. In the face of public pressure, the Likud is emphasising that it will "avoid taking any unreasonable steps that might lead to shifting the line of engagement from southern Lebanon to the Galilee". While One Israel agrees that "the IDF's presence in necessary for the defence of Galilee settlements", it states that "we demand an agreement locating the responsibility for preventing terrorism upon an identified political authority". Its proposed plan of operation includes "a staged withdrawal ... based on an Israeli-Lebanese military-political agreement guaranteed by Syria, within whose framework the Lebanese army will occupy those areas vacated by IDF and international forces". Barak's public declaration of a withdrawal within one year of his election, that is, by June 2000, is absent from his party's platform. The Center Party's platform contains a statement promising quick action and "the immediate withdrawal of the IDF from Lebanon... given security guarantees".