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## The Palestinians are in the driving seat, their time is now

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"Turkey? Yes," "Russia? Yes," "United Kingdom? Yes," "United States? Abstain," "Israel? No." This is how a vote at the United Nations on the recognition of an independent Palestine may sound. And really, why should the Palestinians not demand international recognition of their state? In such a move it could shake the peace process and extricate it from the strangle hold in which Palestine and Israel are caught.

It is not too revolutionary. International recognition of the fact that the West Bank and the eastern portions of Jerusalem are occupied territory already exists, and many states received international recognition before their borders were finalized. As for border crossings, Palestine has a land link with Jordan and could export products through the port of Beirut if Israel decides to prevent access to the sea.

For defense the Palestinians, assuming they will not want to challenge Israel and establish a real army, could invite in UN observers who would fulfill a function similar to UNIFIL in southern Lebanon. In order to counter Israel's security involvement in the territories, they could lean on UN Resolution 2131 of 1965, which forbids countries from intervening in the domestic affairs of another country. International recognition of a Palestinian state would not require the Palestinians to recognize Israel as a Jewish state, and foreign embassies would be established legitimately in its capital because, after all, what will they be afraid of? An Israeli boycott? For the time being it is Israel that is faced with a boycott.

International recognition of a Palestinian state should not undermine the negotiations. Except that under the new circumstances the negotiations will be between two states of equal status.

If Israel announces that it will cease negotiating as punishment, well, that is already what has been happening for a while. Israel will annex the settlements, as further sanctions? In any case they function as an inalienable part of Israel and even without official annexation they are part of the whole, at least according to the prime minister.

Last month, Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad pronounced that in August 2011, "We will celebrate 66 years of occupation and the United Nations will celebrate the establishment of the Palestinian state." For its part, Israel is threatening that if the Palestinians will take such a unilateral step, it will consider this a fundamental violation of the Oslo Accords and can consider itself free of all its obligations. Interesting. In an interview on Israel Radio in 2002 Netanyahu said that "the Oslo Accords are null and void - after all, what is left?"

It appears that there is not a single Israeli leader today who believes there is any breath left in the Oslo Accords. And who decided that first it is necessary to resolve the core issues, and only later to set up a state? The same Oslo agreement that Netanyahu already proclaimed void. So what is the meaning of this Israeli threat? Israelis explain that there is no concern about the step that Fayyad is planning to take since the U.S., Russia, Norway, Egypt and the European Union support the Oslo Accords and will not allow the Palestinians to violate them unilaterally. But it may be that these countries may actually be in agreement with Fayyad, that Israel is the one which has shaken off the Oslo Accords, and the one avoiding their implementation and the implementation of their offshoots, such as the various road maps.

It seems that Obama is fed up of the construction trickery, the Israeli conditions for continuing the negotiations, and overall, of the mockery that Israeli is making of the U.S. administration. If there is a leader who pushed Jerusalem to the center of the table it is Obama, the same Obama who shares the Palestinians' view on the need for settlement construction to cease. Can Israel now be so confident that the U.S. will oppose, or at least abstain during a UN vote? Not to mention "treacherous" Norway, or Russia, which was pushed out of the peace process? This will be time to get even with Israel.

Tomorrow, November 15, the Palestinians will mark 22 years since Yasser Arafat pronounced Palestinian independence. At the time he had no support for the declaration. Ronald Reagan was in Washington, the first president to coin the term "political rights of the Palestinians," who surprised Israel in 1982 with a peace initiative of his own. He did not talk about a Palestinian state, but today the circumstances are entirely different. It is not Israel which is dictating the international consensus but the Palestinians. This is their opportunity to establish the Palestinian state. And Israel? It will have to adapt.

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**Links:**

- [1] <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/the-palestinians-are-in-the-driving-seat-their-time-is-now-1.324542>
- [2] <http://www.american taskforce.org/diplomacy>
- [3] [http://www.american taskforce.org/international\\_community](http://www.american taskforce.org/international_community)
- [4] [http://www.american taskforce.org/palestinian\\_statehood](http://www.american taskforce.org/palestinian_statehood)
- [5] [http://www.american taskforce.org/palestinian\\_unity](http://www.american taskforce.org/palestinian_unity)
- [6] [http://www.american taskforce.org/usisrael\\_relations](http://www.american taskforce.org/usisrael_relations)