

Last update - 20:13 01/03/2009

## ANALYSIS / Why isn't Netanyahu backing two-state solution?

By [Aluf Benn](#)

Prime Minister-designate Benjamin Netanyahu is refusing to declare his support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For Kadima chairwoman Tzipi Livni, that is reason enough to go into the opposition or to attempt to impose a rotation arrangement on Netanyahu. This weekend U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton reiterated Washington's commitment to a two-state solution, effectively joining the foreign minister in portraying Netanyahu as an obstacle to a negotiated settlement.

There are obvious political reasons for Netanyahu's refusal to demonstrate a more moderate stance: It would cost him his potential coalition with the right-wing National Union and Habayit Hayehudi, and force him into a rotation arrangement with Livni. But his opposition to a Palestinian state is also a matter of principle, one he has held for many years.

Netanyahu says he doesn't want to rule over the Palestinians, and has no interest in Nablus, Tul Karm or Jenin; they should govern their own lives, as long as they don't threaten Israeli security, he says. Netanyahu seeks to deny the Palestinians four rights of any sovereign state: control of its airspace; control of its electromagnetic spectrum; the right to maintain an army and to sign military alliances; and, most importantly, control of the border crossings where arms and terrorists could pass. Netanyahu believes Israel must retain all of these.

Netanyahu's model is based on the work of Stanford University political science professor Stephen Krasner, who was director of policy planning in the State Department under Condoleezza Rice. Krasner developed a "restricted sovereignty" model for problematic state structures.

Netanyahu also has a tactical reason for objecting to a Palestinian state: He believes that this must come through negotiations, rather than being something conceded by Israel in advance. He considers the Annapolis process that outgoing prime minister Ehud Olmert and Foreign Minister Livni conducted with the Palestinian Authority's Mahmoud Abbas and Ahmed Qureia to be a joke. In his opinion, Israel must not offer a near-total withdrawal from the West Bank in advance, which he believes would achieve nothing and only encourage

the Palestinians to demand more.

Netanyahu believes Israel must insist on retaining 50 percent of the West Bank - the open areas in the Jordan Valley and the Judean Desert that are vital as a security zone. In light of statements the outgoing government has made to the Palestinians, Netanyahu's position is a joke meant to kill the negotiations before they even begin.

In an interview with Lally Weymouth in yesterday's Washington Post, Netanyahu elegantly avoided the question about two states. Instead of merely saying "No," he presented a vague formulation: "The Palestinians should have the ability to govern their lives but not to threaten ours." Such a statement doesn't explicitly discount the creation of an independent Palestinian state, nor does it address the fine points of control and sovereignty. Netanyahu also undertook to continue the negotiations with the Palestinians, and said Hamas should be toppled by the residents of Gaza [and not by Israel].

Livni demanded Netanyahu explicitly support the establishment of a Palestinian state. The question is what Clinton will make of Netanyahu's opening gambit. Netanyahu's aides believe that as a seasoned politician, Clinton will find a way to work with him, not against him, but it will be interesting to see whether she will also try to effect a compromise between Netanyahu and Livni in a bid toward creating a more moderate Israeli government.

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