

# MEMMO

Sept. 16, 2010

## U.S. Sticking to Key Principles Critical to Talks' Success

**By promoting the resumption of direct negotiations, America has helped create an historic opportunity for Israelis and Palestinians to resolve their differences. The United States can enhance prospects for a successful outcome by adhering to key principles that have guided previous U.S.-led negotiations. These principles include: facilitating negotiations and eschewing efforts to impose a solution; encouraging the parties to persist in direct talks even in the face of near-term setbacks; insisting on broad Arab support for the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the talks; maintaining American commitments to Israel's security; and dealing with disagreements that may arise privately.**

A solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must arise from the parties themselves, and cannot be imposed by the United States or other parties.

- As President Obama made clear at the outset of the new round of talks, "The United States will put our full weight behind this effort. We will be an active and sustained participant. ... But let me be very clear. Ultimately, the United States cannot impose a solution, and we cannot want it more than the parties themselves."
- A deal can only work if both sides enter into it willingly, feel vested in it and intend to implement it. Without buy-in from the two parties and their publics, no accord will be viable.
- The United States should encourage the parties to work out their own solutions to problems. As a facilitator, the Obama administration may offer bridging proposals at the appropriate times to help break logjams. However, a U.S. attempt to pressure the parties into agreements they are not prepared for ultimately will only lead to failure.



**The Palestinians must not threaten to walk out of direct negotiations the moment difficulties arise.**

There is no substitute for direct, sustained negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, even when there are disagreements and setbacks.

- After 18 months, the Obama administration secured agreement from both sides to hold direct negotiations intended to resolve all final-status issues. Acknowledging the years of mistrust and the complexity of the unresolved issues, the president appealed to both parties to commit themselves to uninterrupted negotiations aimed at reaching a framework agreement within a year.
- Obviously, there are significant gaps between the parties on the most fundamental issues. However, renouncing compromise and threatening to walk out of talks will not lead to a successful outcome.

As Israel considers painful compromises for peace, the United States should continue its role as a trusted ally by maintaining security commitments.

- The United States should expand vital cooperation in areas such as intelligence, counterterrorism, thwarting Iran's nuclear efforts, and maintaining Israel's qualitative military edge regardless of the daily ups and downs of the negotiating process.
- Since Israel is being asked to give up concrete assets, such as territory, for intangible and reversible gains, such as promises to end the conflict and refrain from terror and incitement, America should exhibit particular sensitivity to Israel's security concerns.
- America's special relationship with Israel should be seen as an asset in the negotiating process. Trust, not pressure, is the best way to succeed.
- In the past, Israel has been more flexible in negotiations with the Arabs when it had great confidence in its relationship with the United States.
- To the extent there are differences between the United States and Israel, they should be worked out privately, as befitting close allies. Public differences have allowed the Palestinians and Arab states to stall U.S. efforts to get the sides back to negotiations and to increase their demands on Israel.

Even before the peace talks began, Israel moved boldly to condition the environment for peace.

- For the first time in his career, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced in June 2009 that he accepts, and is prepared to negotiate, a two-state solution to the conflict: a demilitarized Palestinian state alongside the Jewish state of Israel.
- Netanyahu announced a 10-month moratorium on the construction of new homes in the West Bank last Nov. 25, calling it a "far-reaching and painful step." No Israeli prime minister from either side of the political spectrum had ever agreed to such a freeze on settlements.
- Israel has removed more than 400 West Bank checkpoints and roadblocks since April 2008, improving the freedom of movement for hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and vastly enhancing the Palestinian economy.

The United States should continue pressing Arab states to move toward normal relations with Israel and to support the efforts of Palestinian moderates.

- Arab states, especially Saudi Arabia, should strengthen Abbas with the political support he needs to fight terrorism, isolate Hamas and make the tough compromises required to reach an agreement.
- If the Arab states are committed to the creation of a Palestinian state, they must provide the PA with financial support to help bolster the economy. Reuters reported that Saudi Arabia's donations to the PA dropped 87 percent during Jan.–Aug. 2010 compared to the same period last year.
- The Arab states can demonstrate their support for the talks by rejecting extremism, ending anti-Israel incitement and preparing their own people to accept peaceful relations with Israel.
- The Arab states should take steps toward normalization with Israel, as called for by President Obama and Congress. Israelis need to know that the Arab world is fully ready to accept the Jewish state as negotiations proceed.