

Point of View

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A Palestinian Army – Now or Later?

Ismail Haniyeh expressed Hamas' objection to Abu Mazen's intention to transfer the responsibility for the security forces from the cabinet to the office of Palestinian Authority chairman (Arnon Regular, **Ha'aretz**, 2/5/06). Immediately after the elections, Khaled Mash'al proposed the establishment of a "Palestinian Army" (Arnon Regular, **Ha'aretz**, 1/29/06).

Following that, Israel is forced to re-examine its opposition regarding the establishment of a Palestinian army, which is the basis for the principle of de-militarization.

What is the Issue?

- On the one hand, **the principle of de-militarization of the Palestinian entity** –
 - The opposition to the establishment of a Palestinian army stems from the principle of de-militarization of the Palestinian entity in permanent status.
 - However, the principle of de-militarization has been eroded following the Rafah Agreement, in which Israel ceded control over the external perimeter of the PA, and due to other developments (See the paper "[A Militarized Palestinian State](#)").
- On the other hand, **dismantling terror infrastructure** –
 - The victory of Hamas appears to have negated any chance of dismantling the military wing of Hamas as required by the First Phase of the Roadmap and promised by Abu Mazen.
 - Therefore, it appears that the sole way to dismantle the military wing of Hamas is through its inclusion in the security forces of the PA.

Why is this Important? Why Now?

- The victory of Hamas changes the basic nature of relations between Israel and the Palestinians. As such, this development will influence Israel's position vis-à-vis the structure, powers and authorities of the Palestinian security forces.
- Will Hamas continue to play the double-game of **maintaining influence (over the process) while avoiding responsibility (for its outcome)** – The electoral victory enable Israel to place direct pressure on Hamas. This pressure depends on the possibility to turn Hamas politically accountable. Accordingly, Israel must appreciate the advantages of having Hamas initiate the coalescence of the Palestinian security forces.
- This is despite the fact that the establishment of a Palestinian army is not compatible with the principle of de-militarization.

Policy Options

- In the aftermath of the elections, it is not likely that Hamas would be disarmed without its consent.
- Israel needs to decide if it is in its interest to oppose the integration of Hamas into the security forces or to allow for the erosion of the principle of de-militarization through the

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establishment of a Palestinian army and the unification of all of the armed militant wings, including that of Hamas. This dilemma holds several considerations:

- On the one hand, integrating Hamas' military wing into the security forces will create clarity regarding the PA's responsibility over its armed bodies. Moreover, Palestinian security forces, which would include Hamas members, may confront the separate militias of Islamic Jihad and Fatah.
- On the other hand, the integration of Hamas' military wing and recognition of the "Palestinian army" will damage the principle of de-militarization. However, this action will turn the Hamas-led PA into the clear "address" for Israel and the international community.

For additional sources see the Re'ut Institute website: www.reut-institute.org:

- "[Abu Mazen – Liability or Asset?](#)" (Point of View, 2/2/06);
- "[A Militarized Palestinian State](#)" (Fundamental Early Warning, 9/29/05);
- "[How Long will the Hamas Continue to Enjoy Both Worlds? \(Hebrew\)](#)" (Point of View, 24/5/05);
- "[Hamas and the PLO: Hostile Takeover of a Shell Company \(Hebrew\)](#)" (Point of View, 1/24/06);
- "[The Hezbollah Precedent \(Hebrew\)](#)" (Point of View, 29/1/06);
- "[The Hamas Movement and the Political Process](#)" (Hindcite, 1/29/06);
- See also Re'ut's Op-Eds on the subject of Hamas: Jonathan Adiri, [Roadmap held Hostage](#), Ynet 12/1/06; Eran Shayshon, [Towards Representing All Palestinians](#), Ha'aretz, 26/6/05; Gidi Grinstein, [Bear Hug for the Hamas](#), Ynet (8/6/05); Eran Shayshon, [Customs against the Hamas](#), Maariv (Hebrew); Yariv Mann, [Like the Hezbollah Ministers in Lebanon](#), (Hebrew) Ha'aretz, 22/1/06.

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