

Chapter 24

Two State Solution

The next step from this point down the pathway to peace will be a two-state solution. The world community is approaching a collective acceptance that the Palestinian people are entitled to be citizens of some nation. Beyond the fact that this is a self-evident, natural human right, acknowledged by the United Nations and all nations and people with an appreciation for self-determination and democratic principles, it is finally becoming a common understanding that the conflict in Palestine/Israel will never be resolved as long as the Palestinians are denied this basic right. One of the many problems that will be resolved with the two-state solution is that of Hamas and other armed resistance groups. With the end of occupation, there will no longer be a need for resistance. Groups like Hamas will likely reorganize as political organizations and will be held subject to the new, democratic process and bound by the Constitution of the new state. Given that some elements might not voluntarily cease in armed struggle, an international peace-keeping force will be deployed to facilitate the transition to the new political order. Given that the idea persists that “the Jews” somehow have a right to their own state, based on ethnic origin and/or religious affiliation, a two-state solution is the only near-term alternative that allows that view to be preserved.

The practical challenges of implementing a two-state solution are well known. The most prominent of these challenges are the geographical discontinuity of the Occupied Territories of Gaza and the West Bank, the Israeli settlements and connecting roadways in the West Bank, and the Palestinian refugee problem. While every potential solution to these challenges involve compromise, they are not insurmountable, especially with the active involvement of the world community.

As the two-state solution is formulated and implemented, the real challenges to its sustainability will become apparent. First, if Israel is allowed to persist as an ethno-/religious-state, what will prevent the new nation of Palestine from being established as an Arab-/Islamic- state? The challenges and risks posed by two, seemingly opposing, religious states sharing borders are all too obvious. Will the rights of religious minorities within this new state be preserved, or will they suffer as the Palestinians suffer under Israeli rule? Will Israel remain as a nuclear state? Will these two states develop a contentious relationship, as is between Israel and its current neighbors? What if the world community should seek to avoid Palestine from becoming a distinctly Islamic state? How can it be reconciled that a Jewish state is legitimate and an Islamic state is not? This arrangement would fail to remove the legitimacy of resistance, one of the driving factors of seeking a solution, in the first place.

Given that the world community is unwilling to confront Israel’s ethnic- and religious-based laws, they will allow similar leeway to the new, Palestinian state. As such, the religious, cultural, and other subjective views of those that rise to power in Palestine will be instituted into law, even if some of those laws fail to secure specific human rights to individual citizens. The world community will force the point that the Palestinians deserve a state, but they will stop short of insisting that the laws of this new state respect all recognized human rights of the individual.

The prediction for how the Palestinian political landscape will develop in the formation of the new state is that the population will tend toward moderation. That said, the path to moderation is

not a straight one. Currently, Hamas and related groups are the Palestinians' best option for resistance to brutal occupation. The fact that Hamas is driven by deep and fundamental religious principles is almost incidental, and in some segments of the Palestinian community, distinctly unappreciated. The Palestinian Authority, as controlled by Fatah and personified by Mahmoud Abbas has lost virtually all credibility within the Palestinian community. If the need for armed resistance is truly removed, Hamas will transform into a political organization, most likely rebranding itself, but it will remain as a religious-based organization. Fatah will most certainly offer new leadership, attempting to regain the trust of the Palestinian community. Additionally, new political parties will emerge with many offering the desired moderation. As long as Israel is allowed to exist as a "Jewish State", especially if they retain nuclear weapons, the foreign policy concerns of the new, Palestinian state, along with the substantial domestic concerns, will make the Palestinian political landscape complex and volatile. In this two-state model, international peace-keeping forces will be deployed in the new Palestinian state but not in Israel. This will only further the perception that Palestine is still not being treated equal to the treatment of Israel.

The two-state solution for Palestine and Israel is imminent, and it will represent an improvement over the status quo. However, it will not be sustainable indefinitely. It is merely a step down the path to a true solution for peace: an end to apartheid, an end to the ethno-/religious-state of Israel.