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Is a Two-State Solution Still Possible?

While sympathy for Palestinian self-rule is understandable, proponents of the two-state solution must resolve seven tough questions before it can be realistic.

The two-state solution—one for Palestinian Arabs, one for Israel, living side by side in peace and security—has long been an inviolable principle for both the U.S. and Israel. But today, intractable obstacles make two states seem more a dangerous fantasy than a viable alternative.

What are the facts?

Hope of Palestinian independence by the United States and Israel has since 2000 produced three offers of a Palestinian state in up to 97% of Judea-Samaria (the West Bank), including a capital in Jerusalem. But profound changes in the region—and persistent Arab rejection of these offers—make a Palestinian state threatening to Israel and the entire region. Until we can resolve these thorny questions, two states can't yet be considered a solution:

1. When will Palestinian Arabs recognize Israel as the national home of the Jewish people? For 71 years, the Arabs have steadfastly refused to accept the Jewish state—preserving the hope that someday the Jews will be driven from the Holy Land. Indeed, according to a recent poll, 57% of Palestinians believe their main national goal should be a one-state solution, reclaiming all of historic Palestine from the river to the sea. Should Westerners insist on something most Palestinians don't want?

2. When will the two warring Palestinian factions— Hamas and Fatah—reconcile? Ever since Hamas, the Muslim terror group, won Palestinian elections in 2006 and then violently seized Gaza, it has waged war with the ruling Fatah party in the West Bank. Not only are Gaza and the West Bank separated geographically, but for 13 years these two factions have fought bitterly, despite their peace efforts and those of other Arab nations. Until Fatah and Hamas declare peace, Israel has no negotiating partner.

3. When will Hamas retract its sworn mission to destroy Israel? Hamas controls Gaza and is today allied with Iran—both of which advocate Israel's destruction and spend tens of millions of dollars supporting anti-Israel terror attacks. How can Israel achieve security when the Hamas charter and its every action focus on eliminating the Jewish state by military force?

4. When will the Palestinians hold national elections? Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas was elected to a four-year term in 2005. He has now served 14 years without standing for election, and neither Palestinians in Judea-Samaria nor Gaza have held national elections since 2006—they are totalitarian entities. Will creating a new Arab dictatorship help create peace?

5. When will the Palestinians create a self-sustaining economy? While the Palestinian Authority (PA) and

Hamas have received billions of dollars in aid from the U.S., the European Union and Arab states, neither group has invested in infrastructure sufficient to create viable economies. Unemployment in the West Bank is 18%; it's 52% in Gaza. Without massive international welfare, both entities would collapse.

6. What would prevent terrorist Hamas from conquering a new Palestinian state? Hamas clearly has superior military might: It violently took over Gaza in 2007, today has 20,000 men under arms and commands tens of thousands of rockets. It also has a well-organized political arm and is supported financially by Iran. If a Palestinian state were formed under the Palestinian Authority, how could the U.S., Israel, Jordan and Egypt protect the new state from a coup by Islamist Hamas terrorists?

Major obstacles currently make the two-state solution untenable.

7. When will the Palestinians institute political freedoms and rule of law? Like many Middle East dictatorships, neither Palestinian "governments" support civil rights or rule of law. The U.N.

Special Coordinator has reported that in Palestinian jurisdictions, "conditions for rule of law" are non-existent. Human Rights Watch reports that the PA is "arresting, abusing and criminally charging journalists who express peaceful criticism." Civilian security in both territories is completely outside of civilian control.

At one time, a two-state solution seemed reasonable—before the Palestinians turned down generous peace offers by Israel in 2000, 2001 and 2008, before Hamas seized Gaza and launched three wars against Israel, before Iran blossomed into a regional cancer, before the Syrian and Yemeni civil wars, before ISIS and al Qaeda, and before 14 years of corrupt rule by Mahmoud Abbas. Until major problems are resolved, the two-state solution seems at best indefensible—and, worse, irresponsible and dangerous.

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FLAME

Facts and Logic About the Middle East

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