

## ReViews - 13<sup>th</sup> Issue:

# The Trend of Palestinian and Arab Inversion towards the Two State Solution

This issue of ReViews cites a variety of quotes which reflect a trend towards the erosion of the principle of the Two-State Solution among the 'moderate' Palestinian camp, as well as among additional Arab elements.

In the Algiers Declaration (11/88), the PLO recognized the concept of the partition of Mandatory Palestine into two states for the first time. Since then, the principle of the Two-State Solution<sup>1</sup> was considered to be the stated goal of the Palestinian National Movement and served as the basis for the Oslo Process (93-01) and the Roadmap (4/03).

However, in recent years, this paradigm has become eroded. The legitimacy of the PLO – the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people – to set the goals of the Palestinian National Movement has been severely damaged due to the rise of Hamas and other radical Palestinian movements that are not yet integrated into its institutions. Recent polls<sup>2</sup> among the Palestinians demonstrate that the popular support for Hamas is still on the rise.

As this document demonstrates, the radicalization of the Palestinian society has even infiltrated into the ranks of those most identified with the 'moderate' camp. Unlike the radical-Islamist groups which have always advocated the One-State Solution, these moderate elements within the Palestinian society suspect the current negotiations with Israel are futile<sup>3</sup> and doubt the viability of the Two-State Solution. The failure of the political process combined with these aforementioned developments may eventually culminate in an official Palestinian inversion towards the Two State solution.<sup>4</sup>

This document also points out trends influenced by these developments within Arab States and among Israeli-Arab leaders regarding the Two-State Solution principle. Recent reports suggested that Arab States were reconsidering support for the Arab Peace Initiative. The initiative offered Israel full normalization in return for a full withdrawal from the West Bank and the establishment of a Palestinian alongside Israel. Despite ultimately reaffirming the plan, discussions surrounding it suggest that the Two State paradigm may be under threat.

Moreover, parallel to these regional trends, the Arab community within Israel has also hinted that it is reconsidering its position towards two nation states. Last year, leading Israeli Arab organizations published four different documents, collectively known as the 'Vision Documents', which challenged the Jewish character of the State of Israel while accepting the framework of the Two State Solution. However, recent statements by Israeli Arab leaders signal the beginning of a potential change in their position regarding this framework.

## 'Moderates' may be preparing the ground for a One State Solution

The stalemate in negotiations has brought moderate Palestinian leaders to warn (or threaten) that the failure of the political process would cause the collapse of the PA. Some even seem to be preparing the ground for a One-State Solution or the re-adoption of the doctrine of armed struggle.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> The Palestinian declaration of independence (11/88) was based on UN General Assembly Resolution 181 ('Partition Plan'). In the declaration, Arafat also mentioned Resolution 242 which calls for a peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of territorial compromise.

<sup>2</sup> The [Jerusalem Post](#) (3/08) reported that a Palestinian public opinion poll showed that Hamas PM Ismail Haniyeh would defeat PA President Abu Mazen if presidential elections were held in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

<sup>3</sup> Recent reports suggest that both Abu Mazen and Salam Fayyad are pessimistic about the chances for successful negotiations by the end of 2008. ([Maan News](#) 3/16/2008; [YNET](#) 2/8/2008)

<sup>4</sup> See: [Failure of the Political Process: The Danger of Dissolution of the Palestinian Authority](#)

<sup>5</sup> One lone voice has been that of Yasser Abed Rabbo, General of the PLO's Executive Committee who called on the Palestinians to take a leaf out of Kosovo's book and unilaterally declare independence ([BBC](#) 2/20/2008).

- Chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat warned that the PA will collapse unless a peace deal is achieved in 2008, with dire consequences for the region. ([AFP](#) 3/19/2008).
- Echoing this, former head of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade in Jenin, Zakariya Zubedia warned that unless a Palestinian state is created by the end of 2008, the Palestinians will throw out the PA. ([Ha'aretz](#), 4/4/08).
- Ziad Abu Zayyad, a former minister in the PA and veteran peace negotiator warned that "there are only two or three years left. If this [the Two-State Solution] doesn't work then everyone will be arguing for a one state solution ([Atlantic Magazine](#) 5/2008).
- Abu Mazen recently said that he does not rule out a return to armed struggle ([Ha'aretz](#) 2/28/2008).
- In similar vein, PA representative in Lebanon Abbas Zaki, recently said that "the use of politics without weapons will not bring results" and emphasized the 'Phased Plan' – that a Palestinian state in the West Bank would be the first phase towards Israel's destruction. ([Memri](#) 4/9/08).
- Ahmad Khalidi, a close aide to Abu Mazen, claimed that statehood does not offer an equitable and fair solution for the Palestinians and that they should consider calling for a resolution based on "mutual respect, equality and mutuality, and a sense of genuine partnership in sharing the land" ([Guardian](#) 12/13/07).
- One Fatah member involved in the Geneva Initiative told Ha'aretz journalist Akiva Eldar that unless progress is made by the end of 2008, he will demand the IDF re-take responsibility for controlling the PA and move the struggle from one over independence to over equal rights. ([Ha'aretz](#) 2/22/08).
- Abu Mazen was reported to have distributed copies of an article by a former Jordanian minister calling for the unilateral dissolution of the PA on two separate occasions – during the last PLO Executive Committee meeting and during a discussion with prominent Palestinian journalists and columnists. (Khatib, [Bitterlemons](#) 3/10/2008).

## Potential Arab Inversion towards Two State Solution

Impatience with the lack of progress in negotiations between Israel and the PLO also caused the Arab League to reconsider its support for the Arab Peace Initiative. The initiative was originally adopted at the Arab Summit in Beirut (3/02) and symbolizes the adoption of the principle of the Two State Solution by the Arab countries.

- Arab League chief Amr Moussa said that the Arab leaders decided "to evaluate and review Arab strategies and the plan of action regarding reviving the peace process as a prelude to decide on next Arab moves." Moussa suggested such a review could take place by the middle of 2008. ([UK news](#)).
- The representative of Saudi Arabia in the Arab League, Ahmad Al-Qattan stated that the Arab peace initiative would not wait indefinitely. ([Maan News](#) 3/16).
- Hossam Zaki, spokesman for Egypt's Foreign Ministry said that "The challenge is do we continue to work with Israelis and Palestinians in order to achieve a two state solution...Or succumb to the will, the wishes, plans and ideas of those on both sides who are trying to change the reality on the ground and make the two state solution impossible." ([New York Times](#) 2/22).
- In an article in Al-Jazeera, former Jordanian minister (of Palestinian descent) Adnan Abu Odeh called on Abu Mazen to seriously consider unilaterally dissolving the PA and forcing Israel to choose between a two state solution or a single binational state. ([Al-Jazeera](#) 2/14/08).

## Potential Israeli-Arab Inversion towards Two State Solution

Recent statements by Israeli-Arab leaders implicitly undermine the paradigm of two nation states and may signal an ideological turning point regarding this principle.

In addition to more frequent comparisons between Israel and the former Apartheid regime in South Africa (with the implicit suggestions of "one man one vote") Israeli Arab leaders are also expressing more radical views regarding the 'outstanding issues' in the Israeli-Palestinian political process thus hampering its prospects of success and signaling that they may not necessarily accept an agreement between Israel and the PLO.

The result of these statements is the undermining of the paradigm of two nation states. It also poses a dilemma for Israel. If negotiations with the Palestinians result in an agreement, its legitimacy may be questioned. If negotiations fail, the paradigm of Two State Solution will be further undermined.

- Adalah, the 'Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel' is considering proposing a new constitution that calls for a supranational regime in all of 'historic Palestine' ([Adalah Newsletter 12/07](#)).

Although there is no direct reference to the issue of borders, the proposal essentially undermines the principle of the Two State Solution and promotes the idea of one bi-national state ([Ha'aretz, 20/12/07](#)).

- Balad MK Taha said that "Israeli Arabs are an integral part of the Palestinian people and are connected to the right of return...there are 250,000 internal refugees living in Israel." (Yonatan D. Halevi [NFC](#)).
- Senior lecturer at Haifa University Assad Ghanem stated that "A two state solution cannot be implemented without the agreement of the Palestinians living in Israel." (ibid).
- Speaking at the Israeli Apartheid week in Toronto, former Israeli MK Azmi Bishara stated that Israel "is actually the biggest armed robbery in the history of the 20th century." ([Jerusalem Post 2/18/08](#)).
- At the recent Doha Forum on Democracy, MK Ahmad Tibi accused Israel of discriminating against its Arab citizens and of having "established an apartheid state." ([Ha'aretz 4/15/08](#)).

End.