

CHAPTER

1

RETHINKING THE PROBLEM



For years, many in the international community have been trying to bring about a permanent peace between Israel and the Palestinians. But peace has proved elusive.

Hezbollah's 2006 attack on Israel, and Israel's intense response, reenergized the international effort to find a long-term solution to the seemingly intractable Palestinian-Israeli problem before a global catastrophe ensues. Recent Palestinian infighting has only exacerbated the urgency. But the current approach is doomed to ultimate failure.

Global events in the first few years of the 21st century make it clear that the road to peace is filled with much more than mutual distrust that can be overcome by open dialogue between Israelis and Palestinians alone. For starters, the norm across much of the Middle East is fanatical anti-Semitism that equals, or exceeds Nazi Germany's.¹ Anti-Semitism is widely preached by Muslim clerics in mosques,² is found in Arab government endorsed textbooks for children,³ and is publicly advanced by Islamic politicians.⁴

The ascent of Hamas in the West Bank and Gaza, while in part due to the corruption of the previous Palestinian governing body, is a reflection of the wider disdain for Israel in the Arab and Muslim world. To Hamas, duly elected by the Palestinians—yet subverted by Fatah—nothing short of the destruction of Israel is an acceptable final outcome to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It's in their charter.⁵ They do not hide it. They proclaim it with full candor: "Israel will exist and will continue to exist until Islam will obliterate it, just as it obliterated all others before it."⁶

Those who dismiss Hamas' stand as mere political rhetoric are either patronizing or naïve. Hamas' leaders mean what they say. They may be practical about their time frame for Israel's ultimate destruction, but there is no reason to believe that they will ever truly waiver from their goal.

Some say that the plight of the Palestinians is the root cause of all hostilities against Israel. They believe that if the Palestinians had their own state in the West Bank and Gaza, all would be well for Israel. The idea of Palestinian statehood in the West Bank and Gaza also fits neatly with conventional wisdom that holds that Israel can be any two of the following three, but never all three: (1) a democracy, (2) a Jewish state, and/or (3) a country composed of all of historic Israel—whatever it is that historic Israel is defined to include.

The logic is this: If Israel remains a Jewish state, and includes all of historic Israel, it cannot be democratic because retaining its Jewish identity means denying democracy to a substantial Arab population. Alternatively, if Israel consists of all of historic Israel, and pursues full democracy, the inclusion of the local Arab population will cause it to lose its Jewish character. Therefore, if Israel wants to be Jewish *and* democratic, the only real choice it has is to accept being smaller. It cannot geographically include all of historic Israel.