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Beyond Two State Solution – Why Recognizing State of Palestine is Important



In politics, context is crucial.

To truly appreciate the recent decision by Ireland, Spain and Norway to recognize the state of Palestine, the subject has to be placed in proper context.

On November 15, 1988, Yasser Arafat, then Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, declared Palestine as an independent state.

The proclamation took place within important and unique contexts:

One, the Palestinian uprising of December 1987 which ignited international support and sympathy with the Palestinian people.

Two, growing expectations that the Palestinian leadership needed to match the popular Intifada in the Occupied Territories with a political program so as not to squander the global attention obtained by the uprising.

There were other issues that are also worth a pause, including the growing marginalization of the PLO as the main political front of the Palestinian struggle.

This irrelevance was the natural political outcome of the forced exile of the PLO leadership from Lebanon to Algeria in 1982, which largely severed the connection between this leadership and an influential Palestinian constituency.

Though Arafat's announcement was made in Algiers, Palestinians in occupied Palestine and across the world rejoiced. They felt that their leadership was, once more, directly involved in their struggle, and that their Intifada, which, by then, had cost them hundreds of precious lives, had finally acquired some kind of political horizon.

The countries that almost immediately recognized the state of Palestine reflected the geopolitical formation at the time: Arab and Muslim countries, which fully and unconditionally recognized the nascent state. Additionally, there were countries in the Global South which expressed their historic solidarity with the Palestinian people.

A third category, which also mattered greatly, was represented by countries in Asia and eastern Europe – including Russia itself – which revolved within the Soviet sphere, posing a direct challenge to American hegemony and Western militarism and expansionism.

Soon after the Algiers Declaration, the geopolitics of the world received its greatest shock since World War II, namely the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the subsequent fragmentation of pro-Soviet states, thus the isolation of the Global South amid growing Western hegemony.

That, too, had a direct impact on Palestine. Though Arafat and his PLO made their fair share of mistakes and political miscalculations – leading to the Oslo Accords, the formation of the Palestinian Authority and the fragmentation of the Palestinian front itself – the Palestinian leadership's options, from a strict geopolitical analysis, were quite limited.

Back then, the PLO had one out of two options: either to continue with the struggle for freedom and independence based on the national liberation model or to adopt a purely political approach based on negotiations and supposed 'painful compromises'. They opted for the latter, which proved to be a fatal mistake.

Political negotiations can be rewarding when the negotiating parties have leverage. While Israel had the leverage of being the occupying power and receiving unconditional support from the US and its Western allies, the Palestinians had very little.

Therefore, the outcome was as obvious as it was predictable. The PLO was sidelined in favor of a new political entity, the PA, which redefined the concept of political leverage altogether, to essentially mean direct financial benefits to an Israeli-sanctioned ruling class.

Since 1988, more countries recognized the state of Palestine, though that recognition remained largely confined within the geopolitical formations at each phase of history. For example, between 2008 and 2011, more South American countries recognized Palestine, a direct outcome of new and assertive political independence achieved in that part of the world. In 2012, Palestine was voted by the United Nations General Assembly as a non-member observer state, allowing it to officially use the name ‘State of Palestine’ for all political purposes.

All Palestinian efforts since then have failed to overcome the power paradigm that continues to exist at the UN, separating the UNGA from those with veto power at the Security Council. The events of October 7, and the genocidal war that followed, have certainly ushered in a massive global movement that challenged the pre-existing geopolitical paradigm regarding Palestine.

If the war, however, had taken place, say ten years ago, the global response to the Palestinian plea for solidarity may have been different. But this is not the case, since the world is itself experiencing a major state of flux. New rising global powers have been boldly challenging, and changing, the world’s status quo geopolitics for years. This includes Russia’s direct confrontation with NATO in Ukraine, China’s rise to global power status, the growing influence of BRICS and the more assertive African and South American political agendas.

For its part, the Gaza war has also challenged the concept of military power as a guarantor of permanent dominance. This is now obvious in the Middle East and also globally.

The latter realization has finally allowed for new, significant margins to appear, allowing Western European countries to finally accept the reality that Palestine deserves to be a state, that the Palestinian aspirations must be honored and that international law must be respected.

Now, the challenge for Palestinians is whether they will be able to utilize this historic moment to the fullest degree. Hopefully, the precious blood spilled in Gaza would prove more sacred than the limited financial gains by a small group of politicians.

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