

A PARADIGM SHIFT FROM TWO-STATE TO ONE-STATE SOLUTION

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The discourse of a two-state solution

Recently, the political discourse of a two-state solution is fading away due to the new facts on the ground generated by the Israeli systematic policies of occupation. Twenty-five years had elapsed since the signing of the Oslo accords which made the two-state solution the only game in town. However, the recent objective conditions synchronized with self-developments on both sides bolstered a draconian paradigm shift towards exploring new plausible solutions, of which the most potential is the one-state solution. This article will explore the failures of the two-state solution and the emergence of the one-state solution in a contextual analysis of pros and cons for the former as well as the latter.

Evidently, Israel bears the brunt of this dramatic situation with its consistent policy of subjugation of Palestinians and the confiscation of their lands, let alone the human rights breaching practiced by the Israelis in the occupied territories. These severe conditions suffered by the Palestinians are precarious at best in reframing the contours of the alleged Palestinian state on the 1967 borders.

Israel also exploits the factional bickering between Hamas and Fatah to create new facts on the ground coupled with the regional security imbalances and the extreme support of the United States along with a weak European Union busy with the UK Brexit and the internal splits over the issues of refugees and anti-Semitism. These conducive conditions are well utilised by Netanyahu in justifying land grab and the building of new settlements.

Consequently, the two-state solution is under a serious challenge. The increasing number of settlers 650,000 in the West Bank and East Jerusalem is a major stumbling block to a contiguous Palestinian state. It is safe to assume that these clear signs of growing misperceptions among both is impossible to accomplish and hard to attain. Regardless, of all strenuous diplomatic efforts exerted in the last two decades never contrived to change the shift from the existing status quo of brute occupation. Subsequently, the peace camps on both sides lost their impact and rendered ineffective coupled with the stalling of the peace talks and the historic paradigm of the intractable issues which are in serious doubt today.

The breakdown of the peace process is paving the way for a new approach that could be much more complexed and problematic like:

- a. Maintaining the status quo.**
- b. A single bi-national state.**
- c. A confederation between Israel and Palestine.**

d. A confederation between Palestine and Jordan.

All these various options are still premature to be a full political discourse, for the one state solution is not acquiescent to both under the current circumstances of a total stalemate. So, the two-state solution is higher on the agenda of both Palestinians and Israelis, and the maintaining of the current status quo will pose steep challenges for Israeli's identity as a Jewish state and a democracy. It is imperative to account for the two-state solution as it had developed since the signing of the Oslo accords. Its specific parameters had been well-defined based on the following:

a. International framework: U.N. resolutions 242 and 338, withdrawal to the 1967 borders, end of claims, and mutual recognised boundaries.

b. Territory and boundaries: the 1967 borders, border rectification based on geographic contiguity and demographic considerations, and finally dismantlement of settlements.

c. Refugee: a just settlement for the Palestinian refugees based on U.N. resolutions and international humanitarian law.

d. Jerusalem: implementing the Clinton parameters with full accessibility to the holy sites by all religious worshippers with the arrangement of a special regime for the old city/a corpus separatum.

e. Security: will be based on a Palestinian demilitarised state with an international multilateral force acting as a buffer deployed in the Jordan Valley agreed by both parties.

f. Mutually agreed recognition of the two sovereign states based on a shared transboundary equitable resource.

These intractable issues of the final phase should be addressed fully for a permanent resolution to this protracted conflict with a full consent to land swaps. This favourable solution is still being supported by the international community regardless of the regional complexities and the internal splits among both publics which in turn makes it more complex and difficult to achieve. The loss of trust had become disillusioned with the two-state solution to end the conflict. Therefore, security and mistrust push the body politic to the extreme right in Israel which totally convinced Israel to maintain the status quo and ending the Oslo accords to a dismal failure.

These current factors on the ground and the new emerged state of being are developing into a recipe for disaster in attaining the Palestinian national project, which by de facto pushes for new debates, political discourses over alternative options to be considered. It is evident by now that the two-state solution is relatively acceptable by both publics with less support being visible today than a decade ago. Mutual distrust and fear are growing more than ever, and the normative view of a two-state solution is crumbling by the day. However, it is important to note that the Palestinian leadership and the public at large did not declare the two-state solution as dead regardless of the dynamic changes on the ground.

The one-state debate

Recently, as the two-state is fading away, there exists today a one-state Israel which controls the West Bank and East Jerusalem by its security and economic policies, thus maintaining a very cheap occupation to sustain. The proponents of a one-state solution firmly believe that a single unified state with full equal rights of citizenship regardless of race, ethnicity, and religion based on freedom

is the most plausible with less xenophobic nationalisms on both sides. One problem to this solution is that it would threaten the concept of a Jewish state.

A second model is for a single state that recognises both individual and collective rights through a multicultural approach. Both communities would share the same land but remain nationally separate. To illustrate further the one state model, it is clear the political reality on the ground is a single state de facto based on a colonial settler movement epitomised in an apartheid system. Many efforts should be exerted to adopt this model, i.e. narrowing the gulf of inequity between both people to accommodate a state for all its citizens. This discourse is becoming more popular among the youth, intellectuals and the academics in the West Bank and Gaza, and it is also favoured by the Palestinians living in the diaspora. Such a trend emanated from the frustrations with the stalemate of the peace process and the burdens of occupation that looks too remote to end. Regardless of the enthusiasm in the direction of a one state model, it still lacks the institutionalisation process which failed in founding traction in daily politics. It is clear by now that the apartheid policies of Israel will act as a major catalyst to a paradigm shift by the youths in adopting the one state model.

The pros and cons of alternative solutions

Continuation of the status quo

For advocates of this current situation, most Israelis believe that reaching a solution with the Palestinians is a very low priority. Consequently, the status quo is satisfactory. The leaders are unwilling to move ahead and seem unprepared to take calculated risks involved in advancing peace and with the absence of a trusted third-party broker to facilitate the negotiations process.

There are many trade-offs as far as Israel is concerned because effective control of the West Bank and Gaza remains highly costly in terms of resources. The perpetuation of the occupation limits strategic and economic opportunities with regional and international actors and creates the conducive conditions for intermittent conflicts that will prolong the zero-sum scenario which further intensifies confrontation and violence. There should be a genuine re-thinking of how to avoid the escalation that is exacerbated towards confusion and anarchy. Surely, this rationale lends itself towards a deep soul-searching that seeks truth and reconciliation and a mitigation of the Palestinians' suffering as well as the end of occupation.

In general, the continuation of the status quo is disastrous in terms of conflict, stability and security; not only in Palestine and Israel, but in the Middle East region.

Two-state solution

Pros	Cons
A pragmatic and viable resolution that has not been given up on completely yet as it seems to be the fairest solution for both sides but still requires trust and good will for a division in sovereignty without territorial separation.	Since Oslo, only 43% of Palestinian citizens would currently accept it, compounded by the fact that American politics heavily favours Israel's policies.
The push for it has become a priority in terms of security, where special measures and arrangements will comprehensively address	From the Palestinian side, the increasing number of Israeli settlements and the decreasing control of the Palestinian Authority

risky state and nonstate actors.	over those areas have led to a dwindling support in favour of it.
Although public opinion trends are not favourable to this solution on either side, they are not the main influencer for both governments.	The principles of this solution fundamentally ignore how interlinked and intermeshed both societies are in terms of economy, settler population, basic infrastructure and even Palestinians residing within Israel.
In Israel, there is no alternative vision more ideal or feasible than the two-state solution despite the public's pessimism about it.	Parties on both sides such as Hamas and Israeli right-wing groups deem the two-state solution as impractical because it runs against their core national goals where each side envisions the other as utterly beaten.

Israeli-Palestinian confederation

The confederation is a model of two independent sovereign states with strong economic ties yet clearly defined territorial borders. The basic concept of this idea is advocated mostly by civil society organisations and is based upon the notion of two governments and a border on or near the pre-1967's "green line", where each state is given the freedom to practice its national rights and identity.

The terms that shape this confederation are a far cry from the two-state paradigm, as it pushes for certain components of each state's sovereignty to be shared and agreed upon. For example, the border will be set in place to facilitate and not to restrict movement. Furthermore, every person would be afforded an equal opportunity to work or study or traverse the region, except for specific individuals who present a legitimate risk to security.

Jerusalem, being a significant point of contention, will become a city that serves as the capital of the two nations. Holy sites will be overseen by an independent international administration, in the same manner outlined in the two-state solution.

Limitless movement and an integrated Jerusalem will not be achieved without special security arrangements and structural changes. These measures will require tight security coordination from both sides as outlined by the Oslo accords; this cooperation will serve to reinforce the previously mentioned arrangements and changes.

Another major pro of the confederation model is that it provides citizens of both sides the right to peacefully secede as well as the opportunity to live as permanent inhabitants in the other state albeit being able to only vote in elections of their country of origin, these terms also extend to the 1948 refugees returning to Israel.

One-state solution

Pros	Cons
A viable solution to be considered if the two-state solution's complexities become hard to resolve.	This resolution is considered by most Israelis as racist and unequal because they view it as a slow but definite demise of their current Jewish state.
The Palestinians' long-term goals and interests demand this solution to be revived as it affords	Has very little support from the left and right, especially the right whose ultimate dream is

a unified state with equal rights of citizenship for all as well as free movement, access to land and resources.	the Zionist Jewish state, these groups regard this solution as a threat to Jewish identity and nationalism.
Critics of the two-state solution have demonstrated the difficulty of freezing and dismantling Israeli settlements.	Provides a clear advantage for one nation to dominate the other in terms of sovereignty, collective rights and national aspirations. Also, it would legalise Israeli settlements and weaken diplomatic leverage enjoyed by the Palestinians.
	There have been some models of a one state for two nations, namely the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, but those examples are quickly disappearing.
	Israeli-Palestinian partition remains the path of least resistance for political leadership who factor in public opinion, the majority of which still believe in the two-state solution however unlikely it may be for both sides.
	Palestinians' dream of living in their own sovereign state after decades of statelessness and resistance is too tempting for a one state solution to be advocated by them.
	Perks for statehood are too appealing for either side to consider a one-state solution. Those perks and opportunities include but are not limited to financial benefits given through membership in the international community, regulatory powers, trade agreements, diplomatic ties and participation in international organisations.

What is required from the international community to salvage the two-state solution since it has adopted it after the Oslo peace process?

The international community has been officially committed to a two-state solution, particularly in the aftermath of the Oslo accords in 1993. However, with Trump recognising Jerusalem as Israel's capital and reversing years of U.S. policy; the idea of upholding a traditional two-state model has been put on life support, making it less likely of an optimal negotiated resolution for the Palestinian cause.

Due to Israel's continued violations of international law with its unrelenting settler activity that prohibits the Palestinian people from establishing their own sovereign state, it is imperative to call upon the international community to condemn and put an end to such violations, which are contributing to the slow death of the two-state solution. Furthermore, in order to give the two-state solution a new lease on life, Europe must recognise Palestine as an independent state on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, and agreements regarding settlement policy and demolition of Palestinian homes must be set in place by the United Nations for Israel to comply with. Finally, a joint international group should be created in order to maintain peace and stability in the region whilst abiding by United Nations resolutions.

For a genuine and lasting peace, Oslo must be repackaged/expanded and a mutually accepted political/economic framework needs to be reformed by policy makers on both sides for discussions of a two-state solution to come back into focus, such collective efforts for an improved version of Oslo must be implemented in order to rehabilitate the two-state solution. Moreover, a softening of positions on both sides, an extension of economic peace, and an unconditional end to Israel's colonization project are crucial; the lack of doing so could prove to have grave consequences for Israel, Palestine as well as the United States.

Concluding Remarks

Since the signing of the Oslo accords, the peace process went through periods of total stalemate. The two-state had been the ideal plausible solution accepted in principle by the parties to the conflict and blessed by the international community. The political frame of reference has been and still is the United Nation Security Council Resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). However, the rapid changes on the ground created new objective conditions that exacerbated the relationship between the contending parties.

The third-party brokerage, i.e. the United States failed to narrow the gulf of inequity between the parties and took a clear stand in unequivocally supporting Israel. Regardless of the futile effort exerted, the United States failed in achieving a peace deal. However, the land grab policy of Israel through a right-wing government catering to the settlers is making it impossible for a Palestinian geographic contiguity that will never become a viable state.

Direct negotiations stopped since Annapolis and the difference in perspectives, approaches, or even direct talks became far apart. Consequently, after twenty-five years of a futile peace process and with the dramatic changes on the ground, the political discourse on the two-state solution became less important and other alternatives opened a new way of rethinking the entire process of ending the conflict.

Models of one-state, a bi-national state, confederation with Jordan, federation with Israel became more fashionable since there is no hope for implementing the two-state under the present conditions. Whether doable or not, at least these models are being discussed in intellectual salons among academics, politicians, youth and particularly the Palestinian diaspora. These models have been mapped briefly to shed light with no in-depth analysis, however, one cannot deny that the serious discussions about alternatives are getting exposed to the public in general. Most importantly, is there a hope for reconciliation and is the two-state viable with the cancerous spread of settlements? Furthermore, the internal Palestinian split is an added complexed factor that impedes a consensus in public opinion. What we live today is a status quo plus which is very convenient for Israel with no cost at all.

Dramatic changes are key to any solution. Until then, the Palestinians will continue to suffer from a repulsive occupation that will deny them their national identity and their aspirations for a viable contiguous state.

About the author

Manuel Hassassian is a professor of Political Science and International Relations and currently serves as the ambassador of Palestine to Hungary. Previously, he served for thirteen years as the ambassador to the UK between 2005-2018.