

The Two-state Solution and Its Dual Significance for the Palestinian People and the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan

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1

Introduction

Jordan has long linked its national security perspective with the establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. From the Jordanian strategic perspective, this solution is intertwined with the other issues surrounding the Final Solution: a sustainable peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians on borders, Jerusalem, refugees' right of return, and territories. The Final Solution is tightly linked to vital Jordanian interests including the return of refugees (a significant proportion of Jordanians are of Palestinian descent and possess the right of return) and Jerusalem (Hashemite guardianship). The rationale of these interests relate to Jordanian demographic balance, American or Israeli attempts to involve Jordan in the internal Palestinian situation, and the historical and symbolic dimension underpinning the Hashemite legitimacy.

This paper attempts to discuss convictions within Jordanian and Palestinian political circles regarding the two-state solution and its consequences for Jordan and Palestine in light of the US administration's latest steps, be it the

US's declaration of the "Deal of the Century", the transfer of its embassy to Jerusalem, or its proposed vision for a Final Solution that would ultimately negate the two-state solution as Jordanians and Palestinians understand it. This would practically put an end to the dream of establishing a true, rather than a figurative, Palestinian state, as it practically and realistically eliminates displaced Palestinians' right of return and promotes a distorted entity called the "Palestinian state", one which bears none of the essential characteristics of a real state.

Concrete American steps and theoretical concepts that promote the Final Solution as well as the unfolding normalization agreements between Arab states and Israel and discussions of "regional peace" as a term for introducing normalization with Israel; and diluting Palestinian demands into a less significant component of such peace, will destroy the two-state solution, which is the option Jordan has always sought and defended, and on which His Majesty King Abdullah II wrote a book entitled *Our Last Best Chance*.

At this juncture, a legitimate and strategic question arises: How does Jordan view these developments? What are the implications for its national security? What alternate options do Jordanians and Palestinians have given all the intersections and overlap between their respective strategic interests? Is there still something that can be done to protect the two-state solution and confront the plot to abort the Palestinian state and sabotage its true foundations?

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The Two-state Solution: Historical Background

Whenever the phrase “two-state solution” is mentioned in any media outlet throughout the world, it is undoubtedly understood in reference to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This prolonged conflict and its pursuant problems have made it a household name in international political discourse. It has been the subject of United Nations resolutions, joint political statements, press conferences and discussions with Arab foreign ministers both inside and outside the Arab region.

The term “two-state solution” is usually mentioned in the context of peace talks, which is an important and desirable goal at both the regional and the international levels due to the importance of Middle East stability.

Interest in the two-state solution arose after Israel’s aggression against Egypt, Jordan, and Syria in June 1967 which resulted in Israel’s occupation of territories in all three of those countries, including the West Bank and Gaza Strip in Palestine. Israel had paved the way politically for that aggression by making it appear as a preemptive war to defend Israel in an attempt to avoid sanctions according to the UN Charter.

After the war, the UN Security Council issued Resolution 242,¹ which affirmed the peace terms most important of which was the withdrawal from the occupied territories as a precursor to establishing a lasting peace. The international effort to reach a lasting peace stalled, and the Swedish UN Envoy Dr. Gunnar Jarring’s mission was terminated. Next, a new war erupted in October 1973, and the United States intervened to end it, which was then followed by three Arab-Israeli peace agreements. The first was the Camp David Accords between Egypt and Israel in 1979, in which Egypt recovered its occupied territories. After that came the Oslo Accords between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel in 1993. This accord did not result in Israel’s withdrawal from occupied Palestinian territories, but rather in the establishment of a Palestinian autonomy. The third agreement was between Jordan and Israel in 1994. As for the Syrian occupied territories, they remained under Israeli control after the failed US-led talks between the two nations. It is worth noting that, since the October War in 1973, control

¹ For the text of the resolution in English, see <https://unispal.un.org/unispal.nsf/0/7D35E1F729DF491C85256EE700686136>

of the Middle East peace process shifted from the UN to the US.

The terms of the Oslo Accords stipulated the PLO's recognition of the State of Israel, but but did not include the establishment of a Palestinian state. The negotiators agreed to postpone that matter until the so-called "Final Solution" negotiations mentioned in the Accords. In this regard, Palestinians, as well as the rest of the world, understood

this as a commitment for the establishment of a Palestinian state, a solution that would finally bring lasting peace to the region, while Israel has only recognized the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians. Twenty-seven years have passed since this agreement, yet the state of Palestine has not been established, and the two sides have thus far failed to reach a final solution. Who is responsible for this?

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Main Actors in the Peace Process

In addition to the two parties to the conflict (Israel and the Palestinian Authority), the main actors in the peace process include the UN and the US, which, as previously noted, began pulling the strings since the early 1970's. Later, the Quartet on the Middle East was formed in 2002, whose membership included the UN, the European Union, the US, and Russia. In the following, I will discuss each party's role in the process over the past quarter of a century.

Starting with the UN, which is the refuge for oppressed nations and peoples and represents the basis and reference point for international law. Since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority until today, Israel has not stopped building settlements and settling Israeli citizens in them thus continuing its settlement activities since 1967 in defiance of the Hague and the Geneva Conventions.

The Arab states lodged complaints relentlessly against Israel on account of these flagrant violations, and the Palestinian Authority followed suit. However, no real action was ever taken to stop such violations. When the Palestinian Authority addressed the

Security Council with its complaints, it was met with the American veto. The US has used its veto power more than forty times against Palestinian complaints, despite the international consensus condemning Israel's behavior.²

The US has played the role of Israel's indirect partner in building the settlements. We should note that the US, from the moment it decided to play the part of peacemaker until now, has only offered two proposals. The first, which bears the name of President Reagan,³ was a peace initiative proposed in September 1982 after the expulsion of the fedayeen (Palestinian guerrillas] from Lebanon. The crux of this project was to establish self-government in the West Bank (and Gaza) in association with Jordan. While it mentioned halting Israeli settlements, it made no mention of establishing a Palestinian state. To the contrary, the US was not convinced that peace could be achieved

² In 2016, in a historic precedent, the US, under the leadership of President Barack Obama, abstained from voting and allowed the Security Council for the first time to adopt a resolution demanding a halt to the settlements in the West Bank: <https://bit.ly/3poAqFZ>

³ For the details of what is known as the Reagan Plan, see <https://bit.ly/36r8mcc>.

through the establishment of a Palestinian state. The second proposal, President Trump's so-called "Deal of the Century,"⁴ also makes no mention of a real Palestinian state.

Upon Washington's request in March 1991, His Majesty, the late King Hussein, dispatched me as an envoy to find out what President Bush intended to do for an international peace conference he announced following the liberation of Kuwait on 28 February 1990. In my meeting with the then US Secretary of State James Baker, he told me candidly that there would be no Palestinian state, but "... an entity, more than an autonomy and less than a state." From this, we concluded that the second actor in the peace process had adopted the Israeli position against the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The third actor, the Quartet, which was formed in 2002 and included the US, concluded its business in 2016 after failing to make any progress towards lasting peace by establishing a Palestinian state. John Kerry, the US Secretary of State under President Obama and the last American representative in the Quartet, merely advised Israel that its policies would lead to the establishment of apartheid which would tarnish its image in the world.⁵ The American position clearly reflects America's support for Israel, whose policies are based on preventing the establishment of a Palestinian state.

⁴ For the Arabic translation of the so-called "Deal of the Century" see <https://bit.ly/38xpjo5>

⁵ For details, see <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/28/israel-apartheid-state-peace-talks-john-kerry>

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Why Does Israel Reject the Two-state Solution?

This fact begs a very important question: Why does Israel reject the establishment of a Palestinian state, the very thing that would lead to its acceptance within the Arab milieu and save it from international embarrassment? Israel's position is both illogical and irrational, and in this section I attempt to explain the irrationality of this position.

When the UN resolved to divide Palestine into a Jewish state and a Palestinian state in 1947, the then seven Arab states and the Palestinian representatives rejected this resolution due to its perceived unfairness. They also refused the resolution for another reason: they rejected the introduction of a foreign state into the homogenous region, which has its own predominantly Arab identity, culture, history, and demography.

Thus, they tried to contain the new Jewish state in the form of a siege and a boycott that lasted until 1967. This strategy came to an end when Israel won its crushing military victory over the Arab armies. At that time, Egypt and Jordan accepted Security Council Resolution 242, while Syria accepted it by extension

after the October War via Security Council Resolution 338⁶ (which stipulated Resolution 242). As a result of the acceptance of these two resolutions, the Arab countries reversed course and accepted the existence of Israel as their neighbor. Thus, the doors were opened for Israel, the blockade ended, and the peace process became the point of reference for all countries.

However, what needed to happen was the return of the occupied land and establishment of peace. The Arab countries declared their acceptance of the State of Israel, provided that peace be achieved and the Palestinian state established. They even reached the point of declaring a resolution in the 2002 Arab Summit in Beirut, by which the Arabs would accept Israel in their midst if it accepted a peace with the Palestinians based on the two-state solution. Thus, The Arab states promised to accept what they had previously rejected in 1947 and establish normal relations with Israel. However, Israel did not respond to this generous offer. Why? Israel must have a reason.

⁶ For Resolution 338 in Arabic, see <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/338>

Israel is the project of a Jewish nationalist movement founded in 19th-century Europe, an era of nationalism and colonialism. Although religion does not constitute a nationality, the leaders of the Zionist movement then were able to blend religion, history, and the Christian persecution of the Jews in Europe into a movement. This movement's main goal was to rescue the Jews through finding a homeland to protect them. Palestine was the desired location, and this concept formed an ideology that became embodied in the State of Israel.

Israel's refusal to allow the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is driven by its adherence to an ideology which is based on two pillars. The first pillar is the land of historic Palestine, which Israel completely secured in the June 1967 War. The second pillar is to ensure Jewish control over the whole territory. so, Israel refuses to permit the establishment of an Arab Palestinian state on it.

Thus, Israel's rejectionist position with regards to a Palestinian state is a purely ideological position, not a political one pursuing state interests based on reason, rather than emotions. Further, Israel's ideological position was confirmed when the Nation-State Law was issued in 2018, which defined Israel as a nation-state for the Jewish people only. Since 1948, about seventy years before the enactment of this law, the State of Israel has dealt with Palestinians who did not abandon their homes

in their cities and villages in accordance with the contents of this law. In order to indirectly minimize the Palestinian population growth by preventing or delaying marriages, Israel created directives that prevented or hindered the construction of new family dwellings located in the cities or villages. Despite such practices, Palestinians living in Israel today make up about 20% of the population, and most of them live within the so-called Triangle area. According to the details of the so-called "Deal of the Century" the American side suggests "the possibility, subject to agreement of the parties, that the borders of Israel will be redrawn such that the Triangle Communities become part of the State of Palestine." This is a very interesting turn of events since the Triangle area was under the control of the Jordanian army before the signing of Rhodes Armistice Agreements in April 1949. Lacking this area, Israel's geography suffered a "lean waist" and accordingly Israel and its allies pressured Jordan during difficult and complex negotiations to exchange the Triangle area for the southern hills of Hebron in order to eliminate that "lean waist". Israel then began to exert military pressure on the residents of the Triangle to emigrate, as it had done in other areas. However, the residents stood their ground and did not leave, and today the Triangle and its inhabitants are a source of demographic and geographic concern for Israel.

I believe there are two additional reasons that nourish Israeli rejectionism:

1. They have the support of the most powerful nation in the world, the US, which has turned a blind eye to their many violations of international law and protected them with its veto power. Moreover, lobbying groups and influential figures within the American Jewish community, such as AIPAC, as well as fundamentalist Evangelical groups in the US, are major, active, and effective actors in shaping American policies, especially vis-à-vis the Middle East.

2. The triumphalism that seized Israeli leaders after their crushing military victory over the Arab armies in the June 1967 War has inhibited their rational decision-making and made them feel that they can achieve the impossible. In my opinion, their latest accomplishment (recognition and normalized relations with the UAE, Bahrain, and Sudan, and peace with their neighbors, Egypt and Jordan) feeds into the triumphalism and increases Israel's defiance. This triumphalism also emboldened Israeli leaders when Israel occupied the rest of the land and fulfilled the first half of their dream.

The question is whether or not the Israelis are willing to accept the negative image Secretary of State Kerry warned them about. By rejecting both the establishment of single state with two nationalities and the establishment of a Palestinian state in the occupied territories, is Israel willing to turn their country into an apartheid state? The issue depends on changing the Israeli political structure, which the ideological right has mostly dominated since the 1995 assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, the last Israeli political leader who believed in peace. Since his assassination, the power of politicians governed by rational political thought has declined, and the power of right-wing ideology has taken its place. Many Israeli right-wing ideologues make no secret of their intention, to annex the Palestinian land they call Judea and Samaria, but without its people. That raises fears in Jordan, that Palestinians may be further and further confined in urban centres or pushed to leave the country east wards.

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What Should We Do as Jordanians and Palestinians?

At this point, as Jordanians, we must be vigilant and active in protecting Jordan. The abortion of a Palestinian state and its erasure from the map will certainly have grave repercussions for Jordanian identity. In reality, this fear has existed since the early days of the Jordanian leadership, even during the reign of His Majesty, the late King Hussein. I also believe that it persists under His Majesty King Abdullah II, based on Jordan's consistent position in support of the two-state solution. We must support this position and demand that the Jordanian leadership expand it so that it gains the support of Arab, Muslim, and international leaders especially that the two-state solution is internationally popular and helps grant legitimacy to Palestinian demands. Jordan must strive to end the division between the Palestinians in the occupied territories, which weakens their position on the global stage which is a fertile ground amenable to Palestinian demands for self-determination and an independent state. This is especially true after the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union, which focused on economic issues rather than universal values unlike democratic countries today who do

focus on universal values. We can see this in the reactions to the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement. Though highly contested by some, it enjoys popularity in many Western universities and societies as a Palestinian form of non-violent resistance. For Jordan, the two-state solution should be the core of its defensive international relations strategy, since it has been embraced by the world, including the UN, as the basis for lasting peace in the Middle East.

Due to the security importance of the two-state solution for Jordan, I propose the formation of a high committee which would track the positions of the world's countries on this issue in order to solicit their support for the two-state solution to build peace and stability in the Middle East, a region of international importance. The committee's mission would include studying the positions of other nations, identifying their interests, and connecting them to the two-state solution for the purpose of advocating for it.

Jordanian leadership should apply this information in its bilateral and international

diplomatic activities. Usually, during His Majesty the King's visits to foreign capitals and participation in international conferences, he is advised to include references to Middle East peace in his speeches and link it to the two-state solution. When issuing any statement about this activity, whether at the bilateral or international level, there must be a reference to the two-solution as a pillar of lasting peace in the region.

At the very least, the perpetual international demand for a two-state solution would deter Israel, and may even prompt it to pull back from its expansionist intentions. This activity should not be limited to governments, but rather must extend to civic society and student unions in order to widen the base of its support globally. As such, one of the proposed high committee's tasks will be to establish friendly relations with these organizations.

Perhaps the most important means of strategic defense for Jordan is conscious action and continuous efforts towards stabilizing the inhabitants of the occupied territories in their land. In this context, it must be noted that sustenance migration is a significant global phenomenon; Asians, Africans, Eastern Europeans, Latin Americans and Arabs are all migrating for a better living.

Sustenance migration may be a key engine for changing the demographic balance. As economic factors pressure or force Palestinians to migrate, this may encourage

certain countries in dire need of migrants and skilled workers to welcome them. I do not rule out resource-rich Arab countries, which have recently opened their doors to Israel, to be among the countries that will open their doors to welcome Palestinians seeking work.

Stabilization requires that the Palestinians in the occupied territories be steadfast in the face of Israel's plans to uproot them. This is the best way to halt the legitimization of the annexation of occupied territories to Israel. Thus, Jordan and the proposed high committee, in self-defense, should formally and earnestly pursue this matter to maintain its security, while also continuing to advocate for the two-state solution. Jordan should highlight the two-state solution as a better solution for Palestinians to earn a livelihood, through developing the proposed Palestinian state and emphasizing its visible and latent development potential. Jordan can also address the task of stabilizing Palestinians in the occupied territories by adopting and enacting several other measures. One such measure could be to facilitate the import of Palestinian agricultural and manufacturing products. Additionally, as Jordanians, our commitment to the two-state solution should be no less than our commitment to Al-Aqsa (Jerusalem).

It is worth noting that most of the world's countries, including the Arab countries, advocate for the two-state solution without demanding that Israel halts settlement

building. It is crucial that this position evolves to include not only the demand of the two-state solution but also to demand an end to settlement building as a precursor to resuming negotiations. The “two-state solution” demand on its own does not stop the settlement building. Before they stopped, Palestinian-Israeli negotiations were taking place while the settlements continued to be built, until the number of settlers reached the hundreds of thousands. Neither the “two-state solution” slogan nor the resumption of negotiations will help the Palestinian cause for statehood without stopping of settlement building.

I also propose that the Jordanian government use its diplomatic apparatus to explain this issue to the friendly Arab countries, so that their position becomes “the two-state solution and the cessation of the settlements.” This note is very important, so that we do not fall

in Israel’s trap and unwittingly oppose the establishment of the Palestinian state.

Finally, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority must be fully aware of the ruse of a Palestinian “archipelago” state (i.e., a state made up of discrete, non-contiguous pieces of land called a “state”). This ploy goes hand in hand with the Israeli right-wing ideology, which seeks to expel a greater number of Palestinians from the Jewish state by carving out the smallest possible amount of land for the largest number of Palestinians. One of the most important features of a true state is territorial contiguity with a single boundary and sovereignty over land, air, and water.

The greatest of all fears is that Israel and the US succeed in deceiving the world by presenting an “archipelago” state called the “State of Palestine.”

About the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Jordan & Iraq

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Likewise, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Jordan & Iraq office supports building and strengthening civil society and public institutions in Jordan and Iraq. We work extensively with civil society institutions and across the political spectrum to establish platforms for democratic dialogue, hold conferences and workshops, and issue policy papers on current political issues.

About the author

Adnan Abu Odeh (*1933) was a political advisor to late King Hussein Ibn Talal in Jordan and Chief of the Royal Court (1984 - 1992). He later became political advisor to King Abdullah II (1999 - 2000). Odeh served as Jordan's permanent representative to the United Nations (1992 - 1995) as Minister of Information in several governments in the 1970s and as Senator in Jordan's Upper House.

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