

# **A PRIMARY SURVEY OF ONE STATE SOLUTION(S) FOR ISRAEL/PALESTINE: PROPOSALS, APPLICABILITY AND PUBLIC ACCEPTABILITY**

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**Abstract:** The two-state solution and the logic of partition between an Israel and a Palestine has come to be widely considered outdated, and we have witnessed the re-emergence of the one-state logic that had itself fallen out of favor with the Oslo Accords and the negotiations that followed. The paper explains the theoretical frameworks of some of these proposals (binationalism, cosociationalism, multiculturalism, and confederalism) and then divides them into four categories based on the solutions they offer to the major contested issues, such as Jerusalem and the refugee issue, as well as the political positions of those who have proposed them. This paper suggests a division into four categories: first, Israeli proposals for assimilation that aim to eliminate Palestinian identity and reinforce the status quo of One Israeli State with first class citizenships for Jews and, at best, second or third class citizenships for Arabs; secondly, confederal proposals aiming to share the same land while maintaining each community's separate identity; thirdly, unitary proposals suggesting fusing the identities of both and orchestrating a new mutual identity; and finally Palestinian original proposals based on the British unkept promise in the 1939 White Paper and the PLO's original stance of One Palestinian State for both Arabs – whether they be Muslims or Christians – and Jews. The paper goes on to scrutinize these solutions based on various different criteria. Finally, the paper deals with possible scenarios based on a general reading of the current course of action.



## Introduction

Since Netanyahu first ascended to the office of Prime Minister of Israel in 1997, the two-state solution has been in decline. Lately, with intensified settlement expansion and Israeli policies intended to undermine the two-state solution along the lines of UNSC Resolution 242, the logic of partition is almost dead, and with it the promises of a two-state solution. This has been largely reinforced by Trump being elected president of the United States, the historical broker of the peace negotiations. The U.S., though it has always been clearly biased towards the Israeli side, had at least in theory remained committed to the idea of a two-state solution to end this conflict. The new administration, however, avoids even using the term.<sup>1</sup>

Automatically, other solutions have begun to be studied and promoted as alternatives to fill the 'vacuum of discourse', and on the top of these have come solutions not requiring separation such the so called 'one state Solution'. This paper explains that there is no single one state Solution on the table but rather many. It divides these solutions into four categories, with each category having its own defining features and major agreement on major issues, but it should be noted that even within each category there are often differences of opinions on some issues. The first category is Israeli right-wing solutions calling for 'closing files' to end the conflict; the second is the confederal solution; the third is a one state solution with a new orchestrated identity; and finally the historical PLO one state demand from before it adopted the '10 Points' and accepted the logic of partition.

The fact that the one state logic has gained momentum lately should not, however, imply that it is a new proposal. It is rather the original and first solution proposed by almost every actor: mandatory Great Britain, Arab Palestinians under the

mandate and later on the PLO, and some Jewish voices.

In 1939, in response to the Great Palestinian Revolution that began in 1936, the Great Britain, the mandatory power, issued what was called the White Paper vowing it would limit Jewish immigration into Palestine and establish a Palestinian state on the whole of the historical land of Palestine (mandatory Palestine) for all its Muslim, Christian and Jewish citizens.

Exhausted by WWII, Britain then abandoned its vows and responsibility as the Mandatory Power by unilaterally referring the case of Palestine to the newly established United Nations. In 1947, the UN General Assembly (UNGA) passed Resolution 181, that came to be known as the Partition Plan, suggesting dividing Palestine for the first time into two states with an economic union; an Arab state and a Jewish state.

In 1964, the Palestine Liberation Organization's charter declared in Article 7 that "Jews of Palestinian origin are considered Palestinians if they are willing to live peacefully and loyally in Palestine.". Later, at the PLO's fifth national council convened in February 1969 where Yasir Arafat was elected as the President of the Executive Committee, a resolution was passed confirming that the PLO objective was to "establish a free and democratic society in Palestine **for all Palestinians whether they are Muslims, Christians or Jews**".<sup>2</sup>

***The fact that the one state logic has gained momentum lately should not, however, imply that it is a new proposal. It is rather the original and first solution proposed by almost every actor: mandatory Great Britain, Arab Palestinians under the mandate and later on the PLO, and some Jewish voices***



The Oslo Accords in 1993 marked the return of the partition strategy proposing to divide Palestine based along the lines of UNSC Resolution 242 as well as mutual recognition while agreeing to negotiate the major issues: withdrawing Israeli forces from the West Bank and Gaza, the status of Jerusalem, the right of return for Palestinian refugees, and borders and settlements.

***The Oslo Accords in 1993 marked the return of the partition strategy proposing to divide Palestine based along the lines of UNSC Resolution 242 as well as mutual recognition while agreeing to negotiate the major issues***

With Netanyahu in power in 1996 and with the interim period (set in Oslo II) ending in 1999 without solving any of the major issues. Edward Said, considered by some as the intellectual father of 'One-Statism', published an article calling for a single state from the Jordan River to Mediterranean Sea for both Arabs – whether Muslim or Christian – and Jews. Since then, several other prominent names have begun advocating for this solution.

Conscious of what the Israeli intelligentsia calls the “demographic threat”, and tired of Palestinian attacks, Israel unilaterally withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005 increasing its presence in the West Bank.

With President Trump coming into office in 2017, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu was able to confidently continue with his settlements policy, effectively turning Palestinian cities and villages in the West Bank into enclaves or ghettos and undermining any chance for a viable Palestinian state. Although previous ‘left-wing’ Israeli leaders did not call for a halt to the creation of settlements, let

alone dismantle them, these settlements expanded hugely under the rule of a right-wing government.

At the latest Israeli elections in 2019, the electorate disregarded the need for a solution with the Palestinians, and those standing were not interested in offering any solution. In the best case scenario, the status quo, it seems that only the official annexation of the West Bank or Area C – most likely a matter of time – will remain to officiate the death of the partition strategy and the two-state solution.

### **Glossary for Suggested Frameworks** **Bi-nationalism**

As the name suggests, bi-nationalism means the unification of two nations into one political system. Bi-nationalism was a political theory used for Palestine during the British mandate between 1922–1948 that called for establishing a single state to inherit the British mandate in Palestine for all its Muslim, Christian and Jewish citizens.<sup>3</sup>

Ironically, the original support for this solution came from within the Jewish community in Palestine during the British mandate. In 1946, the argument was advanced by some Jewish intellectuals before the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry which proposed that “Jew shall not dominate Arab and Arab shall not dominate Jew,” and that “Palestine shall be neither a Jewish state nor an Arab state.”

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Hajj Amin Al Husaini, seen by some as the “first President of Palestine”, is said to have supported the idea of a bi-national state with two separate communities: Arabs and Jews.<sup>4</sup>

These arguments disappeared after the establishment of Israel but came back to the surface after the 1967 War and again after the apparent collapse of the two-state solution.

One proponent of this one state solution, Ghada Karmi, came up with a clear description of what it entailed to have a bi-national state:

*“In a bi-national state, Jews and Palestinians would coexist as separate communities in a federal arrangement. Each people would run its own affairs autonomously and be guaranteed the legal right to use its own language, religion and traditions. Both would participate in government in a single parliament, which would be concerned with matters of supra-communal importance, defense, resources, the economy and so on.”<sup>5</sup>*

### Consociationalism/Confessionalism

This is a form of ‘power-sharing’ mechanisms designed for the purpose of reconciling societal fragmentation along ethnic and religious lines. In deeply fragmented societies, this form of governance is designed to ensure the survival of democracy and the renunciation of violence according to these power-sharing arrangements. It stands in contrast to the concept of majoritarian democracy, where minorities would be integrated instead of accommodated in consociationalism.

The four main features of consociationalism are: having a grand coalition among all the major components of society, a mutual veto for all communities necessitating consensus on major issues, proportionality

***In deeply fragmented societies, this form of governance is designed to ensure the survival of democracy and the renunciation of violence according to these power-sharing arrangements***

of representation where every group gets seats and positions according to its share of the population not simply votes, and segmental autonomy that allows the existence of several culturally-based community laws.<sup>6</sup>

In the case of Palestine, this has been a demand of Arab Israeli citizens and has begun to be seen as a possible mechanism for a future single state.

### Multiculturalism

This describes the existence of multiple cultures within the same society and as a political philosophy it involves ideologies and policies which subscribe to the ideas of a “salad bowl” or “cultural mosaic” in contrast to a “melting pot” for cultural differences. It encourages the maintenance of diverse cultures that co-exist within the same system.<sup>7</sup>

### Confederalism

Confederation could be defined as a unity of independent/sovereign political units or states that come together forming a system for common action with regard to other states. The nature of the relationship among the states constituting a confederation varies considerably. Likewise, the relationship between member states, the federal government, and the distribution of powers among them is highly variable. Some confederations are closer to a unitary state while some are much more similar to an international organization. The federal authorities would work through the governments of the constituent polities rather than directly interacting with the citizenry.



***A confederation would mean the existence of two or more states that agree on establishing some sort of a 'third government' to regulate their common economic, foreign affairs and defense policies, while maintaining a high degree of local autonomy***

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#### **Proposals for a One State Solution:**

This part navigates through all the non-separative solutions, mapping them and, more importantly, categorizing them into four categories based on certain criteria, mainly the standing of those proposing them and their positions on the major contested issues.

The four categories of solutions are; 1. Israeli proposals for assimilation that aim to eliminate the Palestinian identity and reinforce the status-quo of a One Israeli State for first-class Jews and, at best, second- or third-class Arabs, 2. Confederal proposals aiming to share the same land while maintaining separate identities, 3. Unitary proposals suggesting fusing the identities of both and orchestrating a new identity, and finally 4. Palestinian original proposals based on the British unkept promise in its White Paper and the PLO's original stance for a One Palestinian State for Arabs - whether Muslim or Christian – and Jews alike.

#### **A Non-Solution: Israeli Assimilation**

The first type of proposals are similar to those being supported by mainstream Israeli politicians.<sup>9</sup> A few years ago, it would have been regarded as insane to even discuss this option in the Knesset

for example. Right now, however, it has become a major election promise made by the biggest Israeli party and supported by the majority in the Knesset. No one outside Israel stands behind such proposals, but Israeli right-wing parties, almost absolutely free from external or internal pressure, seem very determined on this matter.

The group of proposals for assimilation include strategies and measures that aim to either annex the whole of West Bank, or some major parts of it (Area C, or both C and B; the first 60 percent and the second 22 percent of the West Bank), while not changing the Israeli demographic formula i.e. maintaining Jewish dominance and hegemony. So, it is about having the "Land of Israel" without paying the demographic tax that would come with adding the Palestinians to the nation. The following points clarify their stance regarding the major issues in the conflict:

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■ **Borders, sovereignty and Palestinian Statehood:** these proposals provide a clear vision for these issues: no Palestinian state west of the Jordan River, and hence no border issue. Even if only Area C (60% of West Bank), or even simply the settlements and their surrounding areas (for security measures), were annexed, that would mean no viable Palestinian State could exist on the western side of the river. Its mere existence would mean violating Israeli sovereignty over



***When Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire and protests broke out in Tunisia, it was easy for the regime to denounce the events and call the protesters savages. But the mass of photos, videos and posts that spread like wildfire across social media deprived the regime of its deniability about what was really happening on the ground***

‘its territory’. It would officiate the status quo of Palestinian cities being simply disconnected enclaves. Talks of natural resources would be of no meaning since Israel would be “exercising its sovereignty over its territory”.

■ **Settlements:** Settlements would no longer be ‘settlements’ but an ‘organic’ part of the state of Israel. Some parties and MK’s speak of simply annexing Ma’ale Adumim and other major settlements while some want just the former to be annexed. However, the creeping extremist discourse is making this too little for the electorate to accept just the settlements without at least the whole of Area C.

■ **Jerusalem:** “Jerusalem is off the table” said Trump explicitly after declaring moving his embassy to Jerusalem. It is clear that there is a consensus in the mainstream Israeli discourse that the united Jerusalem is the capital of their state.

■ **The Status of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza:**

• **In the West Bank, including Jerusalem:** the proposals vary in their approach towards this issue due to its 1) demographic complexity and 2) Israel’s image worldwide<sup>10</sup>. On the one hand, no Israeli mainstream parties want to have more Palestinians holding Israeli passports and “threatening Israel’s identity as a Jewish State”<sup>11</sup>, but on the other hand, they know very well that if there is no solution for the Palestinians

of the West Bank, or at the least superficial negotiations, no propaganda machine can beautify the image of an explicitly racist regime similar to the apartheid regime of South Africa.

Therefore, the majority seeks to annex Area C (which is home to fewer than 100 thousand Palestinians) and give them Israeli citizenship. Together with the Palestinians of Jerusalem, this would amount to 300–350 thousand people. This number would hardly affect the Israeli demographic formula.

As for those in Area B and A, their civil status could remain as Palestinian citizens living under a Palestinian pseudo-autonomous entity with one leader, or perhaps more. Linking Palestinians in Area A to Jordan has always been an ambition for the Israelis but both the Palestinian and Jordanian leaderships have been very firm in their rejection of this idea.

Limited freedom of movement (within all historic Palestine or simply within the West Bank) could be offered to Palestinians, but it is quite possible that such a system would be based on ‘social’ or ‘security’ credit to make sure that the Palestinian population poses no security threat under the new formula.

• **In Gaza:** of the major drives for the unilateral disengagement from Gaza in 2005 was the “demographic threat”. Therefore, Israelis are clear that the people of Gaza are not to be linked in any way to Israel. If the ‘Deal of the Century’ would create a Palestinian State in Gaza, Israel would not mind as long as this state is under its control militarily.

■ **Refugees (forcefully exiled Palestinians):** almost all Israeli mainstream parties have abandoned the idea that refugee issue is an



issue in the first place. The solution has always been naturalizing them wherever they are; Lebanon, Syria, Jordan. etc.

■ **Mutual recognition and ending claims:** this could be agreed in a new formula with a Palestinian state-to-be in Gaza, but not with those in the West Bank.

■ **Economy, labor and resources:** The Palestinian economy in the West Bank would continue to be a dependant part of the Israeli economy, and Palestinian exports; such as shoes and olive oil, would be exported 'from Israel'. The Shekel would remain the only currency between the river the sea. Palestinian labor would be a larger part of the Israeli economy than it was before, but it could also be based on a system of 'social credit'. Under this formula, all natural resources would be used at the discretion of the Israeli government.

■ **State Identity:** since it has been a major consideration for all parties, this orientation unequivocally asserts the identity of the One (Israeli) State as a Jewish State with a second-class Arab Palestinian minority.

It should be clear that support for such proposals come only from within Israel that even the Israel lobby in the U.S. does not seem to support these visions.<sup>12</sup>

A poll by Haaretz<sup>13</sup> indicated that 42 percent of Israelis back West Bank Annexation, including two-state supporters. This linear direction indicates further support for annexation over the passage of time. In the following table, the position of the ruling coalition on annexation will be summarized.

Party	Leader	%	Seats (120)	View on Annexation
<b>Likud</b>	Benjamin Netanyahu	26.46%	35	Annexing Area C, with some voices calling for annexing all West Bank
<b>Shas</b>	Aryeh Deri	5.99%	8	Similar to Likud
<b>UTJ</b>	Yaakov Litzman	5.78%	8	Settlements are their strongholds
<b>Yisrael Beiteinu</b>	Avigdor Lieberman	4.01%	5	Annexation with Palestinian semi-autonomous enclaves, with the potential of getting rid of Israeli Arabs
<b>United Right</b>	Rafi Peretz	3.70%	5	Full annexation
<b>Kulanu</b>	Moshe Kahlon	3.54%	4	Unclear
<b>Overall</b>		<b>49.48%</b>	<b>65</b>	

Table 1: Ruling coalition, their weight in Knesset and position on Annexation

### Two States without Partition: One Country, Two States, Three Governments.<sup>14</sup>

For some, the idea of a confederation is "only a matter of sequencing" assuming that the current course of action would continue in the same direction.

The idea of a confederation has been seen as a viable alternative for the failed two-states model.<sup>15</sup> However, the idea originated long before then. During the British mandate, many voices suggested a confederation with economic union, and the UN Partition Plan of 1947 suggested a similar formula. In the 1980s, this concept became associated with a Jordanian–Palestinian union, rather than an Israeli–



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Palestinian one. In 1987 a similar idea was discussed between King Hussein and Shimon Peres (the “London Agreement”) but failed to materialize. Upon the election of the anti-peace Benjamin Netanyahu in 1996, Edward Said concluded that the two-state model had no chance of success and that a single state in the form of a Confederation was the way forward.

Few Palestinian names advocated the idea, but Shlomo Ben Ami claimed in an interview<sup>16</sup> that Yasir Arafat accepted the idea of a confederation with Israel in the mid-1990-s if Jordan and Lebanon were made part of it.

Since then, the idea has drawn considerable attention from some Israeli elites and a few Palestinians. Names like Shlomo Ben Ami<sup>17</sup>, a former Israeli foreign minister and Yossi Beilin, an architect of the Oslo Accords, wrote and advocated strongly for the idea. Even Israel current President Reuven Rivlin<sup>18</sup> announced a vague endorsement for the idea. Recently a forum has been established by some academics and writers to advocate for the idea under the name of the “Israel-Palestine Confederation - IPC”<sup>19</sup>. They have gone so far as to propose a written constitution clarifying the electoral, legislative and executive processes of this potential confederation.<sup>20 21</sup>

In this category of perceptions, the proposals vary on certain details but share the same framework and general principles for settling the conflict and

establishing an Israeli–Palestinian Confederation: either having three governments, one Palestinian for Palestinians, one Israeli for Jews, and a Confederal Government over both, or two separate states but deeply intertwined on all levels. Proposals may vary slightly however on the degree of integration, pace of graduality, refugees and security.

### ■ Statehood, Borders and Sovereignty

Under these frameworks, there would be either (1) one single state, but more complicated than simply the One Man-One Vote Model; a state of three governments. (2) The other perception is that they would be both two independent nation states but they would share the same land (historic Palestine).

The basis of virtual land division would be the 1949 Armistice Line. There could be some land swaps, according to the proposals, but they would be unnecessary under this formula as freedom of movement would be guaranteed with minimal security limitations.

### ■ Security and Military

Under this formula, proposals have been put forward suggesting that Palestinian state would be either partially dependant on Israel when it comes to external security, or that both states would be demilitarized – assuming there would be no reason for conflict.

### ■ Settlements

There would be no need to evacuate settlements since they would both share the same lands and Palestinians could build in and inhabit any city, village or area within the borders of the Palestine Mandate/Historic Palestine. Settlers could be given the status of permanent residents in territory ruled by the Palestinian Government but would vote



for the Israeli government. The same goes for Palestinians under the territory ruled by Israeli government.

#### ■ Jerusalem

Jerusalem would be a shared capital and holy places would be shared on the basis of their holiness for all.

#### ■ Status of Palestinians within Historic Palestine:

Palestinians would be free to live wherever they want within the borders of Historic Palestine, whether as Palestinian Citizens in the case of a limited confederation, or as citizens of the IPC.

#### • Refugees (forcefully exiled Palestinians):

The return of Palestinian refugees to their lands (within the territory ruled by Israeli Government) would take place in correlation with the number of Jewish settlers in the West Bank.

#### • Mutual Recognition and Claims

The two peoples and states would be having to recognize the links of each other to the Land of Palestine, given that freedom of movement for both is guaranteed. Both would end claims of exclusive link and ownership of the land.

#### • Economy, Labor and Resources

Full economic union with total free labour movement (according to market dynamics). The currency could remain the Israeli Shekel or be changed into something both parties agree to.

#### • State Identity and Institutions

Both Palestine and Israel would keep their separate identities, Palestine for Arabs and Israel for Jews, as long as they work within the same framework. According to the limited model, both states would be represented in the UN at the first

stage but gradually afterwards they would gain a joint legislative council, while the full integration model suggests that there would be a single Israel–Palestine mission to the UN from the beginning.

In short, these formulas are about the replacement of separation with integration, while maintaining each other's separate identities and keeping some parallel institutions.

#### The One Man-One Vote Model<sup>22</sup>

Just as in the second group of proposals, this model has never been a part of any official negotiations or demands by either party. It had been propagated mainly by pro-Palestinian and pro-peace activists around the world with some minor vague endorsement by former diplomats who took part in Oslo. Support for this orientation comes either from those who believe the two-state solution is technically dead, that only one state already exists between the river and the sea, and that Israel cannot be allowed to 'become'<sup>23</sup> an apartheid state and should be inclusive to all those who live there, or those who originally believed that the two-state solution was unfair or impractical.

***In short, these formulas are about the replacement of separation with integration, while maintaining each other's separate identities and keeping some parallel institutions***

Support for one democratic state came mainly from activists and academics from Europe, North America and South Africa (a witness of apartheid and successful example for advocates of one state). Prominent academic figures such as Ilan Pappé; the famous historian, and the political scientist Virginia Tilley have supported this solution<sup>24</sup>. A campaign had been launched



under the name of One Democratic State Campaign – ODSC<sup>25</sup> calling for a democratic state on the land of historic Palestine for both Arabs and Jews on the basis of equality. Since then, it has gained ground in Europe, North America and South Africa and many pro-Palestinian activists seem to have subscribed to its political program.

***Support for this orientation comes either from those who believe the two-state solution is technically dead, that only one state already exists between the river and the sea, and that Israel cannot be allowed to 'become' an apartheid state***

Some Palestinian names, such as Mustafa Al Barghouti, president of PNI and former presidential candidate against President Abbas, and Ali Abu Naima, founder of Electronic Intifada, have advocated for the idea. Moreover, the idea has started gaining ground among Arab citizens of Israel: the Arab MK Haneen Zoabi came out firmly for a single democratic state along the lines of the ODSC program. On the other side, some Israeli human rights groups and left-wing figures, such as Gideon Livy, support this idea. President Rivlin<sup>26</sup> said in one statement that the alternative to two states would be a one state solution.

United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres has expressed his support for the idea,<sup>27</sup> and Dennis Ross has hinted that Israeli right wing polices would lead to a single state.

On the other hand, there are slight differences between the proposals for one state in this category and those in the fourth category.

The main characteristics of this group of formulas is as follows:

#### ■ **Statehood, Borders and Sovereignty**

There would be only one sovereign state on the land of Palestine. Borders with neighbors, mainly the Golan and Shebaa farms, would be finally settled based on negotiations.

#### ■ **Security and Military**

There was little seen on this issue from those who propagated a solution along these lines, but what was understood is that it would mean that the security apparatus would be representative of the whole population i.e. Palestinians would be a part of shaping them.

#### ■ **Settlements**

The question of where citizens live would become a minor issue given that there would be absolute freedom of movement and settlement for the whole population on the whole land of Mandate Palestine.

#### ■ **Jerusalem**

Jerusalem would automatically be the capital of this entity, and holy sites would be shared.

#### ■ **Status of Palestinians within Historic Palestine:**

Palestinians in West Bank; including Jerusalem, and Gaza would be all citizens of this one state.

#### ■ **Refugees (forcefully exiled Palestinians):**

There is an agreement on the right of Palestinians to be repatriated, but we would find a difference in tone and content among the advocates of this type of solution. While the ODSC program firmly calls for the return of Palestinian refugees, all those who



***The future economic policies of this state would read this gap in an economic, not ethnic, sense and work on more distributional equality. Some have suggested that Arabs in this state would unite with the disadvantaged Mizrahi Jews in this demand***

were forced out of Palestine in 1948 and their descendants, we find some others calling for either 'proportionate return' of refugees or gradual return governed by the principle of 'absorbability', while compensating those who could not be repatriated.

#### ■ Mutual Recognition and Claims

Under this formula, both Arabs and Jews would acknowledge each other's relation to this land and end their exclusive claims, since they are both sharing basically all they have called for.

#### ■ Economy, Labor and Resources

One unified economy is what almost all one state proposals call for; one economy utilizing the same resources, including human resources. The ODSC, however, speaks of the economic gap currently existing on the land of Palestine (essentially between Jews and Arabs). The future economic policies of this state would read this gap in an economic, not ethnic, sense and work on more distributional equality. Some have suggested that Arabs in this state would unite with the disadvantaged Mizrahi Jews in this demand.

#### ■ State Identity and Institutions

This type of proposals seem to go beyond existing identities and attempt to create a new unique identity for this new regime. This state would not be Jewish, but also not Arab. What is very clear is that they believe it needs to be secular and based on absolute equality regardless of race, ethnicity and religion. As for Zionism,

it would gradually fade away with the process of democratization.<sup>28</sup>

#### **Rights-Oriented Visions: Palestinian Single State Proposals**

It should be noted first and foremost that this group of proposals are highly intertwined with those of group three. Yet, there are two basic differences that have led me to split them into two. The first is the way they perceive Israel and Zionism, while the second is the identity of this one state and its geopolitical identity. Firstly, people who subscribe to this view see Israel as the last surviving entity of the colonial era; a colonial state that has tried to eliminate the native population with the purpose of dominating not only Palestine but the whole region. This attempt to dominate is seen through Israel's support for separatist movements and fueling of ethnic, sectarian and religious tensions in the region. Israel has never attempted to hide this and many speeches and publications by leading figures from its security apparatus support this view. The second is that Palestine had been an Arab entity, though not an independent one, even before the coming of the Muslim Arabs in the 7th century.

The main difference would be that this group calls for a One Palestinian State for Muslims, Christians and Jews to be a part of the Arab Homeland after dismantling Zionism and its institutions and the return of all willing Palestinian refugees.

***People who subscribe to this view see Israel as the last surviving entity of the colonial era; a colonial state that has tried to eliminate the native population with the purpose of dominating not only Palestine but the whole region***



That said, the differences between category 3 and 4 are minimal compared to their commonalities when we look at the end result.

The PLO's first position was along these lines. In 1964, Article 4 of PLO Charter recognized the right of "Jews of Arab origins" (around 10 percent of Israeli Jews now) to become citizens of Palestine and in 1969 at the PLO fifth national council when Yasir Arafat was elected, a resolution was passed confirming that the PLO objective was to "establish a free and democratic society in Palestine for all Palestinians whether they are Muslims, Christians or Jews". It maintained this position until it recognized UNSC resolution 242 as a basis for ending the struggle in 1988.

For some, Palestine had already been established on the whole of historic Palestine through the British Palestinian Mandate, which clearly equated the status of Palestine to the other neighbouring states, such as Iraq and Syria, that were recognized as states but, according to the creators of the League of Nations, were yet to be ready to rule themselves. Legally speaking, Britain had no capacity to change its status and Palestine existed as a state for both Arabs and Jews.<sup>29</sup>

It should be clear that no consensus has been formed among Palestinian elites on these issues but we could come up with major defining features of the demands of the Palestinian grassroots through the following:

Statehood, Borders and Sovereignty  
Sovereign Palestine would be the state of Arabs and Jews living on the historic land of Palestine, recognizing the borders established during the colonial era and still recognized to the present day.

### ■ Security and Military

Dismantling Zionism and its institutions entails dismantling the current Israeli army, internal and external intelligence agencies (Shen Beth and Mossad) and other similar institutions. Instead, there would be a new security apparatus suited to the new situation.

### ■ Settlements

Given that freedom of movement and residence is protected for all within the borders of Palestine, settlements would not need to be dismantled, but they should not necessarily remain 100% Jewish.

### ■ Jerusalem

Jerusalem would be the capital of this entity and holy places would be open to all.

### ■ Status of Palestinians within Historic Palestine:

Palestinians would unite virtually as one entity for the first time since 1948 but the very definition of a Palestinian would change since Jews would be considered Palestinians again (as they were during the Palestine Mandate).

### ■ Refugees (Forcefully Exiled Palestinians):

All willing refugees would be repatriated and compensated for their losses. Historian Salman Abu Sitta in one of his geographical studies affirmed that 85 percent of the homes and lands of refugees are still available and capable of being given back.

### ■ Mutual Recognition and Claims

Zionism would be renounced and Jewish citizens would be considered as Arab Jews and live in harmony as they did for a thousand years in Andalusia and other Arab areas. Jewish religious attachment to Jerusalem would be recognized.



### ■ Economy, Labor and Resources

One economy based on positive discrimination to compensate Palestinians for their direct and indirect economic losses; not only war but also the exploitation of Palestinian resources exclusively for the welfare of the Jewish population and the restraining of the Palestinian economy.

### ■ State Identity and Institutions

Palestine would be a democratic state for all its Muslim, Christian and Jewish citizens while belonging to the greater Arab neighborhood and being a member of the Arab League. Official languages would include Hebrew, besides the majority mother-tongue of Arabic.

The contested issues		The Four Categories			
		Israeli Assimilation	Confederal Proposals	Unitary One State	Palestinian One State
1	<b>Borders, Sovereignty</b>	No need for borders, One Israeli sovereign state on the whole land of historic Palestine	One country for two confederal states, no borders, sovereignty for confederal government	One state on the whole land	One Palestinian State for all its Arab and Jewish citizens on historic Palestine
2	<b>Security and Military</b>	Totally in the hands of Israeli security apparatus. Palestinian security coordination allowed at minimal level to ensure security	Either equally shared or Palestine dependent militarily on Israeli confederal government.	New security institutions equally representing both	New security institutions for the One Palestinian State
3	<b>Settlements</b>	Would keep expanding and be officially annexed	No need to dismantle them since Palestinians could settle anywhere within historic Palestine	Same as the previous, ensuring they do not remain totally Jewish	Could be maintained after it has been ensured that they do not violate the natives' rights.
4	<b>Jerusalem</b>	United Jerusalem would be the capital of Israel	Jerusalem shared as capital for both	Jerusalem is the capital	Jerusalem is the capital of the One Palestinian State



5	<b>Palestinians within Historic Palestine</b>	'Arabs of 48' as second-class citizens, Palestinians of West Bank with no political rights, Palestinians of Gaza excluded totally	Would remain in their current locations with the possibility of them moving and settling freely somewhere else	Arabs and Jews would be free to move and settle wherever they want within the borders	Arabs and Jews would be free to move and settle wherever they want within the borders
6	<b>Refugees</b>	No chance for return or even reunification	Limited return, proportionate to the population of settlements	Either full but gradual return according to absorbability, or limited return with compensation to those that could not be returned	Full return and compensation for all willing refugees
7	<b>Mutual Recognition and Ending Claims</b>	No recognition of Palestinian rights	Mutual recognition and accepting each other's claims to Palestine	Giving up on exclusive claims	With Zionism renounced, Jews would be equal citizens, their religious affiliation to Jerusalem acknowledged
8	<b>Economy, Labor, Resources</b>	Israeli economy to continue to dominate that of Palestinians, Israeli Shekel only currency, Palestinian labor exploited.	One economy utilizing all resources based on equal rights for all. Israeli Shekel to continue as only currency.	One economy utilizing all resources based on equal rights for all, with room for policies for bridging the wealth gap (i.e. Arabs and Mizrahi Jews). A new currency to be introduced.	One economy utilizing all resources based on positive discrimination to compensate all Palestinians, with more focus on refugees. Palestinian Currency (i.e. Palestinian Pound/Junaih that existed during the Palestinian Mandate).



9	<b>State Identity and Institutions</b>	Absolute Israeli Jewish Identity. Current institutions would continue.	Each confederal state would keep its identity while the unitary government would represent both identities. Major institutions would continue with modifications.	New Arab-Jewis identity based on recognition of both ties to Palestine and fusing them into one. Institutions would be rebuilt based on this.	Returning to the previous Palestinian identity that existed during the Mandate. Institutions to be rebuilt.
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Table 2: Summary of the four solutions and their stances on major issues.

### Scrutinizing these Solutions

Finding a solution for a highly complicated century-old struggle would be fairly regarded as mission impossible. No solution is ideal, but some would be less 'wrong' or 'flawed' than others.

Moreover, evaluating these solutions and setting the right measurements, given the huge disharmony and heterogeneity of the audience evaluating them, is not an easy task. Here I tried to set certain measurements for evaluating the matter without trying to morally evaluate any of them.

The Measurements:

#### 1. Acceptability (from both points of view):

The first category of proposals (the Israeli assimilative approach) would find strong ground support among Israeli Jews, even from the eroding left, as long as they promise to maintain absolute Jewish demographic and political hegemony<sup>30</sup>. Palestinians, however, are expected to resist these kind of proposals. The PA, Hamas and other Palestinian actors would reasonably see such proposals as the graveyard of the Palestinian rights and cause.

The second group would have great difficulty in convincing Israeli public opinion; Israel faces almost no real pressure, so the idea of sharing does not seem necessary to Israelis. Palestinians too, having witnessed Israel giving no concessions to advance the two-state agenda, would simply ask themselves, why would Israel give them now!? The international community, however, would find this appealing if any ground support is found.

The third and fourth groups would absolutely be seen as an existential threat by the Israeli intelligentsia and hence be demonized publicly, but they are gaining ground among the post-Zionist elites. Palestinians are gradually moving towards any of them and Palestinian public opinion currently, if not sympathetic, would find no reason to oppose them as they satisfy the basic demands of the struggle. International public opinion would

***Israel faces almost no real pressure, so the idea of sharing does not seem necessary to Israelis. Palestinians too, having witnessed Israel giving no concessions to advance the two-state agenda, would simply ask themselves, why would Israel give them now!?***



find these the most moral of the given solutions since they would uphold democracy, equality, multicultural values, and peaceful coexistence or even integration. For example, studies have shown that the American Jewish community leans towards the one state (third formula) if the two-state solution is dead<sup>31</sup>. More importantly for the international community, it would put an end to an age-old conflict that destabilized the region for decades. Clash of Civilizationists, however, would find these solutions unacceptable.

## **2. Applicability:**

This means the ability to turn these proposals into real action plans

### **a. Borders and Lands**

All the four solutions would easily solve these issues, with the exception of Gaza for the first group.

### **b. Transitional Justice**

Obviously, there is no chance for transitional justice in the first group or even the second. The third is unclear on this point, but the fourth finds it imperative to do so in order to open a new chapter.

### **c. System of Governance**

The first would more clearly define Israel as an apartheid state, while the second would require a high degree of agreement on the shape of legislative and executive bodies. The judiciary would be a major obstacle as well.

The third and fourth systems of governance proposed seem less complicated and more practical than the others.

### **d. Institutions:**

In the first case, Palestinian institutions would be either dismantled or adjusted according to the new arrangement, while in the second they would be supported to grow in a compatible way with the new arrangements. This would be easily

***For the third and fourth solutions, Israeli institutions would have to be either directly or gradually dismantled and re-built in accordance with the new formula(s). Mossad, Shen Beth, the Israeli army, etc. would find no place in the new arrangements. This would make their implementation somewhat revolutionary***

done only if Israeli approval is provided. However, for the third and fourth solutions, Israeli institutions would have to be either directly or gradually dismantled and re-built in accordance with the new formula(s). Mossad, Shen Beth, the Israeli army, etc. would find no place in the new arrangements. This would make their implementation somewhat revolutionary.

### **c. Identity, Language (intangibles):**

This is one of the most difficult questions for all four solutions. The state's identity would be purely Israeli in the first one, and a mixture of both in the second. It is Palestinian in the fourth one. The third set would be the most complicated of all as it calls, though indirectly, for the creation of a new identity composed of elements of both identities for the new entity.

In the last three groups, both Arabic and Hebrew would be state languages.

## **3. Viability of the State:**

This section means the ability of this state to sustain itself as viable after it had been established.

### **a. Security (Internal and External)**

The first formula would be a perfect recipe for the continuation and perhaps escalation of the existing conflict as Palestinians throughout the past and current century have proved to be quite determined to win back their rights. One of the reasons why Oslo failed is that it was too little for the Palestinians, though the main reason remains the Israeli rejection of any further negotiations. The second



entails that Palestinian security would be dependent on Israeli security. The third and fourth may lead to clashes between forces on the opposite extremes.

**b. Economy:**

The first formula would maintain, if not increase, the wide gap between Palestinians and Jews, while the second would do little to enhance Palestinian competitive power. The third formula acknowledges the need for compensating Palestinian refugees but believes economic equality is essential to develop the economy. The fourth proposes 'positive discrimination' similar to South Africa's Black Empowerment to equalize the competing power for both, or at least enhance the Palestinian position as compensation for the long occupation, apartheid, exploitation and hindering of the Palestinian economy. Economic experts would conclude that the fourth scenario would slow down the pace of economic growth, while the previous three would add to the state of inequality and ensure Jewish economic hegemony.

**c. Societal Harmony:**

The first formula would fuel the struggle leading to more intifadas, while the second is highly unlikely to have popular support, if it goes through, and hence societal fragmentation and polarization would be the defining feature. The third and fourth, assuming social integration policies are undertaken, could mean less societal polarization but could turn into communal politics, as in Malaysia for example. Nothing can guarantee that a 'nation-building' process could be quite successful under any of the proposed formulas.

**4. International Recognition (Official and Non-Official):**

The world has little stomach for an openly apartheid regime as in the first formula. This would take time to be rejected, however; apartheid South Africa was not boycotted overnight. The second and the third would be automatically recognized worldwide if they go through. The fourth could be opposed mainly by the U.S. Europe, more concerned about settling the conflict given the geographic proximity and historical responsibility it feels, could recognize such an arrangement if pro-Israel lobbies in those countries find it in their interest, or at least the best offered, but certainly the third formula would be more tempting for them.



Measurements			The Four Categories			
			Israeli Assimilation	Confederal Proposals	Unitary One State	Palestinian One State
1	Public Acceptability		Popular among Israelis, absolutely rejected by Palestinians.	Little support from both	Support growing steadily among Palestinians, very little (almost inexistent) within Israel	Easy to gain ground among Palestinians (it was traditionally the objective), absolutely unacceptable to Israeli mainstream
2	Applicability	Borders and lands	Remain the same as now	Lands would be shared so the question of borders would be of less importance		
		Transitional justice	Not applicable	Not applicable	Possible but not the main focus	Applicable
		System of governance	Apartheid regime	A democratic confederation, Palestinians remain dependent.	A democratic unitary state with full equal rights for all	A democratic state with equal political rights for all
		Institutions:	Would remain the same	Israeli institutions the same, but Palestinian and common institutions would need to be built.	They would need to be rebuilt	They would need to be rebuilt
		Identity, Language (intangibles)	Israeli identity dominating, that of Palestinians suppressed	Both would be able to keep their separate identities	New identity	Palestinian identity for Arabs and Jews



3	<b>State Viability</b>	Security (Internal and External), Ending of Claims	Conflict continued	Difficult to ensure security with old Israeli institutions, and difficult to maintain two contradicting claims (if Zionism continues to be there)	May be able to ensure security considering that new representative security apparatus would be established, and new identity would replace claims	Would be able to ensure security if Jews are given fully equal political and civil rights.
		Economy	Israeli would easily continue exploiting Palestinian labor and the Palestinian economy would remain dependent on the Israeli one. Boycott campaigns would harm its economy if they receive official support worldwide.	Would be able to integrate both economies easily.	New economic policies would need to take place to bridge the gap, economic experts may see Palestinians as 'burden'	New economic policies would need to take place to bridge the gap, and compensate. Economic experts may see Palestinians as 'burden'
		Societal Harmony	Would intensify societal strife	Would not be able to integrate the two societies	Doubtful if two societies can accept new norms	Ardent Zionists would encourage civil strife.
4	<b>International Recognition</b>		Very difficult	Easy to gain	Easy to gain	May face some Western opposition (in countries that have strong Israel lobbies like the U.S.)

Table 3: Summary of solutions

**D: Scenarios: Where We Are Heading**

The general course of action is movement towards the first scenario (the assimilation of Palestinians and unmaking of the Palestinian Question), especially with the Trump's "Deal of the Century". Forces that would naturally oppose this direction – the PA, Hamas and Jordan – are either toothless, exhausted or structurally incapable of resistance. Europe's expected rejection of this formula would not be of great influence as Europe has become a minor actor in this issue, or at least not as major as the U.S.

Unless and until Palestinians manage to unite (i.e. the Fatah-Hamas rift) under one umbrella and one political program accepting the third or fourth formulas, there would be little chance for any of them to advance. The emergence of a new political leadership is possible, but a quick study of Palestinian sociology would reveal otherwise.



The fourth scenario in particular seems unattainable as long as the current imbalance of power continues. The international system is highly biased to the Israeli side (U.S. blindly on the side of Israel, EU and Russia weakly pro-two-state, and China indifferent). It would require clear Palestinian political unity; similar to that under the leadership of Yasir Arafat in the 1970s and 80s, with strong regional support that is almost absent now. The fact that it accepts Jews as a major part of the state would lead Europe to be less 'hostile' to the idea, and some forces within Europe could lean towards the idea.



## Endnotes

\* This essay is a spin-off from a larger piece, as yet unpublished, about the MENA region's increasingly intersecting conflicts; some text may overlap. Views expressed herein are entirely my own.

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# **A Primary Survey of one state Solution(s) for Israel/Palestine: Proposals, Applicability and Public Acceptability**

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The two-state solution and the logic of partition between an Israel and a Palestine has come to be widely considered outdated, and we have witnessed the re-emergence of the one-state logic that had itself fallen out of favor with the Oslo Accords and the negotiations that followed. The paper explains the theoretical frameworks of some of these proposals (binationalism, cosociationalism, multiculturalism, and confederalism) and then divides them into four categories based on the solutions they offer to the major contested issues, such as Jerusalem and the refugee issue, as well as the political positions of those who have proposed them. This paper suggests a division into four categories: first, Israeli proposals for assimilation that aim to eliminate Palestinian identity and reinforce the status quo of One Israeli State with first class citizenships for Jews and, at best, second or third class citizenships for Arabs; secondly, confederal proposals aiming to share the same land while maintaining each community's separate identity; thirdly, unitary proposals suggesting fusing the identities of both and orchestrating a new mutual identity; and finally Palestinian original proposals based on the British unkept promise in the 1939 White Paper and the PLO's original stance of One Palestinian State for both Arabs – whether they be Muslims or Christians – and Jews. The paper goes on to scrutinize these solutions based on various different criteria. Finally, the paper deals with possible scenarios based on a general reading of the current course of action.