

Introduction

For many years, the leading solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the public discourse has been the two-state solution—a Palestinian state alongside an Israeli state. Most of the Israeli public has expressed support for such a solution. This is also the accepted solution among most countries and international organizations, as can be seen in the numerous resolutions of the UN Security Council and General Assembly.

Nonetheless, in recent years, the belief that there is no practical way to separate Israel from Judea and Samaria (also known as the West Bank) has gained popularity. Accordingly, the public discourse has changed in both Israel and among the Palestinians to include an alternative solution to the conflict, namely the creation of one state between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River.

Some of the supporters of this alternative include Israel's Arab citizens and members of the left in Israel who perceive the one state as giving up its definition as a Jewish state. Rather, such a state can be bi-national, Jewish-Palestinian, or nationless.

The idea of shedding the state's Jewish identity is not acceptable to the majority of Israel's Jewish citizens. Therefore, within the Jewish public in Israel, most of the advocates of the one-state idea support a state that preserves its Jewish character. At the same time, most of the public is also interested in maintaining the state's democratic character.

The difficulty in creating a one-state reality that maintains both its Jewish and its democratic character stems primarily from the demographic composition of such a state. The expansion of the state's territory to include Judea and Samaria will increase the number of Palestinians within the population. As of December 2020, there are 9.3 million residents in the State of Israel (including the residents of the settlements), out of which there are about 1.95 million Arabs who reside within Israel, most of whom define themselves

as Palestinians. This includes residents of East Jerusalem, who constitute about 350,000 people. The exact number of Palestinians in the West Bank is controversial. Some estimate that there are less than 2 million, although according to most estimations, it is close to 2.5 million Palestinians, and likely even more. Whatever estimate is chosen, the addition of Palestinian residents of the West Bank to the State of Israel means that the State of Israel would have over 4 million Palestinians, including the Arab citizens of Israel, out of about 11 million residents total. In other words, Palestinians will constitute almost 40% of the population.

In most of the one-state proposals, the Gaza Strip is not included within the territory of the state. The logic behind that is clear. According to various estimates, around 2 million Palestinians live in the Gaza Strip (there are different estimates about this number as well). Therefore, including Gaza in the state would mean that Palestinians constitute almost half of the total population. In addition, including Gaza as part of the state would add a poverty-stricken and underdeveloped territory that requires a significant investment of resources. Moreover, Gaza does not have any ideological significance or strategic value from Israel's perspective, unlike the territory of Judea and Samaria. Furthermore, Israel does not currently control Gaza, nor is Gaza even controlled by a government that is willing to negotiate with Israel. Its inclusion in the territory of the state would require that it be recaptured by force. Yet, as long as there is no solution for the Gaza Strip, the conflict will not be fully resolved.

Whether or not Gaza is included in the territory of the state, the one-state framework leads to the creation of a large Palestinian minority. Given the desire to preserve the Jewish character of the state, this minority would have to abandon its national aspirations, which could create internal tension within the state. This tension and the resulting friction are expected to constitute a serious challenge to the stability of the state, particularly as it involves two peoples with a longstanding history of conflict, rivalry, and distrust. The violent confrontations between Arabs and Jews within Israel surrounding Operation Guardian of the Walls in May 2021 vividly reflect these tensions and their potential ramifications, even after decades of living together in the same state with full civil rights.

Moreover, if the Palestinians were granted equal civil rights in the state, then they could have significant influence on the national level, which would

be incompatible with Jewish national interests and could even lead to the demise of the Jewish identity of the state. Not granting full civil rights to the Palestinians in the state—including full citizenship and the right to vote and be elected to the state's government, freedom of movement, and the right to choose one's place of residence, equality of opportunity, and any other basic right enjoyed by the citizens of the state—would contradict the state's democratic character.

Most of the public discussion of the one-state solution focuses on the question of whether it can be implemented while preserving the state's Jewish and democratic character. The opponents of the idea claim that such a state can be either Jewish or democratic but not both, especially in light of its demographic composition. In contrast, its supporters claim that this combination is indeed possible. Alternatively, they feel that certain components of the state's democratic or Jewish identity can be abandoned. Nevertheless, to have a serious discussion of the implications of the one-state alternative, it is worthwhile to evaluate beyond the question of whether it implies the end of the Jewish/democratic state, and to examine other related aspects as to how such a state would operate and its chances of success as a permanent and stable solution to the conflict. That is the goal of the analysis presented here.

The classic one-state alternative relates to Israel as a state whose territory stretches from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River (with the possibility of including the Gaza Strip) without any internal borders. Israeli law would apply to this entire territory, and the government and its institutions would have full and direct authority over all parts of the state. This model is known as the unitary state solution.

The unitary state solution raises concern about the state's stability, given the expected opposition among the Palestinians to be part of a state with a Jewish character. Therefore, internal division of the state is proposed, with the goal of providing the Palestinians with a certain level of self-rule. The two main models in this context are the model of a Palestinian autonomy, in which there would be an autonomous Palestinian territory within the state, and the federation model, in which the state would be divided into Palestinian and Jewish districts and certain powers would be granted to the district governments.

Another model, which is presented as an alternative to the unitary state, is the confederation model, in which there would be two states—a Palestinian state and a Jewish state (Israel), with open borders between them, governed by a confederate government that has decision-making power in domains that apply to the entire territory of the two states. This model essentially extends beyond the one-state alternative toward a two-state solution. Nonetheless, the dividing line between the models of the federation and the confederation is in practice blurred; therefore, it makes sense to also consider this alternative as part of the discussion of alternatives to the two-state solution.

The idea of a Palestinian–Jordanian confederation is occasionally brought up in Israeli public discourse. This idea assumes the existence of a Palestinian state that is connected to the Kingdom of Jordan. This idea is not analyzed here, because it is fundamentally a two-state model rather than a one-state model, as it is contingent upon the creation of a Palestinian state having a defined border with Israel. Given that Jordan would adamantly oppose this model, clearly it would not be feasible. Should this reality change in the future, this solution should be reevaluated.

Another alternative idea that is raised—explicitly or implicitly—by members of the right in Israel is the annexation of part of the West Bank to Israel, so that the State of Israel would not encompass *all* the territory between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River but rather only a significant portion of this land. The suggestion is to annex the majority of Area C, as defined in the Interim Agreement between Israel and the PLO of 1995 (“the Oslo Accords”). Area C covers over 60% of the West Bank and contains all the settlements and most of the open areas. It houses over 100,000 Palestinians (if the areas adjacent to Palestinian main localities are excluded). Under this idea, the rest of the West Bank, which comprises mainly Areas A and B, as defined in the Interim Agreement, where almost all Palestinians reside, will remain under Palestinian control, either in the framework of a Palestinian autonomy or as a state with limited powers. Israel will retain control over the external perimeter and the aerial and electromagnetic space and overall security powers.

If the Palestinian area is considered a state, then this is a two-state model. It is, however, highly unlikely that the Palestinians would agree to such a limited state. Area C is significant not just due to its size, but also because it contains most of the Palestinian economic assets, namely the areas enabling

agriculture, industry, and development of infrastructure, including for future expansion. A Palestinian state that is limited to Areas A and B would lack any prospect of economic independence and sustainability. If the Palestinian area remains an autonomy under Israeli control, this would be, in fact, a continuation of the current situation, at least in Areas A and B. Neither the Palestinians nor the international community would consider this as a permanent solution to the conflict. Therefore, this option is not analyzed in this document, which focuses on potential solutions to the conflict and not on models in which the conflict lingers on.

Accordingly, this document examines the following models:

1. A unitary state
2. A state with a Palestinian autonomy
3. A federal state
4. A confederation

In analyzing each of the models, the focus is on the interests of Israel and the concerns of the majority of the Israeli public. The common starting point is the preservation of the Jewish character of the state, as this is the solution on which the discourse in Israeli society has centered. In parallel, the extent to which the model also preserves the state's democratic character will be examined. The analysis pertains to the models as permanent solutions to the conflict rather than as interim steps implemented until the conflict is resolved.

The analysis does not cover all the issues related to a permanent solution. For example, the issue of the refugees is not directly connected to the various models; nonetheless, to the extent that resolving this issue is one of the conditions of the Palestinians to view any particular model as a solution to the conflict, then the issue will require some sort of resolution. It can include the return of a limited number of refugees, alongside mechanisms for compensation or any other arrangement that is agreed upon.

The study does not purport to cover all aspects of each model. It does not, for example, include the ramifications of a particular model on the state's foreign relations nor does it attempt to map all facets of life that would be influenced by the model. Rather, the goal is to highlight the way in which the model may be implemented and its main implications. The document also does not provide any analysis of concrete proposals on how to implement the various models, although some of these proposals serve as

the background for the analysis. Given that the document is only a conceptual analysis of the fundamentals of each model, it does not include references to existing documents that describe specific proposals. Accordingly, it also does not include a description of specific arrangements that might be used to implement each model (such as analyzing the distinction between dividing into two districts as opposed to several districts in the federation model). The document has a different purpose—to examine the general reality that would emerge in the aforementioned models, with the aim of determining the viability of each model, the extent to which each one maintains the interests of the State of Israel, and ultimately, the feasibility of the one-state concept in resolving the conflict.

Each model will be examined with respect to the following parameters:

1. Territorial division
2. Status of the settlements
3. Status of Jerusalem
4. Aspects of citizenship and residency
5. Governmental authority
6. Palestinian involvement in government
7. Freedom of movement within the state
8. The refugee issue
9. Security aspects
10. Social aspects
11. Economic and civil aspects
12. Preserving the Jewish character of the state
13. Maintaining the democratic and liberal character of the state
14. Implications for Israel’s Arab citizens
15. Implications for the Palestinian Authority
16. The Gaza Strip
17. Execution of the model
18. Feasibility of achieving the model

After analyzing these factors, the model’s chances of success as a permanent solution to the conflict will be assessed.

In the closing section, the document presents some general conclusions from the analysis of all the models. Finally, in the annex, a table offers a

comparative analysis of the models, including comparing them to the two-state model.

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