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## ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE PROCESS: A FRAMEWORK FOR A TWO-STATE SOLUTION<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

For almost 80 years, since the UN General Assembly's 1947 decision to create two distinct states in Palestine—one for Jews and the other for Arabs, as outlined in the Partition Plan—the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians has persisted. Recent escalations have led to violent clashes, resulting in the deaths of tens of thousands of innocent civilians on both sides. In this context, my paper outlines a framework for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with a focus on the peace agreement and its significant international implications. The project addresses key issues including borders, refugees, settlements, Jerusalem, and resources, and emphasizes potential resolutions to these challenges. It also proposes a solution to the Palestinian political and security forces' inability to prevent violent attacks against Israel. The new plan requires the non-negotiable acceptance of interim administration by the UN and NATO for the new state of Palestine. This proposal establishes conditions for a democratic Palestinian state within modified pre-1967 borders, under UN and NATO oversight for security and development, as a pathway to full independence. Additionally, the peace plan offers security guarantees for Israel.

**Keywords:** *Israeli-Palestinian conflict, two-state solution, peace framework, international administration, Palestinian peacekeeping force (PFOR).*

### Introduction

For the past six decades, both Jewish and Palestinian communities have lived under a cloud of insecurity. Since its establishment in 1948, Israel has faced persistent and overwhelming external hostility (Freilich, 2006). Meanwhile, millions of Palestinians have lived as refugees in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, and other Arab countries, enduring poverty, unemployment, and social discrimination (UNRWA, 2011). It is a historical injustice that two peoples, both of whom have made significant contributions to human civilization, lack the basic conditions for safety, welfare, and prosperity.

The Middle East is changing, presenting a new opportunity for Israeli-Arab and Israeli-Palestinian peace agreements. Despite numerous international mediation efforts, past accords have often failed. This paper proposes a new framework for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While the two-state solution has broad support within the international community, as well as among Israelis and Palestinians, the approaches to its implementation vary. Rather than claiming to offer a perfect solution to this complex conflict, this project aims to address some of the shortcomings of past efforts.

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1 This previously unpublished study was submitted by the author in 2012 as a draft proposal for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the "Comparative National Security of Middle Eastern Countries" program at Harvard University, directed by Professor Charles "Chuck" Freilich.

A central focus of this paper is the development of a democratic Palestinian state under international oversight, which can effectively implement agreements and coexist peacefully with its neighbours, particularly Israel. Before delving into the complexities of a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, it is essential to address the security issues and needs of the conflict's key actors. Recognizing and incorporating these needs and security requirements into the final agreement is crucial for establishing a durable peace.

### **Israeli security**

Israel has often faced the hostility of its neighbours, sometimes alone. This situation is deeply ingrained in the national memory, epitomized by David Ben-Gurion's description of "the few against the many." (Feldman, 1997, p. 9). In Israeli security doctrine, there is a belief that "no external party or parties could be relied upon to assure the existence of the state." (Levite, 1989, p. 29). Consequently, any peace agreement acceptable to Israel must include two critical dimensions: long-term security and effective means of maintaining it. Otherwise, the status quo might be preferable to a peace agreement that could potentially introduce unknown security threats over time. In the Israeli-Palestinian context, security concepts and arrangements must account for the possibility of unexpected changes (Yanai, 2005, p. II). A two-state solution presents two significant security challenges for Israel: first, the geographic complexities make it extremely difficult for Israel to defend its territory; second, a Palestinian state governed by a non-democratic regime might harbor irredentist elements, affecting both sides (Yanai, 2005, p. II). Therefore, Israel requires assurances that the new Palestinian state will be democratic, free from radical movements, friendly, and closely cooperative with Israel.

Israel's core security concept requires a set of four general principles: conditional strategic depth, demilitarization, security cooperation, and airspace control (Yanai, 2005, pp. 13-16). All these security requirements need a credible response in a new plan for peace between the Jewish state and the Palestinian Authority. The plan of peace should produce a comprehensive permanent status agreement, with large acceptance in Israeli public opinion. "Israeli policy toward the Palestinians is not determined solely by national security considerations, but also, domestic politics, historical narratives, religion, and emotions play an important role" (Brom, 2007). Israel's multiparty system and decision-making process, governed by coalition cabinets, are key to understanding this dynamic. "The single most important structural determinant of Israel's national security decision-making process is the PR electoral system and the consequent need to govern through coalition cabinets." (Freilich, 2006). Security, political environment, and public opinion are key factors in the decision-making process and finalization of the peace agreement with the Palestinians.

### **Palestinian security**

Insecurity for both present and future defines the condition of the Palestinian people. Since the Arab-Israeli War of 1948, millions of Palestinians have lived as refugees in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, and other Arab countries. Over 4 million Palestinian refugees endure high levels of poverty, unemployment, and social discrimination (UNRWA, 2011). This situation demands change, as constructing a better future near a traumatized population is impossible without addressing their current plight. The peace process must address the essential needs and security requirements of the Palestinians. These needs encompass both material and political-psychological elements: safety and protection, national welfare and prosperity, protection of the Diaspora, and strong external assurances regarding their existence and freedom (Agha & Khalidi, 2006, pp. 12-15). The fundamentals of Palestinian national security and vital interests should be based on several mutual principles: equality of status (ensuring the Palestinian state is not discriminated against), equality of concerns, and aspirations, the right of self-defence, resolving the refugee problem, preserving Palestinian governance, maintaining basic Palestinian institutions, ensuring authentic and independent representation, and safeguarding holy places and a capital in Jerusalem (Agha & Khalidi, 2006, p. 7-9,15-19). Recognition of these needs and security requirements, and their incorporation into the final agreement, form the foundation for lasting peace. Simultaneously, a balanced agreement that addresses the main interests of both sides can discourage radical groups and reduce public

support for them.

### **The framework for two-state solutions**

In June 2002, President George W. Bush made the first formal U.S. commitment to the creation of an independent Palestinian state, to be established on the West Bank and Gaza (Hunter & Jones, 2004, p. 203). The two-state solution enjoys broad support from the international community, Israel, and the Palestinian people, but the modalities of realization vary. Historically, peace process negotiations have oscillated between the principles of “territory for security” and “security before territory.” The Bush “road map” prioritized Palestinian security and Israeli withdrawals before addressing borders, territory, and statehood.

Shlomo Yanai (2005), in his paper on two-state solutions, concluded that if Israel has learned one lesson from recent experiences, it is that the problem lies not in the principles themselves but in their implementation (Yanai, 2005, p. 23). Our framework for a two-state solution not only addresses classic issues such as territory, security, refugees, settlements, Jerusalem, and resources but also introduces new measures to guarantee and implement the peace agreement. In my opinion, territory, security, refugees, settlements, Jerusalem, and resources should be given equal importance alongside total demilitarization, an international military force, and limitations on sovereignty under international administration of the new state of Palestine. While “Palestinians have historically opposed a provisional state, preferring to establish their state only after all issues are resolved” (Brom, 2007, p. 12), I believe that resolving Israeli-Palestinian issues concurrently is essential. However, the inability of Palestinian political and security forces to prevent violent attacks against Israel necessitates international management.

The new plan mandates the non-negotiable acceptance of UN and NATO administration for the new state of Palestine. This international presence can implement the final peace agreement, secure borders, initiate statehood on democratic principles, and develop a new constitution based on universal values, interim conditions, and international law. Our framework aims to establish a democratic Palestinian state under UN and NATO administration, ensuring security and development as steps toward full independence.

The peace project aims to eliminate threats to Palestinian territorial integrity, political future, and decision-making; address Israeli domination of Palestinian economic life; manage Israeli control over borders and resources; mitigate risks of mass depopulation and ethnic “transfer; and eliminate threats arising from third-party conflicts with Israel (Agha & Khalidi, 2006, p. 21-24). Additionally, NATO’s presence serves as a deterrent to external threats, such as the Iranian nuclear threat. Conversely, this project guarantees security for Israel, fosters a democratic and friendly state in the East, provides a permanent agreement, and opens opportunities for economic expansion in the Middle East.

### **Borders, Territory, and Settlements**

The borders before the 1967 Six-Day War are often used as a reference point for establishing the boundaries of a new Palestinian state. UN Security Council Resolution 242, along with the UN’s stance over the past three decades, has called for Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories and for Palestine to recognize Israel. Resolution 242 has become a key document in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israel has maintained its presence in these territories, citing security concerns. The Palestinian Authority has also acknowledged the borders before the 1967 war. During peace negotiations at Camp David and Taba, Palestinian negotiators agreed in principle that “border modifications” could be agreed on, allowing Israel to annex settlement blocs in the West Bank, potentially offset by land swaps to compensate the Palestinians (Yanai, 2005, p. 19). The goal is for the Palestinian state to include a territory equivalent to the 1967 borders.

President Barack Obama and his administration supported the establishment of a new Palestinian state based on the pre-1967 borders. In his address, in May 2011, on U.S. Middle East policy, President Obama stated that the borders of a “sovereign, nonmilitarized” Palestinian state “should be based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed land swaps” (JTA, 2011). Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu promptly rejected this call, describing the 1967 borders militarily “indefensible” (The Guardian, 2011). After the 1967 war, Israeli added another facet to its national security policies: the concept of defensible borders –

defensive further away from Israel's main population and industrial centers (Feldman, 1997, p. 18).

To ensure Israel's security, the new Palestinian state could be administered internationally, with NATO involvement, and a gradual Israeli withdrawal from strategic areas like the Judea-Samaritan Mountains and the Jordanian border, replaced by a NATO military contingent. This arrangement could provide sufficient security for Israel's industrial, military, and civilian locations. A significant portion of the West Bank settlement population would need to be annexed to Israel, with corresponding Israeli land in the Gaza Strip given to the Palestinians. The Palestinian state should encompass 96% of the West Bank, with the remaining 4%—where about 80% of the settlers live—remaining under Israeli sovereignty. Concurrently, Israel would need to allow safe passage highways connecting the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to the new Palestinian state (The Guardian, 2011). In 2010, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas confirmed that both Palestinians and Israelis agreed on the principle of land swaps, ideally on a one-for-one basis (The Jerusalem Post, 2010).

## Refugees

Israel cannot accept the return of Palestinian refugees within its borders. On one hand, these refugees are a result of the conflict in which Israel was a victim of Arab hostilities. On the other hand, their return could disrupt the demographic balance of the Jewish state. Recent developments in Israeli national security have increasingly focused on demographic concerns rather than geographic ones (Brom, 2007, pp. 14-15). The Palestinian populations in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem have experienced some of the highest growth rates globally, with an annual increase of 2.7%<sup>2</sup>. The population of these territories, which was approximately 3.7 million in 2005, is projected to grow to between six and eight million by 2020. Some Israeli demographers estimate that by 2020, the total population in these areas could reach around 15.5 million, with 58% being non-Jewish (including 2.1 million Arab-Israeli citizens) and only 42% Jewish (Agha & Khalidi, 2006, p. 78-79).

Addressing the refugee issue involves the roles of Lebanon, Jordan, and the international community. These states could help by granting Palestinian refugees permanent citizenship status. A Special International Fund for Palestinian Refugees could provide financial support to integrate refugees into their host countries. Israel should compensate for any loss of property experienced by refugees. Some refugees might return to the new Palestinian state in the West Bank or Gaza Strip, but they would not have the right to return to Israel.

## Jerusalem

Sovereignty over Jerusalem should be shared between the Israeli authority in the western part of the city and the Palestinian authority in the eastern part. East Jerusalem could serve as the future capital of Palestine. Neighborhoods located outside the pre-1967 Green Line but containing significant Jewish settlements should be integrated into Jewish Jerusalem (Ben-Arieh, 2004, p. 19). Post-agreement, the city's daily life should remain unchanged, with particular emphasis on the free movement of goods and people (Hunter & Jones, 2004, p. 208). A key aspect will be ensuring smooth cooperation between East and West Jerusalem through a unified Administrative Committee.

## Sovereignty and Recognition

The new peace agreement for a two-state solution envisions the establishment of a Palestinian state based largely on the borders before the 1967 Six-Day War. During an interim period, the Palestinian Authority should agree to cede some aspects of sovereignty. For at least two decades, the new Palestinian state would be under international administration, with its sovereignty managed by a UN and NATO-administered system. This arrangement aims to ensure security for both the Israeli and Palestinian states. The international political, military, and civil administration in the new Palestinian state would be legitimized by a UN Security Council resolution. The areas administered by the UN and NATO would progressively include 96% of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, along with adjustments through land swaps.

2 <https://datacommons.org/>

The new Palestinian state would formally recognize Israel, and Israel would reciprocate by recognizing Palestine, in accordance with the peace agreement. Israel should also acknowledge the UN and NATO's interim authority in Palestine. Both parties are expected to recognize each other's territories and borders, marking the end of the historic conflict. They must commit to a unified approach in defending the peace agreement.

### **Security, International Administration, and Surveillance of the Palestinian State**

The new peace agreement for a two-state solution proposes that the Palestinian state's sovereignty be limited and subject to international administration for at least two decades. This arrangement aims to ensure security for both Israel and Palestine. Specifically, Israeli concerns about the new Palestinian state potentially becoming a source of instability, such as "Lebanonization" or a springboard for an Arab assault (Feldman, 1997, p. 12), would be addressed. At the same time, international administration would help meet the fundamental needs of Palestinians for security, welfare, and a functioning democracy. An international presence led by the UN, NATO, and the United States could be in line with Israel's security interests. Israeli national security thinking has increasingly recognized the importance of third-party involvement in maintaining stability (Brom, 2007, pp. 14-15). The international community, including the UN, EU, NATO, the United States, and the Arab League, is invested in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and creating a secure environment in the Middle East. Establishing a democratic, peaceful Palestinian state that is friendly with Israel and free from radical movements remains a key goal. Regional and global powers are likely to be open to taking on responsibilities to achieve this.

International communities have successful experiences in cooperation with local forces and the creation of democratic and peaceful states. Kosovo would be a good example of International Administration. The collaboration between UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), multinational forces under NATO command (KFOR), the OSCE, and the EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) has guaranteed security and development in South-East Europe. A new experience of collaboration between the UN, EU, NATO, and OSCE in the new state of Palestine could be functional and useful. The Arab League could also play an important role. International political, military, and civil administration in a new state of Palestine would be validated by a UN Security Council resolution. The UN and NATO could administer the new Palestinian state, covering about 96% of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, along with areas adjusted through land swaps.

Modeled after the UN's role in Kosovo (UNMIK), the UN Interim Administration Mission in Palestine (UNMIP) could handle civil administration, law enforcement and justice, maintain civil law and order, promote the establishment of Palestinian state and self-government institutions in Palestine, promote human rights, support the reconstruction of key infrastructure in the new state<sup>3</sup>. Like NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR), a new multinational force—Palestine Force (PFOR)—could be established, composed of about 20,000 troops from NATO and other countries, including some Arab states with normal relations with Israel, under unified NATO command (NATO, n.d).

PFOR would remain in Palestine based on the UN Security Council Resolution after the peace agreement. PFOR's mandate would be to implement the peace agreement of the two-state solution, deter hostility and threats against Palestine or from Palestine to Israel, demilitarize Palestine, monitor the development of professional, democratic security structures, and support the international civil presence. PFOR tasks should include border security, security and public order, protection of holy places, interdiction of cross-border weapons smuggling, and support for the establishment of civilian institutions (NATO, n.d). PFORs and the newly elected Palestinian Govern mission would include implementing the peace agreement, ensuring demilitarizing Palestinian groups. After Palestinian demilitarization, Israeli Defends Forces would withdraw from the strategic position in the West Bank, and they would be replaced by American forces under NATO command. Initially, PFOR would help recruit and train new Palestinian police forces. Over time, as the Palestinian state evolves towards democracy and peaceful relations with Israel, PFOR's responsibilities would transition to Palestinian forces. In the first decade, with ongoing democratization

3 <http://www.unmikonline.org/>

and improved relations, the Palestinian Defense Forces could be developed into a defense-oriented military under civilian control.

Development of economic infrastructure should be led by the EU, the United States, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and other specialized economic and financial institutions.

Election, democracy, and institution building should be led by the OSCE, as a specialized international organization in post-conflict rehabilitation, confidence and security-building measures, human rights, democratization, and policing strategies<sup>4</sup>. During the first decade, elections should be organized under strict surveillance of the international community, especially the OSCE. Elections are the foundations of democracy. The democratic system requires a government elected by the people in free and fair elections. OSCE mission in Palestine can provide the environment for free and fair elections, restoring faith in democracy, promoting the right to free speech, informing voters, and ensuring fair competition among political candidates and parties.

As the new Palestinian democracy matures, Israel and Palestine, along with other emerging democracies in the region, should be considered for a NATO partnership with a clear perspective of NATO membership. This process would contribute to long-term reconciliation between the Jewish and Palestinian people and establish enduring security.

## Conclusion

A framework for a peace solution in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict should include credible responses about vital needs and security necessities for both sides while providing a clear implementation plan. A peace agreement alone is incomplete without a practical strategy for execution. The new plan requires, as nonnegotiable, the acceptance of UN and NATO interim administration for a new state of Palestine. This plan aims to establish a democratic Palestinian state within borders close to those before the 1967 War, with necessary modifications, under UN and NATO administration to ensure security and development as steps toward full independence. Additionally, the plan offers security assurances for Israel. "It's difficult to find Israeli understanding to withdraw from strategic positions in occupied territory, but comprehensive security measures can do it. Where our security is concerned, we must rely on ourselves, on our own capability and our own strength, and not on external forces," declared Ben Gurion (Levite, 1989, p. 29). International political, military, and civil administration in the new state of Palestine, with US and NATO command, accepted by Palestinians, legitimized by a UN Security Council resolution, is seen as the best security guarantee for Israel.

However, a peace process without other Arab countries, such as Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon, is an incomplete peace agreement. King Hussein's assertion that "Jordan is Palestine and Palestine is Jordan" (Israeli, 2003) highlights the deep national, political, cultural, and territorial connections between Palestinians and Jordanians. The long-term stability of the Israel-Palestine-Jordan triangle is influenced by the significant Palestinian presence in these regions, where actions by one party will affect the other two (Agha & Khalidi, 2006, p.74). The old Middle Eastern dictum that "Arabs cannot make war without Egypt or peace without Syria" holds some truth in it. Jewish state needs to find a creative solution for the Golan Heights, as it relies heavily on water sources located beyond the pre-1967 borders: the West Bank and Golan Heights (Feldman, 1997, p.10). The world is changing. For the entire Middle East, the enemy is not Israel but dictatorship, unemployment, and poverty. In the new context, the peace process between Israel and other Arab countries in the region will be easier to achieve.

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