

Two States

Possible Solutions to the
Israeli-Palestinian Conundrum



INTRODUCTION

This is a collection of potential solutions to the crises in the Middle East that began more than a century ago. Even if these suggestions are not enacted, they may inspire other solutions that result in two states sitting side by side --- Israel and Palestine.

The critical matters are divided into nine subjects:

- ◆ The Right of Return
- ◆ Jerusalem
- ◆ West Bank Settlements
- ◆ The Gaza Strip & Hamas
- ◆ Israeli Security
- ◆ Israeli Governance
- ◆ Palestinian Governance
- ◆ Nurturing & Sustaining the Peace
- ◆ Enactment

What is being proposed are broad brush strokes presented in a concise manner. Addressing the details will require the skills and experiences of professional diplomats.

SUBJECTS

RIGHT OF RETURN

The Issue: Between 1947 and 1948, at least 700,000 people fled the land which became the State of Israel. An additional exodus occurred in 1967. International law appears to allow these people (or their descendants) to reclaim their former homes. However, that involves an estimated 5 million Palestinian people who could move into Israel --- a nation of just 10 million.

The Proposed Solution: Both parties mutually and simultaneously agree that all displaced people have a *moral* right of return but that an actual return is impractical and cannot happen. A fund will be established to aid the displaced first-generation survivors and, if they are no longer alive, their immediate heirs.

JERUSALEM

The Issue: It is believed that Jerusalem has existed since around 3000 BCE. As such, it has a long and complicated history serving as a central point to three major monotheistic faiths. The agreement that ended the 1948 Arab-Israeli War assigned part of Jerusalem to the newly created State of Israel with the remaining assigned to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. However, having two nations manage what had always been a single city was often problematic. Israel took over the entire city in 1967 after the winning the Six Day War. In 1980, the nation's parliament declared Jerusalem its unified capitol, even as surging Palestinian nationalists hoped to make Jordan's former section their capitol. The situation has become even more complicated through Israeli policies regarding residency and new construction.

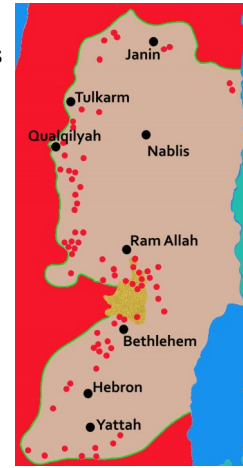
The Proposed Solution: Jerusalem is to be a unified, dual capital city under Israeli stewardship. Both the State of Israel and the State of Palestine are allowed to have government offices in the shared city (foreign embassies can be accredited to both nations). Each resident will be offered the choice to be citizen of Israel, of Palestine or hold dual citizenship. As the city's steward, Israel's responsibilities will include security and policing. Israeli law will apply, albeit with mutually agreed upon exceptions and special circumstances (such as holy sites).



WEST BANK SETTLEMENTS

The Issue: It is important for the State of Palestine to have a contiguous land mass (as much as possible). However, this goal is complicated by the estimate 500,000 Israeli settlers living on the West Bank. This situation must be changed in the least disruptive manner possible.

The Proposed Solution: No one will be forcibly removed from their homes. Settlers will be given three options. 1) to return to Israel proper, with financial assistance. 2) Israeli settlements within 15 kilometers of the border will remain on land that is officially Palestine but leased by Israel (putting them under Israeli law). Any horizontal growth (i.e., involving Palestinian land) is only permissible if approved by both governments. Residents of the other settlements may relocate to one of these, with financial assistance. 3) remaining residents may stay in their current homes as dual citizens of the two nations and living under Palestinian law.



GAZA & HAMAS

The Issue: The war in the Gaza Strip between Israel and the militant group Hamas has left death, physical devastation, questions of governance and serious damage to Israel's international reputation.

The Proposed Hamas Solution: Delegitimize Hamas by starving the group (as much as possible) of funds and weapons. Concurrently, the legitimate State of Palestine civil service and government should receive full support, especially in terms of funds. The official government should be managing ministries and paying salaries rather than a militant organization.

The Proposed Reconstruction Solution: Establish a quasi-governmental body called the **Gaza Institute** to plan and execute rebuilding the enclave. Its governing board should consist of Palestinians (specifically Gazans) and representatives of the funding nations: Saudi Arabia, United States, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Israel (which will be vital in building a positive relationship between the two countries). The neighboring countries of Jordan and Egypt should also be part of the board.

ISRAELI SECURITY

The Issue: Since its establishment in 1948, the State of Israel has faced a near-constant threat to its survival from nearby nations and militant organizations.

The Proposed Solution: The State of Palestine may have a domestic police force but no military. Israel, Jordan and Egypt shall manage relevant parts of the border. The Israel Defense Force will be charged with defending both nations (Israel *and* Palestine) from external threats. The arrangement may be renegotiated after ten years, when hopefully trust has been built among the parties.

ISREALI GOVERNANCE

The Issue: The lack of a formal constitution and the rising influence of fringe political groups have left Israel's democratic system on shaky legs with a series of unstable governments and little public confidence. A key element is the nation's unicameral parliament, the Knesset. The closed national ballot method has resulted in a representative body that doesn't accurately represent the population. It also gives added weight to the power of political parties, especially smaller parties that speak for fringe elements.

The Proposed Solution: The ideal solution is a formal, written constitution. This seems unlikely to occur. With or without such a document, how members of the Knesset are chosen must be reformed. A politically neutral institution should be established to create and supervise 120 representative districts. Each district is to have its own ballot and its own candidates. The districts should be (approximately) equal in population size, contiguous and easily identifiable on a map. This will result in a parliament that better reflects the population and benefits centrist parties who will be more inclined toward cooperation and compromise.

PALESTINIAN GOVERNANCE

The Issue: Years of stagnation have left the Palestinian Authority with ineffectual administration, corruption and a loss of respect among the populace.

The Proposed Solution: Permanently dissolve the Palestinian Authority (PA) as soon as possible. Initially, what will become the State of Palestine will be governed by the temporary **Interim Palestine Administration** (IPA). Its senior committee should be comprised of Palestinians supplemented with representatives from select donor countries. The IPA should remain in existence for no more than two years. During this time, an audit of PA finances should be conducted, a formal State of Palestine constitution written and ratified culminating in elections.

NURTURING & SUSTAINING THE PEACE

The Issue: Establishing two states alone cannot sustain peaceful coexistence. All relevant governments of the Eastern Mediterranean will need a tool to solve additional and future problems as well as to build mutual trust.

The Proposed Solution: Create and establish **The Levant Cooperation Council**. The purpose of the permanent Council is to negotiate and manage shared interests among its members, primarily in matters of natural resources, security and economics. Initial membership: the State of Israel, the State of Palestine, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Republic of Egypt and the Republic of Cyprus.

ENACTMENT

The Issue: Leaders on both sides will be under considerable political pressure to undermine or delay the implementation of an agreement.

The Proposed Solution: The establishment of a temporary agency, the **Middle East Peace Administration (MEPA)**, to ensure that each side takes the necessary steps to achieve a successful two-state situation. It will be headed by a chief executive with the authority to assess the progress of this process and the power to enact rewards and penalties as he deems appropriate. The MEPA board is to be comprised of representatives of donor countries as well as neighboring states Jordan and Egypt. The agency will be dissolved once all of the eight previously suggested elements are in place.

A FINAL THOUGHT

Most politicians are cowards. This is why so few rise to the level of statesmen. Politicians commonly focus on what keeps them in their influential position or which promotes an ideology that benefits or appeases a certain constituency.

A narrative has persisted that Middle East peace cannot be imposed. This narrative has often benefited certain politicians --- in the region and without --- but not the people living in this crucial part of the world. The region's leaders will *not* make a serious effort at making the two-state solution a reality unless the process provides them with the necessary political cover.

That cover comes in the form of a simple sentence: "We have no choice." Fortitude will be necessary by all involved (there *will be* intense opposition, including some violence). But the message repeated to the population is the same: "We have no choice." This message comes with an apt acronym, WHiNCe. The proposed **Middle East Peace Administration (MEPA)** referenced earlier is the proposed enforcement mechanism.

Every important and relevant member of the international community must remain unified and unwavering behind the WHiNCe message. This primarily means the United States, the United Kingdom, the European Union, the United Nations, the Arab League, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, Bahrain, Kuwait, the Vatican and the United Arab Emirates.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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