Is the two-state solution still possible?

Are other frameworks better or more feasible than two states? This study seeks to answer these questions through a candid and rigorous analysis.

Is there another viable outcome?

While the two-state model deserves to be debated on its merits, and certainly on its viability, pronouncements of this formula’s death raise the question: if not two states, then what?
About the Study

The two-state solution has been widely criticized from the right and the left as an idea whose time has passed and been overtaken by facts on the ground. As a result, many other models for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have been advanced, from one-state formulas to confederation outcomes to maintaining the status quo indefinitely. How do these proposals for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict — including the recently released Trump plan — measure up against key criteria, like keeping Israel Jewish and democratic, providing security, and ensuring feasibility? Is there a model that fits the needs of both parties while being realistic in practice? This comprehensive study of potential outcomes for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict assesses the strengths and weaknesses of different plans, and trains a critical eye on whether a two-state solution is still possible, concluding that despite the heavy lift it will take to implement, a two-state outcome is not only possible but the only implementable plan that maintains Israel as Jewish and democratic.

Study Authors

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Contributors

**Ambassador Daniel B. Shapiro** joined the Institute for National Security Studies in March 2017 as a Distinguished Visiting Fellow. At INSS he will participate in several of the Institute's research programs, including those on Israel-U.S. Relations, Israeli-Palestinian Relations, the Arab World, and Israeli Society and Public Opinion. Before joining INSS, Shapiro served as United States ambassador to Israel (July 2011-January 2017). In that role, he participated in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, U.S.-Israel discussions on the Iran nuclear agreement, and negotiations on the $38 billion Memorandum of Understanding for U.S. military assistance to Israel. Prior to that he was Senior Director for the Middle East and North Africa at the National Security Council at the White House, where he served as a member of Special Envoy George Mitchell’s team, led U.S. diplomatic efforts in Syria and Lebanon, and advised President Obama through the early months of the upheavals in Arab states in 2011. He previously served in numerous senior advisory positions in the U.S. Congress. He was a term member at the Council on Foreign Relations. Ambassador Shapiro has taught at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service. He holds a B.A. from Brandeis University and an M.A. from Harvard University.

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All of the information contained in this report is current as of February 2020.
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In early 2013, as President Barack Obama’s second term was getting underway, I sent a memo to the new Secretary of State, John Kerry, from my post at the United States Embassy in Israel. I wrote from the perspective of a veteran of Obama’s first term, and a participant in our failed efforts to generate progress on Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

I acknowledged areas where our administration had made mistakes, or could have performed better. But I observed that a fundamental reason for the failure was a complete lack of trust between the two leaders, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, and the societies they led—and pointed out that in this regard, nothing had changed.

I knew that Secretary Kerry sought to reenergize peace talks, and I pronounced myself skeptical, although prepared to implement whatever he and President Obama agreed on as the policy. But I urged that, whatever other course we took, we also assign a team of experts to research alternatives to a two-state solution.

The recommendation sounded strange, even to myself. A two-state solution had been the declared U.S. policy of both the George W. Bush and Obama administrations, and the implicit policy of the Clinton administration. On a personal level, I had believed since the late 1980s that no other outcome could protect U.S. interests, ensure Israel’s future as a secure, Jewish, and democratic state, and fulfill Palestinians’ legitimate aspirations for self-determination in an independent state of their own. Indeed, it was the primary reason I chose a career in public service.

But barring a dramatic change in Israeli and Palestinian leadership or domestic politics, I saw little chance of advancing our goal. Even if we pursued it—as we went on to do in the talks Kerry led in 2013-2014—I saw value in exploring our options in case we failed.

Kerry did not take up my recommendation, and for perfectly legitimate reasons. With all due respect to policy planning and red-teaming, it is difficult for a government bureaucracy to devote all its resources to the success of a policy goal, while simultaneously planning for its failure. But the lack of a serious study of options other than a two-state solution has been a gap that leaves us uninformed about how those outcomes might unfold, ill-equipped to influence their direction, and unprepared for the new reality they will create.

This groundbreaking study, expertly researched and authored by Shira Efron and Evan Gottesman on behalf of Israel Policy Forum, goes a long way toward filling that gap. Through systematic analysis, informed by the arguments of leading advocates of a range of approaches, and drawing on extensive demographic, economic, security, and public opinion data, they chart the likely course of each of the main options, in addition to that of the two-state solution: continuation of the status quo; Israeli-Palestinian confederation; one democratic or binational state; one Jewish non-democratic state; a Jordanian option; and the newly-released Peace to Prosperity, known as the Trump plan.
The results are at once unsurprising and alarming. In different ways, each of the models studied scores well below a two-state solution in delivering on core goals: sustaining Israel’s Jewish and democratic character; providing self-determination for Palestinians; security; support from various international actors; and, the ease and cost of implementation.

The study’s findings reinforce the instincts of the Israeli and Palestinian people. For many years, significant majorities on both sides rated a two-state solution as their preferred outcome. After over a decade of fruitless attempts at negotiations, as the study notes, those numbers have dropped. Yet even so, large pluralities of both societies continue to express the same preference (despite widespread disbelief that it is possible in the near term), and no other outcome has gathered critical mass support as an alternative.

But understanding the possible outcomes is more important than ever. Most of the main obstacles to achieving a two-state solution remain deeply entrenched. Netanyahu and Abbas, each still in power, have proven unable or unwilling to make the necessary decisions, tell the hard truths to their own people, and sell the difficult compromises in the face of strong domestic political opposition. Mistrust pervades their personal relationship, reflecting well the attitudes of the Israeli and Palestinian people, each one citing their grievances and victimization at the hands of the other. The predominant national narratives, both historical and contemporary, are incompatible with compromise. The security risks of a potential hostile or failed Palestinian state are undeniable. And Hamas’ continued control of Gaza poses a direct challenge to Israeli security, the legitimacy of the Palestinian Authority leadership, and the well-being of the Palestinians they rule. Few of these elements look likely to improve soon.

So Palestinians and Israelis have much to gain by absorbing the findings of this study. But they are not the only ones. So does the United States.

Perhaps more than any other international actor, the United States has invested in the Israeli-Palestinian arena. It has built a close security and economic partnership with Israel, provided assistance to the Palestinian people, helped build the institutions of the Palestinian Authority, and sponsored multiple iterations of peace negotiations. So as the two-state solution declines in both support and likelihood, it is imperative that U.S. policymakers and the American public consider how U.S. interests will be affected by the various courses of action.

That question is beyond the scope of this study. But its analysis offers some compelling hints.

One overarching concern is an erosion of U.S. policy consensus. The two-state solution had the advantage of representing a long-term, bipartisan agreement on the best outcome for U.S. interests. To date, no other approach has succeeded two states as a consensus preference. That could lead to sharp swings of U.S. policy toward Israel and the Palestinians as administrations of both parties come and go and different factions favor varying possible outcomes.

One critical interest that could be affected by the demise of two states is the stability of the U.S.-Israel security partnership, from which both countries benefit. At least two scenarios could strain this partnership. Under scenarios (such as confederation or one democratic state) in which the Israeli military would need to integrate with Palestinian security organs, serious questions arise about whether the United States would continue to find a stable, reliable, professional partner with strong societal support for joint security activities.
In the one Jewish non-democratic state outcome, likely to be seen as abhorrent to many Americans, U.S. law and American values, at least as understood by some potential administrations and their supporters, might preclude a security partnership of the same closeness that the United States and Israel experience today. The United States’ security partnerships with non-democracies like Morocco, Jordan, and, arguably, Turkey, serve U.S. interests, but lack the values-based bonds of those it enjoys with democratic partners, like Israel today.

The stability of Israeli society itself, and the humanitarian conditions of both Palestinians and Israelis, represent another U.S. interest very much implicated by the models presented. The continued status quo or one Jewish non-democratic state are scenarios in which Palestinians would continue to live without self-determination and under some degree of Israeli control. The potential for periodic destabilizing violent episodes, while not new, could certainly increase over time.

But with one democratic state, or with a confederation, the United States might face not only a country with a large minority (and perhaps soon a majority) Palestinian population less friendly to U.S. policies, but an unstable society subject to internal conflicts. Imagine, for example, a majority Palestinian legislature legalizing the return of Palestinian refugees, transforming the Jewish population into a decided minority, or such a proposal being blocked by a bare Jewish majority. In either of these scenarios, and numerous others, it is not a stretch to imagine the society torn apart by Balkan-style inter-communal violence. Mass suffering on all sides could easily result, and the United States might find itself drawn to intervene. Such events could also produce a brain drain, as the most economically productive citizens find more hospitable places of residence, weakening a hi-tech ecosystem that has been a boon to U.S. technology companies.

Lastly, the United States’ ability to manage a wide range of threats and challenges in the Middle East hinges on the stability of Jordan, and on U.S. relations with other Arab states. Options other than two states must be evaluated, in part, on the basis of their impact on Jordan. The study highlights the fundamental opposition of the Hashemite Kingdom to a Jordanian option (which can take more than one form). But nearly all of the other formulas studied also pose serious challenges to Jordan, with its majority Palestinian-origin population, sensitivity to Israeli-Palestinian violence, and direct role in managing Jerusalem’s Islamic holy sites. None of them give confidence that U.S. interests in Jordan would be well-served.

As for other Arab states, today there is a welcome warming trend between them and Israel. But the ability to consolidate those gains into normalized relations between Israel and the United States’ Arab partners could be held back by the absence of two states. Instability and violence, or Israeli dominance of a non-democratic state, could even roll back the positive trends in Israeli-Arab relations, and introduce new tensions between the United States and Arab states.

Until the presidency of Donald Trump, the most likely of the studied outcomes by far seemed to be a continuation of the status quo. As the study notes, that outcome is itself illusory; the status quo is anything but static, as Israeli settlements in the West Bank expand and the Palestinian Authority’s future is called into question. The passage of time would almost certainly lead, eventually, to the need to choose among the other models, most likely the choice between one democratic state and one Jewish non-democratic state.

But the presentation of President Trump’s “Vision for Peace, Prosperity, and a Brighter Future for Israel and the Palestinian People” in January 2020 scrambles that expectation. If that plan is
implemented, or if Israel proceeds with unilateral annexation of some 30% of the West Bank on the basis of the plan, the continuation of what is understood as the status quo is likely to be short-circuited. While the plan ostensibly envisions ongoing Palestinian autonomy (which it calls statehood, but precludes nearly all indicia of sovereignty) in disconnected territories, the collapse of the Palestinian Authority, and with it the need for Israel to resume providing civilian governance and security in the Palestinian population centers of the West Bank, becomes a near-term likelihood. In such a scenario, the timetable for choosing among the alternatives is moved up.

Trump's policies notwithstanding, many Americans continue to see the two-state solution as the best outcome for U.S. interests. But the increasing unlikelihood of its achievement compels us to study other outcomes. In one sense, that is normal: the realities of the world often dictate that we confront sub-optimal foreign policy choices. And in such situations, American officials must try to identify the least bad option, and, to the degree the United States has influence, attempt to steer toward that outcome. This study is an invaluable tool in helping us undertake that task.

But I hope it has another impact, as well. The unsparing descriptions of the models this study presents, with all the dangers they contain for Israelis, Palestinians, U.S. interests, and the region, put the stark reality of those choices before us. It is not pretty. And perhaps, it will help reinvigorate efforts by Israelis, Palestinians, Americans, and others to steer back toward the best outcome, a two-state solution, or at least to keep it alive and viable for the future when new leaders and improved conditions may make it possible.
Chapter 1. Introduction

The year 2020 marks twenty years since the Camp David Summit. While Israelis and Palestinians disagree on the roots of Camp David’s failure, two things are indisputable: it was the first time since the 1947 United Nations (UN) partition plan that an independent Palestinian state was formally on the table, and the negotiations did not succeed in producing a final status agreement. The intervening two decades have not been kind to the two-state framework. The Second Intifada, the failure of the Olmert-Abbas talks in 2008, the Hamas takeover in Gaza and subsequent three wars there, the ascent of the revanchist Israeli right, the collapse of the U.S.-backed peace process under Secretary John Kerry, and the widely criticized pro-settler Trump administration’s plan known as Peace to Prosperity, which was rejected at the onset by the Palestinians, have all helped reinforce the idea of the “death of the two-state solution” in the public conscience.

While the two-state model deserves to be debated on its merits, and certainly on its viability, pronouncements of this formula’s death raise the question: if not two states, then what? And are other frameworks better or more feasible than two states? This study seeks to answer these questions through a candid and rigorous analysis.

Even though the two-state solution has been the sole internationally acceptable formula to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in decades, several other formulas have been proposed throughout the years both on the political left as well as on the right. And although the Trump administration’s plan uses the two-state terminology, in practice their approach combines elements of other models. Following review of academic literature, press reports, and consultations with over a dozen subject matter experts in Israel, the Palestinian Territories, and the United States, we zoomed in on seven approaches for analysis, some of which represent a group of formulas that are similar in nature. These are:

1. Two-state solution
2. Continuation of the status quo
3. Israeli-Palestinian confederation
4. One democratic or binational state
5. One Jewish non-democratic state
6. Jordanian option
7. Peace to Prosperity: the Trump plan

This list is not exhaustive. Still, it represents a wide spectrum of common approaches and ideas and captures today’s vibrant academic and political debate about how to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We analyze these approaches rigorously and systematically, as explained in the methodology section. We do not do that in a vacuum, however. Rather, we seek to understand to what extent they may help attain a “secure, Jewish, and democratic Israel,” which is a core mission of Israel Policy Forum. While Israel Policy Forum, like many other organizations, believes that only a two-state solution can fulfill this vision in the long run, given the daunting challenges that the two-state solution faces we frankly assess how competing ideas to the two-state framework could address the conflict while adhering to our values and steadfast commitment to Zionism.

In that regard, it is noteworthy that we purposely eschew the language of “solutions” in favor of terms like “approach,” “outcome,” “model,” “framework,” or “formula.” This is because we do not believe that all of the models listed are solutions; some present morally reprehensible modes of
implementation including population transfer. Others are simply not actionable in any conceivable scenario. And others disregard the importance of alliances, regional and international. Thus, we do not aim to suggest that each of these formulas have equal ethical or intellectual footing or elevate ideas to the level of the two-state framework by suggesting that it is a comparable alternative. That said, we describe these other formulas objectively and candidly describe their advantages even if the shortcomings outweigh the benefits. As this study shows, none of the formulas—including the two-state paradigm—is a panacea to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. All approaches are associated with various challenges that make them either non-ethical, technically impossible, or politically nonviable. Among all these flawed options, the two-state solution emerges as far from ideal, yet still preferable to the others. This does not mean, however, that Israelis and Palestinians can and should rush to reach a final settlement based on two states. Rather, that it is critical to find interim models that would put the two sides back on the two-state pathway and not push them in the direction of other ideas that are far worse.

1.1 Methodology

This study employed a mixed-method approach including a review of hundreds of academic publications and media reporting, as well as written proposals for Israeli-Palestinian conflict outcomes. We also conducted semi-structured interviews with over a dozen Israeli, Palestinian, and American subject matter experts from across the political spectrum, including current and former officials, civil society activists, and academics. Finally, we developed a useful framework for analysis.

Our first task was mapping the landscape of ideas proposed across the political spectrum to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; group the ideas that are similar in nature; and select the ones for analysis. This selection was guided by the frequency with which these proposals are discussed in the media and academic literature, and based on conversations with dozens of Israeli, Palestinian, and U.S. subject matter experts, which resulted in choosing to focus on the six aforementioned approaches, plus the two-state solution. We subsequently in each chapter describe the evolution of these ideas, as informed by literature, press, and off the record interviews with advocates of the various formulas, their key characteristics, as well as their main advantages and shortcomings. We then identified a methodology for comparing between the different approaches. Drawing on classic policy analysis methods, we developed a tool that is both systematic as well as simple to understand and use for analysis and decision-making. The first step in the tool development process was identifying a set of criteria against which we can evaluate the different approaches. Because the objectives stated by proponents of other approaches may not be a Jewish, democratic, and secure Israel, but only one or two of these components, we break down this goal into its three guiding criteria:

1. Jewish – Whether the approach maintains Israel as a Jewish state;
2. Democratic – Whether the approach maintains Israel as a democratic state;

We also account for the formula’s ability to provide Palestinian self-determination. The other criteria are more general and apply in most policy analysis studies, including ease of implementation, political viability, international acceptance, cost, and timeframe to implementation. We adapt these general criteria to the Israeli-Palestinian context. Based on current best evidence from the literature,
media, and subject-matter experts in Israel, the United States, in the West Bank, and elsewhere in the Middle East, we defined a subset of key evaluation considerations for each criterion.

The considerations are meant to help systematically assess the strengths and weaknesses of each approach as well as compare across the different options along the same dimensions. Table 1.1 provides a list of criteria, their definitions, and corresponding evaluation considerations. While we present only a subset of evaluation considerations, our analysis is based on dozens more that we discussed with subject matter experts.

**Table 1.1. Criteria, Definitions and Evaluation Considerations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Evaluation Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>Whether the approach maintains Israel as a Jewish state.</td>
<td>What is the impact of the model on the demographic balance between the Jewish and Palestinian populations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>Whether the approach maintains Israel as a democratic state.</td>
<td>The extent to which there are regular and competitive elections for effective power, all citizens have equal political and civil rights, and the state does not deny these rights on a permanent basis to people that are under its direct or effective control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian Self-Determination</td>
<td>The degree to which the approach fulfills Palestinian pursuit of self-determination.</td>
<td>Does the model address Palestinian national aspirations? Does it increase Palestinian sovereignty over land and other national symbols?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>The extent to which the approach strengthens Israel’s security.</td>
<td>To what extent does the model increase security risks stemming from terrorism, military confrontation with one or more Palestinian factions, and external threats including to Jordan’s stability?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of Implementation</td>
<td>Ease with which the idea can be implemented in terms of technical complexity, logistics, and resources.</td>
<td>What type of Israeli-Palestinian coordination, or assistance from the international community, is needed for implementation? Would it require mobilization of forces and people, or structural and physical changes? Are changes to existing laws needed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Viability</td>
<td>Acceptance of approach by five categories of stakeholders: (1) Israeli public; (2) Israeli government; (3) Palestinian public; and the Palestinian</td>
<td>How favored is the approach among the Israeli/Palestinian political echelon? Under what conditions could it become more/less acceptable? How acceptable is it to the Israeli/Palestinian sector of Israeli society?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1 In capturing Israeli public opinion, we do not analyze the different sects of society, whose opinions could vary substantially. Moreover, although 21% of Israeli population is of Palestinian descent, often referred to as “Arab Israelis,” we focus primarily on the Jewish population for two reasons. First, the Jewish population is the majority and their weight in polling is greater; and second, various initiatives including in the Knesset, have called for ensuring a special Jewish majority to make concessions on final status issues pertaining to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Therefore, how the Jewish population perceives an outcome accounts more for its Israeli political viability. It suffices to say that polling shows a clear majority among the Israeli Arab public, or Palestinians citizens of Israel, for a two-state solution. There are varying degrees of support for confederation and one democratic state but those are marginal. Any outcome that is non-democratic, threatens their rights as equal citizens of the State of Israel, or fails to provide self-determination to the Palestinians is unacceptable to this sect of Israeli society.
government is divided into (4) the PA, and (5) Hamas. public? Under what conditions could it become more/less acceptable?

**International Acceptance**
- The extent to which international players accept the approach, divided into five groups: (1) Jordan and Egypt; (2) other regional players; (3) the United States; (4) Russia and China; and (5) the European Union and international organizations.
- How would the approach affect Jordanian and Egyptian leaderships, and their publics’ attitudes toward Israel? Would it shape public and hidden ties with regional countries? Would it influence Israel’s standing in international organizations and the risk of sanctions? Could it change U.S. assistance to Israel? Would it affect ties with the diaspora?

**Cost**
- This criterion is broken down into direct and indirect costs associated with the approach.
- What are the expenditures needed for implementation (including one-time fixed costs, e.g., structures, equipment, training, and ongoing operational and maintenance costs)? Who is likely to assume the financial burden? What are the indirect costs and opportunity costs (other things that could have been done instead with the same sources)?

**Timeframe to Implementation**
- Relative time for the approach to be implemented and produce desired results.
- Could the idea be implemented in the near-, medium-, long-term? How long could it take to roll it out? What sequence of events is pre-required for implementation? Does it require investment (e.g., in infrastructure, legislation) that could delay implementation? How long would benefits from the approach be materialized?

The tool itself is a two-dimensional color-coded scorecard depicting the relative performance of an approach in relation to each criterion. The colors range from red, representing poor performance, to green, representing strong performance close to the stated goal. Table 1.2 illustrates the range of colors we used. Thus, the tool assists in characterizing how well an approach performs across each of the criteria. For comparison purposes, the scorecard aligns the performance judgments for each criterion and each approach. The scorecard includes both the color and brief explanatory text for each criterion assessed to enable rapid visual interpretation of the results. The textual component of the tool is aimed at flagging the most challenging and contested elements of a given approach. Of course, a deeper analysis may then be needed regarding those specific issues that we raise.

In each chapter, after discussing a specific approach, we apply the tool to assess how it performs against our criteria. In the last chapter, we populate a common matrix framework, using the approaches as column headers and the criteria described in Table 1.1 in each line to present a comparative picture.

**Table 1.2 Range of Colors for Populating Evaluation Matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>🟠</td>
<td>Strong performance against criterion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🟢</td>
<td>Slightly less strong performance yet still above the midpoint</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.2 Limitations

This study represents an ambitious endeavor to map the landscape of competing ideas to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, assess them rigorously and systematically, and present the findings in a visually accessible manner. It provides a unique and important contribution to the policy literature on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Yet, it still has limitations.

First, as mentioned above, the list of approaches we selected for analysis is not comprehensive. Other ideas exist and some might be better than similar ones we chose to emphasize. It is also possible that we grouped under the same categories similar models without capturing their full nuance. However, in the interest of brevity and clarity, we sought to capture the main approaches advocated on the left and the right, group them based on their similarities, and describe them as accurately as possible in a relatively short number of pages. Because the two-state outcome has been officially supported by the United States, international institutions, and most countries’ governments for at least twenty years, there is significantly more literature about its possible parameters than exists on other models. Similarly, the Trump administration’s plan is described in a 180-page long document that provides great detail about the approach. Yet, we sought to offset this imbalance with interviews with advocates of the different approaches, and indeed we managed to gain access to leading figures across the political spectrum who helped us fill in the blanks.

The tool we developed also has limitations. While the criteria presented are all important, they are not all of equal weight. At Israel Policy Forum, we consider the fate of Israel as Jewish, democratic, and secure as most critical. We also believe in the Palestinian right to self-determination in an independent state. Others might contend that as long as Israel remains Jewish in character, nothing else matters. And yet others value democracy more. And although we are not willing to compromise on Israel’s state characteristics, technical considerations such as ease of implementation, cost, and timeframe could be deal breakers even if the model is ideal otherwise.

In addition, several criteria refer to the acceptability of a given framework to the governments of the United States and Israel; these reflect how the Trump administration and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s current coalition would receive a plan. However, power could change hands in both Washington and Jerusalem in and after 2020, meaning these categories will have to be adjusted. The Palestinian Authority and Hamas, which represent non-democratic regimes, are less dynamic, but their positions could shift in the future, as well. Accordingly, the positions of all governments listed here are consistent with their policies as of the writing of this study in early 2020. Similarly, judgments on political viability of various options among the Israeli and Palestinian publics are based on current polling and do not necessarily account for the ability of (new) leaders and events to re-shape public opinion. All of the information contained in this report is current as of the writing of the final draft in early February 2020. Nonetheless, given available information, the vast bulk of the analysis and conclusions of this study are valid and robust under possible political shifts in Jerusalem, Washington, and even in the West Bank and Gaza.
Moreover, the color codes do not always reflect quantitative data-based evidence. In terms of political viability, we relied on available polling data. However, in assessing costs, for example, we consulted with subject matter experts and used previous experience, available literature, and analytical thinking to determine the colors. In each chapter, we explain briefly how we arrived at the different color schemes. Yet, we acknowledge that some readers, among them stakeholders that have an important role in shaping the current Israeli-Palestinian landscape, may not agree with our judgments and may even operate based on a different set of values.

1.3 Organization of the Report

The plan for the remainder of the report is as follows:

- Chapter 2 analyzes the two-state solution;
- Chapter 3 looks at the status quo, which we do not treat as static, but rather as a dynamic situation in which present trends continue on the same trajectory;
- Chapter 4 examines the group of ideas for Israeli-Palestinian confederation;
- Chapter 5 reviews proposals for one democratic state for Israelis and Palestinians;
- Chapter 6 surveys models for an Israeli Jewish-dominated state;
- Chapter 7 assesses the Jordanian option, i.e., connecting the Palestinians to Jordan without establishing a Palestinian state first;
- Chapter 8 looks into Peace to Prosperity, the Trump administration’s plan;
- In Chapter 9, we compare the different models with one another and conclude the study.
Chapter 2. Two-State Solution

Over the better part of the twentieth century, the area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River—to which some refer as Mandatory or Historic Palestine and others as the Land of Israel—saw a clash between two national movements. On the one hand, the Zionist movement and its key achievements: international endorsement for Jewish statehood, mainly in the 1917 Balfour Declaration and the 1947 UN General Assembly Resolution 181 (known as the Partition Plan); the creation of the State of Israel in 1948; and its development into a regional superpower, including its 1967 takeover and lengthy control of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. On the other hand, the Palestinian national movement, which gained purpose and cohesiveness mostly as a response to Zionist territorial and political gains. Its defining moments include the mass displacement of Palestinians from homes and properties during the 1948-49 war and the 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Its key achievements were international sympathy to the Palestinian plight, the creation in 1964 of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the legitimacy it later gained as the recognized representative of the Palestinian people, and the creation of the Palestinian Authority (PA) as a self-governing body in the West Bank and Gaza since 1994.

Over the past century, no other solution model gained as much traction as the partition of Mandatory Palestine into two states—Jewish and Arab, or Israeli and Palestinian, respectively. To date, the two-state solution is explicitly or implicitly endorsed by the vast majority of international actors, by prominent domestic actors on both sides, and is the preferred outcome of at least a plurality of Israelis and Palestinians. Even the Trump administration’s plan, which we analyze in Chapter 8, uses the two-state terminology, although in practice their model more resembles other approaches. However, as this chapter shows, despite the popularity and longevity of the two-state concept, it is under serious threat.

2.1 Evolution of the Two-State Solution: The Peace Process

The modern peace process was ushered in by international superpowers in the 1991 Madrid Conference. Although it took some years for Israel to formally endorse Palestinian statehood, the two-state solution was an implicit ‘north star’ to those who initiated and propelled the Oslo process of the 1990s, which anchored mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO, the creation of the PA, and defined a five-year interim period at the end of which a final status agreement was to be reached on a handful of the thorniest core issues. Indeed, the earliest two-state model was unofficially drafted by representatives of the two sides as early as 1995;2 alas, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated days before he was to be briefed on its content. Despite bilateral and mediated attempts to achieve an agreement, to this day the sides have been unable to reach a conflict-ending, final status agreement based on the two-state model. The publics, and many analysts, are fatigued by the failure of the peace process. However, a closer look paints a different picture: the majority of the peace process was not focused on negotiating a final status agreement. Rather, it was spent on crisis management to reduce violence, interim processes that purposefully avoided the core issues, and Palestinian capacity building efforts. In fact, of the 28 years since Madrid, only two (2000 and 2007)—about 7% of the time period—were dedicated to

2 The draft agreement by then-Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin and Mahmoud Abbas, then a high ranking PLO official, was concluded in October 1995 after months of secret negotiations, online at https://ecf.org.il/issues/issue/164.
negotiations aimed at reaching a final status agreement. In this sense, public resignation seems to be misinformed, if not misplaced.

2.2 Characteristics of the Two-State Solution

Since President Clinton introduced parameters for an Israeli-Palestinian agreement in December 2000, and through numerous official and non-official negotiations in the years since, a consistent set of principles has materialized as the basis for resolving the conflict’s core issues: delineation of borders that are based on the 1967 lines, with agreed (and probably equal) land swaps, as the basis for the Palestinian state; partition of Jerusalem into two capitals with special arrangements for its holy sites; introduction of security arrangements that focus on Israeli needs but that respect, if not completely fulfill, Palestinian sovereignty; and a sense of historical recognition and a just solution for Palestinian refugees. There remain gaps on each of these parameters, but these formulas remain valid. Nevertheless, they all face challenges. In the most recently-available example, the Trump administration attempted to shatter the notion that there should be compromise on these principles by largely adopting Israel’s positions on each and every one of the issues.

Borders and Settlements

All realistic two-state models base their borders on the 1967 lines (otherwise known as the Green Line), with agreed, minor land swaps to account for large Israeli settlements. Settlement expansion threatens the territorial issue in two related ways: first, by entrenching a gap between the sides’ different interpretation of the ‘settlement blocs’ that Israel will retain in the context of swaps, and, second, by steadily increasing the number of Israelis who will remain on the Palestinian side of the border and who will need to be relocated into Israel in the context of an agreement. In addition, the Israeli political system is rife with annexation schemes for part or all of the West Bank, the consequences of which could be dire for the Oslo framework and a two-state solution. As long as President Donald Trump is in office, U.S. support of such actions, including outright recognition of Israeli sovereignty over large settlements, is possible, if not probable.

Jerusalem

Although Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and the relocation of the U.S. Embassy there were meant to take the issue "off the table" and sever Palestinian connection to the

3 Based on conversations with formal officials, we do not include the negotiations led by Secretary of State John Kerry that represented a serious undertaking on the U.S. side but not negotiations in good faith by the Israelis and Palestinians.

4 The numbers of Israeli settlers that would end up on the Palestinian side of the border continues to rise, and as of 2018 stands at 114,000-269,000 (about 28,000-65,000 households) according to the maps presented by Ehud Olmert and Mahmoud Abbas in the 2008 Annapolis process, respectively.

5 For details of a possible ‘domino effect’ that could begin with even a minor unilateral Israeli annexation in the West Bank, see Commanders for Israel Security, Ramifications of West Bank Annexation: Security and Beyond (summary), pp. 11-17, October 2018.

6 Trump noted: "And the biggest difficulty that anybody has had—you look over 25 year—nobody could get past, number one, Jerusalem. They couldn’t get past it. We’ve taken it off the table. So this gives us a real opportunity to peace. We’ll see how it works out. The Palestinians, I think, are wanting to come back to the table very badly." Remarks by President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel Before Bilateral Meeting, The White House, March 5, 2018
city as discussed in Chapter 8, Jerusalem remains as divided and as contested as ever. Past negotiations envisioned the political division of East Jerusalem: in the context of land swaps, Jewish areas will come under Israeli sovereignty and will join West Jerusalem as the recognized capital of Israel, while the Arab-Palestinian areas will be integrated into a newly formed Palestinian capital. Special arrangements will be introduced in and around the Old City to maintain the integrity of holy sites, and especially the Holy Esplanade. Israeli challenges to the status quo on the Esplanade as well as settlement construction in and around East Jerusalem that threaten the integrity of the future Palestinian capital there remain the two most pressing challenges in Jerusalem.

**Palestinian Refugees**

Past negotiations and third-party proposals addressed the issue of Palestinian refugees by using coded language on responsibility for the creation of the problem and on refugee rights; by presenting resettlement schemes in the new state of Palestine (including new lands transferred to it from Israel proper in the context of land swaps), in existing host countries, in third countries, and in Israel; and by providing financial compensation—all in the hope that an issue of such a symbolic and practical magnitude will not derail the entire agreement. As shown in Chapter 8, in an effort to undermine the refugee cause, the Trump plan proposed a scheme that deviates from previous agreements on this issue. Even beforehand, Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu targeted the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA)—the body mandated to care for refugees in the interim—claiming it plays a central role in perpetuating the conflict. Their scheme was largely thwarted as of early 2020 as UNRWA was able to offset most of the budget cuts and continue operation albeit at reduced capacity, but even if the American approach is more successful, the loss of UNRWA services would not diminish one bit the prominence of the refugee issue in the Palestinian mindset.

**Security Arrangements**

Finally, envisioned security arrangements for a two-state solution always favored Israeli needs and infringed on Palestinian sovereignty. Still, Israel would need to adjust from a territorial security approach to a multi-layered one that is more consistent with a two-state model. Palestinians have succumbed to such infringements on their sovereignty on the condition the agreement will envision the day—years down the road—when a non-militarized Palestinian state will be the sole sovereign over its territory. Netanyahu has articulated new security terms that will preserve Israel’s overarching and open-ended security presence in the West Bank indefinitely, yet despite the Trump administration’s adoption of these terms, these almost certainly fall outside the scope of possible Palestinian acceptance.

### 2.3 Independent Steps to Preserve a Future Two-State Option

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7 After the United States slashed about $446 million in donations in January 2018, the by November 2019 UNRWA’s budget gap stood at $89 million. See “Statement of the Officer-in-Charge UNRWA: Special Political and Decolonization Committee, November 11, 2019.


9 According to Netanyahu: “West of the Jordan, Israel and Israel alone will be responsible for security... It’s not just a question of hot pursuit. It’s also having the ability to be there all the time.” See Ben Sales, “Netanyahu says he supports a Palestinian ‘state-minus’ controlled by Israeli security.” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, October 24, 2018.
In an attempt to bridge the spectrum between a conflict-ending agreement that is impossible in the present political climate, and the status quo that threatens the viability of the two-state solution as shown in Chapter 3, Israeli analysts developed independent options. Such ideas for independent moves are not alternative suggestions for an end state but rather approaches to reverse current trends and maintain the option of two states in the future. Thus, we present them here briefly as a subcategory of the two-state solution and do not conduct a full assessment of their strengths and weaknesses.

The most prominent such plans are those developed by Commanders for Israel’s Security (CIS) and the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS). These proposals aim to minimize the conflict by upgrading security, launching a process of separation and reversal of the settlement enterprise, improving the reality on the ground, rehabilitating trust in political processes, and creating conditions that would improve the chances for success of actual negotiations at a future date. To achieve these objectives, CIS’s “Security First” and its subsequent analyses present an “integrated plan comprising practical measures in three ‘baskets’—security, political, and civil-economic; designed for—and concurrently implemented in—the West Bank, Jerusalem, and Gaza.” The framework developed by INSS is similar in many ways. It does not include a plan for Gaza, yet its authors do not think that such an approach is contingent upon devising recommendations for the Strip and suggest adding modules to address this geographical territory subsequently.

On the security front, CIS’s plan envisions Israel maintaining overall security control west of the Jordan River until a final status agreement ushers in alternative security measures. In the interim, Israel will complete the barrier and enforce a strict border regime along its entire length, thus preventing the infiltration of terrorists from the West Bank and addressing the problem of illegal Palestinian residency in Israel. The plan also calls for vigorous enforcement of law and order in (presently lawless) Palestinian areas in East Jerusalem as well as throughout the West Bank. INSS, in addition to these measures, emphasizes the IDF’s cooperation with the Palestinian security forces, assuming that the more capable and responsible they are, the less would the IDF need to operate in the Palestinian territories. It also calls for transferring security authorities in Area B to the PA, similar to the authorities it now has in Area A, to create a continuous Palestinian area that in the future could be the foundation for the Palestinian state, and in the interim, be considered as a “Palestinian state with provisional borders.”

On the political-diplomatic front, both INSS and CIS call on Israel to implement a series of meaningful steps: work with countries in the Middle East region (and in principle accept the Arab Peace Initiative—subject to certain reservations—as the basis for negotiations); reaffirm its commitment to a two-state solution and willingness to enter negotiations on final status settlement at any time; reverse the policy of differentiation between the West Bank and Gaza by clarifying Israel’s position that the two areas constitute a single political unit in the context of a two-state solution.

On settlements, both CIS and INSS push for constructive measures—call on Israel to declare it has no sovereignty claims over areas east of the security barrier, freeze construction in settlements east of the barrier while limiting new construction west of the barrier to the already built-up footprint, and incentivize settlers to relocate from areas where Israel no longer seeks sovereignty—usually

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10 Commanders for Israel’s Security: Security First.
11 Commanders for Israel’s Security: Regulating Israeli and Palestinian Construction in Area C, and Enhancing West Bank Stability and Security
13 Ibid, 15.
Palestinian-populated areas—to the blocs or inside the Green Line. One means of achieving this would be for Israel to pass a “voluntary evacuation, compensation, and absorption” law.

On Jerusalem, the CIS plan calls for Israel to end sovereignty claims over Palestinian areas of East Jerusalem. At the same time, it argues for maintaining the status quo at the Holy Basin. It also advocates that Israel establish an ‘umbrella municipal authority’ for the development of Palestinian areas, with Israeli and international funding. INSS similarly suggests establishing a separate municipal authority for the Palestinian area in East Jerusalem (not including the Old City and the Holy Basin). This authority would work under the auspices of the Israeli Ministry of Interior but its representatives would be elected from the Palestinian residents of the city, and it would run the affairs of the Palestinian neighborhoods and villages. The authority would be separate from the Jerusalem municipality, and one day if there is a final settlement on Jerusalem it would be moved to the PA.¹⁴

Both the CIS and INSS plans have a strong civil-economic component, seeking to strengthen the Palestinian economy, infrastructure, and governance. The plans differ a bit in the details but the underlying idea is to involve the international community in improving the economic situation in the Palestinian Territories, including in Area C, expanding employment, and resolving housing shortages; restoring calm and strengthening moderate forces, chiefly the PA. In Gaza, it states that Israel should participate in a plan that aims to consolidate stabilize the ceasefire, restore PA management to the Gaza Strip, and unfold large-scale reconstruction of the Strip.¹⁵

Both groups have suggested independent measures that were rejected by Netanyahu’s government, but may well prove relevant to a more centrist Israeli coalition.

### 2.4 Advantages and Disadvantages of the Two-State Solution

In assessing the merits and disadvantages of the two-state solution, focusing on the criteria we selected for analysis, we find that while the two-state solution is still valid in the sense that it would ensure Israel remains a Jewish democratic state, enable self-determination for Palestinians, and address the core issues of the conflict. However, it is seriously challenged when it comes to implementation. To examine that, we take into account a number of factors: political feasibility, the relevant international positions, the reality on the ground, as well as the actual solvability of the core issues.

In measuring Israeli and Palestinian public attitudes toward the two-state solution, observers point to three common trends: First, support for the two-state solution is in decline and has been for the past decade.¹⁶ Second, Israelis and Palestinians generally do not believe the two-state solution is feasible.¹⁷ At the same time, however, despite the discrediting efforts by groups on both sides, the third trend points clearly that the two-state model is by far the preferred option of all the alternative

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¹⁴ Ibid, 58.
¹⁵ Commanders for Israel’s Security: Gaza—An Alternative Israeli Strategy
¹⁷ In June 2018, a majority of Palestinians (56%) and a plurality of Israelis (47%) said the two-state solution was no longer feasible. Ibid.
Palestinian politics have been sharply divided on the question of the peace process since its inception. While the Fatah-dominated PLO has adhered to the two-state solution since 1988, Hamas presented religious- and ideological-based opposition to Zionism and faulted the PLO for granting Israel core compromises at the outset of the process. Hamas is a fundamentalist religious terror movement which refuses to this day to accept international principles that include renouncing violence and abiding by previous agreements, suggesting limited willingness to compromise. Still, over the years, Hamas has evolved. It has negotiated and reached agreements with Israel on tactical issues such as short-term ceasefires (tahdidiyah), humanitarian and economic support, environmental issues, and prisoners swaps; and has offered Israel various strategic, years-long ceasefires (hudna). Further, Hamas has agreed, in the context of Palestinian reconciliation, to reject negotiations with Israel, but to allow PLO leadership to negotiate and to abide by the result of a referendum regarding a peace agreement. Hamas has also supplemented its charter with a new political plan, stepping back from harsh ideological positions and moving closer to the two-state model.

For its part, since 2008 the Israeli political system has largely blocked any meaningful advancement toward a two-state solution. This reality is mainly a product of effective strategies by two-state opponents such as the settler movement and its allies, mainly religious Zionists. Because the Palestinian question is not front and center for most Jewish Israelis, the electoral map does not reflect public support for the two-state solution. Should an Israeli leader pursue a peace process with the Palestinians, opposition will likely be limited to a small but politically apt section of society.

An overwhelming majority of the international community supports the two-state solution, including the UN, the European Union (EU), and the Arab world. Various geopolitical events of recent years have lowered the importance of the Palestinian question in the eyes of outside actors; this in turn has eroded their motivation to promote a peace process, opting instead for a passive posture. Still, the choice of architecture presented by pollsters plays a major role in determining the level of support. The above data referenced the comprehensive Palestinian-Israeli Pulse: A Joint Poll that was carried out systemically over the past decade and is therefore an excellent reference for overall trends. Other confidential polls made available to IPF show significantly higher support for the two-state model.

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18 In June 2018, support for a two-state solution stood at 43% for both Palestinians and Israeli Jews, while support for an alternative policy registered at 17-19% at most. Ibid.
19 The above data referenced the comprehensive Palestinian-Israeli Pulse: A Joint Poll that was carried out systemically over the past decade and is therefore an excellent reference for overall trends. Other confidential polls made available to IPF show significantly higher support for the two-state model.
20 Public opinion polls carried by Commanders for Israel’s Security, 2018-2019, unpublished.
21 According to two Israeli authorities on Hamas, after Oslo, Hamas calculated in an internal memo that “...the Palestinian people were still occupied, its leadership in the hands of a ‘defeated group’ that had forsaken both country and religion and put itself in the service of the occupier.” In addition, Hamas called for “total rejection...of the ‘Gaza-Jericho First’ [accord] for its conclusion of dangerous concessions, its total departure from national and legal norms, and its outright transgression of the red lines agreed on by the Palestinian National Council...[the accord] brings limited and fragmented self-administration in Gaza and Jericho and represents an affront to our honor, a denial of our sacrifices and years of struggle, and a violation of our established historic rights to the land of Palestine.” Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence, Columbia University Press, 2006, p. 102. See also “Dealing with Hamas,” International Crisis Group, January 26, 2004.
the two-state solution remains the official policy of the majority of relevant actors, and will likely continue to be absent a meaningful shift in Palestinian position or a major, paradigm-shifting event (such as unilateral Israeli annexation of West Bank areas and its possible ripple effects).

Under President Donald Trump, the United States backed away from its exclusive support for the two-state solution—in word and in deed. As evident in its plan, the Trump administration has sided with Netanyahu’s government and has been working in Israel’s favor to make the traditional parameters of the two-state solution, outlined above, obsolete. Even before releasing its plan, the Trump administration cut funding to the Palestinians (including the PA, UNRWA, and other institutions such as Palestinian hospitals in East Jerusalem); sought to take Jerusalem “off the table” by recognizing it as Israel’s capital and moving its embassy there; changed U.S. bipartisan policy on the legality of settlements; tacitly endorsed Israeli annexation in the West Bank; and legitimized Israeli demands for indefinite and overarching security presence in the West Bank.24 To date, none of these actions have proved effective in undermining the international consensus around the two-state solution.

In the meantime, as discussed in Chapter 3 (on the continuation of the status quo), current trends on the ground are working against the two-state solution, as well. All in all, the physical barriers that separate Israel proper from the Gaza Strip and from most of the Palestinians in the West Bank contribute to a fractured geopolitical reality. The Palestinian political rift between the Hamas-controlled Gaza and the Fatah-controlled West Bank remains despite overwhelming Palestinian public support for reconciliation. The Israeli-Egyptian control of Gaza’s envelope is air-tight, while conditions inside Gaza remain dire. Israeli presence in, and control of, the West Bank and East Jerusalem remains as dominant as it has been since 1995. The settlement enterprise continues largely unabated, making it harder to evacuate settlers and demarcate a border between the two states if and when the time comes.

Even if the reality on the ground was not working against the two-state solution, Israelis and Palestinians have thus far been unable to agree on the core issues of the conflict because they differ substantially in how they perceive such a conflict-ending agreement.

The Palestinian narrative rejects the Zionist cause; for them, Judaism is a religious attribution and they therefore largely reject its nationalistic manifestation. For Palestinians, twentieth century Zionist presence in Mandatory Palestine came at the expense of the local Palestinian population and disenfranchised them of territory, resources, and livelihood. Thus, Palestinians believe they had already made their historic compromise at the outset of the process when they recognized Israel, disavowed the use of violence, forfeited 78% of historic Palestine, and—by focusing on a prospective Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza—undermined the Palestinian refugee cause related to 1948-49 events. Consequently, for Palestinians, their stances on the core issues already represent ‘bottom line’ positions, and they have very little room for any additional compromises, if at all. Finally,

24 Standing next to Trump in the White House, Netanyahu said, “in any peace agreement, Israel must retain the overriding security control over the entire area west of the Jordan River. Because if we don’t, we know what will happen — because otherwise we’ll get another radical Islamic terrorist state in the Palestinian areas exploding the peace, exploding the Middle East.” See “Remarks by President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel in Joint Press Conference,” The White House, February 15, 2017. The Trump administration has not ruled out supporting Israeli claims for control of the Jordan Valley, or for any other security demands: “We understand how essential the Jordan Valley is to Israel’s security, and obviously that is something that we are going to take into consideration,” said President Trump son in law and special advisor Jared Kushner who is in charge of authoring the plan. “One of the things that this administration prides itself on is being in a position where we really respect and understand Israel’s security needs... If there is an actual proposal (for annexation) that is put forward, we will look at it and we will have discussions,” he said. Pressed further on the question of Jordan Valley annexation, Kushner responded: “We like to keep our options open: that is the Trumpian way.” Tovah Lazaroff, “Jared Kushner on Jordan Valley Annexation: We like to keep our options open,” The Jerusalem Post, October 30, 2019.
Palestinians believe that a final status agreement should end the occupation as swiftly as possible, allowing for the creation of a fully-sovereign Palestinian state. Peace should usher a harmonious new reality in which Palestinians enjoy independence, freedom of movement in and between the two parts of the Palestinian state as well as in Israel, where they can enjoy a sense of spatial freedom and realize employment opportunities.25

For their part, most Israelis who support the two-state solution do so as a necessary compromise to secure Jewish statehood in a hostile region that has fundamentally rejected Jewish peoplehood and the Jewish people’s attachment to the land. From the Israeli perspective, the basic premise of a two-state solution should therefore be separation from the Palestinians. The terms on which such separation should unfold must address vital Israeli needs, primarily real and perceived security challenges that arise from West Bank withdrawal.

Such differing perceptions on the origins and events that have shaped the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and general Jewish-Arab relations remain a major fault line between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians, and their positions on the core issues derive from it.

At the same time, the two-state solution benefits from significant advantages. Primarily, it is in tune with the unwillingness of the majority of Jews and Palestinians to share the same geographical and political space and fulfills both sides’ national narratives. It is the only model that ensures a Jewish majority, Jewish self-determination, and a democratic character for Israel, while also securing independence and national self-determination for the Palestinians. More than any other model, it enjoys international consensus and legitimacy. In addition, although many Israelis focus on security challenges associated with West Bank withdrawal, the vast majority of security experts claim that civilian withdrawal from the West Bank will enhance Israeli security,26 and that Israel’s security apparatus is well-equipped to deal with military redeployment there and can ensure Israel’s security even without ongoing territorial presence in the West Bank. Finally, in comparison to all other models, the positions of the sides are relatively close and perhaps bridgeable.

The main disadvantage of the two-state solution is the vast perception that it is no longer viable or achievable. Gaps remain on the core issues and an agreement is not inevitable by any means. Implementation of a two-state agreement will be challenging—especially the prospective relocation (according to non-official bridging proposals) of 30,000-50,000 settler households from the Palestinian state as well as the vast resettlement and compensation schemes for Palestinian refugees. Opponents of the two-state solution have proven resilient and will likely mobilize at the first sight of a resumed peace process. They will undoubtedly create traction with generally distrustful public attitudes. The key advantages and disadvantages of the two-state solution are as follows:

25 For details on official Palestinian positions, see PLO Negotiations Affairs Department. See also, “A Century of Injustice: Q and A on Palestine and the Balfour Declaration,” October 24, 2017.

26 A 2017 analysis, echoed by the works of Commanders for Israel’s Security, argues that (1) a clear distinction must be made between Israel’s presence in the West Bank on the civilian level (settlements) and the security level (the IDF and ISA or Shin Bet); (2) the basic assumptions of the 1967 Allon Plan (link between settlements and security) have been strategically irrelevant for at least 15 years; and (3) settlements hamper Israel’s security forces from defending citizens against Palestinian terrorism. Avishay Ben-Sasson Gordis, “Israel’s National Security and West Bank Settlements,” Molad – Center for the Renewal of Democracy, December 12, 2017.
Advantages

- Would preserve Israel as Jewish and democratic;
- According to most Israeli security experts, physical separation between the Israeli and Palestinian population, preferably in a two-state outcome, would provide most security to all;
- Plurality (and in some surveys a majority) of both Jewish Israelis (and Arab Israelis) and Palestinians support the two-state solution;
- Public support on both sides is expected to grow under leadership that promotes a two-state solution;
- It is the most acceptable solution to the international community;
- A two-state outcome would lead to normalization of ties between Israel and the Arab and Muslim worlds;
- Would significantly reduce the traction of boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) campaigns against Israel;

Shortcomings

- The Israeli government is actively promoting policies to make the two-state solution non-viable, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s political investment in preserving the Hamas-Fatah split;
- The conflict is not a priority area for Israelis;
- The conflict is not a priority area for the international community, including many Arab states, hence fewer resources are invested in solving it;
- Despite using the two-state terminology, the Trump administration in practice has moved away from the conventional two-state solution, undermining its prospects;
- This formula depends on widespread and unwavering acceptance of Israel’s legitimacy by Palestinians;
- The two-state solution hinges on the PA’s capacity to govern the West Bank and Gaza, something that under current conditions it has not proved able to do;
- The Hamas-Fatah rift makes it hard for the Palestinians to speak in one voice, and for Israelis to believe there is a partner for peace;
- Loss of on-the-ground territorial control over the West Bank carries security risks;
- It would be immensely costly to evacuate and resettle over 100,000 settlers and compensate the Palestinian refugees (although in all likelihood the international community would pay some, if not all, of these expenses).

2.5 Assessment of the Two-State Solution

Based on analysis shown in this chapter we employ the analytic framework that we introduced in Chapter 1 to assess the two-state solution against a pre-determined set of criteria, against which we also evaluate the other approaches in subsequent chapters. As shown in Table 2.1, the two-state solution ranks high on its ability to maintain Israel as a Jewish and democratic state while allowing
Palestinian self-determination. It is also the most favorable solution among the international community, and a plurality of Israelis and Palestinians support it. We err on the side of caution, rating security under the two-state solution as "yellow," i.e., midline, even though most security experts in Israel believe that a two-state solution would be the best option to ensure Israel's security in the long-run. Nonetheless, risks remain. The most challenging aspects of the two-state solution are ease of implementation and cost. In addition to the challenges of negotiating a final settlement and bridging the wide gaps between the sides on the core status issues, actually implementing the agreement could be extremely difficult given the need to evacuate and resettle elsewhere 30,000-50,000 households of settlers; to find a solution to the Palestinian refugee problem; implement security infrastructure and technology that would compensate for the loss of territory; and find a way to have Jerusalem as the capital of both states but with a border that ensures security.

Table 2.1. Applying Analytical Framework to Evaluate the Two-State Solution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Two-State Solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>The two-state formula leaves Israel with a Jewish majority population and does not necessitate Israel alter its state symbols, thus leaving Israel a Jewish state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>The two-state formula extricates Israel from the occupied territories, removing Israeli control over a large non-citizen population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian self-determination</td>
<td>The two-state formula creates an independent Palestinian state, allowing Palestinians to realize their rights to self-determination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Many Israeli and American security experts support a two-state outcome. Two states will reduce friction between Israel and a large Palestinian population in the West Bank, allowing Israel to prioritize foreign threats from Iran and other hostile actors in the Middle East region. However, creating a Palestinian state means Israeli security services will not have unfettered access to Palestinian cities for counterterrorism operations, as the IDF currently enjoys. Moreover, while Israel will likely have some form of a security presence in the Jordan Valley through monitoring equipment, it is unlikely that a future State of Palestine will accept an Israeli military presence there in the long run.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of Implementation</td>
<td>A two-state outcome requires completion of several ambitious tasks. Even though most two-state proposals allow Israel to annex many major settlements hugging the Green Line, a significant number of Israeli settlers will still need to be evacuated, dwarfing the number of settlers evacuated from the Gaza Strip and northern West Bank in 2005. Settlers will need to be compensated if they are evacuated. Palestinian refugees who are not relocated to Israel or Palestine under a &quot;just resolution&quot; to the refugee question will require compensation as well. Palestinian Authority institutions will need to be extended across the West Bank, including areas not presently under PA control. Some form of resolution to the PA/Hamas split between the West Bank and Gaza Strip will also need to be achieved, lest the Palestinians be left with a divided rump state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israeli Public Support</td>
<td>A plurality of Israelis supports a two-state outcome according to the latest polling, although this position is eroding. A viable political process could alter this, however.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Israeli Government Support</strong></td>
<td>Members of the current Israeli government have supported de facto annexation policies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Palestinian Public Support</strong></td>
<td>A plurality of Palestinians supports a two-state outcome according to the latest polling, although this position is eroding. A viable political process could alter this, however.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PA Support</strong></td>
<td>The Palestinian Authority supports a two-state outcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hamas Support</strong></td>
<td>Hamas rejects Israel’s legitimacy. Some Hamas officials have signaled willingness to accept Israel within its 1967 borders. However, Hamas continues to participate in attacks against Israeli civilians and organizes disruptive actions along the Israel-Gaza border, undermining the credibility of its claims to support a two-state outcome as a means to end the occupation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acceptance by Jordan and Egypt</strong></td>
<td>Jordan and Egypt both support a two-state outcome to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A two-state outcome could help relieve domestic pressure on these states to support the Palestinian cause as it would lead to the creation of an independent Palestine. Jordan and Egypt are also members of the Arab League, which backs the two-state formula as part of the Arab Peace Initiative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acceptance by Arab World</strong></td>
<td>Most Arab states support a two-state outcome to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A two-state outcome could help relieve domestic pressure on these states to support the Palestinian cause as it would lead to the creation of an independent Palestine. For governments that lack formal relations with Israel, a two-state outcome would allow these states to bring their relationships into the public with less risk, while opening new business, tourism, and trade opportunities. These governments also back two states as members of the Arab League, which pushes for the two-state formula as part of the Arab Peace Initiative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>U.S. Acceptance</strong></td>
<td>While previous American presidents have opposed annexation of the West Bank and a one-state outcome in favor of a territorial compromise, the incumbent Trump administration has taken steps to encourage revanchist elements of the Israeli right. Even before releasing the Peace to Prosperity plan, these steps included reversing the longstanding State Department position that West Bank settlements contravene international law, recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel outside a negotiated political process, and recognizing Israeli sovereignty in the Golan Heights. At the same time, the administration released a plan that uses the two-state terminology and adopts some of the negotiation principles, even though it exclusively adopts Israeli positions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acceptance by Russia and China</strong></td>
<td>Russia, China, and most major non-Western powers support a two-state outcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acceptance by the EU and International Organizations</strong></td>
<td>The EU, UN, ICC, and other international institutions support a two-state outcome.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Direct Costs
A two-state outcome will necessitate several very costly undertakings. The evacuation and compensation of settlers, resettlement of a small number of Palestinian refugees and compensation of the overwhelming majority who are not repatriated to Israel and Palestine, the construction of new Israeli and Palestinian border infrastructure, and the expansion of Palestinian state institutions across the West Bank and Gaza, plus the reconstruction of damaged infrastructure in the Strip. While it can reasonably be assumed that some outside actors, such as the European Union and Arab League will help to offset the costs, these will nevertheless be ambitious and costly tasks.

### Indirect Costs
A two-state outcome would see Palestinians gain more economic autonomy (although this would also mean the West Bank and Gaza are no longer captive markets of Israel, which may be viewed as a negative indirect cost for Israel). Tourism to Israel and Palestine would also benefit from the perception that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is resolved. The West Bank and Gaza would face fewer access and movement restrictions, improving entry-exit processes and access to services such as education abroad. Israel would be open to trade and tourism opportunities with Arab and Muslim countries.

### Timeframe to Implementation
In order for a two-state outcome to be achieved and be sustainable, Israel would need a government willing to pursue one and the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority would likely need to reconcile with the Hamas administration in Gaza. Once a formula is agreed upon, the resolution of questions related to settlers and refugees would be an ongoing project that could take years to fully realize.
Chapter 3. Continuation of the Status Quo or “Wait and See”

Policy analysis methodology calls for comparing alternative courses of action to the status quo, the “do nothing approach, or “wait and see.” Can the status quo be described as an actual alternative to the two-state solution? That is questionable. After all, as long as the Oslo Accords framework remains valid,28 the status quo supposedly is an interim stage that theoretically should lead to a two-state solution when conditions are ripe. Even advocates of this approach that we interviewed said that the two-state solution remains the only viable solution in the long-run, yet until certain requirements—many of which are unrealizable in the foreseeable future—are fulfilled, maintaining the status quo is the best alternative at present.29 In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this idea is sometimes referred to as “conflict management.” From this perspective, the status quo is considered a temporary situation. And the frequent assertion that the status quo is “unsustainable”30 also alludes to its transitory nature.

Nonetheless, in practice the status quo persists. And while data indicate that the Palestinians are unhappy with the status quo, and polls suggest that Israelis resent the status quo as well,31 other studies, including a 2016-2018 joint poll conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research with the Israel Democracy Institute and the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, indicate that Jewish Israelis are in fact content with the status quo.32 A forthcoming RAND Corporation study that analyzed focus group data from 2018-2019 found that while the vast majority of Palestinians reject the status quo, Jewish Israeli participants across the political spectrum thought it was a reasonable, relatively risk-free, and feasible option, unlike the other alternatives.33 In addition, even though 53% of Israelis said in surveys that not enough has been done to advance a peace agreement with the Palestinians, the public continues to vote for political parties that do not advance such an agreement.34 Moreover, most Israelis, although unhappy with the status quo, believe that it is likely to persist in the next decade.35

The issue, however, is that the status quo or “wait and see” alternative is a fallacy. The status quo is not static, but dynamic, and passively “doing nothing” to advance a peaceful solution to the conflict

29 For example, a former senior Israeli defense and government official affiliated with the political right told us that until the Palestinians change their attitude and narrative and accept Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people, a two-state solution cannot be accepted. Yet, the end solution will be in the form of two states for the two peoples and all other suggestions from the left or the right are “nonsense.” Discussion with a former senior defense and government official, in person, Tel Aviv, November 18, 2019.
30 The notion that the status quo is unsustainable has been commonly expressed on the left and the right, for example from former Secretary of State John Kerry to Senior Advisor Jared Kushner.
31 Survey commissioned for the Commanders for Israel Security, unpublished.
32 According to the Two-State Index Fifty, 56% of Jewish Israelis said that continuation of the current situation is bad for Israel. See the Two-State Index, November-December 2019. Also, in response to a question about overall quality of life in June 2018, public opinion researchers Prof. Khalil Shikhaki and Dr. Dahlia Shindlin found that approximately half of the Israelis in the study described current conditions as “good” and only 18% said that things are “bad” or “very bad” (the remainder are in-between). Only 15% of Palestinians who participated in the study said that conditions were “good” versus 62%, who said that conditions were “bad.” See Palestinian-Israeli Pulse: A Joint Poll (2016-2018) Final Report: Role of Public Opinion in the Resilience/Resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict, Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research with the Israel Democracy Institute and the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research, December 2018.
34 Two-State Index, November-December 2019.
35 Ibid.
means that present trends—including trends that are detrimental to the viability of a two-state solution—continue. In this chapter, therefore, rather than defining this self-explanatory approach, we instead describe these present trends and briefly explain why their continuation at the same rate, could make the two-state solution non-viable. These trends are population growth (which could change the demographic balance between the Jewish and Palestinian populations in the area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River); continued settlement expansion (which directly affects the ability to separate into two states along an agreed-upon border); the related growing Israeli calls to annex West Bank territory; and a deepening rift between the Palestinian factions Fatah and Hamas, consequently dividing the West Bank and Gaza into two political entities. In Chapter 8, we analyze the Trump plan, which in a sense is an attempt to codify the status quo.

3.1 Demographic Trends

Demographics has always played an important part in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, starting with the Arab rejection of the UN partition plan on grounds that the territorial division of the land did not reflect the demographic realities—the Jewish population was still a minority, and Jews legally owned only some 7% of the land, but were to be allocated 56% of the land, while the majority Arab Palestinians were to receive less than 50% of the land. Since then, the demographic debate has not abated. On the contrary. And while demographics should in theory be an objective count of people, in the Israeli-Palestinian context, it is fraught with politics and subjective interpretation. 36

One of the underlying rationales for the two-state solution is that partition is needed to ensure that Israel remains a Jewish and democratic state. Given parity or near-parity in population numbers, one-state outcomes would mean that either Israel would no longer be Jewish, or no longer be democratic. 37 This paradigm is based on official data by the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) and Palestinian data sources that already in 2014 indicated near-parity in population sizes in the territory between the Jordan River and the sea. According to Israel’s CBS, in May 2018, the Israeli population was slightly over 9 million, with 74%, or 6.7 million, Jews, 21%, or 1.9 million, “Arabs,” including “Arab” Israelis, Druze, and East Jerusalem Palestinians, and some 5%, or 434,000, others. 38 According to assessments that are based on Palestinian official data (which is close to the IDF’s civil administration data), the Palestinian population in the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem is slightly over 5 million. Because both Israel and the Palestinians count East Jerusalem’s population, the number is closer to 4.7 million, some 2.7 million in the West Bank and 2 million in Gaza. 39 Add to that the 1.9 million Arab citizens of Israel, most of whom are Palestinians and the number is close to 6.6 million, almost the same as the 6.7 million Jews in Israel recorded by the Israeli government. Israeli demographers that are not considered politically affiliated, such as Professor Sergio DellaPergola of Hebrew University, believe that Palestinians inflate their numbers by some 600,000 (including East Jerusalem numbers and some more), bringing the number of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza to 4.4 million and overall between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River to almost 6.4 million. 40 These assessments mean that the Jewish population in the area is 52%

37 If Palestinians outnumber Jewish Israelis in a democratic setting, Israel would no longer be able to maintain its Jewish characteristics. If the State of Israel maintains its Jewish character and does not grant a large Palestinian population, even if it is not the majority but a substantial minority, equal rights, it would no longer be considered a democracy.
38 Central Bureau of Statistics, Israel’s population, media release in honor of Israel’s 2019 Independence Day.
40 Thomas L Friedman, “If You Think Trump is Helping Israel, You are a Fool,” The New York Times, March 16, 2019.
versus 48% non-Jewish, with the latter expanding at a faster rate likely creating parity in population sizes within the next two decades.

Some on the political right, however, suggest that by annexing the West Bank and granting its residents equal rights, but not annexing Gaza and its two million Palestinians, Israel can retain its Jewish majority and be a democracy.\(^{41}\) This approach relies on a different assessment, mostly that of Yoram Ettinger and the American-Israeli Demographic Research Group (AIDRG), who question the Palestinian data and argue that it overstates the population figure by one million. Further, they argue that Palestinian population growth rate is on the decline while high fertility rate among the Jewish orthodox and ultra-orthodox population will help sustain high population growth on the Israeli side.\(^{42}\) However, DellaPergola and others reject this argument and project that the Palestinians will become a majority sooner or later—even if Gaza is not counted.\(^{43}\)

Whether and when the Palestinians become a majority is an important question, but Israel’s ability to retain its credentials as a Jewish and democratic state would be jeopardized even if the Palestinians only become a substantial minority. The proposals to annex parts or all of the West Bank, could add 2.6 million Palestinians to Israel’s population. If they become equal citizens, they would command immense political power, making up almost 40% of the population and changing Israel’s Jewish character. On the other hand, if they only become non-citizen residents, it would mean that some three million people in Israel (including the 400,000 Palestinians of East Jerusalem), 25% of the population, would not have equal rights, formalizing a non-democratic system of government across the Palestinian Territories and Israel. Hence, the alarming calls by CIS, INSS, and others to avoid irreversible annexation and seek separation from the Palestinians.\(^{44}\)

### 3.2 Settlement Expansion

The number and size of settlements have grown substantially since 1967, and at an expedited rate since the first Likud-led government took office in 1977. Crudely speaking, there are two types of settlements—the first are settlements in the West Bank that were officially established by the Israeli government. The international community and the Palestinians consider Israeli Jewish neighborhoods in East Jerusalem also as settlements, and count the approximately 215,000 Israelis that live there as settlers, but here we distinguish between the West Bank and East Jerusalem settlements.

The other type of settlements are outposts—settlements that were established since the 1990s without government approval and are considered illegal according to Israeli law. Out of 126 outposts, two outposts were evicted (Migron and Amona); 15 were legalized and some 35 are in the process of being legalized.\(^{45}\)

\(^{41}\) This idea was introduced by Caroline Glick in her book *The Israeli Solution*.


\(^{43}\) Karin Laub and Dan Perry, *For Israel, it’s all about the population figures,* Associated Press, February 18, 2014. In this article Sergio DellaPergola, is quoted as having predicted in 2013 that Palestinians would outnumber Jewish Israelis by 2050 even if Gaza is excluded.


\(^{45}\) Peace Now, Settlements Watch.
While settlement expansion could generally hinder the future possibility of reaching territorial compromise, it is important to examine which expansion is occurring in settlements that are likely to remain under Israeli sovereignty in a peace agreement, i.e., the “settlement blocs,” and which developments are in areas that would have to be evacuated. Thus, expanding the settlements blocs in a way that does not require more territory (i.e., through vertical construction) is less critical than expansion of settlements further from the 1967 lines. Similarly, the numbers of settlers should also be looked at more carefully. As of December 2018, there were 448,672 settlers in the West Bank, up from 297,250 in 2008 and some 115,000 in 1999 (data for 2019 is not yet available during the time of writing). Nonetheless, most of them reside in the settlement blocs, and depending on the border envisaged, would be in territory that is annexed to Israel in a land swap. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the number of settlers to be evacuated is estimated at 30,000-50,000 households—a less alarming figure than the over 650,000 settlers cited by those who believe the two-state solution is no longer viable. Another positive indication for those that seek to advance a two-state solution, as indicated by the far right’s alarm, is that the rate of settler population growth has declined in recent years from 5.6% in 2008 to 3% in 2018.

Still, however, settlements are continuing to expand and the numbers of settlers are continuing to grow in absolute numbers (Table 3.1). Assuming an annual growth rate of 4% (slightly less than the average growth rate of the last decade), the Jewish population in the West Bank could grow to 664,144 by 2028 (Figure 3.1). In another concerning sign, in 2018, construction began on 2,100 new housing units, most of which were in settlements that are likely to be evacuated in a two-state agreement. Further, movements to expand settlements in the West Bank are gaining traction. A recent example is a petition circulated in February 2019 to have two million Jewish Israelis in the West Bank, which was signed by most senior members of the outgoing coalition. Already, the numbers of settlers that are to be evacuated in a peace agreement is a daunting challenge. Letting present settlement trends continue could eventually make a one-state reality in the West Bank irreversible. The Trump plan, which leaves all settlers and existing settlements in place while greenlighting Israeli annexation of territory and creating Israeli Jewish settlement enclaves within the Palestinian entity, increases this risk.

Table 3.1. Settlers in the West Bank: 2008-2019

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th># of Settlers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>297,450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>312,608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>328,204</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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46 Although the status of the settlement blocks is also to be determined in negotiations.
47 Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics and the Yesha Council, a group representing Israeli settlements in the West Bank.
48 The Israeli far right is alarmed about decline in growth rate of West Bank settlers. Sluger, "המגמה הנסיגת ממציאית לטיעוד ביתוב ושלום" January 8, 2019.
49 Based the Geneva Initiative border, 73% of new construction was in settlements that are likely to be evacuated in an agreement.
50 מבקש קואליציה חסידית: 2,500 משפחות בודדות יהודיות, מחולות חסידים, February 5, 2019.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>settlers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>342,071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>359,071</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>374,469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>390,027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>405,644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>421,409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>435,708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>448,672</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3.1. Projected Settlers in West Bank With 4% Population Growth Rate**

3.3 From Creeping Annexation to Legislated Annexation

Israel’s settlement expansion is not a new phenomenon, but its manifestation in recent years in terms of both actions on the ground and laying the legislative and administrative infrastructure for legislated annexation has become known as ‘creeping annexation.’ Over the last decade, a variety of stakeholders have been actively pursuing a legislated annexation. For example, in 2014, following the failure of the negotiations led by Secretary of State John Kerry, then-Minister of Economic Affairs and today’s Defense Minister Naftali Bennett called for annexation of Area C.51

Over the next five years, the prospect of annexing territory has become more pronounced and more mainstream. Chapter 6 presents the variety of current annexation proposals. In September 2019, Prime Minister Netanyahu, who throughout his tenure as the country’s leader blocked annexation

initiatives, said for the first time that he would annex the Jordan Valley and apply sovereignty to all the settlements in the West Bank if elected. Since then, annexation has become a key issue dominating Israeli election discussions. While not referring to all West Bank settlements like Netanyahu and his coalition members, Likud’s main political opposition, Blue and White, has also been promising to annex the Jordan Valley, land that is in the heart of Israeli consensus. And the Trump plan was interpreted in Israel as a green light to annex 30% of the West Bank (and potentially more later, as discussed in Chapter 8).

Of course, pre-election rhetoric may not reflect reality, and if they are able to form a government, both Netanyahu and Gantz may elect to avoid annexation. Nonetheless, it is clear that the risk of annexation of West Bank territory is real. And while the Israeli public is not likely to oppose extension of sovereignty onto the settlement blocs or the Jordan Valley, there is no guarantee that it would end there. CIS has shown in great detail how a small-scale annexation of area could cascade into a series of events with catastrophic ramifications including violence, the collapse of the PA, annexation of the whole West Bank and the 2.6 Palestinians who reside there, and a fatal blow to the prospect of a two-state solution (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2 How Annexation of a Settlement Bloc Could Mark the End of the Two-State Solution

Source: Commanders for Israel’s Security


3.4 Fatah-Hamas Split

One of the reasons often cited for the inability of Israel to reach a final settlement with the Palestinians is that their leadership is split between Hamas, a terrorist movement that is the de-facto ruler of Gaza, and the Fatah-dominated PA, which controls the West Bank. Thus, the argument goes, the PLO, Israel’s peace partner, does not represent all Palestinians, and is not empowered to agree to a final settlement with Israel. Moreover, there is no guarantee that Hamas would abide by such an agreement.

Indeed, Hamas and Fatah are quite different in their approaches, not only toward Israel. Their rift began long ago but deepened after the 2006 elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council in which Hamas won a majority of the votes. In the aftermath of the elections, Israel, the United States, and the other members of the Middle East Quartet (the European Union, Russia, and the UN) refused to legitimize Hamas’s victory and conditioned continued assistance to the PA on Hamas’s renunciation of violence, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous Israeli-Palestinian interim agreements. Hamas refused to accept these conditions and formed a new government without Fatah. Tensions rose and in the summer of 2007, Hamas violently forced Fatah forces out of Gaza and took over the Strip. Multiple mediation attempts by Egypt and Qatar have failed since then.

In 2017-2018, the PA slashed the salaries of former government workers in Gaza and cut fuel subsidies to pay for electricity, reducing power supply to 2-4 hours per day. The international community accused the PA of hurting the people of Gaza by blocking Israeli-approved large-scale reconstruction projects only to pressure Hamas. These actions, combined with the long-lasting blockade of Gaza and the aftermath of three wars, brought Gaza to the brink of a public health emergency resulting from no water for drinking, cooking, and hygiene, and lack of sanitation solutions that led to untreated sewage flowing from Gaza into the Mediterranean Sea. Various solutions were found to restore a more steady electricity supply and advance large-scale projects, but Gaza is still teetering on the brink of a humanitarian crisis while the PA and Hamas remain divided as ever.

To be sure, Israel and the international community are not responsible for the Fatah-Hamas split. Yet, their policies have deepened the rift from the onset. In the early days following Hamas’s takeover, they enacted a West Bank-only policy—sanctioning Hamas in the hope of weakening the organization, driving it from power, and strengthening the PA. This is still the objective of the European Union and the UN. Israel, however, with backing from the Trump administration, has reversed course recently and began implementing a Gaza-only strategy, promoting policies that strengthen Hamas, weaken the PA, and hinder the possibility of reaching a final settlement. First, the Israeli government refused to allow the PA to return to Gaza and reconcile with Hamas. In 2018, Israel changed its longstanding policy against Gulf Arab states transferring cash assistance

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56 The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, UN REPORT: URGENT NEED TO RESOLVE THE PA’S FISCAL CRISIS AND SUPPORT THE FRAGILE PALESTINIAN ECONOMY; GAZA’S HEALTH SYSTEM FACES SERIOUS CHALLENGES; September 23, 2019.
58 Discussion with a former Israeli government official, in person, Tel Aviv, November 18, 2019.
to Gaza, an approach predicated on fear this money would reach Hamas’ hands. Instead, Israel now allows and facilitates the regular transfer of millions of dollars in cash from Qatar into Gaza. In March 2019, the Jerusalem Post reported that Netanyahu said, “whoever is against a Palestinian state should be for transferring the funds to Gaza, because maintaining a separation between the PA in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza helps prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state.”

Through 2019 and early 2020, Israel has been promoting understandings with Hamas (known in Hebrew as “Hasdara”) over a long-term ceasefire with substantial easing of the closure on Gaza. While alleviating the humanitarian situation in Gaza is necessary, Israel’s policy vis-a-vis Hamas while ignoring the PA, expanding settlements, and promoting West Bank territorial annexation only strengthens Hamas in both Gaza and the West Bank; undermines the PA; and deepens the separation between the two parts of the Palestinian people, in turn depriving the PA of the claim that it represents all Palestinians and is therefore a partner for negotiations. This policy will therefore have a substantial negative impact on the possibility of an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal in the future.

59 Nidal al-Mughrabi, “Qatar pays Gaza salaries to ease tensions; Israel says money’s not for Hamas,” Reuters, November 9, 2018.

60 Lahav Harkov, “Netanyahu: Money to Hamas part of strategy to keep Palestinians Divided, The Jerusalem Post, March 12, 2019.”
3.5 Advantages and Disadvantages

Despite ongoing trends that make the status quo dynamic and likely unsustainable in the long run, as of early 2020, the status quo has some notable advantages, which explains why at least on the Israeli side, the public is not prioritizing solving the conflict with the Palestinians, and despite not liking the status quo, over half of Israelis report that they are content with it in the interim. The Israeli government is seeking to deepen the status quo and make it irreversible, and it is coordinated with the Trump administration in that effort. Hamas also benefits from the status quo. At present, the security situation is relatively quiet and the economy is strong, providing little incentive for Israel to deviate from the current trajectory. Despite negative trends, the status quo does not pose an obstacle to Israeli improvement of ties with world powers, which are formally more sympathetic to the Palestinian cause (e.g., China, Russia, India), and even improvement of formal and informal ties with Arab and Muslim countries. The international community continues to fund the PA and the latter continues security cooperation with Israel.

Nonetheless, the status quo could lead to a one-state reality if present trends continue. The security situation is fragile and could turn quickly as it did in the previous two intifadas and in violent waves such as the “stabbing intifada” that started in 2015. The PA is under survival risk and Israel continues to face pressure and risks sanctions in international organizations. Further, the opportunity cost for both Israelis and Palestinians are high. These advantages and disadvantages are summarized as follows:

Advantages

- The status quo is politically highly feasible in Israel; also by Hamas;
- No public pressure on either side to deviate from the status quo;
- The status quo is familiar and deemed in Israel as low risk;
- Does not require any action but “continue doing nothing to advance peace;”
- Current situation is relatively quiet and secure from the Israeli perspective;
- Israeli security cooperation with the PA is maintained;
- The international community, primarily Europe, continues to support the PA financially and otherwise;
- Arab countries have back-channel ties with Israel;
- Formally still on pathway to a final status settlement.

Shortcomings

- Could lead to a one-state outcome intentionally or unintentionally;
- Sense of security and protection is fragile and could shift if security cooperation with the Palestinians ceases;
- The PA is struggling financially and publicly and could lose its legitimacy and collapse;
- Ties with Jordan are tense as Amman is nervous about Israeli actions in the West Bank that could threaten Jordan’s stability;
- Arab states keep ties with Israel hidden and do not have an incentive for normalization;
- Israel continues to face international pressure in international organizations such as the ICC as well as from the BDS movement;
The situation in Gaza is extremely tenuous and could easily tip into humanitarian catastrophe and anarchy.

3.6 Assessment of the Status Quo

Assessment of the status quo against the set of selected criteria paints a mixed picture, with performance by most criteria that is coded yellow, meaning around the midpoint. Some of the cells are coded yellow because if present trends continue, it is likely that the situation could deteriorate. Yet, if we were to capture a snapshot of current reality, one not yet shaped by the Trump plan, these criteria may have even gained a lighter green.

For example, in terms of security, one of the most important criteria, the present situation is relatively peaceful. The West Bank is quiet thanks in large part to cooperation with the Palestinian security forces; there has not been war in Gaza since 2014, despite ongoing fears of escalation. Efforts to reach a long-term ceasefire between Israel and Hamas could delay such developments even further; and the security establishment is focusing efforts on the northern front, which is not related to the Palestinian issue. Therefore, security captured in this moment would have been coded as light green (notwithstanding the IDF and the PA security forces’ frequent interception of terror attempts and ongoing rocket fire from Gaza). Nonetheless, because the status quo could turn any moment, as happened several times in the last three decades, we code it yellow.

Similarly, despite the official positions of most actors for two states and against annexation, Israel in the last decade has advanced its relations with countries such as China, Russia, and India; developed backchannel and public ties to Arab and Muslim countries; and the security cooperation with Jordan and Egypt is stronger than ever. These players are not supporters of the status quo, yet they have larger interests that trump their support for Palestinian statehood. In addition, maintaining the status quo does not require serious effort nor does it take time to implement, suggesting falsely that the situation could be maintained as is, even though stakeholders that are trying to block the way to a two-state solution are working to deepen current trends, including the Trump administration, which uses the two-state term in practice to make the status quo permanent.

Because Israel at the moment benefits from relative quiet and strong international position, the Palestinian issue is not a top priority for the Israeli public who has no strong incentive to deviate from the status quo. And while the public may not be openly happy with the current situation, there is no bottom-up push to change it. Furthermore, it explains why until Trump brought the topic back onto the agenda, Israeli political parties have avoided the subject in their campaigns and why the public continues to elect parties that not only ignore the topic, but also have worked to deepen the status quo in contrast to the public’s will.

The Palestinian side faces a different problem. The public is overwhelmingly against continuation of the status quo, but at least it lets the PA continue its internationalization strategy—turning to international institutions for recognition and action—as a pathway to statehood. Moreover, the status quo enables the survival of the PA and its role as the representative of the Palestinians. Nonetheless, the PA lacks legitimacy, and elections could lead to Hamas gaining power. Meanwhile, Hamas benefits from the status quo as it grants the organization legitimacy as a sovereign. The real test for the status quo approach will come when either current trends turn the reality on the ground to an irreversible one-state scenario (in terms of settlement expansion or legislated annexation), or if the security situation deteriorates. Then the midpoint assessment of the status quo could change
and provide a wake-up call to the Israeli public. Unfortunately, by then it may be too late for the political system to respond.

**Table 3.2 Applying Analytical Framework to Evaluate the Status Quo**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Continuation of the Status Quo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>Settlement expansion and annexation threats, a defining characteristic of the status quo, would risk Israel's Jewish majority and the Jewish character of the state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>Limited rights to Palestinians could undermine Israel's democratic nature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian self-determination</td>
<td>The status quo does not fulfill the Palestinian aspiration for self-determination, but the PA and Hamas have limited sovereignty on land and formally the pathway to statehood remains open.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Israel at present benefits from a relatively quiet and secure period, borne out of low motivation for an intifada, close security cooperation with the Palestinian security forces that also benefits the PA, the prospect for understandings with Hamas, and collaboration with Jordan around the Temple Mount. In that regard, security could be coded as &quot;light green.&quot; However, the current security situation is fragile and continued settlement growth, creeping annexation that could lead to legislated annexation, lack of a political horizon on the Palestinian side combined with possible Palestinian elections, could turn the situation quickly, undermining Israel's security as well as that of the Palestinians. Israel enjoys freedom of action in the West Bank that can enable a robust response to a change in the security environment, but not without costs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of Implementation</td>
<td>Letting present trends continue is technically feasible. Annexation, if materialized, will require changes in legislation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israeli Public Support</td>
<td>In polls, when asked explicitly, the Israeli public indicates its dissatisfaction with the status quo, yet its behavior and responses in other studies indicate that the public is content with the current situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israeli Government Support</td>
<td>The current Israeli government actively promotes the continuation of present trends. A new government could change policies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian Public Support</td>
<td>All polls indicate that the Palestinian public rejects the status quo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA Support</td>
<td>The PA publicly rejects the status quo. Nonetheless, it continues security cooperation with Israel and at the same time works to sustain the divide with Hamas, implying that at least partially it is content with this approach relative to less favorable outcomes to the Palestinians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamas Support</td>
<td>Hamas officially is against the status quo but in practice benefits from the current situation, especially if the organization is able to reach &quot;understandings&quot; with Israel that would further legitimize it as a Palestinian sovereign in Gaza.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance by Jordan and Egypt</td>
<td>Continuation of present trends is not likely to fundamentally change Jordanian and Egyptian policies toward Israel or the Palestinians. A move toward legislated annexation, however, would not be tolerated by Jordan, nor possibly by Egypt. The latter is also concerned about the deepening divide between the West Bank and Gaza that assumes Cairo would have no choice but to increase its involvement in Gaza.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acceptance by Arab World</strong></td>
<td>Regional actors, primarily pragmatic Arab countries with which Israel maintains mostly back channels, are not actively seeking to alter the status quo because it allows them to advance their own interests without paying a political price for ties with Israel. The Gulf states use the Palestinian rift to advance their agendas, and Qatar especially benefits from the current situation. A move toward legislated annexation and armed conflict could expose these countries to criticism and change their degree of acceptance of the situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>U.S. Acceptance</strong></td>
<td>The United States has traditionally acted as a broker in the peace process in order to break the deadlock. The Trump administration however developed a plan that de facto seeks to turn the status quo into a permanent reality. Even before releasing its plan, the administration supported the continuation of the status quo in both words and actions. These include reversing the longstanding State Department position that West Bank settlements contravene international law, recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel outside a negotiated political process, and recognizing Israeli sovereignty in the Golan Heights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acceptance by Russia and China</strong></td>
<td>Russia and China formally support the establishment of a Palestinian state and in recent years have sought a role in the peace process. They consistently vote pro-Palestinian positions and against Israel's in international organizations and have adopted an opposite position to that of the current U.S. administration on Jerusalem and other issues. Nonetheless, despite ongoing trends that deepen the status quo and make Palestinian statehood less likely, China and Russia have deepened their ties with Israel in the last decade, suggesting that they pay lip service to the Palestinian cause while their other interests trump these considerations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acceptance by the EU and International Organizations</strong></td>
<td>Solving the conflict is not the international community’s priority and as long as the pathway toward a two-state solution is formally preserved, the EU and the international community as it is represented in international organizations would accept the status quo. Unilateral steps by Israel that make the status quo permanent and close the door on a two-state solution would not be tolerated by the EU and the international organizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Direct Costs</strong></td>
<td>The Israeli economy is sound in the status quo. Yet the BDS movement can gain, and if Israel annexes territory it could lead international sanctions. In the event that present trends lead to escalation in violence, tourism would decline and security expenditures would rise. On the Palestinian side, the status quo in terms of access to capital, limitations on access and movement, and limited resources, is very costly for both the public, which suffers from high rates of unemployment, and for the PA, which is facing a severe financial crisis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indirect Costs</strong></td>
<td>Indirect costs include Israel maintaining a comprehensive security infrastructure in the West Bank, and deleterious effects on the Palestinians resulting from financial crisis and the divide between the West Bank and Gaza. Opportunity costs for Israel include trade with the Arab world that remains low to non-existing, and investment in the West Bank at the expense of socioeconomic programs in Israel proper. Poor public services can eventually increase brain drain from Israel. For the Palestinians, the opportunity cost of not having a state is immense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Timeframe to Implementation</strong></td>
<td>Continuation of present trends is currently occurring. For formal annexation, a legislated procedure is needed; however, it can occur quickly if there is a political decision.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 4. Israeli-Palestinian Confederation

In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, proposals for a confederation incorporate elements common to both the conventional two-state solution and a single democratic state. As in the traditional two-state outcome, supporters of confederation envision two distinct entities: Israel and Palestine. Yet they also emphasize freedom of movement across the entire territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea for all residents of the area, both Israeli and Palestinian, and their proposals rest on the idea of shared supranational governing institutions.

4.1 Evolution of the Confederation Idea

The idea of a confederal structure for Israel and Palestine is almost as old as the idea of partition in former Mandate Palestine. UN Resolution 181 from 1947, which called for the division of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, also expounds a plan for an economic union between the two new countries.

The supranational institution envisioned under Resolution 181, called the Economic Union of Palestine (EUP), would have overseen a customs union, joint currency system, environmental issues and water access, as well as issues related to cross-border transit and trade, including international seaports, airports, highways, and rail traffic. A Joint Economic Board would govern the EUP, with representatives from the Jewish state and Arab state, along with three UN appointees. A Tariff Commission would also be established. Common revenues collected via customs would fund confederal institutions, while a limited amount of surplus funding could support the internationally administered city of Jerusalem, with any remaining proceeds redistributed by the EUP between the two states. Freedom of movement would be ensured for residents of both states seeking to visit Jerusalem, and Arab and Jewish residents of the internationalized city would have the opportunity to seek citizenship from either state, along with its attendant national political rights.61 Because of Arab rejection of Resolution 181 and the subsequent civil war in Mandatory Palestine and the 1948-49 First Arab-Israeli War, the UN proposal was never implemented, although more recent plans echo some of its stipulations, including the Trump administration plan.62

4.2 Key Characteristics of Confederation Models

Today, the idea of confederation is typified by proposals such as the “two states, one homeland,” from the joint Israeli-Palestinian non-governmental organization Eretz L’kulam (A Land for All), the Parallel States Project (PSP) from Lunds University in Sweden, and the Two States in One Space (2S1S) proposal, a plan developed by the Israeli-Palestinian Center for Regional Initiatives (IPCRI, a think tank formerly known as the Center for Israeli-Palestinian Research and Information). Key characteristics shared by these proposals are as follows:

Freedom of Movement, Citizenship, and Residency Rights

In an op-ed for +972 Magazine, Two States, One Homeland movement member Michal Haramati lays out the group’s objectives: “settlers will remain in their homes while Palestinian refugees will be

allowed to return to their towns and cities of origin. Everybody will enjoy complete freedom of movement, and Israel/Palestine will go back to being a single geographical unit, in which two political entities live side by side with open borders.”

The PSP envisions “two parallel state structures, both covering the whole territory, with one answering to Palestinians and one to Israelis regardless of where they lived.” These general principles are common to many confederation plans, which seek to provide for sovereignty and independence for Israel and Palestine, while obviating the need to evacuate settlers, divide Jerusalem, or restrict Palestinian refugees to only the West Bank and Gaza through open border systems and provisions for non-citizen residency.

The Eretz L’kulam plan calls for a two-state solution based on the June 4, 1967 boundaries, with a more permeable border and greater freedom of movement, including the possibility for Israelis and Palestinians to establish permanent residency in the other’s state while remaining citizens of their home countries. Other confederation plans also emphasize their grounding in two independent states with their own respective governments, institutions, and national emblems, while also underscoring the need for shared institutions and symbols (such as a confederal or “interstate” flag, to be flown alongside a state’s national flag—not dissimilar from the practice of European countries flying EU banners alongside their national flags).

Freedom of movement, citizenship, and mutual residency rights are central features of confederation plans. Under 2S1S, Israelis and Palestinians would be citizens of one country, residents of one of either country, and also maintain a separate confederal citizenship.  

Eretz L’kulam recommends that both Israel and Palestine determine their own immigration policies, but that the citizens of both states retain the right to establish permanent residency in the other. The 2S1S framework predicts that under confederation, the distinction between citizen and non-citizen residents within Israel and Palestine could become a source of tension. To ameliorate this issue, 2S1S’ authors suggest minimizing the differences in rights afforded to citizens and residents, with the primary divergence being national political rights (citizens would vote in national elections; residents would not). However, 2S1S also calls for strengthening local governance and allowing non-citizen residents to have full political rights at the municipal level.

In order to execute a non-citizen residency program, Eretz L’kulam suggests a phased implementation with only an agreed-upon number of people initially being allowed to live as permanent residents in the other state. The question of settlements will be resolved by allowing Israeli citizens (essentially settlers) to live on the territory of Palestine while being required to “respect local laws.” A reciprocal arrangement will allow an agreed upon number of Palestinian citizens to live within Israeli territory, which can also help to address the question of Palestinian

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63 Michal Haramati, “The Israeli-Palestinian conflict doesn’t have to be a zero-sum game,” +972 Magazine, September 1, 2016.
65 Ibid., 55.
67 Ibid., 73.
68 Ibid., 79.
Understanding these numbers would be critical to preempt tensions surrounding transit over the internal Israeli-Palestinian border.\textsuperscript{69}

Border controls between Israel and Palestine will need to accommodate a vision of significant freedom of movement between both states.\textsuperscript{70} The PSP recommends a joint border crossing regime, while also conceding that separate border controls may be more politically feasible. Under the PSP proposal, a joint police force comprised of comparable numbers of Israelis and Palestinians would patrol the Israel-Palestine frontier,\textsuperscript{71} and immigration policy and issuance of travel documents would be overseen collectively.\textsuperscript{72}

**External Borders and National Security**

Confederation models also seek to provide a solution for the external borders of the union; that is, Israel's borders with Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon, and Palestine's borders with Egypt and Jordan. PSP assigns these borders to the protection of an international force, with the placement of monitoring equipment accessible to both Israeli and Palestinian governments.\textsuperscript{73} Under *Eretz L'kulam*, the confederal government will have the authority to deploy a joint Israeli-Palestinian force along the external frontier (an international presence, as suggested by PSP, would be impossible in this scheme, as *Eretz L'kulam* puts forward a mutual defense treaty that would ban foreign militaries from Israel and Palestine\textsuperscript{74}). The precise parameters of the mutual defense treaty have not yet been mapped out, and it is not obvious under what circumstances Israelis would want to become involved in a Palestinian conflict or whether Palestinians would view a mutual defense treaty as rendering them a vassal state of Israel.

In the case of *Eretz L'kulam*, the composition of the joint Israeli-Palestinian border security force is not specified, nor is its relationship with the two member states in the confederation, Israel and Palestine.

It is not clear whether troops are "loaned" to the confederation by the separate military and paramilitary institutions of Israel and Palestine (as is the case with UN peacekeepers) or if they represent an independent body. If they are loaned by Israel and Palestine, then will orders from their respective militaries or from the confederal authorities take precedence? This question could prove particularly relevant if the joint force is deployed in a manner that either the Israeli or Palestinian government deems incompatible with its national security interests; for instance, if the Israeli presence appears intrusive or in any way mimicking the occupation, or if the Israelis feel the joint force is not providing sufficient attention to an external issue.

If the joint security force is completely separate from the Israeli and Palestinian governments, then its relationship with the two states is equally important. *Eretz L'kulam*’s framers do not provide answers as to whether these troops are the only external border security for Israel and Palestine,

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\textsuperscript{69} "Shared and Agreed Principles," *Eretz L'kulam*, n.d.
\textsuperscript{70} LeVine and Mossberg, (2014): 90.
\textsuperscript{71} *Eretz L'kulam*, n.d.
\textsuperscript{72} LeVine and Mossberg, (2014): 90.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 91.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 91.
\textsuperscript{75} *Eretz L'kulam*, n.d.
whether they are a complement to existing national forces, and whether they can be moved or withdrawn according to one or both of the two states' wishes.

As noted above, PSP differs from Eretz L’kulam in its support for an international presence along the external borders of the confederation. Yet this invites many similar questions. Which countries would contribute to the international presence? What would their relationship be to their home governments, to the confederation, and to Israel and Palestine? Would their deployment complement or supersede the need for the IDF and Israeli Border Police, as well as Palestinian forces, to patrol their countries' respective borders? And what would happen if one or both members in the confederation rejected the actions of the international force?

Here, two dynamics in the present relationship between Israel and the Palestinian Authority should be noted as they are unlikely to change. First, Israel as an undeclared nuclear weapons state and regional military power far outclasses most of its neighbors militarily, certainly the relatively small and lightly armed PA gendarme-style forces. If the IDF and Palestinian security forces share joint security institutions, there is no reason to expect the Israelis to surrender their commanding position. This would create a situation in which the Palestinians must accept being the junior partner in an arrangement with Israel, and Palestine may see its interests subordinated to Israeli ones in key areas including national security and foreign policymaking.

The second dynamic is institutional. The PA is a single-party dictatorship. Gaza, whose integration into a confederation is a dubious proposal, is also governed by an authoritarian regime. The NGO Freedom House’s 2019 Freedom in the World report assigns Israel a score of 78/100 (with 100 being “most free” and 0 being “least free”), while the West Bank and Gaza Strip hold scores of 25 and 11 respectively.76 Israel, for all of its failings, is a vibrant democracy with functioning democratic institutions, free press, a multiparty electoral system, and more. These differences inform the accountability of military and security forces to their respective national governments, as well as to the confederation.

**Confederal Model for Jerusalem**

Jerusalem introduces a special case for the confederal border regimes. The PSP describes Jerusalem as a potential “testing ground” for the model, owing to the city’s “lack of internal borders and competing claims of sovereignty.”77 Under the PSP outcome, Jerusalem would be accessible to all within the Israel-Palestine confederation for travel and residency rights.78 Similarly, Eretz L’kulam describes Jerusalem as the capital of both Israel and Palestine, supervised by a special municipal government under the aegis of Israel and Palestine, with Israelis and Palestinians as both residents and citizens of their respective states.79 This model for citizenship in a shared Jerusalem reflects the framework embodied in UN Resolution 181.80

2S1S proposes an entirely new governing structure, known as the Jerusalem/al-Quds Metropolitan Authority (JAMA), for the contested holy city.81 Funded nationally by Israeli and Palestinian taxes

78 Ibid., 23.
79 “Shared and Agreed Principles,” Eretz L’kulam, n.d.
80 General Assembly resolution 181, (1947).
81 Yacobi, et al. (2014): 100.
rather than through locally collected revenues, JAMA will be governed according to bilateral political and security conventions between Israel and Palestine. Because JAMA would be accessible by all within the confederation, the city would require a separate security system. The 2S1S project anticipates a demilitarized security cordon surrounding Jerusalem, with "controls appropriate to national borders [...] exercised at the exits of the open city zone." Crimes committed within JAMA would be prosecuted by the government of the state from which the offender entered Jerusalem. Holy sites would be the purview of an "international, interreligious council" featuring equal representation of Christians, Muslims, and Jews. Political analyst and Eretz L'kulam supporter Dahlia Scheindlin further notes the potential for freer access to Jewish sites in the West Bank such as Hebron’s Cave of the Patriarchs and Rachel’s Tomb in Bethlehem as an advantage of the confederation model over the conventional two-state formula, which would presumably entail greater separation.

**Economic Integration**

Because of the ease of movement some confederation models allow, the economic disparity between Israel and a prospective State of Palestine would need to be addressed as less affluent Palestinians would more easily travel [and potentially live] in Israel, and Israelis, generally wealthier, would have the opportunity to do the reverse in Palestine. Presently, Israel’s GDP per capita is about $40,000 USD, while it is just around $1,900 for the Palestinian West Bank and under $900 in the Gaza Strip.

This gap must be kept in mind when considering that Israelis and Palestinians would essentially share housing and labor markets because of the liberalized freedom of movement regime between their respective states. The disparity will undoubtedly influence Israelis’ and Palestinians’ ability to live and work as non-citizen residents of their neighboring country (Israel or Palestine), a feature common to many confederation plans.

Eretz L’kulam calls for a "minimum economic safety net" for all Israelis and Palestinians. Meanwhile, PSP raises the possibility of a shared tax revenue redistribution policy between Israel and Palestine, with an emphasis on improving the economy of the latter. Additional support for the Palestinian economy can come from Israel and other states. Bridging the gap between the Israeli and Palestinian economies could be a long-term objective, with one former senior Israeli government official likening the process to the rehabilitation of the former East Germany after 1990.

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82 Ibid., 101.
83 Ibid., 102.
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
91 Ibid., 144.
92 Discussion with former senior government official, in person, Tel Aviv, November 21, 2019.
Trade policy presents another potential area for integration. Free trade associations between Israel and the United States and Israel and the EU could be expanded to incorporate Palestine.  

**Other Joint Mechanisms and Forms of Shared Governance**

In addition to an open border regime between the two countries, the *Eretz L’kulam* confederation plan provides for several common governing bodies. These include a shared supreme security council, a human rights court to resolve issues pertaining to Israeli and Palestinian non-citizen residents of the two countries, and an economic development authority.

Reconciliation and restitution mechanisms will also exist to ease latent tensions between Israelis and Palestinians and compensate both Palestinian refugees and their descendants and Middle Eastern Jews and their descendants. These efforts at restorative justice mirror proposals for reconciliation and a right of return under a single democratic state, albeit with greater emphasis placed on addressing guilt from both sides rather than exclusively examining Israeli misdeeds.

As referenced above, Israel and the PA are institutionally dissimilar; Israel being a multiparty democracy and the PA and Hamas government’s both being authoritarian one-party systems. Given the sharply differing domestic practices and theories of jurisprudence featured in both governments, it is difficult to envision certain joint institutions. How would a shared human rights court (proposed by *Eretz L’kulam*) function if one party to the confederation faces serious problems concerning non-democratic governance and the rule of law? How a democracy and an authoritarian government present restorative justice to their constituents may also differ as a non-democratic regime must derive legitimacy from sources other than the ballot box. To retain some popular support, a Palestinian government may not want to subscribe to reconciliation mechanisms that present grievances on both sides of the conflict.

Institutional criteria for confederal membership would not be unique to a confederation of Israel and Palestine. The EU requires that aspirant members subscribe to a set of guidelines colloquially known as the Copenhagen Criteria. Among the EU’s requirements is “stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities.” This clause in particular is among the reasons Turkey has not become an EU member and why a relationship has never developed between Brussels and authoritarian states like Belarus. Given the EU’s high degree of integration and open movement regime, these criteria make sense in Europe and similar requirements may be useful in the case of Israel and Palestine. At the same time, this means major reforms (possibly even regime change) among the Palestinians would be necessary for a confederation to be established.

Because Israel and Palestine would be sovereign states sharing confederal structures by mutual agreement, secession from the confederation would also be permissible and intended as a peaceful process. Writing for *Foreign Policy*, Dahlia Scheindlin compared this eventuality to the bloodless transitional period of *Eretz L’kulam*.

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breakup of Serbia and Montenegro in 2006 and the United Kingdom’s exit from the EU.\textsuperscript{98} Yet problems could arise if one party seeks to leave the confederation while the other supports it, issues that would be compounded by the presence of non-citizen residents from both Israel and Palestine on the other’s territory. If the confederation is dissolved, what will be the rights of Israelis and Palestinians living in the other’s territory?

4.3 Advantages and Disadvantages

\textit{Eretz L’kulam}, the PSP, 2S1S, and similar proposals entail a significant degree of political, security, and economic integration. However, other proponents of confederation may support formulas with less potent shared institutions.\textsuperscript{99} From this perspective, confederation is less an end in itself and more of a pathway to a two-state solution. One former senior Israeli government official who supports a confederation explained that “confederation should only be a means to a two-state solution. If it no longer means two states, I would drop it.”\textsuperscript{100} According to this view, the utility of a confederation is not only in shared institutions, but also in its political significance as a way to incentivize Israeli and Palestinian leaders to restart a formal peace process if both parties understand the potential benefits of a confederal model.\textsuperscript{101}

In that regard, confederation is an ambitious attempt to reconcile the contradictory impulses informing support for both two-state and democratic one-state proposals. As in a one-state outcome, confederation supporters seek to obviate the need for resolutions to complicated, seemingly intractable issues such as the Palestinian refugee question, settlement evacuation, and the status of Jerusalem, by guaranteeing a high degree of freedom of movement across borders. However, confederation does so within the framework of two sovereign states sharing porous or open borders, as well as joining in supranational institutions governing issues like a common tariff regime and mutual defense.

For Israel, the largest drawback to confederation is that it does not address the security questions that are at the heart of most Israeli objections to any permanent status arrangement with the Palestinians. Currently, Israel maintains a security barrier separating the overwhelming majority of the West Bank and all of the Gaza Strip from Israel, employs checkpoints at West Bank and Gaza crossings, and oversees a permit system for Palestinians who want to enter Israel. Confederation, with its permeable borders, does not simply fail to alleviate Israeli security concerns. Rather, it ignores them entirely. For a country that is consumed with security, porous borders and unregulated freedom of movement will be a complete non-starter that renders confederation unfeasible to an extreme degree.

The security arena is not the only question of feasibility here. Superficially, leaving settlements in place while allowing Palestinian refugees to return to their places of origin provides a quick salve for outstanding problems. However, given that the governing Israeli right has been unwilling to accept either a two-state or democratic one-state formula for ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is doubtful that it would seize upon an approach which incorporates core elements of both of these

\textsuperscript{98} Scheindlin, 2018.
\textsuperscript{99} Discussion with Israeli policy researcher, in person, Tel Aviv, November 20, 2019.
\textsuperscript{100} Discussion with former senior government official, in person, Tel Aviv, November 21, 2019.
\textsuperscript{101} Discussion with Israeli policy researcher, in person, Tel Aviv, November 20, 2019.
models. This is particularly true if Israel would be required to surrender or share control of its borders with an international force or any non-Israeli presence.

For the PA, there is little incentive to move into an arrangement in which a State of Palestine would likely be a junior partner. Depending on how porous borders are under a confederal model, Palestine might see an exodus of Palestinians to more affluent parts of Israel, as occurred in Germany after the underdeveloped east was merged into West Germany.

The presence of Jewish settlers living simultaneously as Israeli citizens and Palestinian residents on the territory of a future Palestine may invite further unwanted political complications for that country’s government. Allowing settlers to remain as Israeli citizens, rather than Palestinian, could be perceived as legitimizing settlements. This risks presenting additional issues surrounding crimes committed by or against these Israeli citizens. What court would try the defendants in such cases? And could harm to Israeli citizens invite Israeli military intervention and reoccupation of parts of the West Bank?

Open borders or a significantly more liberal freedom of movement regime are mechanisms to allow settlers to remain in place and give Palestinians, including refugees, access to all parts of former Mandate Palestine, while maintaining the structure of two sovereign states. However, even if this framework were to be implemented in spite of the significant political obstacles, the confederation could still devolve into a one-state outcome. Palestinians living in Israel may not be content to live as non-citizen residents in what they perceive to be their homeland, and Israeli settlers in Palestine may feel similarly, and agitate for equal political rights. Moreover, an open border system may create additional security problems, making both Israel and Palestine more accessible to malicious non-state actors. Such problems could be especially acute in Jerusalem, where several confederation plans envision an open city. In the case of proposals like the JAMA entity envisioned by the 2S1S plan, a potential assailant could enter Jerusalem through one state and freely exit into the other.

If a two-state outcome is reached, it is doubtful that Israelis and Palestinians will see a complete divorce. Geographic proximity and over a half-century of Israeli military occupation and civilian settlement have intertwined Israeli and Palestinian infrastructure and economies. However, the degree of political and security mergers envisioned by many proponents of confederation is unlikely to be realized. The key advantages and shortcomings of the confederation idea are summarized below:

**Advantages**

- Allows Israeli settlers to remain in place without having to be evacuated;
- Ostensibly resolves the status of Palestinian refugees;
- Does not require dividing Jerusalem;
- Permits for realization of self-determination of both Jews and Palestinians;
- Sustains Israel as a democracy;
- Encourages mutual cooperation and trust-building;
- Adheres to internationally accepted two-state framework.

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Shortcomings

- Political non-starter with both Israelis and Palestinians;
- Presence of large communities of non-citizen Israelis in Palestine and Palestinians in Israel presents likely source of friction between both parties;
- Security clashes could also erupt between the security forces of both states in the likely event of violence;
- Risks creating an unequal arrangement between an affluent and powerful Israel and an impoverished and weak Palestine;
- The economic challenges of integrating the economies are enormous;
- The challenges of integrating Israel’s democratic and transparent state institutions with Palestinian non-democratic and kleptocratic institutions are daunting;
- Requires a level of trust not only to negotiate and reach a two-state framework, but also to agree to cooperate in good faith—and this trust is totally absent.

Section 4.4 Assessment of Confederation

Confederation, despite its appeal, rates relatively poorly against most criteria although not on the two of the most important ones—its ability to sustain Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. However, it falls on serious security shortcomings. Depending on the degree of integration between the two confederated states, the toll on the Israeli economy could be substantial, given the wealth disparity between Israelis and Palestinians. Moreover, confederation requires a degree of integration that a traditional two-state model would not, giving rise to additional complications associated with joining a functioning democracy like Israel to a single-party authoritarian regime like the PA. Further, there is neither Israeli nor Palestinian strong support for confederation. A 2018 poll conducted by the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research at Tel Aviv University and the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research in Ramallah found that on both sides some 30% would support a confederation after it was described to survey participants in one paragraph. At the same time, around 60% of both Jewish Israeli and Palestinian respondents said that they were opposed to the confederation idea.\textsuperscript{103} In focus groups RAND conducted on this topic, Israelis and Palestinians who were asked separately about the confederation had difficulties understanding the concept and said that it is utopic and unrealistic in the Israeli-Palestinian context.\textsuperscript{104} Table 4.1 summarizes the valuation of the Israeli-Palestinian confederation approach in our analytical framework.

Table 4.1. Applying Analytical Framework to Evaluate the Confederation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Confederation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>Confederation is based upon a two-state formula, which leaves Israel with a Jewish majority population and does not necessitate Israel alter its state symbols, thus leaving Israel a Jewish state. However, an open freedom of movement policy between Israel and Palestine could alter this down the line.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>Confederation is based upon the two-state formula. Different from the traditional two-state formula, however, is confederation’s continuation of Israeli control over a non-citizen population. However, this...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{103} Joint Poll conducted by the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research at Tel Aviv University and the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, August 13, 2018.

<p>| <strong>Palestinian self-determination</strong> | An arrangement would be by consent, with non-citizen Palestinian residents living in Israel of their own volition, and with the opportunity to live in an independent Palestine. |
| <strong>Security</strong> | While confederation is based upon a two-state formula, which provides for an independent Palestine, an Israeli-Palestinian confederation would likely see Palestine as a junior member. The continued presence of Israeli settlers (as non-citizen residents) in Palestine, along with the necessity for a joint security policy (including the Israel Defense Forces, one of—if not the most—powerful militaries in the Middle East), means it is likely Palestine's economic, security, and foreign policy autonomy would suffer. |
| <strong>Ease of Implementation</strong> | Open or porous borders between Israel and Palestine would provide easy avenues for hostile non-state actors to pass between the two states. The ability of Palestinians to live as non-citizen residents in Israel, and of Israelis to do the same in Palestine, creates a serious potential source of friction between the two states. Harm to non-citizen residents in one state could invite conflict between their home and host governments. |
| <strong>Israeli Public Support</strong> | Recent polling indicates most Israelis oppose confederation. Moreover, the Israel-West Bank security barrier is popular with the Israeli public, in contrast to confederal proposals, which tend to call for more porous borders. |
| <strong>Israeli Government Support</strong> | The current Israeli government is opposed to a two-state outcome, which is the basis for a confederation model. While confederation allows settlements to remain in place, the current right-wing government is unlikely to support the tradeoff of having to accept non-citizen Palestinian residents. |
| <strong>Palestinian Public Support</strong> | Recent polling indicates that most Palestinians oppose confederation. |
| <strong>PA Support</strong> | The PA supports a two-state solution, which represents the basis of a confederation model. PA officials have suggested that they would support some confederal institutions, but only after independence is achieved. The PA is unlikely to support any outcome that would leave Palestine as a junior partner in an arrangement with Israel. Moreover, allowing Israeli settlers to remain in Palestine as non-citizen residents could be seen as legitimizing Israeli settlements, something the PA is unlikely to accept. |
| <strong>Hamas Support</strong> | Hamas opposes a two-state formula, which is the basis for a confederation model. |
| <strong>Acceptance by Jordan and Egypt</strong> | Jordan and Egypt support a two-state outcome, which is the basis for a confederation model. However, if the confederation were seen as having a destabilizing effect along their borders, Egypt and Jordan might oppose this proposal. Moreover, Egypt and Jordan are unlikely to compel the Palestinians to enter into an arrangement that they propose. |
| <strong>Acceptance by Arab World</strong> | The Arab states support a two-state model, which is the basis for a confederation arrangement. It is likely that Arab governments would support such an arrangement, pursuant to the Arab Peace Initiative, unless it is viewed as destabilizing among Arab governments or is strongly resisted by the Palestinians as forcing them into a lopsided arrangement. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U.S. Acceptance</th>
<th>While previous American presidents have opposed annexation of the West Bank and a one-state outcome in favor of a territorial compromise, the incumbent Trump administration has taken steps to tacitly encourage revanchist elements of the Israeli right, most recently in the release of its Peace to Prosperity plan. The United States under the Trump administration is unlikely to initiate a political process leading to a confederation but it is also not likely to stop Israelis and Palestinians from pursuing this framework (based upon two states) as an outcome if they choose to do so independently.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance by Russia and China</td>
<td>Russia and China support a two-state outcome to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but are not actively engaged on the issue, and are unlikely to contest the specifics of a proposal that calls for two states in name.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance by the EU and International Organizations</td>
<td>The EU and most international institutions support a two-state outcome, which is the basis for a confederation model.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Costs</td>
<td>The costs of a confederation model will vary depending on the depth of supranational institutions created and the degree of integration. Assuming a model with a high degree of integration, some costly tasks associated with two states will be obviated, namely evacuation of settlers. However, the free movement of individuals between Israel and Palestine may impose new security costs. Moreover, the West Bank and Gaza will need to be economically rehabilitated in order to fit into a confederation with a more affluent Israel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Costs</td>
<td>A confederation may allow Israel access to trade and tourism opportunities. This could lead to an opening with Arab and Muslim states as it is based upon a two-state formula, which is an acceptable avenue to normalization for most of these governments. However, the open-ended security questions associated with confederation mean that Israel and Palestine will not be able to project the same image of stability; accordingly, the full benefits traditionally associated with two states may not be realized.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeframe to Implementation</td>
<td>Confederation is based upon two states. In order for a two-state outcome to be achieved and be sustainable, Israel would need a government willing to pursue one and the Fatah-led PA would likely need to reconcile with the Hamas administration in Gaza. Once a formula is agreed upon, the resolution of questions related to border arrangements, residency, and supranational institutions will take years to realize.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5. One Democratic State

The two-state model has been the preferred approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Yet, throughout the decades since 1947, the concept of a single democratic state has been kept afloat, with present-day incarnations.

5.1 Evolution of the One Democratic State Idea

In 1947, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) recommended a partition of the British Mandate of Palestine into two states, one Jewish and one Arab. However, alternatives recommending a single democratic state in the territory of the former British Mandate have long been proposed by Palestinian, Jewish, and foreign observers.

While the majority of UNSCOP expressed their preference for two states, a minority of its members (India, Iran, and Yugoslavia) supported a plan for a single state, which was appended to the committee’s 1947 report. UNSCOP’s report listed “a unitary state (with an Arab majority...)” and “a single state with a federal, cantonal, or binational structure” as two possible outcomes to the Palestinian question. The recommendations of the Indian, Iranian, and Yugoslav representatives were issued on the basis that Palestine was “the common country of both indigenous Arabs and Jews.” The delegates described theirs as the “most democratic” model, describing a framework for a federation of Jewish and Arab units, with a national federal government overseeing both. The national government would include a federal court with a “minimum membership” of three Jewish and four Arab justices and a legislature with equal representation of both Jews and Arabs.105

In the aftermath of the Oslo process of the 1990s, the two-state model has been revived as the sole internationally accepted formula for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, a solution along the lines of both one- and two-state models remains unrealized. Both the demographic makeup and political arrangement of the territory of the former British Mandate differ greatly from the situation in 1947. As shown in Chapter 3, some 13 million people live between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza with near parity between the Jewish and Palestinian populations. All Palestinians in this space live under varying degrees of Israeli rule,106 making some advocates argue that the reality already reflects a one-state and the effort should focus on ensuring that it is democratic.107

5.2 Characteristics of One Democratic State

Today, proposals for a one-state outcome with equal rights generally seek to integrate the three aforementioned territories (Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza) into a single state, while conferring citizenship rights on all residents of the area.

106 Gaza is de facto controlled by Hamas but is subject to Israeli air and sea blockade and Israeli and Egyptian border restrictions. “At 70, Israel’s population is 8.842 million, 43% of world Jewry,” The Times of Israel, April 16, 2018.
Shared Country with Equal Rights

In contrast to the status quo, in which Israel is identified under its Basic Laws as a Jewish and democratic state, proponents of a single democratic state outcome generally favor no ethno-national classification or a recognition of the national aspirations of both Jews and Palestinians within the framework of a shared country.\textsuperscript{108} Proposals for a single democratic state tend to highlight their ability to accommodate the rights of both groups. An emphasis is placed on the restorative justice element, with a democratic one-state outcome seen by its supporters as a means to correct perceived wrongs, such as Israel’s self-definition as a Jewish state (at the expense of minorities and Palestinians in the occupied territories) and the Palestinian refugee crisis. These recommendations tread more lightly around security and political arrangements, such as the fate of the PA, perhaps in part due to the fact that no government, including Israel and the PA, formally supports a single democratic state while the UN and major world powers remain formally committed to two states.

The Palestinian-American writer Yousef Munayyer, executive director of the U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights (USCPR), recommends that the rights of members of both Jewish and Palestinian communities be preserved under a constitution that would require a 90% legislative majority to amend, thus preventing “one group from using a demographic advantage to alter the nature of the state” via a simple majority.\textsuperscript{109} Proposals for a binational or federal structure reflect the spirit of UNSCOP’s minority report, while a unitary state without any internal national distinctions might provide no structures specifically geared toward the needs of Jews or Palestinians. The Palestinian-American writer Ali Abunimah considers that a single democratic state could be more centralized, or could have a federated binational structure along the lines of the system operated between Dutch-speaking and Francophone communities Belgium, while clearly favoring the latter.\textsuperscript{110}

Supporters of one democratic state cite their proposal as the only vehicle capable of delivering a just solution to both peoples and/or the only viable peaceful outcome to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in light of the perceived “death” of the two-state solution. In particular, the existence of one state could resolve Palestinian grievances that partitional proposals require compromise on, such as the demand for a right of return for refugees (and their descendants) who fled or were expelled during the First Arab-Israeli War of 1948-49.\textsuperscript{111} The precise execution of the right of return varies among supporters of a single democratic state. The One Democratic State Campaign, an Israeli-Palestinian leftist group led by Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions Director Jeff Halper, recommends the “full implementation of the Palestinian refugees’ right of return,” while not mentioning a continued right of return for Diaspora Jews.\textsuperscript{112} By contrast, other supporters of one democratic state call for a right of return for both Palestinians and Jews.\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{108}Yousef Munayyer, “There Will Be a One-State Solution,” \textit{Foreign Affairs}, October 2019.
\textsuperscript{112}“The Political Program of the Campaign for One Democratic State in Historic Palestine,” \textit{Free Haifa}, August 16, 2018.
\textsuperscript{113}Abunimah, \textit{One Country}, 121.
Final Status Issues

According to proponents, other core issues would also be taken off the table by the absence of a partition (e.g., in a two-state solution). Ali Abunimah writes that in addition to “the rights of Palestinian refugees,” a single democratic state could “resolve [...] the fate of Israeli settlements built after 1967 [...], and the status of Jerusalem,” as well as freedom of movement issues (“What if an Israeli Jew who wanted to move to Hebron, or a Palestinian who chose to move to Tel Aviv or Jaffa, was simply able to do so?”).114 Professor George Bisharat of the University of California Hastings College of Law, an international law and Middle East politics expert, has authored numerous publications on the moral and legal foundations of a single democratic state. He lays out a similar set of core Palestinian demands that would be rendered more easily resolved under a one-state outcome: the rights of refugees,115 equality for Palestinian citizens of Israel,116 self-determination and sovereignty,117 control over East Jerusalem,118 and an end to the Israeli military occupation of Palestinian Territory.119 Bisharat further establishes central Israeli concerns that could be mediated by one state: rights to individual and collective security,120 sovereignty in Jerusalem,121 access to Jewish historical sites across former Mandate Palestine,122 regional acceptance by Arab and Muslim states,123 and preserving Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.124 While Bisharat concedes that maintaining Israel as a Jewish and democratic state will be the position that is most difficult to reconcile with a single state, he nevertheless sets forth a one state model that should accommodate for both Jewish and Palestinian self-determination and national identity.125

Building New Relationships Between Israeli Jews and Palestinians

To supporters of a single democratic state, the most intractable questions surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are so difficult to answer because they transcend proposed international borders.

In establishing the new relationship between Israeli Jews and Palestinians, a special role may be envisioned for Israeli Arab citizens (many of whom already identify as Palestinian). This population can help mediate the transition to one state, based on their communal ties to both Israeli Jews and cultural and familial connections with Palestinians in the occupied territories.126 Yousef Munayyer also proposes a truth and reconciliation commission based on similar processes undertaken after the end of apartheid in South Africa and the Rwandan Genocide.127 The utility of such a mechanism

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114 Ibid., 105.
115 Ibid., 18.
116 Ibid., 20.
117 Ibid., 21.
118 Ibid., 21.
119 Ibid., 26.
120 Ibid., 26.
121 Ibid., 26.
122 Ibid., 27.
123 Ibid., 24.
124 Ibid., 25.
125 Ibid., 25.
127 Munayyer, 2019.
in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is to provide some measure of acknowledgement of wrongdoing in a situation in which there is no obvious “loser” to be punished by a victorious party.128 Other variations on this theme may take a harsher line with one party, typically the Israeli Jewish/Zionist side. The ODSC, for instance, calls for a single state to “correct the historical grievances of the Palestinian people as a result of the Zionist colonialist project.”129

New Governance Models

Another question proposals for a single democratic state seek to answer is how the resultant entity will utilize (or discard) existing Israeli and Palestinian government institutions. In 2001, Georgetown University Law Professor Lama Abu-Odeh proposed a “constitutional-liberal” state. More recently, Munayyer proposed the enactment of a written constitution for a single state to replace Israel’s existing Basic Laws, which in his view privilege Jewish citizens without adequately addressing the needs and rights of Palestinians.130 A proposal for such a constitution already exists in the form of “the Democratic Constitution,” a document produced in 2007 by Adalah, an Israeli Arab civil rights NGO. While the Democratic Constitution does not envision a one-state outcome to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it does seek to re-designate Israel as “a democratic, bilingual, and multicultural state,” rather than as a Jewish state, and thus its stipulations may be instructive in seeking to understand proposals for one binational or nonsectarian democratic state. As it stands, the Democratic Constitution employs existing Israeli institutions, such as the Knesset, in coordination with new entities like a proposed Parliamentary Committee for Bilingual and Multicultural Affairs.

Under Adalah’s plan, Arab and self-described Arab-Jewish political parties are empowered such that their ascent or participation in certain political processes is legally mandated, a callback to the earlier UNSCOP minority report’s requirement for different demographics to be represented in government bodies. The perambulatory clauses of the Democratic Constitution, as well as Chapter 3, Section II, reflect a desire for restorative justice, similar to the truth and reconciliation mechanisms Munayyer suggested in 2019. In particular, the Democratic Constitution envisions Israeli acknowledgement of wrongdoing in the Nakba (Palestinian catastrophe of 1948-49) and the post-1967 military occupation, as well as a right of return for both Palestinian refugees outside of Israel and Israeli Arabs and their descendants who were internally displaced within the nascent Jewish state.131

According to supporters of one state, restorative justice will not be limited to symbolic measures, but to practical accommodations as well. Some form of economic rehabilitation or a practice that supporters of one state liken to affirmative action will be required in order to ensure that Israelis and Palestinians are on a more level playing field within the framework of a shared state.132 One Palestinian public policy researcher explained that closing this gap would require external investment from the United States and EU133 (the former currently leans toward the pro-annexation position of the Israeli right, while Brussels continues to back a two-state formula). These would presumably require a significant contribution given how far apart Israelis and Palestinians are in terms of development, average income, and other critical metrics.

129 Free Haifa, 2018.
132 Discussion with a Middle East law and politics expert, California, November 2019.
133 Discussion with a Palestinian public policy researcher, Ramallah, November 2019.
Eliminating Current Institutions and Integrating Israeli and Palestinian Systems

The PA presents another issue. A quasi-state entity born from the Oslo Accords of the 1990s, the PA currently exercises direct or indirect control over about 40% of the West Bank (corresponding to Areas A and B). The PA was created with the implicit objective of acting as a transitional body in the creation of an independent Palestinian state (separate from Israel). For many who believe in one democratic state, the PA also represents collaboration with Israel. As one supporter of a single state outcome put it: “PA was conceptualized as an instrument of ongoing [Israeli] control of the Palestinians, was successful in this role, and that is a role that should not be worthwhile or worthy of preserving.”134 There is also a sense among supporters of a single state that the PA is being kept afloat by European aid money.135 Considering all of this, the PA’s role must be addressed.

Despite these impressions, the PA does have many of the trappings of a sovereign state, including local and national governing structures and a paramilitary security force. Because the PA functions as a de facto one-party regime under Fatah, its current operations would need to be reconciled with the widespread desire for democracy among supporters of a single state. Writing for the Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs, Tariq Kenny-Shawa suggests dismantling the PA in order to either preempt an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories or the establishment of a single democratic state.136

Integrating Palestinian and Israeli political movements within the framework of a one-state outcome represents another critical task. Presently, many Palestinian political parties (with the notable exception of Hamas) are organized under the aegis of the PLO, which is in turn dominated by Fatah. The PLO is also internationally recognized as the representative of the Palestinian people in other countries and multilateral organizations, as well as in negotiations with Israel. Diana Buttu, a former legal adviser to the PLO negotiating team, also recommends dissolving the PA and reorganizing the umbrella institution to be “more representative,” including through the admission of Hamas as a constituent faction.137 One Palestinian policy researcher posited that if the PA, also Fatah-led, dissolves itself, this can restore public confidence in the PLO and provide the organization with the political space to shift from its current pro-two-state orientation to backing a single democratic state.138 Even with the removal of the PA, a more inclusive PLO can continue to be relevant in the pursuit of one state by representing Palestinian interests in international proceedings against the Israeli government, including through the International Criminal Court and International Court of Justice.139

Hamas and Gaza each constitute additional complications. Gaza is physically, politically, and economically separated from the rest of the Palestinian polity in the West Bank, not to mention Israeli Arabs and Palestinian refugees in third countries. The territory is significantly poorer than both Israel and the West Bank, and several wars between Hamas and other non-state actors on one

134 Discussion with a Middle East law and politics expert, in person, California, November 2019.
135 Discussion with a Palestinian public policy researcher, in person, Ramallah, November 2019.
side and Israel on the other have wrought serious damage to the area’s physical infrastructure. Hamas is not a PLO member faction, and has never reconciled with Fatah and the PA.

The One Democratic State Campaign accuses Israel of “fragmenting the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza into isolated cantons,” and many proposals for a one-state outcome call for Gaza to be reincorporated into the resultant Israeli-Palestinian entity. However, Gaza’s problems are not purely political, and the ongoing Israeli blockade, economic issues, water and electricity problems, and looming public health crisis may merit immediate redress separate from the establishment of a united democratic state. One supporter of the single democratic state formula explained that their desired outcome might take as many as three decades to achieve, but that this would be too long for the people of Gaza.

While Israel controls Gaza’s airspace and maintains a land and sea blockade of the Strip (with additional border closures from the Egyptian side), Hamas maintains a significant degree of independence as compared with the West Bank-based PA. Hamas oversees government institutions across the entire Gaza Strip, and its police, paramilitary, and military forces operate free from Israeli incursions (except during times of open conflict, as in 2008-9, 2012, and 2014). A single state outcome would lack legitimacy if non-state actors continue to maintain independent military forces. Hamas and other such groups would need to be disarmed and/or integrated into the national armed forces of the new Israeli-Palestinian state.

Federation as a One State Variant

Federation represents a notable exception among democratic one state models. This proposal does not include Gaza, leaving it as a quasi-independent Hamas enclave. It also preserves Israel’s Jewish character, rather than treating one state as a vehicle to achieve restitution for Palestinian refugees and other victims of the conflict. One former Israeli intelligence officer who supports federation describes a plan with equal citizenship for all residents of Israel and the West Bank. The state would be divided into 30 cantons, 20 starting with a Jewish majority, and 10 featuring a Palestinian majority (Jerusalem and Hebron would each be cantons). The state’s Jewish character and symbols would be preserved, with the Law of Return continuing to apply solely to Jews. However, the state would cease to host KKL (Jewish National Fund) lands, given that the KKL-JNF has carried out discriminatory policies against non-Jews. In the West Bank, the Palestinian Authority would need to be dissolved (mirroring other proposals for a single democratic state), with its security forces potentially integrated into local cantonal police in the former West Bank.

140 Free Haifa, 2018.
141 Djerijan, Muasher, and Brown, 2018.
142 Discussion with a Middle East law and politics expert, in person, California November 2019.
143 Discussion with a Middle East law and politics expert, in person, California, November 2019.
144 Discussion with a former Israeli intelligence officer, in person, Tel Aviv, November 2019.
146 Discussion with a former Israeli intelligence officer, in person, Tel Aviv, Israel, November 2019.
Addressing Political Barriers

Today, the establishment of one democratic state is not the official position of either Israel or the PA, nor is it supported by any major external power or the Arab League. Such proposals are liable to be unpopular among Israeli Jews, who would likely (except under the federation proposal) have to compromise on the Zionist character of the state, and may fear persecution by an Arab-led government. Several supporters of a single democratic state conceded that their ideas are presently unpopular, with one even calling it “a non-starter.” However, such acknowledgements are followed up by a belief that in the long term, a single democratic Israeli-Palestinian state is an inevitable outcome to the conflict. Once a critical mass of support is achieved, proponents of one state say, it will be difficult for certain pro-two-state institutions, such as the Arab League, to suppress a move toward a unitary democratic state, although they may initially attempt to subvert it.

To address these political obstacles, a “freedom charter,” modeled after the document produced by the African National Congress in its campaign against South African apartheid, can also be useful in clarifying the movement’s objectives, partly with the aim of easing the anxieties of relevant parties. An Israeli-Palestinian freedom charter would, for instance, address the rights of Israeli Jews inhabiting homes Palestinian refugees once lived in.

5.3 Advantages and Disadvantages

A single-state outcome would deprive Israel of its Jewish character, while shifting to a unitary or binational model in which Palestinians do not necessarily exercise power autonomously either. Still, in theory, a single democratic state should spare Israelis and Palestinians from addressing other complicated compromises inherent in partition. Both parties would have access to all parts of former Mandate Palestine; settlers could remain in place while Palestinian refugees could return to their (or their ancestors’) places of origin. All residents of the state would hold equal citizenship. Jerusalem would not be divided in any fashion, and individuals of all backgrounds would enjoy unfettered access to the city’s holy sites.

Despite the clear appeal of some of these proposals, there is currently no constituency for such an outcome in Israel or in the Palestinian territories. Israeli Jews are unwilling to abandon their national identity, renounce Zionism, and be subsumed as a minority or near-minority in a single-state outcome. No Israeli political party supports this formula; the closest is the small Arab nationalist Balad, which supports an Israel without ethno-national identifiers alongside a separate Palestinian state, and Balad now is a part of the Joint List, which supports a two-state outcome. According to a poll conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research in December 2019, under 30% of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip support abandoning the two-state
solution in favor of a single democratic state, while 70% are opposed to this approach\(^{155}\) (although support for two states is eroding, with a majority of Palestinians opposed to this formula as well\(^{156}\)). Moreover, a single democratic state outcome lacks international legitimacy; the United States has never backed such a model, and the Trump administration is particularly unlikely to do so. The EU, which enjoys a strong relationship with Israel and is a primary backer of the two-state solution, is unlikely to adopt such a tack. Likewise, the Arab states share important security ties with Israel and likely view its continued existence (in its present form) as advantageous to their interests in the region, although some supporters of a unified democratic state contend that it might be difficult for Arab governments in the region to oppose their formula in the long run if the Palestinian public were to adopt this approach.\(^{157}\)

The new, unified state would have to undertake burdensome institutional reforms in order to function effectively. Such tasks would include disarming the various non-state Palestinian groups and integrating them into a united military force, where former militants would either have to stand down or serve alongside former-IDF soldiers whom they might regard as colonial oppressors and who in turn will likely regard their erstwhile Palestinian foes as terrorists. This will be an especially difficult issue to navigate, as some groups are satellites of outside powers, such as Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and, to a lesser extent Hamas, which are Iranian proxies. The expanded democratic system would also have to accommodate parties like Hamas and Fatah in the same political space as right-wing religious Zionist factions like Ha’Bayit Ha’Yehudi.

Significant investment would also be required to prevent Palestinians from being a permanent underclass in a single state. Here, the example of Germany, which underwent unification in 1989-90, is instructive. Whereas there is a shrinking economic gap between eastern and western Germans, a vast chasm exists between the relative prosperity in Israel and the poverty that persists among Palestinians. East Germany’s per capita GDP in 1990 was just under $10,000 USD (around $19,000 when adjusted for inflation), compared with $15,000 in the west (just under $30,000 in today’s terms). By contrast, the starting points for Israelis and Palestinians are much further apart. Israel’s GDP per capita today is around $40,000.\(^{158}\) The figure for Palestinians in the West Bank is about $1,900;\(^{159}\) in Gaza, it is just shy of $900.\(^{160}\)

Since 1990, about 3.68 million people have moved from ex-communist eastern Germany to the more affluent west, while only 2.45 million made the reverse migration.\(^{161}\) It is not inconceivable that the former Palestinian Territories would suffer a similar demographic hemorrhaging under one state, with Palestinians leaving Ramallah, Jericho, or Gaza to try their fortunes in Tel Aviv and Haifa. As people abandon the more impoverished regions of the single state, neglect by government and investors may follow. This does not even begin to address the logistical problems that would be associated with resettling Palestinian refugees, should the one state government fulfill their right of return.


\(^{156}\) Ibid., 24.


\(^{159}\) Ibid.

\(^{160}\) Ibid.

Superficially, a democratic one-state outcome presents a salve for seemingly intractable problems: Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, borders, and so on. But other issues are bound to arise: an income divide between Israelis and Palestinians that is more of a chasm than a gap; the need to extend state institutions across a disunited polity; addressing the troublesome place of extremist groups and hostile non-state actors in the new state; and establishing a unified security policy for the one-state government. Thus, for each of the problems that a single state might solve, new ones are created, as summarized below in the list of advantages and shortcomings.

**Advantages**

- Does not require removal of Israeli settlers;
- Can accommodate right of return for Palestinian refugees;
- Allows Jerusalem to remain united;
- All residents of the state will have equal citizenship;
- Offers a democratic and equal model;
- Envisions reconciliation.

**Shortcomings**

- Compromises both Jewish and Palestinian self-determination;
- Completely nonviable politically for both Israelis and Palestinians (although Palestinian acceptance of this idea, particularly among young Palestinians, is on the rise);
- Would require onerous tasks such as disarmament or integration of hostile non-state actors into a centralized armed force;
- Difficult to bridge economic gap between Israelis and Palestinians;
- Implementation obstacles make this idea non feasible.

### 5.4 Assessment of One Democratic State

The one democratic state idea in principle could solve the conflict, obviate the need to bridge the Israeli and Palestinian positions regarding core status issues, and create a liberal democracy with equal rights to all. However, as visibly clear in Table 5.1, this version of one state rates poorly, with performance along most criteria coded as orange and red. Unsurprisingly, given the very poor to non-existent support for one democratic state among Israelis, and the fact that it means the end of the Zionist vision of a Jewish state, this option is deemed completely non-viable. In discussing this option, INSS wrote “the one-state solution would be worthy of serious debate were it realistic—if there were even a remote chance that Jews and Palestinians could run one state together and treat each other with mutual respect and full equality.”

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**Table 5.1. Applying Analytical Framework to Evaluate One Democratic State**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>One Democratic State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>A single democratic state will, by its nature, compromise Israel's Jewish character by rendering the Jewish population a minority or near-minority.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Democratic</th>
<th>A single democratic state will confer citizenship rights to all residents of the state.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian self-determination</td>
<td>While a single democratic state will not be a Jewish state, it will not be a Palestinian state initially. However, given demographic trends and the potential realization of the right of return of Palestinian refugees, Palestinians may eventually represent a majority of the population and predominate in state institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>A single state would have greater strategic depth than Israel would have under a two-state outcome. However, the new democratic state would have to overcome significant hurdles in organizing its unified armed forces, with the need to disarm and integrate hostile non-state actors. There will also be increased interaction between populations in the former occupied territories; this could potentially translate into more peaceful relations, but it could also lead to friction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of Implementation</td>
<td>A single democratic state would need to bring its public services, including healthcare, public transportation, and education up to a similar standard. The PA would need to be dismantled, potentially inviting armed clashes with its erstwhile security services. The unified armed forces of the state would have to mediate latent hostilities between both Israeli and Palestinian troops. Significant funding or some form of affirmative action would be required to ensure that West Bank and Gazan Palestinians do not form a permanent lower class in the new state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israeli Public Support</td>
<td>Most Israelis, particularly Israeli Jews, will be unwilling to abandon their national identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israeli Government Support</td>
<td>No Israeli political party supports this formula; the closest is the small Arab nationalist Balad, which supports an Israel without ethno-national identifiers alongside a separate Palestinian state, but Balad is now part of the Joint List, which does support a two-state outcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian Public Support</td>
<td>Current polling indicates that the Palestinian public rejects a single democratic state outcome; however, support for two states is steadily eroding and could translate into increased support for one state in the future.¹⁶³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA Support</td>
<td>The PA supports a two-state solution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamas Support</td>
<td>The Hamas government in Gaza, which does not formally recognize Israel even within the Green Line, is formally committed to claiming all of former Mandate Palestine; however, Hamas’ control over Gaza also benefits from the status quo. Moreover, while Hamas does support a single state in theory, its anti-Semitic ideology and authoritarian rule in Gaza mean its commitment to democratic norms and equality is highly dubious.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance by Jordan and Egypt</td>
<td>Jordan and Egypt are immediately impacted by events in Israel and the Palestinian Territories. A single democratic state could resolve outstanding domestic political issues for both countries; for Jordan, it may even become a destination for emigration by some Palestinian-Jordanians. However, Egypt and Jordan might also lose the stability of their respective security relationships with Israel. Depending on the political landscape of a single democratic state, it could also empower elements hostile to Egypt and Jordan, such as Islamist parties or Palestinian nationalist factions seeking to unite with the Palestinian majority in Jordan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance by Arab World</td>
<td>The Gulf Arab states might risk losing vital security and intelligence ties with Israel against Iran, as well as being forced to discard the Arab Peace Initiative. However, a single democratic state outcome would resolve outstanding domestic political issues for many Arab governments. With Palestinians enjoying equal rights with Israelis, it would be less feasible for opponents of these governments to exploit the Palestine question in order to undermine them.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>U.S. Acceptance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Because of the close nature of U.S.-Israel relationship, it is unlikely that a U.S. administration would force Israel to adopt this approach, even if it is being actively pushed by international institutions or other governments. Therefore, American support for a single democratic state is contingent on Israeli consent to such a plan. Notably, however, among the U.S. public, a single democratic state could be accepted in line with the American tradition of support for movements like the civil rights campaign and anti-apartheid efforts against South Africa. However, it is unclear what would be required in order for this to translate into a shift in government policy (and what support it would get from U.S. Jewry).</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acceptance by Russia and China</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russia and China benefit from commercial and security ties with Israel that may be lost depending on the viability of the new democratic state. However, political relations between Israel and these countries are not strong, and they may ultimately be indifferent to Israeli-raised concerns like the state’s Jewish character. In some cases, the creation of a single democratic state may even ease thorny, intertwined relations between Russia, China, Israel, and Arab and Muslim governments.</td>
</tr>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acceptance by the EU and International Organizations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The EU and international institutions support the two-state outcome. However, if a single state outcome were accepted by a large segment of the Israeli and Palestinian populations, or if Israel were to undertake steps that definitively close the door on a two-state formula, these entities may come around to support a single democratic state as the next best formula in order to ensure maximal access to political and civil rights.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct Costs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The government of the single democratic state will need to invest significant resources in bridging the vast standard of living and income gap between Israelis and Palestinians, in expanding social services to cover all people living under the new government, as well as in improving infrastructure between the former State of Israel and Palestinian Territories. A great commitment of resources would also be required to unite national security institutions including the military and law enforcement.</td>
</tr>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Indirect Costs</th>
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<tr>
<td>Israel may suffer brain drain as younger and educated Jewish Israelis may leave if Israel no longer is characterized as a Jewish state, or as Israel becomes undesirable as businesses leave, and for reputational reasons.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Timeframe to Implementation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years of institutional reform would be required to expand institutions, create new ones, bridge the standard of living gap, and dismantle entities like the PA and armed non-state actors. These processes could be delayed depending on the degree of cooperation of all relevant parties.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 6. One Israeli Jewish-Dominated State

Since the UN partition plan, the two-state concept has been for decades the sole internationally accepted formula for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Four Israeli prime ministers—Ehud Barak, Ariel Sharon, Ehud Olmert, and Benjamin Netanyahu—have formally accepted the principle of two states for two peoples while in office, although Netanyahu has since backtracked.164 Despite the long history and large acceptance of the partition formula, some Israeli and pre-state Zionist Jews have sought to maintain a single state across all of the former British Mandate of Palestine (since 2005, some of these proposals have left out the Gaza Strip). Arguably, the plan released by the Trump administration in January 2020 can lead to such an outcome also.

6.1 Evolution of the One Jewish State Idea

In the 1930s, Zeev Jabotinsky, the founder of the Revisionist Zionist school of thought, established the New Zionist Organization (NZO) as an alternative to the mainstream Zionist leadership. The NZO’s stated purpose was the “establishment of a state with a Jewish majority on both sides of the Jordan river,” suggesting Jewish sovereignty in what is now Israel and the Palestinian Territories, along with the area of the modern day Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on the basis that this encompassed the Jewish people’s true territorial patrimony.165 However, political realities stemming from the First Arab-Israeli War and the 1967 Six-Day War meant that the objective of “both banks of the Jordan” never fully entered the Israeli political mainstream, and by the 1970s, even Herut (the ideological heir to Jabotinsky’s Revisionist organizations and the precursor to the modern Likud party) had abandoned this more ambitious goal in favor of retaining the West Bank and Gaza, along with the Golan Heights, all captured in 1967.166

Jabotinsky initially envisioned full equality for all Palestinian residents of his intended Greater Israel, which would encompass present-day Jordan in addition to what is now Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza, writing that “equal rights for all Arab citizens will not only be guaranteed, they will also be fulfilled.”167 As late as 1968, Herut advocated for citizenship for the “Arab residents of Eretz Yisrael.”168 Jabotinsky and his contemporaries squared their revanchist territorial agenda with an expansive program of equal rights by betting on “a large-scale immigration of Jews maintained for a period sufficient to build up a Jewish country,”169 which would ensure a Jewish state’s ethno-national character and its democracy.

More recently, it has become evident that no such massive influx of Jewish immigration will be forthcoming170 to cement an absolute Jewish majority across the territory of former Mandate Palestine (even accounting for the Soviet Jewish exodus of the late 1980s and 1990s). Today, calls for a single Jewish state entail a formalization of the status quo, in which Israel occupies the West

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Bank. This would be achieved through the annexation of territory already under Israel’s *de facto* control. Accordingly, more recent proposals have focused on schemes that would not necessarily confer citizenship on Palestinians living beyond the 1949 armistice lines. A common theme in these later plans is Palestinian autonomy, but not citizenship, within a Greater Israel. As prime minister, Menachem Begin conceived of an autonomy plan for West Bank and Gazan Palestinians as a permanent solution rather than an interim step toward full separation from Israel and the establishment of an independent state. Begin’s plan was a counter-proposal to Egyptian President Anwar Sadat’s call for self-determination for West Bank and Gazan Palestinians, including through statehood. Begin conceived of a council to be elected by Palestinian residents of the occupied territories to administer local affairs in the area while stopping short of either offering Israeli citizenship or an independent state (modifications could possibly be made to this system through a nebulous “review” process, which was not greatly detailed). On the other hand, autonomy would extricate Israel from some aspects of day-to-day Palestinian life. In 1979-80, the Begin government, Egypt, and the United States mediated these proposals through a series of autonomy talks, the results of which were incorporated into the Camp David Accords.171

In some ways, the Oslo peace process of the 1990s resembled the autonomy talks of the previous decade. Neither gave explicit mention to Palestinian statehood, and both envisaged a non-sovereign Palestinian entity in the occupied territories.172 A critical difference between the two, however, was that in the Oslo process, Israel negotiated with the PLO, whereas the autonomy talks lacked any Palestinian participants. During the 2000 Camp David talks, Prime Minister Ehud Barak developed an offer that included Palestinian statehood. While the PLO ultimately rejected Barak’s proposal, this marked the first time the two-state solution entered the Israeli political mainstream. The Trump Administration’s plan Peace to Prosperity speaks about two states but in practice revived the idea of a limited Palestinian autonomy within Israeli control, as discussed in Chapter 8.

### 6.2 Present-Day One Jewish State Models

In the twenty years since that juncture, supporters of a Jewish one-state outcome generally subscribe to one or more of the following narratives. First, that perpetual Israeli control over all of former Mandate Palestine provides Israel the strategic depth necessary to protect against hostile states and terrorist groups. Next, because the PLO has rejected Israeli offers for an independent state, waiting for a suitable Palestinian partner for peace is a hopeless exercise.Lastly, there is the view that the West Bank—Judea and Samaria—represents the “biblical heartland” of Israel, and that a partition cannot deliver true historical justice to the Jewish people.

The security argument gained broader traction after the failure of the peace process at Camp David in 2000, the sustained terrorist violence of the Second Intifada, and the increase in rocket fire from Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and other extremist groups in the Gaza Strip following Israel’s 2005 disengagement from the coastal enclave. As Jerusalem Post columnist and 2019 New Right Knesset candidate Caroline Glick argues, “The idea that, in the midst of an all-out Palestinian terror campaign that targeted Israeli civilians, the Palestinian leadership would be interested in setting violence aside and embracing Israel as its partner in peace is patently absurd.”173

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172 Ibid.
This argument is complemented by the “no partner” narrative and the current political division of the Palestinian leadership, between Fatah-rulled areas of the West Bank and Hamas-controlled Gaza. A 2014 op-ed in the New York Times by Israel’s then-Economy Minister and as of early 2020 Defense Minister Naftali Bennett, who has championed the nationalist “biblical heartland” narrative (once noting that “one cannot occupy his own home”),\textsuperscript{174} brings together the security and no partner arguments with the longstanding formulation of Palestinian autonomy as a substitute for statehood. Today, Bennett is far from alone in pushing for a combination of autonomy and annexation. In recent years, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has also embraced the terminology of “autonomy plus,” “autonomy plus plus,” and “state minus” to describe his ideal outcome to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.\textsuperscript{175}

Bennett’s proposal, which he refers to as the “Stability Plan,” cites the conflicts that followed Israeli withdrawals from Palestinian cities under Oslo, the Gaza disengagement, as well as the IDF’s pullout from southern Lebanon in 2000 as a security rationale for one state. Instead of independence, West Bank Palestinians will receive autonomy and economic relief. Bennett’s proposal, like Begin’s, lays out a framework for local Palestinian government without promising citizenship or a role for Palestinians under Israeli sovereignty.\textsuperscript{176} Arguably, despite using two-state terminology, the Trump plan actually alludes to a Palestinian autonomy within greater Israel.


\textsuperscript{175} Ben Sales, “Benjamin Netanyahu’s views on a Palestinian state, explained,” JTA, March 18, 2019.

\textsuperscript{176} Naftali Bennett, “For Israel, Two State is No Solution,” November 5, 2014.
6.3 Key Characteristics of One Jewish State

The autonomy concept mirrors the already extant PA, which exercises a degree of self-governance in Areas A and B of the West Bank. Proponents of one-state schemes with Palestinian autonomy have varying answers for the PA’s future. Bennett acknowledges that the PA is the current administrator in Areas A and B, but writes that “if it collapses, that should not concern us [Israel].” Other key characteristics are as follows.

Governance of the West Bank

Blue and White Member of Knesset Yoaz Hendel advocates annexing 30% of the West Bank, including settlement blocs near the Green Line, as well as the Jordan Valley, leaving the 40% of the West Bank already under PA rule as an “expanded autonomy,” and defining the remaining 30% of the area as disputed. Hendel is indifferent to the labels associated with his proposal, writing that “the future [Palestinian] entity” in the West Bank “may define itself by any name it chooses.” Elyakim Haetzni, a former member of Knesset for the now-defunct far-right settler party Tehiya and a founder of the Kiryat Arba settlement, along with two relatives, have developed a one-state program based on autonomous “regional municipal administrations” in Areas A and B (as exists with the PA today), but the proposal is predicated on the dissolution of the PA first.

Other proponents of autonomy-based one-state outcomes take a tougher line when it comes to the PA’s role. Likud MK Yoav Kisch, for instance, recommends dismantling the PA and the Israeli military administration in the West Bank, with 47% of the West Bank annexed to Israel and 38% administered by a new autonomous non-state Palestinian entity. Full West Bank annexation, supported by figures like Transportation Minister Bezalel Smotrich (as of early 2020), politician Moshe Feiglin, and right-wing columnist Caroline Glick would also necessitate the dissolution of the PA as these proposals extend direct Israeli administration across the annexed territory. Table 6.1 explains the degree to which pro-annexation officials and pundits referenced in this chapter seek to extend Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank, although, as discussed later in this chapter, formal annexation of only part of the West Bank could amount to a de facto one-state outcome. Partial or full implementation of the Trump administration plan would consist of partial or full annexation, as explained in Chapter 8.

Table 6.1: Annexation Proposals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Annexation Proposal</th>
<th>Type (Full/Partial Annexation)</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bezalel Smotrich’s “Decisive Plan”</td>
<td>Full annexation</td>
<td>Includes population transfer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

178 Ibid., 34.
179 Ibid., 35.
180 Ibid., 20.
181 Ibid., 31.
182 Ibid., 30.
## Citizenship, Residency, and Rights for Palestinians

It bears mentioning here again the demographic statistics that were introduced in Chapter 3 about the status quo. Some 13 million people currently live between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, with near parity between the Jewish and Palestinian populations. All Palestinians are subject in varying degrees to Israeli rule and control.\(^{183}\) Given the demography, non-citizen autonomy is key to maintaining an artificial Jewish majority, thus satisfying proponents of one Jewish state's nationalist criteria. Furthermore, individuals who advocate a single Jewish state outcome may question the official Palestinian census statistics, suggesting they are inflated. Naftali Bennett has cited the previously mentioned studies by Yoram Ettinger, who claims Gaza’s population is exaggerated by 400,000 and the West Bank’s by a full one million people.\(^ {184}\) The claim of inaccurate or exaggerated statistics has also been advanced by Caroline Glick, who suggests that citizenship can be applied to West Bank Palestinians without risk to Israel’s Jewish character both because there are fewer Palestinians than is widely believed and because many will reject the offer.\(^ {185}\) However, Glick also sets out “reasonable limits” that may bar access to citizenship for some Palestinians, including “past or current incitement” against Israel. It is unclear what precisely this entails or how strictly it would be enforced,\(^ {186}\) although in her book, *The Israeli Solution* (2014), Glick predicted that West Bank annexation would reduce Israel’s Jewish majority from 75% to 66%, with “unforeseeable consequences on Israeli politics.”\(^ {187}\)

The Haetzni one-state program features a citizenship component that mirrors Glick’s. As with Glick’s “Israeli Solution,” the Haetzni plan promises residency for Palestinians in annexed territory (in this case, the entire West Bank) with the possibility to apply for citizenship—“a status similar to the Arabs of East Jerusalem.”\(^ {188}\) However, this hardly portends a significant growth in the Palestinian share of...

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1.\(^ {183}\) At 70, Israel’s population is 8.842 million, 43% of world Jewry,” *Times of Israel*, April 16, 2018.
2.\(^ {184}\) Elhanan Miller, “Right-wing annexation drive fueled by false demographics, experts say,” *Times of Israel*, January 5, 2015./
4.\(^ {186}\) Glick, 2014.
5.\(^ {187}\) Ibid., 238.
Israel's citizenry. While the number of East Jerusalem citizenship applications is rising, it still rests at just about 1,000 annually (out of over 350,000 Palestinian East Jerusalemites), with 54% of applications approved in the last five years.\(^{189}\) Haetzni’s idea, like Glick’s, also call for eligibility restrictions. Under the Haetzni plan, residency will be denied to any “terrorist elements” or member of the PLO.\(^{190}\) This echoes Glick’s stipulation that “past or current incitement” against Israel would be a disqualifier for citizenship.\(^{191}\)

Other proposals contain even more limited paths to citizenship for Palestinians living in annexed territory. Instead, these proposals prioritize incentivizing Palestinian emigration from the West Bank. Israeli Transportation Minister and Tkuma party leader Bezalel Smotrich incorporates this into his proposal for annexation of the entire West Bank territory,\(^{192}\) as does former member of Knesset and Zehut party leader Moshe Feiglin. According to Feiglin, countries like Germany and Canada are feasible destinations for Palestinians based on viable job opportunities, while Brazil and other South American states would welcome Palestinians because of their existing Arab and Palestinian communities.\(^{193}\) Those Palestinians who opt not to emigrate or who do not accept residency in an expanded Israel under the restrictive terms may face harsh treatment. Bezalel Smotrich frames Palestinian terrorism as the only other possible alternative to emigration and limited residency or citizenship rights, and “terrorists will be dealt with by the security forces with a strong hand.”\(^{194}\) Similarly, Feiglin promises that “anyone that fights Israel or incites to terrorism will be eliminated or deported.”\(^{195}\) While there is no question that Israel can and should combat terrorism, what constitutes terrorism and incitement under Smotrich and Feiglin’s plans is somewhat nebulous, given that many Palestinians may find neither emigration nor limited residency rights to be satisfactory.

### The Future of Gaza

In managing the demographic balance between Jews and Palestinians, proponents of a Jewish one-state outcome provide varying answers for the status of the Gaza Strip. Caroline Glick excludes Gaza from her one-state proposal, arguing that leaving out Gaza undermines the demographic case for an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank.\(^{196}\) Additionally, she claims that Israel’s 2005 disengagement and removal of ground forces and civilian settlers from Gaza, as well as the territory’s governance by Hamas, a terrorist organization, absolves Israel of responsibility for the coastal Strip.\(^{197}\) Instead, Glick essentially forecasts a continuation of the status quo. “Gaza,” Glick writes, “is a foreign entity governed by a terrorist organization that routinely engages in acts of war against Israel.” Accordingly, Israel is justified in continuing its blockade of the Strip.\(^{198}\)

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\(^{190}\) Levian, 2019.

\(^{191}\) Glick, 2014.

\(^{192}\) Levian, 2019.

\(^{193}\) Ibid., 17.


\(^{195}\) Levian, 2019.

\(^{196}\) Glick, 2014.

\(^{197}\) Ibid., 134.

\(^{198}\) Ibid., 135.
Likewise, Gaza is excluded from Naftali Bennett’s Stability Plan.\textsuperscript{199} Smotrich’s plan makes only passing mention of Gaza, implicitly suggesting that his aim is to annex the West Bank, but not the Strip.\textsuperscript{200}

### 6.4 Advantages and Disadvantages

Each of the Jewish one state proposals share an interest in preserving a Jewish majority in Israel, not unlike the traditional two-state model. However, Jewish one-state formulas have taken greater liberties in determining what constitutes a majority. Earlier iterations of this line of thought appear to suggest a true majority, with Ze’ev Jabotinsky’s vision of massive Jewish immigration to balance the existing Palestinian Arab population. Later iterations of a single Jewish state are less far-reaching than Jabotinsky’s initial territorial objective of “both sides of the Jordan,” while dialing back earlier commitments to citizenship for Palestinians in place of varying degrees of autonomy.

In addition, formulas for an Israeli Jewish-dominated one-state outcome have one common advantage: they would be politically easy to achieve in the near-term. While West Bank annexation would have serious legal, political, economic, and security consequences for Israelis and Palestinians in the long run, treating large swaths of the West Bank as part of Israel is in many ways a formalization of a longstanding status quo.

However, such a scenario also presents significant disadvantages. A one-state outcome will send a definitive message to Palestinians—already deeply skeptical of a two-state solution—that their national aspirations will not be realized through a political process. In this context, the already unpopular PA, whose raison d’être is midwifing an independent Palestinian state, is not liable to last very long. The PA is non-democratic and derives some of its legitimacy (to the extent that the Palestinian public continues to tolerate the PA) from the promise that it will eventually deliver independence from Israeli occupation. If Israel demonstrates explicitly that no independence will be forthcoming, Palestinians may see no reason to continue to accept the PA. While Israeli officials have undertaken steps toward “creeping annexation” and signaled revanchist designs on West Bank territory, their refusal to absorb the area wholesale (until this point) continues to give the PA and the Palestinian public a degree of plausible deniability. Annexation and a Jewish-dominated one-state outcome would undermine this already tenuous and informal understanding.

If the PA folds, Israel will be left with the clean-up. If the PA’s collapse is precipitated by annexation or some other Israeli initiative, then Israel cannot expect outside support as it seeks to deal with the ramifications of a post-PA West Bank. Israel may then have to disarm and pacify the erstwhile PA Security Forces. Even if this does not occur, Israeli security experts expect that security coordination with the PA will end,\textsuperscript{201} and Israel will be forced to resume direct administration of the occupied territories, as was the case between 1967 and 1993, necessitating a significant investment in social services and infrastructure.\textsuperscript{202} Key security relationships with Gulf Arab states and Israel’s treaties with Egypt and Jordan, already subject to significant, negative public pressure, will also be jeopardized.

Feiglin are explicit in their intentions to deny Palestinians rights after annexation, even promoting ethnic cleansing of the annexed territory. More “mainstream” proponents of annexation and a single-state outcome, such as Naftali Bennett, advocate a vague notion of autonomy for Palestinians while still declining to confer citizenship on the millions who will find themselves under de facto Israeli sovereignty. While proponents of autonomy and partial annexation may claim theirs is a democratic proposal, they are relying on a fiction that Palestinians in this outcome would not be subordinate to Israeli authority, much in the same way that apartheid South Africa promoted the existence of nominally independent black “homelands” (Bantustans) in an attempt to deflect criticism.

Such a situation will harm Israel’s foreign relations. The EU, Israel’s largest trade partner, may take punitive measures. Israeli security experts project that if sanctions were of a similar scale to those imposed on Russia after the annexation of Crimea, such measures would inflict a 2.4% decrease in Israel’s GDP (about $8.2 billion USD). Non-western authoritarian powers like Russia and China, while less invested in the outcome of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, may nevertheless find it difficult to navigate ties with Arab and Muslim states and Israel after a single-state outcome. Even if penalties from other states are not forthcoming or are more limited, the mere negative perception of apartheid and perpetual conflict in Israel may deter tourists and investors.

Israel’s critical security relationship with the United States will also suffer. While the Trump administration, which has ideologically aligned itself with expansionist elements in the Israeli government, is unlikely to oppose an Israeli Jewish dominated one-state outcome—the administration even drafted a plan that could very possibly lead to such an outcome—a future White House may challenge a non-democratic Israel. Even if the United States tries to preserve its ties to Israel based on strategic interests, Israel will become hostage to partisan battles in Congress, with the relationship becoming more akin to U.S. support for Saudi Arabia and less like Washington’s generally non-controversial alliances with liberal democracies in Europe. If Israel adopts this course of action, it will also affect U.S. Jewry support for the Jewish albeit non-democratic state.

In the near-term, it may be relatively easy for Israel to institute the policies, such as legislated annexation, that would produce a Jewish-led single-state outcome, given the ascent of the Israeli right and the backing of the Trump administration. However, what is easy is not necessarily effective or right, and the disadvantages associated with this formula renders it costly and unsustainable in the long run. The key advantages and disadvantages of the one Jewish state approach are summarized below.

**Advantages**

- Politically viable among the Israeli government with modest support among public;
- Maintain Israel as a Jewish state at least formally;
- Initially may only require a formalization of the status quo to achieve;
- Will likely receive the blessing of the current American administration.

**Shortcomings**

- Compromises Israel’s credibility as a liberal democracy by permanently rendering Palestinians stateless non-citizens;

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203 N.a., Ramifications of West Bank Annexation: Security and Beyond (Tel Aviv: Commanders for Israel’s Security), 35.
- Jewish identity will be kept only formally if the state has a large majority or even equally large non-Jewish population;
- Denies Palestinians the right to self-determination;
- Undermines Israel’s security relationships with the Palestinians, Jordan, Egypt, and back-channel ties with other Arab states;
- Increases hostility between the Jewish and Palestinian populations and likely leads to severe deterioration of the security situation;
- Violence would downgrade Israel’s credit risk, reduce investment, and hurt tourism;
- Could require a costly re-imposition of direct Israeli rule over Palestinian cities;
- Will damage Israel’s relations with the EU, international organizations, and major non-Western powers, and subject Israel to fiercer BDS pressures;
- Could create a rift with U.S. Jewry over breaking away from liberal democratic values;
- The international community will likely stop funding the PA if it is gone, or offering assistance to the Palestinians, which would burden the Israeli economy with the exuberant costs of providing services to millions of Palestinians.

6.5 Assessment of One Jewish State

The one Jewish state idea does not fare well against our criteria. On most accounts, as shown in Table 6.1, it receives either an orange or red rating, with the only factors playing in its favor being the current Israeli government’s position and the backing this position receives from the Trump administration. A different U.S. administration is likely to resume traditional bipartisan policy toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and work to help the sides achieve a two-state solution. A less hawkish Israeli government would be unlikely to push for annexation of a majority of West Bank territory, which could lead to a one non-democratic state outcome. The risk is that if the current Israeli government, with U.S. backing, annexes and claims sovereignty to the West Bank or parts of it, this process would be irreversible.

Table 6.1. Applying Analytical Framework to Evaluate One Jewish State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>One Jewish State</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>Jewish Israelis retain primacy in government institutions, state symbols, and official character, but de facto or de jure annexation of territories containing large non-Jewish Palestinian populations compromise Israel’s Jewish majority population in practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>Lack of rights for Palestinians in annexed territories formally renders Israel a non-democratic, apartheid-style regime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian self-determination</td>
<td>A Jewish-dominated one state outcome will require annexation of all or part of the territory Palestinians expect would be part of a separate, independent Palestine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>The one Jewish state model would begin with annexation of West Bank territory. In the immediate aftermath, annexation may provide the illusion of calm on the security front, as the near-term political impact of annexation will merely be a formalization of a longstanding status quo. However, annexation will undoubtedly damage or completely abrogate arrangements with the Palestinian security forces, as well as partnerships with Arab states like Egypt and Jordan, all of which may be unwilling to countenance official Israeli annexation of the West Bank. This will have far-reaching consequences for Israeli security in the West Bank, as Israel will no longer be able to depend on PA cooperation for counterterrorism operations. PA security services, whose primary motivation for working with Israel had heretofore been</td>
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</table>
the promise of statehood, may transfer arms and personnel to hostile non-state actors, as occurred during the Second Intifada. In this environment, Israel will have to return to direct administration of major Palestinian cities currently governed by the PA, placing large numbers of Israeli soldiers and Palestinian civilians in closer proximity than at any time since the Second Intifada. Israel will also have to determine how it regulates movement between the annexed territory and Israel within the Green Line; a laxer regime may provide easy access for terrorists to Israeli settlements and population centers while more onerous controls will increase tensions already exacerbated by annexation and amplify the appeal of extremist groups among Palestinians.

### Ease of Implementation

Given the primacy of the right-wing in Israeli politics, it would be relatively easy for an Israeli government to pass annexation legislation. However, implementation could encounter obstacles as a one-state scenario plays out. If the PA is replaced by another autonomous regime, as some supporters of a Jewish one-state outcome suggest, Israel will need to organize this system. If Israel cannot identify sufficient Palestinian support for such an arrangement, as current polling indicates is likely, Israel will be forced to compensate for services currently supplied by the PA, including education, social security, and law enforcement.

### Israeli Public Support

Most Israelis support separation from the Palestinians, but many would accept annexation as a second choice, especially as farmed as "extension of sovereignty." However, annexation of West Bank territory, which would lead to one state in practice, is not necessarily viewed by the Israeli public as directly connected to a one-state outcome, which is unpopular. Accordingly, Israelis may support steps that would lead toward a single Jewish-dominated state without explicitly desiring this outcome.

### Israeli Government Support

The current Israeli government contains many vocal supporters of West Bank annexation and even figures who explicitly back a single state outcome. While Israel faces political deadlock over the future of Prime Minister Netanyahu, the right-wing, which tends to support annexation, is numerically superior to the pro-separation, pro-two-state center-left. Despite this, even the most right-wing Israeli governments have deferred to less public "creeping annexation" measures, which extend Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank in practice but are less expansive than formal annexation, allowing Israel to deflect some degree of international pressure.

### Palestinian Public Support

Polling indicates that the Palestinian public rejects a single Jewish state outcome.

### PA Support

The PA supports a two-state solution and rejects a Jewish-dominated non-democratic regime.

### Hamas Support

The Hamas government in Gaza, which does not formally recognize Israel even within the Green Line, will not accept an expansion of Israeli sovereignty into new territories.

### Acceptance by Jordan and Egypt

Jordan and Egypt remain firmly committed to the two-state framework, owing to external commitments (such as the Arab League's Arab Peace Initiative), as well as domestic pressures. Both the Egyptian and Jordanian publics are highly sympathetic to the Palestinian national cause, and Jordan is home to a vocal anti-normalization movement. Should Israel formalize a one-state outcome, it will be more difficult for Cairo and Amman to claim they are still pursuing Palestinians' best interests by supporting two states. While it is impossible to determine whether Egypt and Jordan would abrogate their peace treaties with Israel (and that might not happen), it is very likely that they would vocally oppose annexation and push contacts with Israel, already less-public facing, further underground. Trade and business relations could be damaged, as well as travel.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Acceptance by Arab World</strong></th>
<th>Israel lacks formal relations with the other Arab states, but has undertaken de facto cooperation with these governments on security and intelligence issues, particularly to deter Iran and its proxies. These states reap significant benefits from their relationship with Israel without having to bear the domestic political costs of normalization. Annexation would remove any potential incentive for normalization, as the Arab states will only pursue this route under a two-state framework. Meanwhile, leaders in the Gulf Arab states may encounter domestic pressure to sever any kind of relationship with Israel.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>U.S. Acceptance</strong></td>
<td>While previous American presidents have opposed annexation of the West Bank and a one-state outcome in favor of a territorial compromise, the incumbent Trump administration has taken steps to encourage revanchist elements of the Israeli right. Even before releasing its Peace to Prosperity plan, these elements included reversing the longstanding State Department position that West Bank settlements contravene international law, recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel outside a negotiated political process, and recognizing Israeli sovereignty in the Golan Heights. The administration plan de facto calls for establishment of a Palestinian autonomy encircled by Israeli territory. Refusal by the Palestinians to accept this offer would pave the way for full Israeli annexation of the West Bank, and to a one-state outcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acceptance by Russia and China</strong></td>
<td>Russia and China will continue to vote against Israel at the United Nations, while maintaining a relationship in practice. However, ties with Israel will become more difficult to navigate as pressures may emerge from Arab or Muslim states to censure or even sanction Israel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Acceptance by the EU and International Organizations</strong></td>
<td>The EU will oppose annexation verbally. Because the EU operates based on consensus, the severity of punitive measures taken against Israel may be lower as more pro-Israel leaning governments in Central and Eastern Europe may eschew tangible punishments. The UN will also condemn annexation and a single-state outcome. Palestine, which is a non-member observer state, may essentially function as a government-in-exile represented at the UN. The International Criminal Court, which recently launched a probe into Israeli conduct in the West Bank prompted partly by rising political support for annexation, may intensify its current efforts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Direct Costs</strong></td>
<td>Israel will likely have to assume responsibility for services previously provided by the PA in areas that are de facto or de jure annexed. If the PA’s security forces break off their relationship with the Israeli military and security services, Israel will also take on additional costs associated with directly administering large parts of the Palestinian population and with disarming and containing the erstwhile PA security forces. Other increased security costs may come with the construction of new border infrastructure around annexed areas (if only Area C is formally absorbed) and Palestinian population centers. Tourism to Israel, particularly from Europe, will suffer, both as a result of penalties enforced by other countries and the potential perception of Israel as being inhospitable, conflict-ridden, and/or non-democratic. International high-tech companies may leave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indirect Costs</strong></td>
<td>Israel may lose out on business and trade opportunities with the Arab world, as well as with other countries. Depending on the severity of punitive measures undertaken by the international community, Israelis may face difficulty in traveling and doing business abroad. Cultural arrangements and academic exchanges could also be discarded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Timeframe to Implementation</strong></td>
<td>In its initial stages, the imposition of an Israeli-Jewish dominated one-state outcome will largely mean a formalization of the status quo. Many right-wing Israeli politicians support such a formula for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, even among those who do not explicitly back a one-state outcome. West Bank annexation is popular. The primary obstacles to implementation are fear of international backlash, as well as Israel’s present political paralysis, which relates to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s legal fate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 7. A Jordanian Option

A Jordanian option to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is in some ways the most controversial. Jordan has time and again said that it would not join more closely with the Palestinians unless a two-state solution is concluded first. In recent years, however, Amman has been concerned that despite its rejections, policies by the current Israeli government with support from the United States represent an effort to revive the “Jordan is Palestine” idea. While we do not want to legitimize far-fetched ideas, or thinking that favors the destabilization of an important partner of Israel and a critical, peaceful actor in the Middle East, we believe that Jordan’s fears are not baseless and therefore include this model in the analysis.

7.1 Evolution of the Jordanian Option Idea

In the course of the First Arab-Israeli War (1948-49), Jordan occupied the territory on the est bank of the Jordan River, land which had been allotted for a Palestinian Arab state under the 1947 UN partition plan. Jordan subsequently annexed the West Bank, a move that received limited international support (with only the United Kingdom, Iraq, and Pakistan conferring recognition over Jordan’s sovereignty in the territory).

After Israel seized the West Bank from Jordan in the 1967 Six-Day War, Amman retained its claims on the territory until 1988, when it renounced its stake in favor of the PLO. Thus, peace proposals initially revolved around the West Bank’s relationship with the Hashemite Kingdom, rather than with the Palestinians. A well-known example of such a Jordanian option is the Allon Plan, so-named because Israeli cabinet minister Yigal Allon drafted it in 1967-68.

At first, Allon favored treating the West Bank as a Palestinian issue rather than a Jordanian one. Immediately after the June 1967 Six-Day War, Allon supported creating an independent Palestinian state in parts of the West Bank, arguing that the Hashemite Kingdom was fragile and could be taken over by hostile parties including Palestinian or Syrian figures, who “will have a defense agreement with the Soviet Union and China.” In July 1967, Allon conceived of a rough map, with Jerusalem united under Israeli control, annexation of the Jordan River Valley, and Palestinian statehood in two disconnected enclaves in the northern and southern West Bank, with a small land corridor in the northern enclave connecting the area to the Jordan River. However, Palestinian statehood proved unpopular in the Israeli cabinet, with Prime Minister Levi Eshkol favoring autonomy, a position Allon gradually adopted by the end of 1967.

The Israeli cabinet’s orientation moved toward a Jordanian option in early 1968. Jordan had maintained clandestine ties with Israel prior to the Six-Day War, and Foreign Minister Abba Eban planned to present a Jordanian option to King Hussein during a meeting scheduled for late spring 1968. The Allon Plan, as it is now understood, became the Israeli government’s official position during this period. Rather than change the geography of his program to reflect the switch to a Jordanian option, Yigal Allon simply adapted his map of proposed Palestinian state to be the extent

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204 "Jordanian annexation of the West Bank (1950),” Economic Cooperation Foundation, n.d.
206 Ibid., 274.
of territory returned to Jordan under the Allon plan. However, when Abba Eban, Yigal Allon, and Chaim Herzog ultimately met with King Hussein in September 1968, the Jordanians did not accept the Allon Plan. While Hussein recognized that any agreement with Israel would not mean an exact return to the pre-June 1967 lines, he viewed the Allon Plan as incompatible with Jordanian security, as "a [land] corridor could be cut off at any moment, and Jordan would not be able to defend it."

However, the Jordanian option persisted. Twenty years after the Six-Day War, Shimon Peres, then foreign minister in a Likud-Labor/Alignment unity government, met with King Hussein in London. The two drafted a document, which recommended convening an international Jordan-Israel peace conference under the auspices of the UN and the United States, in pursuit of an agreement based on UN Security Council Resolutions 242 (calling for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from territories occupied in 1967) and 338 (calling for a cease-fire in the Yom Kippur War and implementation of 242). At the time, negotiating with Jordan was still viewed as preferable to direct engagement with the Palestinians, represented by the PLO. According to one Israeli official involved in the negotiation of the London Agreement, Peres’ logic for engaging Jordan rather than direct negotiations with the Palestinians was based on familiarity: "We know the Jordanian army, we know we can rely on it, why would we want a Palestinian army here?"

The 1987 London Agreement marked a turning point in the history of the Jordanian option, albeit a negative one. Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir had given the meeting between Peres and the Hashemite monarch his blessing, but he rejected the arrangement the two had drafted. Because of Shamir’s refusal and Peres’ inability to deliver an agreement, as well as the outbreak of the First Intifada in the occupied territories later in 1987, Jordan ultimately opted to disengage politically from the West Bank.

**Amman Shifts Course and Backs Palestinian State**

Until the 1988 disengagement, Jordan retained claims to the West Bank as well as parliamentary representation for Palestinian residents of the Israeli-controlled area, who continued to hold Jordanian citizenship. West Bank Palestinians lost their Jordanian nationality and symbolic representation in Amman when the Hashemite Kingdom "severed administrative and legal ties" with the occupied territory, a move ostensibly undertaken out of respect for Palestinian national aspirations and the ambitions of the PLO. The disengagement brought Jordan in line with longstanding Arab League policy, including decisions of the 1974 Rabat Summit (recognizing the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people) and the 1982 Fez Summit (calling for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip).

Despite the shift, limited overt support from former Jordanian government officials and public intellectuals, most notably, ex-Prime Minister Abdelsalaam al Majali, for some kind of linkage

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207 Ibid., 282.
208 Ibid., 285.
211 Discussion with a former Israeli official, by phone, December 30, 2019.
214 “King Hussein Announces Jordan’s Disengagement From the West Bank,” Economic Cooperation Foundation, n.d.
between the Palestinians and the Hashemite Kingdom remains to this day. Al Majali visited Israel in 2007 to broach the idea of a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation. Under his proposal, the king of Jordan would serve as president of the confederation, with a supranational regime representing both Jordanians and Palestinians, and confederation-level security forces. However, the proposal requires the establishment of a Palestinian state, which would be invited to join a confederation after independence.\textsuperscript{215} Al Majali addressed a public audience in Nablus in 2016 as a guest of PLO Executive Committee member Ghassan Shakaa, claiming support for a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation.\textsuperscript{216} On both occasions, Palestinian officials declined to categorically rule out such an eventuality,\textsuperscript{217} but in 2016 stated that that it would have to be considered after Palestinian independence. Moreover, PA officials expressed annoyance at perceived Jordanian interference in the PA’s internal affairs.\textsuperscript{218}

Since Jordan’s 1988 political disengagement from the West Bank, the Hashemite Kingdom has resisted public calls to join more closely with the Palestinians. This reality is reinforced by the decision of PLO and Jordanian leaders to conclude peace treaties with Israel in the 1990s.\textsuperscript{219} Any proposal that would see Amman annex Palestinian territory would erode Jordanian credibility among other Arab and Muslim states by deviating from the formal (if moribund) peace process, which is between Israel and the PLO, as well as from more recent Arab League understandings, such as the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, which promises normalization with Israel in exchange for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.\textsuperscript{220} Therefore, a central question when figures like al Majali claim support for a Jordan-Palestine confederation is whether they operate with the Hashemite monarchy’s support.

On this question, an Israeli official involved in past negotiations with Amman contends that figures like al Majali are merely “tolerated by the king [of Jordan].”\textsuperscript{221} However, a senior Israeli foreign policy adviser and former official who supports the Jordanian option claims such former officials from the Hashemite Kingdom do so with government approval.

7.2 Characteristics of a Jordanian Option

The characteristics of a Jordanian option are not fully fleshed out and not publicly discussed due to great sensibility vis-à-vis Amman. In general, the “Jordanian option” covers more than one option and includes (a) Jordan taking on a governance role in the West Bank; (b) Palestinians living in the West Bank under Israeli control (possibly with autonomy), gaining Jordanian citizenship and being able to vote in elections in Jordan; and (c) the Hashemite monarchy being replaced by a Palestinian-origin dominate government (based on the old Israeli “Jordan is Palestine” slogan). We describe the characteristics of the first option, about which former officials agreed to speak with us. Yet, arguably, implementation of the Trump administration’s vision could create a Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank that is linked politically to Jordan, corresponding to the second version, which we do not discuss here in detail. Internal pressures could also lead to the collapse of the Hashemite Kingdom, which could conceivably pave the way to the third option.

\textsuperscript{215} Pedatzur, 2007.
\textsuperscript{216} Avi Isaacharoff, “Ramallah fumes at Jordanian meddling in question of Abbas’s successor,” The Times of Israel, June 4, 2016.
\textsuperscript{217} Pedatzur, 2007.
\textsuperscript{218} Isaacharoff, 2016.
\textsuperscript{219} Pedatzur, 2007.
\textsuperscript{220} “Arab Peace Initiative,” S. Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace, n.d.
\textsuperscript{221} Discussion with a former Israeli official, by phone, December 30, 2019.
The senior Israeli foreign policy adviser we spoke to recommends the creation of a United Arab Kingdom (UAK) including a Jordanian and Palestinian component.\textsuperscript{222} Notably, the "United Arab Kingdom" title is borrowed from a 1972 proposal by the late King Hussein of Jordan for a federation of Jordan and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{223}

The UAK proposal espoused by a senior Israeli foreign policy adviser shares some similarities with this vision, but is also different in key areas. Both the 1972 Jordanian proposal and the plan supported by some Israelis see a state including both Jordan and the West Bank (Palestine). The Jordanian subunit would comprise the current Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, but unlike under King Hussein's program, the Israeli vision sees the Palestinian area as being noncontiguous, with borders based on the Allon Plan.\textsuperscript{224} This likely means that there would be at most a narrow land corridor connecting Jordan and Palestine within the UAK, while parts of the West Bank under UAK control might be disconnected, making way for the annexation of major settlements to Israel. This also means that the Israeli plan would see East Jerusalem remain part of the Jewish state,\textsuperscript{225} whereas the 1972 Jordanian program treated East Jerusalem as Palestine's provincial capital within the UAK.\textsuperscript{226}

Under this Israeli official's proposal, the fate of Palestinian refugees would be the business of the United Arab Kingdom, although the UAK would "need to be very careful" about the subject, and in the immediate term, refugees would remain where they currently are in order to preserve the demographic balance throughout former Mandate Palestine (presumably the return of refugees to the UAK would be an internal issue for the kingdom, and the Israeli official's comments suggest an expectation that the UAK would subordinate its interests to Israel's concerns). The Gaza Strip would be a part of the UAK. American backing would be essential, with increased military equipment and economic assistance as incentives for Jordan to accept the proposal.\textsuperscript{227} This mirrors a recommendation from Hillel Frisch of the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, who suggests a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation with Amman receiving U.S. aid that would have otherwise been directed to the Palestinians.\textsuperscript{228} However, while some officials in Amman had speculated before its release that the Trump administration’s peace plan contained a Jordanian option,\textsuperscript{229} the White House denied this,\textsuperscript{230} and their plan does not explicitly call for a Jordanian role in the future Palestinian entity although that could be one outcome if the plan is implemented.

**The Future of the Hashemite Kingdom**

The program suggested by a senior Israeli foreign policy adviser, like al Majali’s proposal, and King Hussein’s 1972 plan, essentially preserves the Hashemite Kingdom as an independent (or leading) component of a confederation with a Palestinian entity. However, other Jordanian option proposals seek to fundamentally alter the nature of the Hashemite Kingdom or to erase it altogether (as mentioned above).

\textsuperscript{222} Discussion with a former official and senior Israeli foreign policy adviser, in person, Jerusalem, November 20, 2019.
\textsuperscript{223} “Jordanian King Hussein's Federation Plan (1972),” Economic Cooperation Foundation, n.d.
\textsuperscript{224} Discussion with a former official and senior Israeli foreign policy adviser, in person, Jerusalem, November 20, 2019.
\textsuperscript{226} “Jordanian King Hussein’s Federation Plan (1972).”
\textsuperscript{227} Discussion with a former official and senior Israeli foreign policy adviser, in person, Jerusalem, November 20, 2019.
\textsuperscript{229} Curtis Ryan, “Jordanians worry that the ‘deal of the century’ will come at their expense,” The Washington Post, June 1, 2019.
One such project is backed by a former leader of the Israeli settlement movement. This settler leader notes that the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan “only exists because of the bayonet […] Israel should fold the bayonet and let Jordan become a constitutional kingdom” or a democratic state wherein it is likely that “the Palestinians will take over right away.”

The indifference (or outright hostility) toward the Hashemite Kingdom and its fate, characteristic of the Israeli settler leader’s plan, is endemic in some quarters of the Israeli right. In December 2019, Aryeh Eldad, a former member of Knesset for the far-right Tkuma and Otzma Leyisrael parties, wrote in Maariv that “Jordan is Palestine’ is not just a slogan or a political plan. It is a fact.” Caroline Glick, writing for Yisrael Hayom, states that “Israel is the guarantor of Jordan’s economic survival. The government needs to recognize the power that comes with that distinction.”

A Jordanian Option to Enable Annexation

The Israeli right’s adoption of the Jordanian option marks a shift from its original left-of-center proponents in Israel’s Labor governments, who saw the Hashemite Kingdom as an outlet to extricate Israel from large parts of the occupied territories. As a former Israeli official involved in past talks in Jordan observes, “Here in Israel, today, those advocating a Jordanian option are those who oppose the two-state solution, not those who want to give up the West Bank.”

As with the proposal put forward by a senior Israeli foreign policy adviser, the former settler leader’s recommendations envision partial Israeli annexation of the West Bank. In the case of the former settlement movement leader, Areas A and B (40% of West Bank territory, home to more than 90% of the Palestinian population) would be joined to Jordan, with the possibility of an exchange of territory with Area C and land corridors with the Hashemite Kingdom to ensure greater contiguity. Gaza, under the Israeli settler leader’s plan, would remain under Hamas rule in the near term and would be expanded to include Egyptian territory in the northern Sinai Peninsula. While Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al Sisi has rejected such ideas, the former settler leader believes such a resolution would improve Cairo’s status in the Arab world. According to a former IDF official, internal economic pressures on Egypt could bring its government to accept a greater role in Gaza against its will for financial assistance. Egyptians officials have ruled such thinking.

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231 Discussion with a leader in the settlement movement, in person, Tel Aviv, November 22, 2019.
234 Alpher, 2019.
235 Discussion with a former Israeli official, by phone, December 30, 2019.
236 Discussion with a former official and senior Israeli foreign policy adviser, in person, Jerusalem, November 20, 2019.
238 Discussion with a former IDF official, by phone, November 20, 2019.
239 Discussion with Egyptian security and foreign policy officials, by phone, October and November, 2019, respectively.
7.3 Advantages and Disadvantages

The political and security ramifications of the former settler leader’s plan would be more far reaching because it envisions the dissolution of the Hashemite Kingdom. According to this plan, many aspects of the governance of the new Jordanian-Palestinian state will be an internal affair. Jordanians and Palestinians will be left to determine such critical items as the fate of the PA and even the future role of the Jordanian monarchy. As this former leader of the settler movement puts it, “once [Jordan and the Palestinians] accept it, they can work it out.”

The Jordanian option generally encompasses a set of proposals involving handing responsibility over parts of the West Bank to the Hashemite Kingdom. On the surface, this avoids some of the complications associated with both one-state annexationist formulas and the traditional two-state outcome. Major Palestinian population centers would be outside of direct Israeli control. Moreover, risks associated with state-building would be largely obviated. Indeed, as the Jordanian option’s early advocates noted, the Hashemite Kingdom is an established state, whose government is viewed by the Israelis, and the international community, as reliable. By contrast, the creation of a new Palestinian state presents several unknowns, including its viability, the strength of its institutions, and its ability to deter hostile non-state actors. A Palestinian state would be small, comprising under a fifth of former British Mandate Palestine. By contrast, Jordan has significant strategic depth, although large parts of the country are sparsely populated.

However, the very stability that Jordan currently represents could be compromised by the implementation of a Jordanian option. Jordan is already home to a majority Palestinian population; the growth of this community could inflame grievances against the Hashemite (non-Palestinian) monarchy, which would be seen as definitively denying Palestinians their right to self-determination. The introduction of nearly three million new residents to a country already strained by an influx of large numbers of Syrian and Iraqi refugees. Such problems would only be compounded if Gaza were attached to Jordan, as is the case in the UAK proposal backed by a senior Israeli foreign policy adviser. The collapse of the Jordanian state, with which Israel shares its longest and quietest land border, would be disastrous for Israeli security. It would also mean the demise of a key American ally in the Middle East.

Because of these dangers, it is no surprise that the Jordanian government has refused to publicly or privately support absorbing any part of the West Bank since the late 1980s, a turnaround that coincided with the outbreak of the First Intifada and the failure of the London Agreement. Jordanian government officials consistently describe such plans as absolute non-starters. Any move by Jordan to take on areas widely understood as the territory of a future Palestinian state would also contravene a broad international consensus, and specifically, fly in the face of Arab League proposals like the Arab Peace Initiative. There is no incentive for Jordan to invite the ire of its Arab partners over land it has renounced claims on for more than three decades.

Lastly, support for the Jordanian option is now more prevalent among right-wing Israeli leaders and analysts who are aware of these issues and simply opt to ignore them, or, more disturbingly, are apathetic toward Jordan’s future. Some may even view Jordan as an illegitimate entity, which should be reorganized as the “real” Palestinian state. This presents a sharp contrast with the

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240 Discussion with a leader in the settler movement, in person, Tel Aviv, November 22, 2019.
241 Discussion with a former official and senior Israeli foreign policy adviser, in person, Jerusalem, November 20, 2019.
242 Discussion with a former Israeli official, by phone, December 30, 2019.
243 Eldad, 2019.
original framers of the Jordanian option in the governments of Levi Eshkol and Golda Meir, as well as the drafters of the London Agreement, who simply viewed Jordan as a more trustworthy partner than the PLO or other Palestinian groups. In light of these issues, the Jordanian option today is a fantasy at best, and one that would be a willfully reckless undertaking even were it not fantastical. We summarize its key theoretical advantages and disadvantages below.

**Advantages**

- Obviates the need to establish new state institutions in Palestine;
- Does not require evacuation of settlements;
- Addresses the issue of Jerusalem;
- Jordan is a reliable Israeli partner, removing some of the uncertainty about the nature of Israel’s neighbors in a two-state outcome;
- Jordan has strategic depth that a separate Palestinian state would lack;
- Israel would not directly administer large Palestinian populations.

**Shortcomings**

- Could undermine the Hashemite Kingdom, compromising a key Israeli and American security partner;
- Additional three million (or more) Palestinians would strain Jordan, already under duress due to influx of large Syrian and Iraqi refugee populations and a swath of other economic challenges;
- Jordan is vehemently opposed to this option;
- The Jordanian option contravenes Arab League policy and international consensus;
- Denies Palestinians access to self-determination;
- Some permutations of this idea totally ignore Gaza or fantasize a greater Egyptian role over Strip, a concept problematic in itself given Cairo’s objection;
- Would face stiff resistance from the U.S. given the implications for Jordanian stability.

**7.4 Assessment of the Jordanian Option**

The models grouped under the Jordanian option category could appeal to the Israeli public as they would keep Israel Jewish and democratic, and this is a favorite approach among influential thinkers on the political right. Alas, the window for pursuing this idea closed in 1988 and despite its current revival, Amman now opposes it vigorously. If the Hashemite Kingdom collapses, as some proponents of this thinking contend, and Jordan becomes “Palestine,” it would create a variety of other severe regional security challenges. Thus, it is unacceptable not only to regional players but also to the international community, including the United States where there is still strong support for Jordan’s stability. In addition, implementation of this option is expected to be extremely complicated and costly.
Table 7.1. Applying Analytical Framework to Evaluate the Jordanian Option

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>A Jordanian Option</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>The Jordanian option extricates Israel from direct control over most of the Palestinian population in the West Bank, thus preserving Israel as a Jewish state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>The Jordanian option extricates Israel from direct control over most of the Palestinian population in the West Bank, thus preserving Israel as a democratic state.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian self-determination</td>
<td>Most iterations of the Jordanian option leave the Palestinian population under the control of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, thus denying Palestinians fulfillment of their national aspirations. While it is possible that a Jordanian-Palestinian state could be established with the future overthrow of the Hashemite monarchy, this is by no means guaranteed, and Israel, the United States, and other Arab governments will resist efforts to dismantle the Jordanian government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>In the near term, the Jordanian option could reduce friction between Israel and the West Bank Palestinian population. However, in not fulfilling Palestinian national aspirations, the Jordanian option could inspire new grievances against both Israel and Jordan. If the Jordanian government is undermined, Israel could lose a critical security partner. The downstream impact of this would be particularly significant, as Israel's longest border is with Jordan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of Implementation</td>
<td>Jordan would have to expand state institutions to cover Palestinian population centers in the West Bank, undertake relevant security measures, and account for potential political fallout. In tandem, the PA would have to be dismantled to make way for the Jordanian state. Israel would not have to evacuate settlements necessarily, as the rump West Bank would be attached to a larger territory (Jordan). However, the withdrawal of troops from the West Bank would still take some time, and Israel's military would have to change its posture to reflect the state's new borders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Israeli Public Support</td>
<td>The Jordanian option is not widely discussed in the Israeli public, although Shamir’s refusal to endorse the London Agreement is seen by Israel as a seriously missed opportunity. The Israeli public is largely unconcerned with the fate of the Palestinian population, attaching greater importance to Israel’s security and Jewish character. Thus, it is likely the Israeli public would accept such an option if it were revived.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israeli Government Support</td>
<td>The Jordanian option is popular among some influential right-wing politicians and policymakers in Israel. However, because of sensitivity regarding the relationship with Jordan, this outcome is not frequently discussed openly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Palestinian Public Support</td>
<td>The Palestinian public may prefer Jordanian governance to Israeli occupation, but are unlikely to actively desire trading one source of foreign rule for another.</td>
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<tr>
<td>PA Support</td>
<td>The PA supports a two-state outcome and will not willingly accept a formula that likely requires its dismantlement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hamas Support</td>
<td>Hamas will not accept trading Israeli control over Palestinian Territory for Jordanian rule.</td>
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<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Acceptance by Jordan and Egypt</td>
<td>Jordan has historically had a troubled relationship with Palestinians, who comprise a majority of the population in the Hashemite Kingdom. After formally renouncing claims to the West Bank in 1988 and taking on an active role in advocating for a two-state outcome, Jordan is unlikely to accept this outcome willingly. This is especially the case so long as Jordan plays host to significant Syrian and Iraqi refugee populations; the influx of refugees has already created a burden on Amman, and expanding Jordan’s population to cover nearly three million more Palestinians is only likely to further strain the state’s resources. Egypt is unlikely to support a solution that leaves Palestinians’ self-determination unfulfilled or undermines Jordanian stability, and worse—assumes a greater Egyptian responsibility over Gaza.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acceptance by Arab World</td>
<td>The Arab states are unlikely to support an outcome that does not fulfill Palestinian national aspirations and undermines Jordanian stability.</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S. Acceptance</td>
<td>Jordan is a key American strategic partner in the Middle East. Any initiative that would undermine Jordanian stability is likely to face U.S. resistance, particularly in Congress. However, the Jordanian government has expressed concern that current efforts supported by the Trump administration could have a destabilizing effect on the country and indirectly pave the way for a “Jordan Option.”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance by Russia and China</td>
<td>Most major non-Western powers support a two-state outcome, including Russia and China. However, Russia and China are unlikely to take an active role in resisting a Jordanian option beyond verbal censure against Israel and/or Jordan in international institutions like the UN.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acceptance by the EU and International Organizations</td>
<td>The EU and international institutions are unlikely to support an outcome that does not fulfill Palestinian aspirations to self-determination and risks Jordan’s stability.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct Costs</td>
<td>Israel will have to assume the costs of withdrawing troops from the West Bank, as well as the possibility of evacuating a small number of settlers, although most settlements are likely to remain in place. Jordan will have to expand state institutions and social services to cover the West Bank’s Palestinian population. Jordan, and potentially Israel as well, will have to shoulder the burden of dismantling the PA and establishing new security and border infrastructure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indirect Costs</td>
<td>If Jordan is destabilized or collapses in the long run, Israel will have to restructure its defense posture on its eastern border. It will lose security and potentially economic benefits associated with its relationship with Jordan as well as with stability. Potential business ties with other Arab states, which will likely reject the Jordanian option, could be lost as well.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Timeframe to Implementation</td>
<td>While the Jordanian option does not require the movement of large numbers of Israeli settlers and obviates the need to address some of the thornier issues associated with models like the two-state outcome, it will still take some time for Jordan to assert itself in the West Bank, for Jordan and the PA to determine the precise institutional framework of any connection between the entities, and for Israel to complete a withdrawal from parts of the territory. This timeline could be lengthened depending on the degree to which the PA and other Palestinian groups and entities do or do not cooperate.</td>
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Chapter 8. Peace to Prosperity: The Trump Plan

In January 2020, the United States under the Trump administration released a new political vision for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict officially dubbed “Peace to Prosperity.” An economic component was unveiled during the summer of 2019. The plan provides for Israeli annexation of roughly 30% of the West Bank, including the Jordan Valley and all Jewish settlements. A non-contiguous Palestinian entity will exist on 84% of the Palestinian Territories (the West Bank and Gaza), after accounting for land swaps. While the Trump administration has called its proposal a two-state solution, the Palestinian entity envisioned under the plan has very limited sovereignty. And while the plan adopts the terminology of the core-status issues—borders, Jerusalem, refugees—its interpretation and suggestions for solving these issues radically depart from long-standing thinking, unabashedly favoring Israel’s positions, concerns, and rights over those of the Palestinians.

In practice, the Trump plan codifies the trends described in Chapter 3 about the status quo. In addition, it shares much in common with Israeli Jewish-dominated one-state formulas (Chapter 6), while also incorporating some characteristics featured in confederation schemes (Chapter 4). As of the writing of this study, the Trump plan will be the basis for official American policy for at least the next eleven months, depending on the outcome of the November 2020 U.S. presidential elections. For all of these reasons, we have chosen to assess the Trump administration's proposal on its own, rather than as a subsection of our evaluations on the other models.

8.1 Evolution of the Trump Plan

In the three years leading up to the Trump plan’s release, American officials indicated that the administration’s approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would be a departure from previous U.S.-backed initiatives; as Jared Kushner, senior adviser to President Trump, reflected in 2019: “A lot of the criticisms we get are from people who have tried to do this in the past and failed and then they criticize us for not doing it the same way that they’ve done it.” Early on, officials involved refused to even use the term “two-state solution.” Jason Greenblatt, one of the chief architects of the plan and at the time an American special envoy, justified the administration’s reluctance to explicitly back a two-state solution by stating that “using certain phrases and labels is not helpful because they lack detail and nuance.”

Ultimately, the Trump administration did choose to frame their proposal in terms of a two-state solution. Yet while the American initiative employs terminology shared by two-state supporters, the actual substance of the Peace to Prosperity plan deviates sharply from the parameters of the traditional two-state model as described in Chapter 2.

8.2 Key Characteristics of the Trump Plan

(Lack of) Palestinian Sovereignty

244 Jared Kushner on Israel-Palestine deal: Time to try something new,” Al Jazeera, June 25, 2019...
While the plan is described as a two-state solution, the Palestinian entity is effectively non-independent. The entire Palestinian entity is encircled within Israeli territory, sharing no border with a third state except for a narrow strip on the Gaza-Egypt frontier, but Israel will have a presence at that international crossing as well. Lack of control along state borders is a major impediment to the prospect of Palestinians exercising any kind of meaningful autonomy. The Trump plan leaves a number of potential Palestinian actions and policies subject to Israeli approval, and denying the Palestinian entity authority over its borders gives Israel a way to enforce its veto.

Israel continues to exercise security control over the West Bank, and the Peace to Prosperity plan leaves it up to Israel to determine whether the Palestinians have met the criteria that would permit an Israeli withdrawal. The plan limits the return of Palestinian refugees to the new Palestinian entity. Imports will be delivered via “designated facilities” in Haifa and Ashdod, where Israel will have security control (this element mirrors Naftali Bennett’s one-state “stability plan”). The future development of independent Palestinian sea and airport facilities is conditioned upon Israel’s consent.

Thus, the plan severely restricts opportunities for the Palestinian entity to perform basic functions associated with independent statehood, such as managing its own national security, setting immigration and absorption policies, and developing transit facilities. Because the PLO and Palestinian Authority reject the Trump proposal, these terms will not be adopted by the Palestinians voluntarily and will need to be imposed from above. Indeed, Trump administration officials have essentially delivered an ultimatum to the Palestinians by suggesting that they have four years to accept the plan.

**Borders and Settlements**

The Trump plan calls for the creation of a Palestinian entity in parts of the West Bank and in Gaza. It is the first U.S. plan to be accompanied by a map, although it is presented as a “conceptual” one. The plan allows Israel to annex all West Bank settlements, while calling for a settlement freeze in areas not slated to be part of Israel. However, this is only nominally a compromise, as the areas left outside of Israel’s official borders under the Trump plan are primarily Areas A and B of the West Bank and parts of Area C where Israel has never built settlements and is unlikely to build in the foreseeable future. Based on calculations by mapping expert Dan Rothem, Israel will annex 30% of the Palestinian territories (West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip) and will swap in return the equivalent of about 14%. All in all, the Palestinian territory will comprise about 84% of the Palestinian Territories (meaning the West Bank and Gaza, along the June 1967 lines) (Figure 8.1). As explained in Chapter 2, negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians thus far have been on the basis of 1967 borders with minor land swaps. The Palestinian position is that pre-1967 borders represent 22% of former Mandate Palestine. They have been willing to compromise on land swaps, and allow Israel to annex the settlement blocks, provided that swaps are small and equal in size and

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246 Ibid., 33.
247 Ibid., 27.
252 Peace to Prosperity, 38.
quality of land. The most flexible position demonstrated by the Palestinians was reportedly in negotiations between Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and then Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, where the Palestinian map reportedly agreed to a 4% swap.\(^{253}\) Clearly, the map provided with large and unequal swaps is a non-starter for the Palestinians.

\(^{253}\) Discussion with a former senior Israeli negotiator, in-person, Tel Aviv, February 3, 2020.
Peace to Prosperity
(Trump Peace Plan, Jan. 2020)
Recreation of Conceptual Map

Map Credit: Dan Rothem
Because the Trump plan permits Israeli annexation of all Jewish settlements and the Jordan Valley, the Palestinian entity lacks territorial contiguity and is practically divided into six large cantons—three in the West Bank, one in Gaza, and two more in the Negev. Meanwhile, 15 additional enclaves containing Israeli settlements would be disconnected from Israeli territory. This would leave Israel with a roughly 850-mile border with the new Palestinian entity, as compared with the existing Israel-West Bank barrier, which is about 440 miles in length, and the original Green Line, which is 198 miles long.

To compensate for the territorial fragmentation of the West Bank, the proposal calls for “transportation contiguity.” This would be achieved via a network of roads and tunnels. However, these routes would fall under Israeli security control, meaning the Palestinian entity would lack control over its external borders.

The plan also proposes redrawing Israel’s borders such that the 250,000 Arab Israelis, or Palestinian citizens of Israel, of the area known as “the triangle” become part of the Palestinian state, essentially stripping them of their Israeli citizenship and rights. This element has been widely criticized as undemocratic and subsequently Prime Minister Netanyahu’s office responded by saying that even if the plan is implemented, this element would be excluded.

### Jerusalem

Under the Trump administration’s proposal, the Palestinian desire for a capital in East Jerusalem is acknowledged but not fulfilled. Rather, the plan states its aim to keep Jerusalem united under Israeli control, citing Israel’s record as a “good custodian” of the city, as well as the 1995 Jerusalem Embassy Act. However, the proposal also envisions a Palestinian capital “in the section of East Jerusalem located in all areas east and north of the existing security barrier;” meaning Kufr Aqab and Shuafat Refugee Camp, two areas within the Jerusalem municipal borders, and Abu Dis, a small Palestinian town east of the city. Despite the Trump plan’s provision that the Palestinians can designate their capital al-Quds (an Arabic name for Jerusalem, literally meaning “the holy one”), none of these areas are close to the Holy Basin or to what was defined as Jordanian East Jerusalem/al-Quds, and each of them are geographically disconnected.

Although Kufr Aqab and Shuafat Refugee Camp are inside Jerusalem’s city boundaries, they are neglected by municipal services as they fall on the Palestinian side of the security barrier. Because Kufr Aqab is largely beyond the reach of both Israel and the PA, garbage piles up on the streets, traffic is frequently congested, and a generally lawless atmosphere prevails.

Shuafat Refugee Camp was the last Palestinian refugee camp to be established in the Jordanian-occupied West Bank after the 1948-49 First Arab-Israeli War and the only one to fall within the

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256 Peace to Prosperity, 8.
257 Ibid., 12.
259 Peace to Prosperity, 15.
260 Ibid., 9.
261 Ibid., 16.
262 Ibid., 17.
enlarged Jerusalem municipality. Many basic services inside the camp, including primary education and some healthcare functions, continue to be dispensed by UNRWA, whose operations in East Jerusalem Israel is presently advancing legislation to shutter.

Abu Dis is a small West Bank Palestinian village. During the failed 2000 Camp David negotiations, Israel contemplated Abu Dis as a Palestinian capital, and in the 1990s, a parliament building was even erected there, although construction was never completed and the structure lies derelict.

Abu Dis is home to 13,000 people, while Kufr Aqab and Shuafat Refugee Camp collectively have a population of roughly 120,000. This means that about two thirds of the non-citizen Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem would remain under direct Israeli control inside the enlarged municipality according to the Trump plan. Further, Palestinians of areas designated as the new Palestinian capital may emigrate into other parts of the city so as to avoid losing their rights as Jerusalem residents.

The plan includes a contradiction regarding the Temple Mount, the holiest site in Judaism and the third-holiest site for Muslims, who call it Haram al-Sharif. The plan calls for the status quo at the site to “continue uninterrupted.” But immediately after this stipulation, it goes on to say that “people of every faith should be permitted to pray on the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif, in a manner that is fully respectful to their religion, taking into account the times of each religion’s prayers and holidays, as well as other religious factors.” However, under the status quo, which has prevailed over more than five decades, only Muslims can pray at the site while Jews can visit under tight restrictions but not pray.

The plan also envisions joint commercial and tourism enterprises between Israel and the Palestinian entity. A special tourism area to support Muslim pilgrimage to Jerusalem would be set up in Atarot (an industrial zone), which would be under Israeli sovereignty. As with many other Palestinian initiatives under the plan, the creation of the tourism zone would require Israeli approval. The proposal also envisions a joint tourism administration, the Jerusalem-Al-Quds Joint Tourism Development Authority, which would work with Israel, the Palestinian entity, and with Jordan.

Palestinian Refugees

Under the plan, no Palestinian refugees can return to the State of Israel. Palestinian refugees seeking permanent residence essentially have three options: first, absorption into the Palestinian entity (subject to limitations); second, integration in current host countries (subject to those countries’ consent); and third, the acceptance of 5,000 refugees each year, for up to ten years (50,000 total refugees), in individual Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member countries who agree to participate in Palestinian refugee resettlement. UNRWA is to be dismantled and refugees who

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264 “Israeli draft law seeks to ban UNRWA in East Jerusalem,” Middle East Eye, November 28, 2019.
266 Ibid.
268 Discussion with an Israeli expert on Jerusalem, in person, Tel Aviv, February, 2020.
269 n.a., Peace to Prosperity, 16.
270 Peace to Prosperity, 18.
became citizens of another country would lose their refugee status (referring primarily to Palestinians in Jordan). A special fund, the Palestinian Refugee Trust, would be set up to support the absorption of refugees (but the United States is not committing to contribute to the fund). The plan equates the Palestinian refugees with the Jewish refugees who were forced to flee their homes in Arab countries during and after the First Arab-Israeli War (1948-49). Notably, the proposal mentions the expulsion of Jews from Arab and Muslim states without discussing the context in which Palestinians were expelled or fled from the territory that became Israel.

**Israeli Security**

The Trump plan places an emphasis on ensuring Israel's security needs are met. However, this is achieved at the expense of Palestinian sovereignty, and Palestinian security needs are not acknowledged.

Under the Trump administration’s proposal, Israel will continue to operate a security presence inside the new Palestinian entity. While the plan’s objective is ostensibly to phase out Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory, it is left up to Israel to determine when its security criteria for withdrawal have been met. In other words, Israel can purport to agree to a two-state outcome while continuing to hold the West Bank in perpetuity. The intrusive nature of a continuing Israeli security presence is reinforced by a clause in the plan affirming Israel’s “right to dismantle and destroy any facility in the State of Palestine that is used for the production of prohibited weapons or for other hostile purposes.” The right of self-defense is already enshrined in international law, including in the UN Charter. The inclusion of this clause is therefore curious as it is either redundant or permits Israel to maintain an intrusive military presence inside the territory of an theoretically sovereign state. In addition to an on-the-ground role in the West Bank, Israel is given control over all airspace west of the Jordan River. Off of Gaza’s Mediterranean coast, Israel is permitted to continue its naval blockade.

There is also a question of new border infrastructure. The border between Israel and the Palestinian entity in the West Bank would be nearly double the length of the existing barrier, necessitating the construction of a new wall and/or fence. The route of the new border will also leave about 14,270 Jewish settlers in disconnected enclaves within the Palestinian state. These isolated settlements and the roads leading to them will require Israeli military protection, creating the potential for friction between the and law enforcement and the government and population of the Palestinian entity. The same potential friction will exist between the 140,000 Palestinians living in enclaves inside of Israel and Israeli security services there. A similar issue is examined in Chapter 4, on Israeli-Palestinian confederation plans, many of which contemplate a situation wherein Jewish settlers continue to live inside the territory of a State of Palestine.

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271 Ibid., 21.
272 Ibid., Appendix 2B.
273 Ibid., Appendix 2C.
275 Peace to Prosperity, Appendix 2A.
276 Ibid., Appendix 2C.
278 Ibid.
Economic Component

Prior to revealing the political elements of the plan, the Trump administration released in June 2019 its accompanying economic part, which was introduced as "a vision to empower the Palestinian people to build a prosperous and vibrant Palestinian society." The plan proposed a $50 billion investment in the new Palestinian state and Israel’s Arab state neighbors which would create one million new jobs over 10 years, double the size of the Palestinian economy, cut poverty in half and reduce unemployment to below 10%. The investment would not come from the United States; rather, it would be supported by international donors, chiefly in Arab nations. Out of the $50 billion, $28 billion would be invested in Palestine and another $22 billion in Jordan, Egypt, and Lebanon.

The economic part emphasizes different elements, the first of which aims to improve the business environment to encourage investment in Palestine by ensuring property rights, the rule of law, fiscal sustainability, capital markets, and anti-corruption policies. The second element is opening the "West Bank and Gaza to regional and global markets," which will require "major investments in transportation and infrastructure" to link the West Bank and Gaza with neighboring countries, as well as "increasing the competitiveness of Palestinian exports and reducing the complications of transport and travel." To complement these investments, this plan will also support steps to improve Palestinian cooperation with Egypt, Israel, and Jordan.279

Furthermore, the plan will “facilitate billions of dollars of investment” in several infrastructure and other sectors including electricity, water, and telecommunications. Moreover, the plan envisages private sector growth and investment in entrepreneurship, small businesses, tourism, agriculture, housing, manufacturing, and natural resources.” In addition, there will be investment in education, workforce development, healthcare sector and in overall improvement of the quality of lives of Palestinians. Finally, the plan mentions increased trade with neighboring countries, mentioning explicitly Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and Lebanon.280

8.3 Reactions to the Plan by Key Stakeholders

Because the Trump plan represents such a departure from conventional two-state thinking, we elaborate in this section about the responses of various stakeholders to the plan. These are also summarized in Table 8.1 which assesses the Trump plan against our predetermined set of criteria.

Domestic Israeli Political Reactions

The Right-Wing
The U.S. administration’s proposal was formally unveiled at a press conference in January 2020 featuring remarks from both President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The plan exposed some divisions on the Israeli right. Many leaders expressed interest in enacting the parts of the plan they did support while ignoring others. This illustrates how the Trump administration’s plan dovetails neatly into other annexation-based one-state proposals discussed in Chapter 6.

279 Peace to Prosperity, Economic Framework.
280 Ibid.
The Israeli prime minister traveled to Washington for the formal unveiling with a delegation of mayors from Jewish settlements in the West Bank. The delegation came from the Yesha (Yehuda, Shomron, v’Aza, or Judea, Samaria, and Gaza) Council, which represents the settler community. The Yesha Council ultimately expressed support for annexation as envisioned under the plan, while opposing the creation of a Palestinian state.  

Acting Defense Minister Naftali Bennett adopted a similar position. His opposition is noteworthy because the Trump plan bears much in common with Bennett’s “Stability Plan,” which calls for annexation of parts of the West Bank and an autonomous Palestinian entity subject to Israeli security control.

However, terminology appears to be critical here, and right-wing Israeli leaders who criticized the plan are averse to a Palestinian state in any form, regardless of how limited its sovereignty is (and as we have demonstrated, the Palestinian entity’s statehood is largely symbolic under the Trump plan).

Eli Shaviro, mayor of the Ariel settlement, withdrew his membership in the Yesha Council over the group’s initial reaction to the plan, which was categorical opposition. He noted that the PA would inevitably reject the plan, rendering the Trump administration’s nominal support for a Palestinian state a moot point. Oded Revivi, mayor of the Efrat settlement and the Yesha Council’s foreign envoy, reiterated the settler group’s objection to a Palestinian state while describing the annexation portion as something that “offers real gains for the settlement project.” In short, Israeli leaders who support annexation and a one-state outcome see an opportunity to implement the parts of the Trump plan that they like while leaving aside the rest.

In some ways, Israeli reaction to the Trump plan was distorted by the timing of its release. Many Israeli politicians who might have otherwise supported the proposal more enthusiastically, such as Yisrael Beiteinu party leader Avigdor Liberman, framed the launch of the plan as a political maneuver by Prime Minister Netanyahu in the runup to Israel’s March 2020 Knesset elections.

The Center

Political considerations also impacted the response of centrist Kachol Lavan party leader Benny Gantz, Netanyahu’s chief political rival. On the one hand, it would be disadvantageous to take any position that might be perceived as insulting the Trump administration. In three successive Knesset races, Kachol Lavan has avoided taking explicit positions on unilateral West Bank annexation and the two-state solution. Conversely, Gantz has expressed implicit opposition to unilateral annexation, as envisioned in the plan, suggesting that he would support annexation of the Jordan Valley in coordination with the international community and Jordan (meaning that he will likely not move to annex, as no other country save the United States would conceivably support such a move).

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283 The Stability Plan is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.
Gantz offered broad praise for the proposal without citing specific elements. Kachol Lavan’s preferred route was to bring the entire Peace to Prosperity proposal to a vote in the Knesset rather than vote on unilateral annexation of West Bank territory, as the prime minister sought to do. This would allow the party to avoid directly endorsing unilateral annexation, while also forcing far-right parties that oppose a Palestinian state on principle into a bind because of the plan’s provision for a nominally independent Palestinian entity.  

Some leaders of Kachol Lavan affiliated with the political right, such as Yoaz Hendel, have proposed similar formulas to solving the conflict, as mentioned in Chapter 6. It is important to note however that several members of Kachol Lavan from the Yesh Atid subgroup rejected a provision of the plan which leaves the Triangle, an area of northern Israel primarily populated by Israeli Arabs, to the Palestinian entity.

The Left-Wing

Israel’s political left has shrunk considerably since the 2015 Knesset election. The two main factions representing the left are Labor-Gesher-Meretz (an alliance of those three parties, plus the Israel Democratic Party) and the Joint List (a unified ticket comprised of four Israeli Arab parties).

Labor Party leader Amir Peretz thanked President Trump for his initiative, affirming that direct negotiations between Israel, the Palestinians, and the Arab states should be conducted after the March 2020 elections. Itzik Shmuli, chair of Labor’s Knesset faction, took a harsher tack, criticizing the Trump plan for inviting “one-sided annexation.” Meretz leader Nitzan Horowitz criticized the removal of the Triangle from Israel.

The Joint List has expressed alarm over the possibility of the Triangle being placed within the borders of the Palestinian entity, referring to the Trump proposal as a “transfer plan.” The Joint List, which recommended Benny Gantz be tasked with forming a government after the September 2019 elections, objected to the Kachol Lavan leader’s praise for the plan. The Joint List even stated that it would withhold support for Gantz after the elections based on the latter’s praise for the Trump plan.

The Israeli left’s objections to the Trump plan highlight an interesting inversion of the Israeli far-right’s position. The far-right opposes the Peace to Prosperity initiative because it creates a Palestinian state, albeit one without any kind real independence. In Israel, left-wing criticism of the Trump plan derives from the perspective that the American proposal is not a viable two-state solution: it allows for unilateral annexation and proposes border adjustments that would strip over 250,000 Israeli Arabs of their citizenship.

294 “Joint List MK says party won’t back Blue and White over support of Trump plan,” The Times of Israel, January 31, 2020.
The Palestinians and the Arab States

The PLO, PA, and Hamas all rejected the Trump administration’s proposal. After the Peace to Prosperity plan was released, PLO Executive Committee member Hanin Ashrawi set out the following as the basis for Palestinian opposition to the framework: the United States is “accommodating land theft, accommodating settlements, the annexation of Jerusalem […] negating the borders of Palestine, maintaining the occupation or reinventing, redefining the occupation.”

Despite immediate Palestinian rejection of the Trump plan, events surrounding the proposal’s release initially gave the impression of limited Arab state support. The ambassadors of Oman, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates attended the unveiling ceremony in Washington, DC. Saudi Arabia and Egypt did not attend, but released statements that welcomed the Trump administration’s efforts while refraining from addressing its specifics.

Yet the governments of Oman, Bahrain, and the UAE later said that they did not support the Peace to Prosperity program, contending that they had only sent their respective ambassadors to the unveiling ceremony because they had not been fully briefed on the plan’s contents. Regardless of whether or not that claim is true, their opposition was formally expressed in unanimous denunciations passed by the OIC and the Arab League. The Arab League condemnation emphasized the Arab Peace Initiative as the minimum basis for negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

Launched in 2002 by the Arab League under Saudi leadership, the Arab Peace Initiative calls for a two-state solution based on the June 1967 lines in exchange for normalization between Israel and the Arab states. Notably, the Arab Peace Initiative was also referenced in the Saudi Foreign Ministry’s initial comment on the Trump plan.

While other U.S.-aligned Arab states treaded lightly around the Trump plan’s substance immediately following its release, Jordan has been consistent in its opposition. Amman’s objection is noteworthy because the text of the plan frequently references the Hashemite Kingdom as a prospective partner in executing the Trump administration’s vision.

Even before the formal launch of the Peace to Prosperity political program, Jordanian officials signaled their fears that a framework tilted too heavily in Israel’s favor could lead to protests demanding Amman cancel its peace treaty with Israel. Others have expressed fears that the United States would seek to turn Jordan into a de facto Palestinian state. Such suspicions are a longstanding element of the Jordanian perspective. The Jordanians oppose any attempt to abolish the Hashemite monarchy and treat the country as an alternative Palestinian homeland as part of a “Jordan option,” which we discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7.

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298 Arab League, Twitter Post, February 1, 2020.
8.5 Advantages and Disadvantages

Peace to Prosperity, or the Trump Plan, is characterized mostly by disadvantages. However, it does entail some noteworthy benefits. The formulation of the plan by the Trump administration made Benjamin Netanyahu, an Israeli prime minister representing the most hawkish government Israel has ever had, agree a-priori, and before negotiations, to land swaps, the establishment of a neighboring Palestinian state, and a Palestinian capital in East Jerusalem—elements of a final-status agreement that could pave the way to an agreed upon outcome. The plan could also impress upon the Palestinian leadership that time is not necessarily on their side, thus incentivizing them to offer a constructive way forward and stop stalling.

Yet these benefits are more about the context of the Trump plan than its content. Moreover, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, the use of two state terminology is also misleading and dangerous as in practice the Palestinian state envisioned in the plan is more of a sub-state autonomous entity with extremely limited sovereignty; the land swaps are large, unequal in size and quality of land, and create a non-contiguous Palestinian entity; the capital is near Jerusalem but not in an area that the Palestinians consider Jerusalem and their ties to the city are ignored. The plan supposedly designs a solution to the refugee problem but it completely ignores the Palestinian position as well as conventions defined by international law according to which there are, as of writing, 5.6 million Palestinian refugees, defined as people displaced in 1948-49 and their descendants. The plan’s dangerous proposition to redraw the border such that Israeli Arab citizens would be stripped of their rights and become citizens of the Palestinian state is a provocative, undemocratic idea that only the extreme right in Israel would entertain. It is possible that the goal was to offset the number of Palestinians who would be annexed to Israel in the West Bank (some 140,000 in the West Bank in addition to some 250,000 in East Jerusalem), yet it is unclear why the U.S. administration needs to come up with such a suggestion.

Further, the plan creates substantial security risks starting with a complex and extremely long border (850 miles) that would lead to increased friction, not to mention the cost of building a barrier along such a circuitous route in the mountainous terrain of the West Bank. Protecting the 14,270 Jewish settlers who will remain in disconnected enclaves within the Palestinian entity will be a daunting task. Moreover, settling a hostile Palestinian population in enclaves by the border with Egypt as part of the land swaps goes against Israeli security rationale of ensuring buffer zones near borders. In addition, the plan and its aftermath—particularly if it is seen as a green light for Israel to annex territory—could lead to breakdown of the security cooperation between the IDF and the PA security forces, a cooperation that has been essential to preserving the relative quiet in the West Bank in recent years. Finally, already under immense domestic pressure, the plan could further shake the stability of the Jordanian state, with which Israel has its longest and most stable border. This risk would become imminent if Israel goes ahead and annexes the Jordan Valley. As former head of Mossad Tamir Pardo wrote, “the collapse of the Jordanian government would bring Iran right to Israel’s doorstep.”

303 See UNRWA.
305 Discussion with a former senior Israeli defense official, in-person, Tel Aviv, February 3, 2020.
306 Discussion with a former senior Israeli defense official, in-person, Tel Aviv, January 30, 2020.
Most saliently, the Trump plan opens the door to unilateral West Bank annexation, both through its specific elements and because of how it has been unveiled. U.S. and Israeli government officials, from Netanyahu to Jared Kushner and David Friedman, have said that the only barrier to beginning the annexation of territory envisioned as belonging to Israel in the plan is working out the precise territorial parameters and producing the requisite maps. Peace to Prosperity is being treated less as a plan for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations aimed at a permanent status agreement between the two sides, and more as a bilateral U.S.-Israel agreement over just how much and which West Bank territory Israel can annex. The plan paves the way for territorial annexation in a manner that no other diplomatic initiative has.

Of course, if the plan indeed leads to unilateral Israeli annexation of West Bank territory, it would not only lead to increased security risks, but could also create a one-state outcome, which, as discussed in Chapter 6, would compromise Israel’s credibility as a liberal democracy by permanently rendering Palestinians stateless non-citizens.

As for the economic framework of the plan, its components are important and several of them are necessary to build a functioning and self-sufficient Palestinian economy in the future. Nonetheless, the implementation of the economic segment hinges on the adoption of the political vision, which is a non-starter for the Palestinians. Moreover, the plan does not specify who will fund the $50 billion endeavor. Furthermore, given the length and route of the new proposed border between Israel and Palestine, it is not clear how Palestine can have an independent economy and a separate customs union, in a sense proposing a confederal economic structure for the two entities. In addition, the investment of $28 billion over 10 years may not be sufficient to bring about all the changes described in the plan and create one million jobs.

Also, of the proposed $50 billion, only $13 billion would be in the form of grants to all four countries (Palestine, Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon) while $25 billion would be in “subsidized loans,” but the degree of subsidy is not mentioned, and in the case of the ramshackle economies of these countries, the level of interest on loans would make a meaningful difference. The remaining $12 billion are supposed to come from private investors, who may be more reluctant to offer convenient repayment conditions.

Inclusion of Lebanon in the plan is also surprising. The underlying rationale for including Egypt and Jordan is that they would be interested in economic cooperation with Israel and the Palestinians. But is this assumption also valid when it comes to Lebanon, a country whose debt is over $90 billion, which lacks a formal or informal relationship with Israel, and where Hezbollah is in the government? The answer is probably no.

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308 Discussion with a former senior Israeli official, in-person, Tel Aviv, February 3, 2020.
309 Discussion with a former senior Israeli official, in-person, Tel Aviv, February 3, 2020.
310 Discussion with a former senior Israeli official, in-person, Tel Aviv, February 3, 2020.
Advantages

- The announcement made an Israeli right-wing prime minister agree prior to negotiations to a two-state model with land swap and a Palestinian capital in Jerusalem—pillars of a final status agreement that could lead to a solution;
- Demonstrates to Palestinians the urgency of progress and that time is not necessarily on their side;
- Includes a strong commitment to normalization of ties between Israel and the Arab countries;
- Politically viable among most of the Israeli government (minus extreme right) with support among public;
- Maintains Israel as a Jewish state, at least formally;
- Does not require evacuation of settlements or division of Jerusalem;
- Physically separates Israelis and Palestinians, albeit in a very complex manner;
- Uses terminology that, even if hollow, could be built on if the plan serves to launch negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians.

Shortcomings

- The plan is more a roadmap for annexation than a roadmap for an agreement between the two sides;
- The plan was rejected by all Palestinian factions and population; they see it as humiliating, paying only lip service to Palestinian self-determination and ignoring their demands;
- Could develop into new terms of reference, which could prevent Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in perpetuity since this plan is a non-starter for Palestinians;
- Could compromise Israel’s credibility as a liberal democracy if Israel implements one part of the plan and permanently renders Palestinians stateless non-citizens;
- Provides for an indefensible Israeli border with many disconnected Israeli enclaves, creating potential friction between settlements and the Palestinian entity;
- Increases hostility between the Jewish and Palestinian populations and likely leads to severe deterioration of the security situation;
- Poor reception in Arab states means the United States will not have backing from key regional partners;
- Risks undermining the stability of Jordan, one of only two Arab states to have a formal relationship with Israel and the country with which Israel shares its longest land border;
- Jewish identity will be kept only formally if the state has a large majority or even equally large non-Jewish population;
- Could damage Israel’s relations with the EU, international organizations and major non-Western powers, and subject Israel to fiercer BDS pressures;
- Could create a rift with U.S. Jewry over breaking away from liberal democratic values (as well as with future administrations).

8.6 Assessment of Peace to Prosperity, or the Trump Plan

The Trump plan fares rather poorly against most of our criteria. As shown in Table 8.1, its main advantages are the political viability among Israelis, and of course its U.S. backing. Other than that, it is a non-starter for Palestinians and even the Arab countries, which responded in kind when the
plan was released, praised the efforts to bring peace but not the actual content of the plan, and ultimately and unanimously rejected it in votes in the Arab League and OIC. A partial implementation of the plan by Israel, i.e., unilateral annexation of West Bank territory, could lead to the same adverse outcomes of a one non-democratic Jewish state (see Chapter 6). It could also destabilize Jordan and marginalize Israel internationally, especially if there is a new administration in Washington that might wish to resort to conventional two-state thinking that respects both Israeli and Palestinian considerations.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8.1. Applying Analytical Framework to Evaluate the Trump Plan</th>
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<td><strong>Criterion</strong></td>
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<td>Democratic</td>
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<td>Palestinian self-determination</td>
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<td>Security</td>
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<td>Ease of Implementation</td>
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<td>Hamas Support</td>
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<td>Acceptance by Jordan and Egypt</td>
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<td>Acceptance by Arab World</td>
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<td>U.S. Acceptance</td>
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<td>Acceptance by Russia and China</td>
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<td>Acceptance by the EU and International Organizations</td>
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<td>Direct Costs</td>
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<td><strong>Indirect Costs</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Timeframe to Implementation</strong></td>
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Chapter 9. Comparison of Approaches and Conclusion

The objective of this study was to map the various approaches advocated for addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, evaluate and compare them. In each of the previous seven chapters, we described and evaluated the approaches we selected for analysis: the two-state solution; continuation of the status quo; Israeli-Palestinian confederation; one democratic state for all; one Jewish state; the Jordanian option; and the Trump plan. To evaluate these competing ideas, we traced their evolution, described their key characteristics, assessed their advantages and disadvantages, and used a policy analysis framework to judge how they perform against a predetermined set of important criteria. In this chapter, we briefly compare the overall advantages and disadvantages of the approaches, summarize key takeaways from the study, and suggest a pathway forward.

9.1 Findings and Key Takeaways

Each of the approaches we analyzed is flawed in one way or another. Either they are unable to sustain Israel as a “Jewish, democratic, and secure state”—the vision advocated by Israel Policy Forum, among many other organizations; or they fail on international acceptance; or are severely challenged on implementation grounds. The previous chapters provide detailed explanations on each formula’s merits and shortcomings as well as their performance against our criteria (included here as a reminder in Table 9.1).

Table 9.1. Criteria, Definitions, and Evaluation Considerations

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<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Evaluation Considerations</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>Whether the approach maintains Israel as a Jewish state.</td>
<td>What is the impact of the model on the demographic balance between the Jewish and Palestinian populations?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democratic</td>
<td>Whether the approach maintains Israel as a democratic state.</td>
<td>The extent to which there are regular and competitive elections for effective power, all citizens have equal political and civil rights, and the state does not deny these rights on a permanent basis to people that are under its direct or effective control.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>The extent to which the approach strengthens Israel’s security.</td>
<td>To what extent does the model increase security risks stemming from terrorism, military confrontation with one or more Palestinian factions, and external threats including to Jordan’s stability?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palestinian Self-Determination</td>
<td>The degree to which the approach fulfills Palestinian pursuit of self-determination.</td>
<td>Does the model address Palestinian national aspirations? Does it increase Palestinian sovereignty over land and other national symbols?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ease of Implementation</td>
<td>Ease with which the idea can be implemented in terms of technical complexity, logistics,</td>
<td>What type of Israeli-Palestinian coordination, or assistance from the international community, is needed for implementation? Would it require mobilization of forces and people, or structural and physical changes? Are changes to existing laws needed?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and resources.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political Viability</td>
<td>Acceptance of approach by five categories of stakeholders: (1) Israeli public; (2) Israeli</td>
<td>How favored is the approach among the Israeli/Palestinian political echelon? Under what conditions could it become more/less acceptable? How acceptable is it to the Israeli/Palestinian publics? Under what conditions could it become more/less acceptable?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>government; (3) Palestinian public; and the Palestinian government is divided into (4) the PA,</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and (5) Hamas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>International Acceptance</td>
<td>The extent to which international players accept the approach, divided into five groups: (1)</td>
<td>How would the approach affect Jordanian and Egyptian leaderships, and their publics’ attitudes toward Israel? Would it shape public and hidden ties with regional countries? Would it influence Israel’s standing in international organizations and the risk of sanctions? Could it change U.S. assistance to Israel? Would it affect ties with the diaspora?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jordan and Egypt; (2) other regional players; (3) the United States; (4) Russia and China;</td>
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<td>and (5) the European Union and international organizations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>This criterion is broken down into direct and indirect costs associated with the approach.</td>
<td>What are the expenditures needed for implementation (including one-time fixed costs, e.g., structures, equipment, training, and ongoing operational and maintenance costs)? Who is likely to assume the financial burden? What are the indirect costs and opportunity costs (other things that could have been done instead with the same sources)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeframe to Implementation</td>
<td>Relative time for the approach to be implemented and produce desired results.</td>
<td>Could the idea be implemented in the near-, medium-, long-term? How long could it take to roll it out? What sequence of events is pre-required for implementation? Does it require investment (e.g., in infrastructure, legislation) that could delay implementation? How long would benefits from the approach be materialized?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is useful, however, to demonstrate visually how the different approaches compare against one another. For that purpose, we populate a common matrix framework, using the approaches as column headers and the criteria in each line to present a comparative picture. We do not repeat the textual comments that we included in the different chapters for brevity purposes. Instead, we populate the overall assessment matrix only with the color codes to compare across the approaches (Table 9.2).
Table 9.2 Comparison Across Approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Two-State Solution</th>
<th>Continuation of Status Quo</th>
<th>Israeli-Palestinian Confederation</th>
<th>One Democratic State</th>
<th>One Jewish State</th>
<th>Jordanian Option</th>
<th>The Trump Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
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<td>Democratic</td>
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<td>Palestinian self-determination</td>
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<td>Security</td>
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<td>Ease of Implementation</td>
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<td>Israeli Public Support</td>
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<td>Israeli Gov't Support</td>
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<td>Palestinian Public Support</td>
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<td>PA Support</td>
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<td>Hamas Support</td>
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<td>Acceptance by Jordan and Egypt</td>
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<td>Acceptance by Arab World</td>
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<td>U.S. Acceptance</td>
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<td>Acceptance by Russia and China</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acceptance by the EU and Int'l Organizations</td>
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<td>Direct Costs</td>
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<td>Indirect Costs</td>
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<td>Timeframe to Implementation</td>
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</table>
As the matrix clearly illustrates, the two-state solution is the preferred formula. It would not only maintain Israel as democratic and Jewish, but also separate the Israeli Jewish and Palestinian populations to reduce friction and lower incentives for violence, thus producing greater stability and security. The two-state model also provides the Palestinians with self-determination, and is still the preferred option among the publics on both sides, as well as the international community. Other formulas on the right and the left, while rated higher in some areas, perform more poorly against most criteria.

The Israeli-Palestinian confederation would also keep Israel democratic and Jewish and grant the Palestinians self-determination, yet it fails on security and political viability, accounting for acceptance by the Israeli and Palestinian governments and their respective publics. A Jordanian option would also maintain Israel’s Jewish and democratic nature but is unacceptable by the main stakeholder—the Hashemite Kingdom. Some proponents of this option contend that if the kingdom collapses, this would actually pave the way for a Jordanian option, but this ignores the fact that it is critical to maintain Jordan’s stability as part of a much larger security architecture in the Middle East, which, among other things, is a pillar of Israel’s security.

The four remaining models, the two “one-state” options, continuation of the status quo, and the Trump plan, which in practice resembles the one Jewish state and status quo approaches despite the use of two-state terminology, would not keep Israel as Jewish and democratic in the long run. None of them grants real self-determination to the Palestinians. Further, they do not benefit from strong domestic and international support.

The status quo is a bit different in that regard. It is only natural that under the illusion of a relatively calm security situation, especially in a time of strong economic performance and robust international standing, Israel would not have an immediate incentive to shift course. After all, the status quo was rated above or along the midpoint on most criteria (13 of the 18 cells are yellow and light green), and represents a stable option. On the security front, the head of Shin Bet, Israel’s internal clandestine security service, said in January 2020 that during 2019, the agency prevented 560 terror attacks, including two suicide bombings and four kidnappings. In an unfortunate scenario where Israel fails to intercept serious terror attacks, the Israeli public would likely again prioritize the Palestinian issue and modify the perception that the status quo is viable.

In addition, as long as the status quo is formally defined as an interim situation, and does not officially turn the page on a peaceful final settlement, the international community is likely to continue enabling the status quo. The release of the Trump Peace to Prosperity plan may, however, disrupt this equilibrium by transforming the status quo into a more permanent arrangement. Should Israel use the Trump plan as cover to unilaterally annex parts of the West Bank and apply sovereignty to all settlements while stating an intention to leave them permanently in place, it will mark the start of the sand running in the one-state outcome hourglass. The assumption built into continuation of the status quo—that Israel can always move toward two states should it deem the time and conditions to be right—will no longer apply, and outside actors will begin to shift their own policies and responses accordingly. Under this scenario, we might see events unfold as described in Chapter 6, in which legislated annexation could trigger a cascade of events that would turn the status quo into a single Jewish-dominated, not necessarily democratic state, and this option, as the

matrix indicates, rates poorly on 11 out of the 18 criteria. The Trump peace plan, which increasingly looks like an annexation plan and de facto greenlights such a move, elevates the risk of this scenario. Even though the two-state outcome is the best approach, or the one assessed to be least flawed, it has serious challenges mostly pertaining to acceptance by the current Israeli government, some of whose leaders are working tirelessly to kill it. In addition, implementation of the two-state model could face daunting difficulties. These include evacuating and re-settling some 30,000-50,000 settler households; devising a solution and compensation mechanism to Palestinian refugees in Gaza, the West Bank and in the diaspora; and finding a creative formula for Jerusalem as the capital of both nations. As explained in Chapter 2, there are substantial gaps between the Israeli and Palestinian positions on these issues, making them hard to agree on to begin with. If and when there is an agreement, execution will be complex, expensive, and could take a long time. All of these contribute to a growing sense that a two-state outcome is no longer feasible or has outlived its usefulness as a paradigm. Indeed, these are complicated problems. And if present trends continue, the two-state framework could have an expiration date. However, there are detailed plans that were developed often jointly by Israeli, Palestinian and international experts that could still address each and every one of the final status issues.

Sadly, despite clear advantages over the other formulas, this course of action is not necessarily going to prevail. Policies by the Israeli government, backed by the Trump administration, combined with the intra-Palestinian rift between the PA and Hamas, indicate that at present, one criterion may be more influential than others—acceptance by, or rather the interests and actions of, the current Israeli government and its patron in Washington, DC. Thus, the main challenge is to overcome the political hurdles and try to advance, or at least not derail, the prospect of a two-state reality.

9.2 Where Do We Go from Here?

The political situation on both the Israeli and Palestinian sides has been fairly steady in the past decade with Benjamin Netanyahu and Mahmoud Abbas in charge. On both sides, however, the situation can change soon with elections in Israel (at the time of this writing, a third round is expected in less than one year) and legal issues affecting Netanyahu; and waning talk about elections in the Palestinian Territories, coupled with discussions about the day after Abbas in Ramallah. Changes at the top could inject new energy into the peace process and revamp the Oslo framework. However, waiting for leadership to change is not a policy prescription. That is especially true given the looming shadow of the Trump administration plan that has adopted Israeli positions entirely and seeks to turn the status quo into a reality at the risk of leading to a one-state outcome. In the current political climate, what can be done to secure the option of reaching a peaceful two-state framework in the future?

Because bilateral negotiations on a final two-state settlement are currently not in the cards, we propose putting a halt to present trends that could make a two-state outcome non-feasible, and through words and actions create conditions and an atmosphere more conducive to jumpstarting the peace process when the time is right. This can be done in one of two general ways: independent moves by Israel, or returning to a transitional agreement framework such as the Road Map.

As discussed in Chapter 2, independent constructive steps in preparation for a reality of two states for two peoples would prevent Israel from sliding into a one-state outcome. The two plans for independent moves we reviewed, by CIS and INSS, are similar in nature and both include political, diplomatic, regional, security, and economic elements. In short, Israel would reaffirm its
commitment to the two-state model and state its willingness to enter negotiations on final status issues. Israel would also say it has no sovereignty claims east of the Separation Barrier and pass legislation that incentivizes settlers in isolated and remote Palestinian areas to move to the settlement blocs or Israel proper. The IDF would maintain its operational freedom in the West Bank but at the same time, Israel would actively work to strengthen the PA politically, economically, and security-wise in preparation for the day it is expected to fully govern.

Transitional arrangements are not independent but rather bilateral and hence could be difficult to conclude at present. In short, such arrangements also seek to create a two-state reality via understandings and agreements between Israel and the PA on preliminary separation measures, for example through a settlement construction freeze outside the settlement blocs or east of the barrier and redeployment of the IDF as necessary. Such an approach defers negotiations on other thorny final status issues to later stages. In the meantime, however, it can theoretically seek to advance a Palestinian state with provisional borders as envisaged in the second stage of the Road Map, which was never implemented.

While the Trump Peace to Prosperity plan was neither envisioned nor presented as a transitional plan, some of its components could be workable were it to be transformed into a basis for moving forward rather than as a complete end-of-conflict arrangement. For instance, allowing the Palestinian Authority to assume control of the approximately 30% of Area C that is granted to Palestine under the Trump plan’s conceptual map would provide an opportunity to further the separation process on the ground and give the PA renewed purpose for institutional reform. The Trump plan could also provide an opportunity to revisit Israeli control of Kufr Aqab and Shuafat Refugee Camp - areas that are part of Jerusalem in name only and the status of which even members of the current Israeli government (such as Jerusalem Affairs Minister Ze’ev Elkin) are in favor of transforming. The plan could also be useful in spurring a reevaluation of some of the current security arrangements in the West Bank, both in conceptualizing where a light footprint of IDF troops may be required following a permanent status agreement and where PA Security Forces might be able to expand their current jurisdiction and responsibilities. This eventuality is admittedly remote given the Trump administration’s seeming insistence in seeing the plan be carried out as the “ultimate deal,” though this would be a way of taking its framework and attempting to work with it in a constructive manner.

Ultimately, neither the independent nor the transitional arrangement approaches are ideal, and both are likely to face Palestinian resistance. For their part, after a nearly three decades of peace process, the Palestinians suspect that these strategies are designed as improved means of conflict management that would prevent them from establishing a state. The Israeli public is also suspicious of unilateral steps following the negative precedent set in Gaza.

Nevertheless, in the current stalemate, while both approaches might not lead to a permanent agreement, they would at least keep the window open for such an agreement in the future. At the very least, they would facilitate the beginning of a separation process and prevent an irreversible slide into a one-state outcome, in which Israel’s status as Jewish, democratic, and secure would be fatally compromised.
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