

PRO AND CONTRA ARGUMENTS ON THE TWO-STATE SOLUTION



Pro Arguments on the Two-State Solution:

- It is the most just solution and the solution that would end the decades-old occupation.
- The existence of two national groups with conflicting aspirations which neither is willing to give up will not pacify the situation on the ground.
- It is the only realistic way of dealing with the fact that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one between two distinct nations. Israelis and Palestinians have fundamentally different identities and different ideas.
- Deep mistrust and sacrifice due to decades of ethnic and national conflict which cannot easily be undone, making alternative solutions such as a bi-national state impossible.

Pro Arguments on the Two-State Solution:

- The “demographic threat” of Palestinians outnumbering Israeli Jews, who are attached to the basic Zionist idea of a state with a clear “Jewish majority”.
- The two-state solution is the best way to preserve Israel as a state that is both Jewish and democratic. It’s far more likely to abandon West Bank settlements than to give up on Zionism wholesale.
- There is an international consensus that the two-state solution is the best/only viable solution to the conflict.
- The two-state solution has endured because there is no other viable option. A one-state solution has no prospect of gaining support, especially not in Israel.

Pro Arguments on the Two-State Solution:

- Unrest among Palestinian citizens of Israel as seen, for example, in May 2021 makes it hard to imagine that a one-state reality would be remotely stable.
- Realization of the two-state solution would weaken Hamas and other resistance groups.
- The two-state separation would provide most security to all.
- Among all people living between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea there is more acceptance of some sort of a two-state solution than there is for any other solution.

Pro Arguments on the Two-State Solution:

- Under a political process promoting a two-state solution support on both sides will grow.
- Realization of the two-state solution would reduce the traction of boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) campaigns against Israel.
- Realization of the two-state solution would strengthen/enhance normalization of ties between Israel and the Arab and Muslim worlds and be the key to any further regional accord.
- The two-state solution could lead to a new prosperous and peaceful Middle East. Without it, security escalations will remain on the agenda.

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Contra Arguments on the Two-State Solution:

- Both sides claim the entire land “from the river to the sea” as theirs. Both peoples define their identity through that land, so every compromise would require forgoing part of that identity.
- The two-state solution depends on widespread and unwavering acceptance by the two sides’ populations which is not the case.
- The Israeli government is actively promoting anti-two-state policies, including Prime Minister Netanyahu’s “investment” in preserving the Hamas-Fatah split.
- There is no need to change the current situation.

Contra Arguments on the Two-State Solution:

- Israeli settlements complicate borders and demographics and are not compatible with the principle of a Palestinian state that is territorially contiguous and viable. Evacuation and resettlement of settlers would be immensely costly.
- Return and/or compensation of Palestinian refugees is simply impossible.
- Loss of control over the West Bank would carry high security risks for Israel.
- Prior to October 7, 2023, the conflict was not a priority area for Israelis, nor for the international community, including many Arab states, and the two-state solution was long considered dead and buried. Its recent “exhumation” is a mere displacement activity that only highlights the inability of world leaders to propose – and/or impose – something more credible.

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Contra Arguments on the Two-State Solution:

- Peaceful coexistence of two states born into such an ocean of blood is unimaginable. The level of dehumanization and distrust impedes the parties' willingness and capability to make concessions or even negotiate.
- The rise of support for Hamas/armed groups only shows what would be expected from a Palestinian state. Potential Palestinian elections outcomes (in favor of Hamas/Islamists as suggested in some polls) casts doubts about the PA's commitment to democracy and human rights.
- Ongoing Palestinian disunity makes it difficult or impossible for the Palestinians to govern a state and for Israelis to believe there is a partner for peace.
- There is currently no political Palestinian entity that enjoys the broad domestic and international legitimacy needed to make bold decisions towards a two-state solution.

Contra Arguments on the Two-State Solution:

- It is naïve to hope that Palestinians with Israeli citizenship would be allowed to remain peacefully in an “ethnically pure” Israel, and that Jewish settlers would be allowed to remain peacefully in an “ethnically pure” West Bank.
- Demographics: Jews and Palestinians are currently 50:50 but the land would be divided 78:20 which makes a model of a peaceful exchange of populations unrealistic.
- The horrific destruction of Gaza will take decades to rebuild, require immense resources, and add new challenges – including trauma and potential for radicalization – which would complicate efforts towards a two-state solution.