

Where Do We Go From Here? Five Jewish-Israeli Perspectives, with Resetting the Table. Please do not quote part of this document out of context.

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Introduction

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is at its core a conflict over who may exercise rights in and control over the same strip of land, resources, and holy sites. In 1993, a formal agreement was signed in Oslo, Norway that aimed to put in motion a framework for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by partitioning the land into "Two States for Two Peoples." Almost as soon as it began, however, the peace process faced profound challenges and setbacks. In recent years, it has stalled to the point of near collapse. In February of 2016, the *New York Times*' Thomas Friedman, long a supporter of negotiations and the two-state solution, stated bluntly, "[t]he peace process is dead. It's over, folks."

This primer presents five perspectives among Jewish-Israelis on the current impasse and visions for the future. It is by no means a comprehensive presentation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict today and does not represent the spectrum of Palestinian perspectives or other stakeholders around the world. Rather, this primer is offered as an introductory overview to a range of current Israeli thinking and points of view on the conflict.

Background

The war of 1948 ended with armistice agreements signed between Israel and each of its neighbors (Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria). Those agreements expanded the territory administered by the new Jewish state beyond the borders that had been recommended by the United Nations a year earlier. Two areas densely populated with Palestinians remained just outside of Israel's borders: the Gaza Strip, which was administered but not annexed by Egypt, and East Jerusalem and the West Bank, which were unilaterally annexed by Jordan. Approximately 150,000 Palestinian Arabs remained in Israel as citizens of the new Jewish state. Approximately 750,000 Palestinians became refugees, settling primarily in refugee camps in the West Bank, Gaza, and neighboring Arab states.

None of the Arab states recognized the legitimacy of the State of Israel and, notably, each of the bilateral armistice agreements explicitly affirmed that the armistice lines between Israel and its neighbors demarcated *military* boundaries rather than permanent *political* borders between the states. Such borders, the agreements stated, would be determined only via future negotiations. The boundaries created by the armistice agreements are generally referred to as the Green Line, which served as Israel's *de facto* borders until 1967.

In June of 1967, Israel launched a pre-emptive strike against Egypt, whose forces had mobilized on the border. The war quickly evolved into a three-front battle with Egypt, Syria, and Jordan that was over

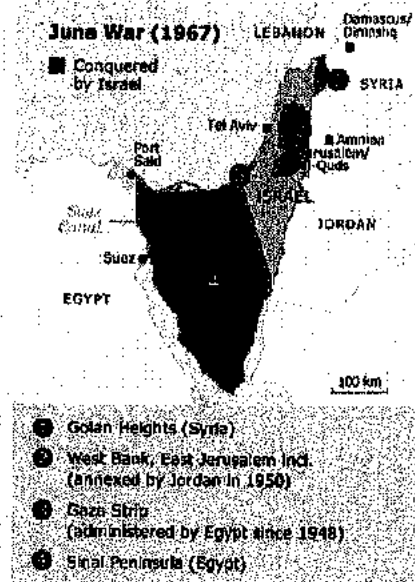


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almost as soon as it began. By the end of what is known in Israel as the Six Day War, Israel had captured several new territories across the Green Line, including East Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza, the Sinai Peninsula, and the Golan Heights.

For most Israelis, the swift, decisive victory in 1967 was both shocking and elating. In the escalation leading up to the war, most Israelis and much of the world believed that a regional war might lead to Israel's annihilation, as neighboring Arab leaders publically vowed to destroy the Jewish state. Most Palestinians, by contrast, see Israel as having acted as the aggressor, strategically designing a pretext for an unnecessary war to realize its expansionist territorial goal to control the land "from the Jordan River to the Sea."

The territorial realignment following the 1967 war marked a seismic shift in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Not only did Israeli-controlled territory expand significantly, but it now included several areas of profound biblical and historical significance to Judaism, including the Old City and Western Wall in East Jerusalem, the West Bank (a.k.a. Judea/Samaria), and Sinai. In addition, it included two areas densely populated with Palestinians in the form of Gaza and the West Bank. These changes sparked three critical points of contention and debate within Israeli society:



1. **Land for Peace vs. Greater Israel.** Israelis were divided almost immediately over what should be done with the newly-conquered territories. Most have fallen into one of two camps, and debate between them dominated Israeli politics for much of the next four decades:
 - **Land for Peace.** Many Israelis believed that the newly acquired territories could be used as a bargaining tool to advance peace. They argued that there should be formal peace negotiations with Palestinians and/or the Arab countries based on withdrawal from most or all of the territories. Israel should control and administer the land, including Gaza and the West Bank, only out of temporary necessity. Today, those who hold this position urge that Israel's indefinite control over the West Bank will lead to two unwanted outcomes:
 - a. Ruling over a hostile population while increasingly becoming isolated in the international community
 - b. A choice between sustaining Israel's Jewishness or democratic character, but not both. Put in 2016 numbers, if the 2.8 million Palestinian Arabs living in the West Bank were incorporated into Israel and given full Israeli citizenship, Israel's population would be approximately 40% Palestinian, with a higher population growth rate than that of Israel's Jewish residents. There would also still be over 5 million Palestinian refugees of 1948 and their descendants, most of whom claim the "right to return" to the land from which they fled or were expelled.
 - **Greater Israel (*Eretz Yisrael Hashlema*).** Many Israelis, however, opposed returning all or part of the land, usually for one of two reasons:
 - a. **Secure borders:** many view the 1967 borders as indefensible and dangerous, leaving Israel nine miles wide in one place and placing Israeli population centers such as Tel Aviv and Jerusalem at risk. Several Israeli leaders have described them as "suicide borders".

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- b. **Religious significance:** many see the territory Israel acquired in 1967 – particularly East Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria – as the core of the Jewish historical homeland, the land promised to Abraham, where Judaism was born, and the cradle of Judaism’s holiest sites. Some link the victory in 1967 and restoration of this land to the Jewish people as a sign of divine intervention and incipient messianic redemption.
2. **“Occupied” vs. “Disputed” Territories.** A second point of debate has been the legal status of the newly acquired territories. Shortly after the war, the UN Security Council termed the captured lands as “occupied” by Israel, a formal term in international law that comes with a range of legal obligations as detailed in the Geneva Conventions. This view has been upheld by several international bodies, including the International Criminal Court of Justice, as well as the EU, the United States and the Israeli High Court of Justice, which ruled that “Judea and Samaria [West Bank] and the Gaza area are lands seized during warfare, and are not part of Israel,” and “are held by the State of Israel in belligerent occupation.”

The official position of the Israeli government, shared by many Israelis, has been that these are “disputed” and not occupied territories. Since the 1949 Armistice lines were designated as military and not political boundaries, at the insistence of the Arab countries, and since the West Bank and Gaza were not internationally recognized between 1949 and 1967 to be parts of Jordan and Egypt, respectively, Israel argues that no nation had clear rights to these lands before the 1967 war. According to international law, territories are only “occupied” if captured in war from an established and recognized sovereign. Thus, the Israeli government argues that “[p]olitically, the West Bank...is best regarded as territory over which there are competing claims which should be resolved in peace process negotiations. Israel has valid claims to title in this territory based not only on its historic and religious connection to the land, and its recognized security needs, but also on the fact that the territory was not under the sovereignty of any state and came under Israeli control in a war of self-defense, imposed upon Israel.” This camp argues that Israel has at least as much right to these territories as do Palestinians.

3. **Settlements and the Settler Movement.** Perhaps the most contentious legacy of the 1967 War is the Jewish civilian communities commonly known as settlements that have been constructed inside areas captured in 1967. Some early settlements, initiated by the Israeli government as military outposts that later were populated with civilians, were in areas Israel believed were vital to its security, such as the corridor between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv and in the Jordan Valley. Many others were initiated by an ideological movement born after 1967 that saw the “liberation” of the Jewish people’s historic holy lands as a sign of Divine providence and coming redemption. The ideological settler movement established communities throughout Judea, Samaria, Sinai and Gaza to solidify Israel’s hold on the territories and their permanent restoration to the Jewish people. Many others moved to settlements for economic reasons, taking advantage of subsidies and other government-sponsored incentives. Today, there are nearly 400,000 Israeli Jews living in the West Bank and another 300,000 living in East Jerusalem.

Most of the international community considers settlements to be illegal, since they view the settlements as being built on occupied Palestinian land, an argument that the Israeli government rejects. Beyond the legal debate, many critics of settlements, including many Israelis, argue that settlements present “an obstacle to peace.” Some believe that the settlements have undermined rather than supported Israel’s security by fanning the hostility of Palestinians and Israel’s Arab neighbors. Most importantly, many argue that their presence and

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growth undermine the viability of a potential Palestinian state since they carve the West Bank into numerous non-contiguous parts. Many observers believe that this is precisely the point, with the primary objective of the settlements being to establish "facts on the ground" that will expand Israel's pre-1967 borders and slant negotiations in Israel's favor or prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state altogether. Once residential communities are established and rooted to the land – and extensive infrastructure of roads, electricity and water built to service them – they become difficult to dismantle, both politically and emotionally. While some Palestinians suggest that Jews would be welcome to remain in the West Bank as citizens of a future Palestinian state, most argue that the settlements have effectively "cantonized" the West Bank and forced a situation in which any future Palestinian state will resemble "Swiss cheese."

The dynamics set in motion in 1967 dominated the territorial dispute in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict at least until the mid-1990s and the launch of the Oslo peace process. The 1993 Oslo Accords marked the apex of the land-for-peace camp, which had gotten a boost from the 1979 peace treaty with Egypt, in which the Sinai Peninsula was returned in exchange for peace and recognition of Israel's right to exist. The Oslo Accords included a set of agreements between Israel and the Palestinians intended as the first phase of a framework for achieving a final peace settlement between the two sides. For a brief window in the mid-1990s, Oslo set forth a relatively widely shared optimism that the conflict might soon reach a formal resolution.

In the time since, however, support for Oslo and more generally for negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians has virtually disintegrated on both sides. The arc of events that catalyzed and cemented that stalemate is complex and contentious, though at least four moments are crucial for understanding current Israeli sensibilities:

- Almost as soon as it was announced, Oslo set forth a cycle of rapid polarization and escalation between proponents and opponents of the framework, for both Israelis and Palestinians. The internal Israeli conflict culminated in the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by a Jewish settler radically opposed to withdrawing from the lands captured in 1967. This event shocked and traumatized many in Israel, which subsequently elected a critic of the Oslo agreements, Benjamin Netanyahu, as Prime Minister amidst an escalation of Palestinian attacks against Israeli civilians.
- In 2000, US President Bill Clinton convened a summit at Camp David between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and PA President Yassir Arafat, intended to reach a final status agreement based on the Oslo framework. The summit failed, with most Israelis placing full blame on Arafat. Though many competing narratives surround what took place at Camp David, the conventional Israeli wisdom sees Barak as having offered Arafat an extraordinarily generous deal exceeding all Israeli expectations, including 96% of the West Bank. Many Israelis saw Arafat's rejection of this offer as proof that Palestinians will not accept any peace deal or give sanction to any borders of a Jewish state, and are therefore not "a partner for peace."
- The failure at Camp David was closely followed by the Second Intifada, a Palestinian uprising against Israel from 2000-2006 that included dozens of suicide attacks on Israeli civilian sites including dance halls, buses, and cafes. Many Israelis believed that Arafat and other Palestinian leaders incited the attacks or even coordinated them. While this narrative, too, is contested by Palestinians, many Israeli intelligence officials, and others, the sense that Palestinians responded to Israel's most generous possible peace offer with brutal violence against civilians traumatized many Israelis and greatly hardened Israeli popular sentiment against the peace process. In

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response to the terror attacks, Israel began construction of what it termed a "separation barrier," a network of fences and walls surrounding the West Bank intended to keep Palestinian militants out of Israel.

- In 2005, under Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's leadership, Israel unilaterally withdrew from Gaza. Sharon argued that given the inability to reach agreement with the Palestinians through negotiations, Israel would move unilaterally to ensure its own security while leaving open the possibility for a future negotiated agreement. Within two years Gaza was under the control of the militant Palestinian organization Hamas and missiles were regularly fired from Gaza into southern Israel, most notably onto the town of Sderot, which became a symbol for most Israelis of the frustration, trauma, and failure of the Gaza disengagement. "We withdrew and got rockets in return" became a truism among Israelis, reinforcing the fear among many that pulling out from the West Bank would only open Israel to greater violence and terror. Though it is not the subject of this primer, Palestinians view the Gaza withdrawal in starkly different terms.

By the end of the first decade of the 21st century, cynicism had become the dominant attitude toward the peace process and the peace camp in Israel had grown virtually non-existent.

With the formal peace process at an impasse and increasing numbers of commentators pronouncing it "dead," no one is certain what is next. Most Israelis support a two-state solution in principle and do not wish to rule over Palestinians in the West Bank forever. Nonetheless, most do not trust that a negotiated two-state solution, even if it were attainable, would bring Israel peace because they believe Palestinians would not accept Israel's legitimacy even if Israel were to withdraw from the West Bank. In other words, the most common desired outcome is largely at odds with most people's assessment of what's possible.

With that in mind, a wide range of views and orientations exist among Jewish-Israelis for responding to the current political stalemate.

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Where do we go from here? Five Israeli Views and Visions

View 1. Conflict Management: "We support two states, but without a partner we must wait."

Israeli journalist and writer Yossi Klein Halevi summarizes what he calls his "centrist" position as follows:

A centrist has two nightmares about Israel's future. The first is that there won't be a Palestinian state. The second is that there will be. A centrist regards a Palestinian state as an existential necessity for Israel – saving us from the impossible choice between Israel as a Jewish and democratic state, or the moral burden of occupying another people, from growing pariah status. But a centrist also regards a Palestinian state as an existential threat to Israel – risking rocket attacks from the Samarian highlands on the coastal plain, where most Israelis live, transforming greater Tel Aviv into Sderot, the besieged Israeli town bordering Gaza that has been on the receiving end of thousands of rockets over the last decade... *While I believe the absence of a Palestinian state is a long-term existential threat to Israel, I fear that its creation today would be a greater danger.* (emphasis added)

This camp asserts that Israelis remain willing and ready to negotiate, compromise, pursue peace, and accept a Palestinian state, as they always have been. They continue to desire two states as the long-term outcome of the conflict. However, they also believe that the Palestinians have proven that they are unwilling to accept a Jewish state of Israel and their fundamental rejection of Jewish indigeneity and sovereignty in the Land of Israel represent the true obstacle to peace. As Klein Halevi concludes:

For Israelis, the real obstacle to an agreement is the continuing refusal of the Palestinian leadership, and much of the Arab leadership generally, to accept the legitimacy of a Jewish state *in any borders.* (emphasis added)

This camp believes it would require a foundational shift in Palestinian recognition of the Jewish state before a true Palestinian partner for peace materializes. As a result, the only option Israel has is to "manage" the conflict; this camp sees efforts to "resolve" the conflict in the medium-term as utopian. The prevalence of this view in Israel is less a reflection of what people aspire toward, and more an expression of their assessment of a hard reality that includes no better alternatives. Israeli author Danny Gordis summarizes this view:

Because [Palestinian] hatred of the Jewish state cannot be appeased, Israel has no good options at the moment. It will thus hunker down and hold on.

Expanding on this premise, Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon argues that there is no way forward until Palestinians offer fundamental recognition of the Jewish state, demonstrate their ability to stabilize their economy and political arena, reign in terror, and relinquish the right of return:

As someone who supported [the] Oslo [Peace Process], I'm learning that on the other side we have no partner for two states for two people. There is no one on the other side.

[There] hasn't been, since the dawn of Zionism, a leadership that is prepared to recognize our right to exist as a nation-state for the Jewish nation and to recognize an agreement as the end of the conflict and the end to demands.

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We won't talk about an inch, about a millimeter of territory, if we don't see that we have a partner who talks about recognition, about the end of the conflict and about giving up the right of return.

Yaalon argues that a negotiated agreement with the Palestinians *is* still possible, but will inevitably be a long road. Moreover, the journey will only be prolonged if Israel makes risky concessions prior to fundamental changes in Palestinian leadership and society:

The Oslo doctrine failed because it put the cart before the horse. The Palestinians received political concessions without ever proving their willingness or ability to bring about order and stability in the territories handed over to their control...

No dialogue can succeed and no reforms will be possible so long as the Palestinians—and Arabs in general—believe that the Jewish state can be subdued by force...

The Israelis need not abandon their hopes for true peace with the Palestinians... However, in order for it to become a reality, two conditions must be met: first, unequivocal Palestinian recognition of Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state; and second, the establishment of Palestinian self-rule on a solid economic, political, and security basis...

Unfortunately, the road leading to this destination is still very long... The present diplomatic path, which forces Israel to make far-reaching concessions and take genuine risks in return for empty Palestinian declarations, is headed for war, not peace... In order to avoid repeating mistakes, both sides must get off the train to nowhere and board the one on the right track.

Given their assessment of Palestinian rejectionism, this camp views calls for Israel to "end the occupation" of the West Bank as misguided, naïve and blaming of the victim. As Gordis writes:

[W]hen I find myself listening to the standard 'end the occupation' mantra of the American Jewish opposition, I feel like I'm watching kids squeezing their eyes tightly shut, hoping against hope that this night, the tooth fairy really will come after all. Our presence on the West Bank may be necessary, or it may be foolhardy; about that, reasonable minds can and do differ. But the notion that our presence on the West Bank is the prime impediment to peace is sheer myopia....

[So long as] peace is fundamentally unachievable, the questions that matter are not how to make peace, but how to protect both Israel's body and soul while peace remains elusive.

View 2: The absence of a two-state solution will spell Israel's doom. Israel should be pro-active to make it viable.

For this group, the pragmatic and/or moral danger of Israel maintaining political and military control over the West Bank necessitates Israel pro-actively pursuing peace and creating conditions that will support Palestinian partnership at the negotiating table and on the street. Author Amos Oz paints a future without a negotiated two-state solution as dismal, if not disastrous:

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We'll begin with the most important thing, with a matter of life-and-death for the State of Israel: If there will not be two states here, and fast, there will be one state here. If there will be one state here, it will be an Arab state, from the sea to the Jordan River...

[I]t's very possible that, in order to avert the emergence of an Arab state from the sea to the Jordan River, a dictatorship of fanatic Jews will rule here temporarily, a dictatorship with racist features, a dictatorship that will suppress both the Arabs and its own Jewish opponents with an iron hand. Such a dictatorship will be short-lived. Hardly any dictatorship of a minority that suppresses the majority has survived long in the modern era. At the end of that road, too, an Arab state, from the sea to the Jordan River awaits us, and before that perhaps also an international boycott, or a bloodbath, or both.

Oz argues that "managing" the conflict will leave Israel in a perpetual state of war with temporary periods of ceasefire, ushering in more extreme and violent Palestinian leadership:

[C]onflict management...sentences us to the next Lebanon war, and the one to follow... the next Gaza war and the many to follow... a third, fourth, and fifth Intifada in Jerusalem and the West Bank, all spilling over to our streets. The resulting collapse of the Palestinian Authority would mean the emergence of Hamas or a more extreme successor, with untold casualties on both sides.

Israeli author and journalist Ari Shavit delineates additional profound moral and pragmatic costs to perpetuating "the occupation:"

Early June 2017 will mark 50 years of the occupation...

At the end of 50 years it will be clear what our revealed choice has been: We prefer the Land of Israel over the people of Israel. Most of the Jews in the world still live in the diaspora. The vast majority of them are committed to liberal democratic values. A significant part of the Jewish citizens of Israel is also still committed to those same values. This means that two-thirds of the Jews are not reconciled with a continuing situation of control over another people while denying their national, civil and human rights....

The moral depravity and the brutalization of recent years prove the extent to which the control of others has corrupted us. At the end of 50 years it will be clear what our revealed choice has been: We prefer the Land of Israel over the values of Israel... There are no more excuses and justifications and there is no more "tomorrow." The permanency of the occupation is becoming an integral part of our life and our identity. Thus it is endangering the State of Israel, the Jewish people and the Jewish heritage. Before the Palestinians embark on the 50th-year intifada and before the international community imposes the 50th-year sanctions on us, it is incumbent upon us to find the courage to end the 50-year curse by ourselves, for ourselves.

If there is any hope for avoiding these outcomes, according to this view, Israel simply has no other option than to take pro-active steps toward the two-state outcome, regardless of behavior on the Palestinian side. Oz argues that recent changes in the Middle East serve as a moment of promise for Israel to reengage with regional Arab powers to make progress:

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Both Iran and the Islamic State are responsible for sleepless nights in the capitals of [Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and others in the region as well as in North Africa]. Against this backdrop Israel is now perceived as part of the solution, [as long as] cooperation with us can be legitimized by ending the occupation and addressing Palestinian aspirations for statehood.

Oz points to the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, endorsed by the Arab League -- which promised normalizing relations with Israel in exchange for a full withdrawal from the "occupied territories" -- as a major missed opportunity, whereas "engaging... this historic reversal of the old rejectionist Arab position... would open the door to two states and regional security."

Oz emphasizes that his lens is not clouded by rose-colored optimism, but rather represents a pragmatic take on preconditions for Israel's survival:

I am not naïve. Peace is no toy resting on a shelf for us just to reach out to have... I promise no quick fix, no easy implementation. I empathize with the legitimate fears of millions of Israelis who recognize the need for parting but do not trust the Palestinians for providing security. But I anticipate grave consequences if we don't part with the Palestinians. For I cannot reiterate enough: It is either two states by choice or one -- Arab -- state by default.

This camp counters the common refrain that "there is no Palestinian partner for peace" in a couple ways. Many reprimand the Israeli government, especially under Benjamin Netanyahu, for not doing enough to foster goodwill and undermining the Palestinian leadership's authority and ability to serve as a true partner. Some in this camp argue that Israel itself has not demonstrated good faith partnership, particularly by participating in negotiations while simultaneously expanding settlements in the heart of areas designated as part of a future Palestinian state (sometimes compared to "eating a pizza, while negotiating over how to divide it"). The editorial board of Haaretz, a left-leaning Israeli newspaper, writes:

Rejection of the Palestinian partner is a deception aimed to delude the public into thinking the Israeli government's hands are clean.

There is "no partner" because of incitement by the Palestinians, say those who engage in incitement against the Palestinian Authority. "No partner" because the Palestinian Authority has been unable to prevent the so-called atmosphere attacks, say the people who have failed to apprehend the "price tag" gangs. And "no partner" say those who are slated this week to publish tenders for the construction of 1,400 homes over the Green Line...

In their view, the only appropriate partner is one who will accept continued Israeli control of the Jordan Valley, who does not call for a boycott of Israeli factories in the settlements and is willing to recognize Israel as the "Jewish national state" despite the fact that some 20 percent of its citizens are Arabs. The problem is that such a partner is almost impossible to find, not only among the Palestinians. Even Israel's friends have given up on defending its positions, and some are already supporting sanctions against Israel...

It is amazing how Israeli politicians who are steadfast in their mantra of "no partner" fail to comprehend a basic fact about negotiations between adversaries: Partners do not grow on trees, they are created through hard work; that building process is their job...

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It is not an exaggeration to say that it is the Israeli side that is not a partner for peace.

Others reject the notion that there is no Palestinian partner. Several former Israeli military intelligence officials involved with Camp David – for example – strongly criticize the political “spin” placing primary blame on Palestinian leadership for the collapse of the peace process and escalation of violence that followed. Gilead Sher, who headed the Israeli negotiation team at Camp David and was Chief of Staff to former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, argues that the current Palestinian leadership “is as good as it gets”:

Palestinian leaders recognize the State of Israel, support a two-state solution, coordinate with Israel on security matters, promote business and trade, and officially oppose violence. If they continue to lose legitimacy among their people, as they have over the past several years, the self-fulfilling prophecy of ‘no partner’ may come to be.

View 3: Partial annexation and Palestinian self-rule, but not a Palestinian state

While for nearly two decades much of the Israeli political conversation focused on the when, where, and how of two states, alternatives have been voiced in recent years by Israeli leaders who do not believe in the viability or desirability of the two-state framework. Once peripheral, the idea of partially annexing the West Bank has begun to be integrated into the Israeli political mainstream, advocated by many leaders of the Likud party, several ministers, and the current speaker of the Knesset, Yuli Edelstein. Perhaps the most prominent voice calling for partial annexation has been advanced by Naftali Bennett, currently Israel’s Minister of Education and Minister of Diaspora Affairs as well as head of the Jewish Home Party (*Bayit Yehudi*). Bennett’s arguments are not rooted in a national-religious language, but rather in a secular language focused on security.

Bennett argues that after 20 years of negotiations, the peace process has only produced ongoing cycles of violence and frustration to Israelis and Palestinians alike. Capturing Israeli disillusionment with the land-for-peace paradigm, Bennett states that “It’s not working... No one [in Israel] thinks handing over land will bring peace anymore.” Rather, we should “stop obsessing about the one thing we can’t solve” and create a new plan for a secure future.

Bennett’s plan follows two premises. First, the lesson of Israel’s 2005 Gaza withdrawal is that “when we evacuate to the so-called 1967 lines and hand it over to our adversaries... [p]eace is not obtained. Rather, we are met by war and bloodshed.” As he sees it, this has been a constant pattern regarding the lands conquered in ‘67: “[e]very place we’ve pulled out of turned into a radical Islamic base.” In Bennett’s view, this is a byproduct of entrenched and pervasive hatred in Palestinian society. He argues:

On the Palestinian side, when hundreds of these events happen, not only do they not condemn — I’m talking about officials in the PA — they in fact celebrate. That’s a society that’s been corrupted.

Second, Bennett sees a massive increase in the threats that radical Islam poses for both Israel and the West more broadly. With the rise of ISIS, the collapse of the Syrian state and instability in other Arab states, Israeli military withdrawal from the West Bank would “potentially open the door for the Islamic State and other extremists to flood into the new Palestinian state. We cannot take that risk.” In other words, a Palestinian state in the West Bank from this perspective would only produce more violence, terror, and danger for Israel and beyond. Bennett argues:

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[W]e're fighting the battle of the free world. We're literally the border between Islamic State and the free world. Quite literally. The Golan Heights, that's where radical Islam meets the free world. The Lebanese border is where Hezbollah and Iran meets the free world. Physically. And it's tough. And if we weren't here, you'd see it all flow to the West. So we're the front bastion of the free world.

For these reasons, Bennett believes the survival of a Jewish state depends on preventing the creation of a Palestinian state: "I will do everything in my power to make sure [the Palestinians] never get a state... No more illusions."

At the same time, Bennett argues, Israel must accept the fact that the Palestinians "are not going anywhere." As a result, any Israeli plan for the future must take responsibility to provide a secure, hopeful life for Palestinians so as to minimize home-grown Palestinian unrest and violence. Israel, he claims, has failed in this to date. "It's our fault," he says, "[t]he quality of life for the Arabs has not been good enough." He points to Arab-Israelis as evidence that coexistence is possible under Israeli sovereignty. "Israeli-Arab society is in a very positive trend," he claims. The Israeli-Arab "mainstream wants to be part of Israeli society" and "99.9% of Arab citizens are loyal to the State of Israel."

Given these principles, Bennett urges replacing the Oslo framework with a different plan. Briefly summarized, it calls on Israel to:

- Upgrade Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank, in the areas largely under Palestinian control (known as Areas A and B, where the majority of West Bank Palestinians live). Palestinians "should govern themselves and run their day-to-day lives... Much of this already exists, but we can do better."
- Invest in a "massive upgrade of roads and infrastructure, as well as the removal of roadblocks and checkpoints throughout the West Bank... ensure freedom of movement for all residents – Palestinian and Israeli – and to improve their quality of life."
- Invest in the economic viability of Palestinian life in Areas A and B, including building "economic bridges of peace between Israelis and Palestinians." Such economic networks will produce a "bottom-up" capacity for coexistence.
- Annex Area C, which is the largest territory of the West Bank and controlled by Israel, offering the Palestinians who live there full Israeli citizenship.

Bennett concludes, "[b]y applying Israeli law and asserting national sovereignty in those blocs, while upgrading Palestinian autonomy in Areas A and B, we will reduce the scope of territory in dispute, making it easier to reach a long-term agreement in the future."

For Bennett, the lofty goal of peace simply is not attainable, yet there are still tangible steps to take once we face this reality:

Peace is a big word. The connotation of peace is a treaty that then holds for eternity. We have nothing of such, and I don't think anyone in the region, whether Palestinian or Israeli or Jordanian, thinks this is viable. Everyone talks about it, but no one really believes it. No one.

So my point is to stop the charades. Let's stop the charades. Why? Because the charade creates a huge degree of frustration. Because the gap between the rhetoric and reality is so big and

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that's where the dissonance creates frustration. If everyone way down, with their feet on the ground, would say let's be reasonable here, you know and I know, we both know, that we're not going to reach this Palestinian state peace deal ever, so let's think of alternatives. It's the longer way, but the more true way that would ultimately bring peace and quiet.

While Bennett's proposals appeal to many Israelis, one reason that the idea of annexation has remained marginal in Israel's political arena is that many anticipate international condemnation of such a move since the international community does not recognize Israel as the legitimate ruler over the West Bank, and it would leave most Palestinians in the West Bank stateless. Critics compare it to a "reservation" system in which Palestinians in Areas A and B would be responsible for providing municipal services but still live under Israeli military rule and not achieve genuine political representation.

Bennett and other supporters of annexation like Speaker of the Knesset Yuli Edelstein argue that giving Palestinians in annexed Area C full citizenship and significantly improving the quality of life in the Palestinian-controlled Areas A and B should bring the international community around to supporting the idea. Edelstein also joins Bennett in arguing that annexing Area C would create a new legal reality that would eventually come to be viewed as inevitable, as has largely been the case with East Jerusalem, which Israel annexed in 1980. Though many international objections were voiced at the time and the international community does not recognize Israel's sovereignty in East Jerusalem, the move has now come to seem irreversible for most Israelis. Bennett acknowledges that this is not a full "solution" per se, largely because a solution is likely simply not possible in his view. Ultimately, he concludes,

I am aware that the world will not immediately accept this proposal. It seems to go against everything Israel, the Palestinians and the international community have worked toward over the last 20 years. But I will work to make this plan government policy because there is a new reality in the Middle East... The regional upheaval and disintegration of nation states oblige us to act responsibly.

View 4: Greater Eretz Yisrael and the Religious Zionist Vision

The religious Zionist settler movement was born shortly after the 1967 war. The majority of religious Zionist communities embraced what had previously been a marginal form of religious Zionism associated with Rav Abraham Kook, who'd argued since the late 1920s in favor of the Divine and messianic character of Zionism. Many religious Jews saw Israel's decisive, unexpected victory in the 1967 war as a clear expression of Divine will and harbinger of redemption, particularly given the religious significance of the newly acquired territories of Judea and Samaria that had formed the backbone of the Jewish peoples' biblical homeland. Rabbi Haim Druckman, who became a leading voice of the settler movement that emerged in the decade after 1967 explained:

I could come up with... plenty of quotations from authoritative sources, according to which we are living in an era of redemption, but I prefer to observe reality. After two thousand years Jews return to their homeland; the desolate land is being continuously built; there is a unique process of the ingathering of the exiles; we have won independence and sovereignty which we did not have even during the era of the Second Temple. What would you call this reality if not a reality of redemption?

Most religious Zionist leaders see Judea and Samaria as "liberated" in 1967 and restored to Jewish sovereignty after nearly two millennia of foreign, occupying rule. Rabbi Moshe Levinger, a leader in the

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early Settler Movement, argued that the IDF had recaptured "what was stolen from Israel 1897 years ago." Rabbi Tzvi Yehudah, the son of Rav Kook who became perhaps the central leading figure of the settler movement in the 1970s and 80s, put it this way in 1967:

The Torah prohibits giving up even one inch of our liberated land. This is not a conquest and we are not conquerors of foreign lands. We are returning to our home, to the inheritance of our ancestors. This is not an Arab land. This is the inheritance of God and the entire world must become accustomed to this thought.

Within a decade, a cohort of Orthodox Zionist leaders formed what became known as Gush Emunim, the "Block of the Faithful," whose goals included building support for settlement expansion inside the Israeli government and accelerating the pace and scale of settlement expansion, especially in the West Bank, with or without government permission so as to ensure permanent Jewish control over the land. Although a messianic movement, Gush Emunim focused on an incremental approach of working to convince Israelis of the religious centrality of the Land to the Jewish people and establishing a normal life in Judea and Samaria to try to make future territorial compromise impossible. Many leaders adopted a strategy of "kima kima" (step by step) and "saying only that which can be heard" by the broader public:

This faith does not permit slogans such as 'Messiah now, peace now'...The Redemption comes *kima kima*, by the same power that created our state, and we shall work, managing to move forward along the path toward it, despite all its complexities.

Over the coming decades, two important trends marked the relationship between Gush Emunim supporters and much of the rest of Israeli society. On the one hand, the religious Zionists gained a measure of support and sympathy from mainstream Israelis. The Settlement Movement invoked the "pioneering spirit," and deep sense of idealistic Zionist purpose reminiscent of the early 20th century. Many Israelis have come to live in the settlements without a strong religious ideology, drawn by government subsidies for home ownership, geographical convenience, and a modest degree of support for Jewish settlement of the land.

At the same time, most Gush Emunim members increasingly felt dissociated from, if not hostile to, broader Israeli society and political culture. As Israel traded land for peace with Egypt in 1979 and then launched the Oslo Peace Process in the early 1990s following the First Intifada, many religious Zionist leaders tended to view any Israelis willing to give up land as enemies of "true Zionism," lost and misguided secularists standing as obstacles to God's will.

By the early 1980s, a "dovish fringe" of religious Zionist leaders argued that achievement of peace and saving Jewish lives might offer reasons to compromise or delay exclusive Jewish rule over all of the territories. Revered rabbis including Aharon Lichtenstein and Yehuda Amital argued to privilege the people of Israel over the Land of Israel. In Rav Amital's words:

If opportunities for a genuine and final peace with the Arabs materialize, after which emigration of Jews from the Land might stop and a massive immigration of Jews might begin, and we are faced with the choice of more Jews in the Land of Israel with less holy land under Jewish rule, or fewer Jews in the Land of Israel and more holy land under Jewish rule, we should choose the first option.

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Amital's opinion, however, inspired widespread denunciation suggesting he had contradicted the very premise of Gush Emunim and his right to be part of the movement.

From its inception, the religious Zionist movement significantly disagreed over the extent to which expanding Jewish settlements and resistance to exchanging land-for-peace could be pursued "at any cost," including extralegal and even violent means. Rabbi Yisrael Ariel, former Chief Rabbi of the evacuated settlement of Yamit in the Sinai Peninsula of Egypt wrote:

Don't wait for the exterminator to sneak up on the settlements of Judea and Samaria, perish the thought. Don't wait for the moment when the cranes arrive at Kedumim and Elon Moreh. Take Yamit as an example... and the moment that they come to uproot a planting, to attempt to demolish houses, let every individual abandon a house and do battle in Yamit in order to save Judea and Samaria, in order to save all of the Land of Israel!

These tensions exploded most poignantly in 1995 when an extremist religious Zionist, Yigal Amir, assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin with the intention of derailing the peace process, arguing that killing Rabin was an act of collective self-defense on behalf of the Jewish people. Though Rabin's assassination was categorically condemned by many religious Zionists, the commitment to sustaining Jewish sovereignty over the full territory of Greater Israel brought the religious Zionist world into ongoing resistance with Israeli policies and sparked an ongoing, internal debate over when vanguard, illegal and even violent activities might be justifiable.

The strain between the Orthodox religious Zionists and the government of Israel reached another apex in 2005, when Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon instituted a unilateral withdrawal from Gaza. Settlers perceived Sharon, who had long been a supporter of the Settler Movement, as a traitor. His betrayal was compounded in their eyes by the refusal of the Yesha Council, the municipal umbrella organization of all the settlements, to support a plan for settlers to block primary Israeli roadways as part of anti-withdrawal demonstrations. Though Yesha leaders claimed that they could not support bringing Israel's Jews into "civil war," many settlers, especially younger ones, were left dismayed. Many in the Orthodox community experienced the IDF's removal by force of thousands of resistant, unwilling settlers as a profound collective trauma. One evacuee from Gush Katif, a block of 17 settlements in southern Gaza whose vegetable-producing greenhouses had been a symbol of success for the settlement movement, explained the psychological impact:

I feel that the pain we suffered went way beyond [losing our] home. We were pioneers; we had helped build Israel. Yet [there were many in Israeli society who] were not touched at all by our pain, who thought, "Big deal, so you lost your house. So what?" There was an attempt to delegitimize our feelings of loss, and that was the most painful of all... The people of Gush Katif had moved there out of a sense of mission, a *shelichut*. It was a settlement built on love of and connection to the land. Suddenly, we were evil... What was our crime? That we had built these *yishuvim*, these communities? The army prepared its soldiers as if we were violent people. Even those who shouted did not get violent, and their screams and refusal to leave came from a place of great pain, the shattering of a great dream they had built with their own hands. At the time, I felt that the government of Israel had abandoned us, as if we were no longer a part [of the Israeli nation].

In recent years, the settler movement has further fractured into more moderate and more radical wings. The Gaza withdrawal hardened many against any possible future withdrawal, a conviction that solidified

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as Hamas rose to power in Gaza soon after the withdrawal. The smaller, more radical strain is typified by organizations such as *Neemanei Eretz Yisrael* (Believers of the Land of Israel) who are committed to securing and expanding new settlements across the West Bank, often by creating illegal outposts and effectively daring the Israeli government to dismantle them. With a marked distrust of the Israeli political class, this youth-dominated movement took from the withdrawal a sense that they can only rely on themselves to implement the religious Zionist vision. A fringe have turned to retaliatory violence including attacks on Palestinian property and even persons – commonly known as the “price tag policy” – not only as revenge for Palestinian violence but against any event perceived as detrimental to the settler project.

From the settler movement’s inception, a sizable group of religious Zionists has supported population transfer or policies that will encourage Palestinians to depart the Land of Israel. As one of the founders of the *Kedumim* settlement, David Rosensweig has put it:

We must induce them to leave here. They must be made to feel that the land is slipping away beneath their feet... For the good of our peace, their peace, and the peace of all Israel, not only for the settlers of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, and for our future in this land, for there to be any future at all, there is no place for Arabs with us here... We must find a new way, a new revolutionary way to deal with the Jewish-Arab conflict.

Other religious Zionists have preached for peaceful co-existence of Jews and Arabs, provided it is under Jewish sovereignty. Some would be willing to support territorial compromise and argue that sustaining a Jewish majority is more important than retaining all territory. A small minority argue that they would be willing to live as citizens of a Palestinian state, provided they could sustain their connection to the land.

Most religious Zionists in the settler camp, however, share the belief that Judea and Samaria belong rightfully and exclusively to the Jewish people, and if Arabs cannot live peacefully with Jewish rule they do not have a part in the Land of Israel and redemptive plan. As Davidi Perl, head of the Gush Etzion regional authority, summarizes:

I believe in a version of [a two-state solution]. The whole of Israel for us and the 22 Arab countries for them. This area was mentioned many times in the Bible. We believe that this place was given to us by God. It is the land of King David and the Arabs have no legitimacy whatsoever. If I went to live in America for 10 years, I could not claim that the land was mine. So if the Arabs want to live here under our rule, under a green card system, that’s ok. But there is no rational explanation for their claim on the land. Nobody really believes the two-state solution is possible. Not us, not the Arabs, not the world.

Most religious Zionists view the notion that Jews should be excluded from living in Judea and Samaria – either by preventing the development of settlements or as part of a future peace deal – as absurd, even discriminatory. As Sherri Mandell, resident of the Tekoa settlement and mother of terror victim Kobi Mandell concludes,

I find it very interesting that there is a place that Jews aren’t supposed to live in the world. If Jews were told in Paris or London or Manchester that we weren’t allowed to live there, the whole world would be up in arms, saying this is unjust. The only place in the world where we’re told we can’t live because we’re Jews is the heart of Biblical Judaism.

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Finally, from the point of view of religious Zionist theology and ideology, the idea that territorial compromise would be a prerequisite for peace is nonsensical. On the contrary, Jewish restoration of the Land of Israel is a prerequisite for messianic peace and the redemption of the world.

Views 5a and 5b. Is it Time to Talk about One State? "Right" and "Left" Takes on the One-State Option

A rare but growing perspective from across the political spectrum within Israel calls for a unified state that includes the current West Bank and Israel. There are two current versions of this perspective -- one right-leaning and one left-leaning -- both of which argue that while the dominant political rhetoric surrounding the conflict focuses on the two-state solution, Israel and the West Bank currently exist in a *de facto* "one state reality." While the Palestinian Authority maintains some degree of autonomous control over Palestinian areas, most of the people in these camps argue that the PA's weakness and corruption and Israel's control over most Palestinian infrastructure and economic development means that Israel remains the true sovereign of the West Bank. Each version of this perspective argues that formalizing and improving this *de facto* one-state reality offers the best way forward for all parties.

From the Right

An array of current and former Likud officials articulate a version of a one-state vision, including former Speaker of the Knesset and Israel's current President Reuven Rivlin, former defense and foreign affairs minister Moshe Arens, current Likud Member of Knesset Tsipi Hotovely, and prominent pro-settler activists including Uri Ellitzur, former head of the Yesha Council, and Emily Amrousi, Yesha's former spokesperson. Though there are slight differences among them, they all combine a staunch commitment to Greater Israel and a corresponding sense of Israel's responsibility to honor the rights and dignity of the Arab population living on the Land.

Many right-leaning supporters of a one-state solution argue against a two-state solution on pragmatic grounds. From a security perspective, a two-state solution according to the 1967 borders would mean Israel would lose strategic depth and open the way for missiles to be fired into Ben Gurion airport or Tel Aviv, only a few miles from the Green Line. An independent Palestinian state would likely lack economic viability, further radicalizing its population. The growth of Jewish settlements and infrastructure in the West Bank (roads, electricity, water) cannot easily be undone, morally or practically. And neither population will readily renounce its claim to the land projected to be part of the other peoples' state in a two-state arrangement-- neither Palestinians their claim to pre-1948 Arab villages now part of Israel nor Jewish-Israelis their claim to sites of Biblical significance in the West Bank, like Shechem (Nablus), Hebron and Jericho.

Many of these one-state advocates from the right see themselves as inheritors of the one-state vision laid out by Ze'ev Jabotinsky, leader of the Revisionist stream of Zionism in the early 20th century. They translate their core commitments into proposals to:

- Gradually annex all of the West Bank to Israel
- Retain the Jewish character and symbols of the state and enshrine them in a constitution
- Grant the Palestinian population of the West Bank full citizenship and civil rights
- Improve Palestinians' quality of life and the sense of shared community between Jews and Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line

Notably, their proposals generally exclude Gaza, which would remain an independent entity whose hostility to Israel would still need to be addressed. They also reject the Palestinian right of return for

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refugees currently outside of the West Bank. Nonetheless, they are clear and unequivocal in criticizing Israel's current treatment of Arabs both in Israel and in the West Bank. Rivlin, for example, has argued that, "[i]t is time to honestly admit that Israel is sick and it is our duty to treat this illness." Speaking of life in the West Bank, Amrousi writes that,

[T]he status quo... [is] really not moral. It's impossible to go on like this, with a situation in which my Palestinian neighbors have to cross three checkpoints to get from one village to another. There is a distortion here - true, for security reasons, for logical reasons - but something went wrong along the way, and we can't go on accepting this... The whole situation now is wrong.

In response, many in this camp have used their positions to advocate for improving the material conditions of Palestinians. As speaker of the Knesset, Rivlin blocked or opposed legislation, often from his own party, that he found undermined Palestinian quality of life. Now in his largely ceremonial, but highly symbolic position as President, Rivlin has pledged:

I hereby swear, in my name and that of all our descendants, that we will never act against the principle of equal rights, and we will never try and force someone from our land.

For this camp, such vows come partly from a sense of moral responsibility and partly from a belief that that hope for security rests in Palestinians seeing Israel as a place of hope for them rather than oppression.

At the same time, for this camp, the Palestinian rights they champion are exclusively individualistic, not collective. Indeed, in this vision, the Palestinian nationalist movement would end. Tsipi Hotovely, currently Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, explains,

I want it to be clear that I do not recognize national rights of Palestinians in the Land of Israel. I recognize their human rights and their individual rights, and also their individual political rights - but between the sea and the Jordan [River] there is room for one state, a Jewish state.

The Jewish claim to the Land of Israel, they argue, is undeniable, rooted in all the religious, historical, and political reasons that comprise the Greater Israel viewpoint. Like others in this camp, Rivlin rejects the notion that Israel is occupying the West Bank. "It can't be 'occupied territory,'" he has said, "if the land is your own."

To these core positions, proponents of this perspective add three central critiques of the two-state option. First, they believe that a future Palestinian state is likely to be hostile to Israel, either immediately or eventually, even if that state is the result of a negotiated agreement with the Palestinian Authority. For this reason, many in this camp argue that the risks brought about by a binational state would be lower than those connected to a Palestinian state. In Hotoveli's words,

Unequivocally the binational danger [is lower]. In the binational process we have a degree of control, but the moment you abandon the area to a Palestinian entity, what control do you have over what will happen there? ...Coping with the [large] Arab minority is a lower price than the danger of the Qassams, the delegitimization and the immoral actions we will commit in coping with them, and also preferable to giving up parts of the homeland, including Jerusalem.

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Second, this camp claims that the two state outcome, even if it were achievable, would produce less true democratic self-determination for Palestinians. While their one-state vision admittedly requires the end of Palestinian national claims over the West Bank, Rivlin argues that the two-state solution offers only a shallow simulation of real self-determination since its greatest supporters “are not even talking about a real state for the Palestinians. They’re talking about an autonomy with no army, borders, control over airspace or telecommunications.”

By contrast to these drawbacks, they argue, their one-state vision enables true freedom of movement on both sides of the Green Line, full political representation, and fully shared economic and municipal infrastructure dedicated to lowering the gap between Arabs and Jews on both sides of the Green Line. Encouraging raising the ceiling of Palestinian political activity in Israel, Rivlin has suggested the idea of a confederate, dual parliament system and has positively invoked the possibility of an Arab being elected Prime Minister of Israel.

Finally, many members of this camp reject the mantra of “separation” that has become central to two-state advocacy in Israel. As Rivlin argues:

Contrary to Barak’s slogan — ‘We’re here and they’re there’ — Jews and Arabs today live both here and there, on both sides of the Green line, especially in Jerusalem...If there’s a threat to Jewish statehood, its less in a bi-national solution than in partitioning the land.

Believing in the rightness of Arab-Jewish coexistence both morally and strategically, Rivlin regularly declares that “we are not doomed to live together, we are destined to do so.”

From the Left

If the right-leaning one-state vision sees itself as a revival of Jabotinsky’s early Zionism, the left-leaning version might be seen as a revival of the early 20th century Zionisms of Ahad Ha’am and Judah Magnes, both of whom prioritized a rebirth of Jewish culture and spiritual renewal over state-centric definitions of the Jewish homeland. The contemporary iterations of this perspective begins from a similar assessment of “the one-state reality” offered by the right-leaning one-state advocates. They also share a critique of the many pitfalls of the two-state solution, were it to happen, and the likelihood that it would be unsustainable. Their primary point of departure from the right-leaning one-state advocates is that they do not view the Jewish claim to all the land of Greater Israel as undeniable or unassailable. The left-leaning version concedes that a single-state outcome that does not insist on that state being an exclusively Jewish state may mark the end not only of Palestinian political nationalism but also of Jewish political nationalism enshrined in a state, especially if Arabs become the demographic majority. Israeli academic and former Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem Meron Benevisti encapsulated this vision as early as 2003:

[T]oday we are living in a binational reality, and it is a permanent given. It cannot be ignored and it cannot be denied. What we have to do is adapt our thinking and our concepts to this reality. We have to look for a new model that will fit this reality. And the right questions have to be asked, even if they give the impression of a betrayal of Zionism, even if they give the feeling that one is abandoning the dream of establishing a Jewish nation-state in the Land of Israel.

We will never reach a point at which one group will truly renounce the right of return and the other group will truly abandon its longing for Beit El. We will never reach a situation in which the Arabs in Israel forgo their demand for their own collective rights. What we have to do is try to

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reach a situation of personal and collective equality within the framework of one overall regime throughout the country...The paradigm, therefore, is the binational one. That's the direction. That's the conceptual universe we have to get used to.

For Benevisti, as with many Israelis in this camp, the prospect of sacrificing the Zionist dream in return for manageable, sustainable coexistence is daunting, but ultimately the only viable choice:

I am not happy about what I am proposing. I know that what I am stammering to you here is not truly a solution. Because even if some sort of federal structure is established here it won't bring peace. There won't be peace here. Even if there is some sort of binational arrangement, it will do no more than manage the crisis. The violence will always occur on its fringes.

But the truth is that the whole situation that has been created here is one of conflicts and contradictions and the absence of a solution. So today I am sad and pessimistic. I live with a deep sense of breakdown. It is not easy for me to part with my father's dream of a Jewish nation-state. It's hard for me. For most of my life that was my dream, too. But I am truly fearful for my grandchildren. Whenever I look around me I am fearful for my grandchildren. How will they live here? What am I leaving them?

Like many on the left now advocating one-state, journalist Yonatan Amir presents a long list of reasons he sees an agreement based on two states as unattainable. Among them, he urges that the left must concede to the right that Palestinian demands are not likely to be satisfied with any iteration of a two-state solution that has yet been on the table. In response, he urges, the left must work together with the right to advance a new paradigm that joins a vision for Greater Israel with equal rights for Israelis and Palestinians:

If there was a period when this solution was relevant — and this too should be taken with a grain of salt — five decades of military rule, 500,000 settlers, a failed agreement and one Gaza disengagement later, it is enough to simply glance at the maps and see how scant the chance of reaching an agreement is.

Even if we assume that we can convince a large percentage of settlers to evacuate the West Bank... and assuming that a state that was unable to take care of thousands of Gaza evacuees will be able to take care of hundreds of thousands of evacuees from Judea and Samaria, and assuming that both sides will agree to allow visits to each other's holy sites, and assuming the Palestinians will be satisfied with a demilitarized 21 percent of their historic homeland, and assuming that they will agree to give up on the right of return, and assuming we find a solution that will reconnect Gaza and the West Bank, and assuming that the agreement will be accepted by the majority of Palestinians (and not just a handful of suits in Ramallah). Even if we assume all these to be true, after Oslo and the disengagement, who can guarantee that missiles won't strike central Israel a month after an agreement is signed? The Zionist Left has no good answer beyond its belief that things will eventually work out. So is it really a surprise that so few buy their plan?...

Instead of trying to sell the Right on fantasies of dividing the land, which are destined to fail, [the Left] must work with [the Right] to bring about one state with equal rights for all residents on both sides of the Green Line.

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This move will not abrogate Palestinian national aspirations. It will not put an end to either Jewish or Arab terror and will not solve all of Israel's essential problems. But it will help build a more stable and fair infrastructure based on democracy and equality, which are so crucial for the existence of a healthy society.

Though technical plans for one-state arrangements lag behind those for the two-state paradigm that dominated Israeli political discourse for two decades, many one-state advocates on both right and left urge rigorous exploration of "federation" arrangements that were once on the table among mainstream Zionist leaders including David Ben-Gurion (along with Jabotinsky) and are inspired by historical precedents including Belgium, Canada, Spain and Northern Ireland. The "federalist" idea generally takes the form of semi-autonomous Jewish and Arab political units deriving their power from a centralized authority, and has been advanced by some center-left and center-right thought leaders including constitutional lawyer Ruth Gavison and political theorist Daniel Elazar.

Both the right and left versions of the one-state perspective remain marginal in the Israeli political landscape, though talk of the need to explore "alternatives" continues to grow.