

# The **ONE-STATE-TWO-NATIONS** Proposal

A proposal to resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict by means of a Union between the State of Israel and the State of Palestine, along the lines of the Scotland-England relationship within the United Kingdom, enabling the two nations to share the land on a basis of equality, while retaining their national lives and identities.

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## **1. Executive Summary**

**1.1** There are two distinct nations residing within Israel-Palestine: the Israeli-Jewish nation and the Palestinian-Arab nation. At the heart of the conflict between them is the fact that both nations have claims on the same territory: all of former Palestine.

**1.2** A just and lasting peace between the two peoples requires the development of a political structure which both peoples can accept, which enables them to share the land, and which, as far as possible, achieves their national aspirations. The One-State-Two-Nations proposal is designed for this purpose. It is inspired by the relationship between Scotland and England within the United Kingdom.

**1.3** The proposal is that the two existing States of Israel and Palestine unite to form a single sovereign State: the United State of Israel and Palestine. Within the United State there would be two largely self-governing nations, Israel and Palestine, with a defined but open border between them. Each nation would maintain its existing national, legal, educational, cultural and religious institutions.

**1.4** The parliament of the United State would be directly elected by all citizens. The State parliament and government would be responsible for such matters as external affairs and defense, control of the currency and economic policy, citizenship (including provision for civil marriage) and immigration, infrastructure and resource management.

**1.5** The two nations of Israel and Palestine would have a large degree of autonomy, with residents of each electing their own parliament, and with a government responsible for matters such as education, health, welfare, housing and local economic development. The character of each nation would automatically reflect the character of its majority population, but all residents would be treated as equals without any discrimination.

**1.6** Citizens would have a right to change residence from one nation to the other, subject to certain provisos. There would also be a right for Jews and Palestinians outside the United State to migrate into Israel and Palestine respectively.

**1.7** This proposal would produce a fully democratic State of all its citizens, while allowing Israel and Palestine to preserve their national lives and identities, each having sovereignty, shared with the other, over all the land. No other proposed 'solution' to the conflict achieves this.

## **2. The Two Nations**

**2.1** There are two distinct peoples residing within Israel-Palestine: Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs. These are national identities according to the dictionary definition of a nation: “A large body of people united by common descent, history, culture, or language, inhabiting a particular state or territory.” (Oxford English Dictionary)

**2.2** Currently the Israeli-Jewish nation inhabits the State of Israel, created in 1948. The Palestinian-Arab nation inhabits the State of Palestine, created in 1988. There is a significant minority of Palestinian Arabs within Israel, who were given Israeli citizenship after the 1948-49 war. There is a significant minority of Israeli Jews within Palestine, as a result of Israel's illegal colonization of the West Bank.

**2.3** The *de facto* border between the two States is the 1949 Armistice Line (the Green Line, also called the 1967 border). Palestine includes the West Bank and Gaza, 22% of former Palestine. Israel includes the remaining 78% of former Palestine. The West Bank is under Israeli military occupation, and Gaza is blockaded by Israel and Egypt.

**2.4** At the heart of the Israel-Palestine conflict is the fact that both nations have claims on the same territory: all of former Palestine. The Palestinian Arabs claim it on the grounds that they are the indigenous people of Palestine, and have the right to self-determination within that territory. Israelis claim it on the grounds that the original Jewish homeland was within Palestine, and that all the world's Jews have a right to go there to establish a Jewish state.

**2.5** A just and lasting peace between the two peoples requires the development of a political structure which both peoples can accept, which enables them to share the land, and which, as far as possible, achieves their national aspirations. The One-State-Two-Nations proposal is designed for this purpose. It is inspired by the relationship between Scotland and England within the United Kingdom (of Great Britain and Northern Ireland).

### **3. The Union of Scotland and England**

**3.1** Historically, England and Scotland were two independent nations. They had their own parliaments, laws and judiciary. In medieval times they fought several wars as English kings tried to impose their rule on Scotland, but the Scots retained their independence.

**3.2** In 1603, as a result of a breakdown in the line of descent of the English monarchy, King James VI of Scotland was invited to become King James I of England, holding the two thrones simultaneously. He styled himself as King of Great Britain rather than King of Scotland and England, and pursued the idea of a union of the Scottish and English parliaments.

**3.3** This idea did not come to fruition until 1707 when the two parliaments passed reciprocal Acts of Union which joined them into a single Parliament of Great Britain, based in London. England and Scotland had become united as the sovereign state of Great Britain, with a single citizenship.

**3.4** England and Scotland have retained their national identities and characters. They have different legal systems, different established religions, different cultures and different educational systems. They have their own national institutions, such as the National Library of Scotland and the English National Opera. Their existence as distinct nations is recognized internationally: for example, by having national sports teams playing in international competitions. There is a defined but open border between them.

**3.5** In 1998 the UK Parliament passed the Scotland Act which created a Scottish parliament and government based in Edinburgh. The UK parliament reserved certain powers to itself, such as foreign affairs, defense, the currency and economic policy, citizenship and immigration, overall management of infrastructure, energy, natural resources and transport.

**3.6** The Scottish parliament cannot legislate on those reserved matters, but otherwise Scotland has almost complete self-rule on matters internal to itself, such as education, health, welfare, agriculture, the environment, local government, culture and justice.

**3.7** The powers of the Scottish parliament are devolved from the UK parliament, which remains sovereign, and can potentially overrule it. There is no English parliament: English internal affairs are dealt with by the UK parliament.

## **4. The United State of Israel and Palestine (Usip)**

**4.1** There are striking parallels between the Scotland-England relationship and the Israel-Palestine relationship:

Scotland and England were neighboring states with a history of conflict: so are Israel and Palestine;

Scotland and England are distinct nations with different legal systems, different established religions, different cultures and different educational systems: so are Israel and Palestine;

Scotland and England have their own national sports teams playing in international competitions. So do Israel and Palestine;

**4.2** These parallels have inspired the One-State-Two-Nations proposal, which applies the principles of the Scotland-England relationship within the UK to the Israel-Palestine issue. The States of Israel and Palestine would unite to form the United State of Israel and Palestine (Usip), while still existing as two largely self-governing nations. The following are some ideas of how that might work out.

### **Governance**

**4.3** The parliament of the United State would be directly elected by all citizens. Candidates for election must demonstrate a commitment to peaceful coexistence between the two nations, and equality for all citizens. The State parliament and government would be responsible for such matters as external affairs and defense, control of the currency and economic policy, citizenship (including provision for civil marriage) and immigration, infrastructure and resource management; and would have taxation powers to support these activities.

**4.4** The two nations of Israel and Palestine would have a large degree of autonomy, with residents of each electing their own parliament, and with a government responsible for matters such as education, health, welfare, housing, local economic development; and with taxation powers to support these activities. The character of each nation would automatically reflect the character of its majority population, but all residents would be treated as equals without any discrimination.

**4.5** The State parliament would decide which powers it reserves to itself: for example, it might decide that university education should be a State, not national, activity. The State parliament, being sovereign, would act as an upper revising chamber to the two national parliaments, in particular to ensure that the national parliaments or governments do not discriminate against their minority communities.

### **Borders & Immigration**

**4.6** There would be a defined but open border between the two nations. (See 5.3 below for more on this topic). There would also be a right for citizens to change their residence from one nation to the other, with two provisos:

First, this would apply to individual families, not to organized nationalistic groups; Second, each nation would be able to petition the State parliament to allow it to limit inward migration if it felt this was necessary to preserve its national character.

**4.7** Jewish and Palestinian people living outside the United State would have a right to migrate into Israel and Palestine respectively. However, the State government would be able to restrict the total rate of immigration to that which the economy can absorb: stateless refugees would have priority.

### **Security and defense**

**4.8** The only threat to the security of Israel arises from its occupation of Palestinian territory. The only threat to the security of Palestine comes from Israel. The Arab states and Iran will accept any peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. The United State will have no enemies, and can start to wind down the massive military capability it inherits from the IDF, and help create a Middle East free of nuclear weapons.

Each nation will have a police force. The United State will have an internal security force to take action, or coordinate action, against trans-national or external threats.

## 5. The 'Final Status' Issues

### Jerusalem

**5.1** Jerusalem would be the State capital territory housing the State parliament and government offices. It would also be the capital of both nations. Its residents would participate in national elections in one of the two nations of their choice.

### The Holy Places

**5.2** The Holy Places would be administered by a department of the State government, with the guidance of an international commission of religious authorities.

### Determination of the border

**5.3** The present-day *de facto* border between Israel and Palestine, the 1949 Green Line, is not a suitable permanent border, for two reasons:

First, it gives 78% of the territory of former Palestine to Israel, and 22% to Palestine, namely the West Bank and Gaza. Given that the number of Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs are roughly equal at the moment, and there are about 5 million Palestinian refugees with a right of return, this border would result in an injustice to the Palestinians of monumental proportions, and a Palestinian nation living at an uncomfortable population density.

Second, this border would leave the original homeland of the Israelites, Judea and Samaria, outside Israel. Israeli Jews, under the influence of Zionism, would not accept this.

**5.4** Determination of an open border would be much less contentious than agreeing a sovereign border between two states. It is not even essential that each nation has a contiguous territory. A new border should be determined by a joint Boundary Commission with independent chairmanship.

**5.5** The main objects of the Boundary Commission would be to determine a border that:

- a: placed a substantial majority of Jews within Israel and of Arabs within Palestine, but with a significant minority population in each;
- b: minimized the number of Israeli Jews who would end up in Palestine, and the number of Palestinian Arabs who would end up in Israel, against their wishes;

c: produced a much more equal distribution of land area than the *de facto* border, mainly by placing a substantial part of the Negev within Palestine, as suggested at the Lausanne Conference of 1949;

d: placed a significant portion of the West Bank within Israel.

### **The Settlers**

**5.6** The most difficult issue to be resolved between Israel and Palestine is the question of the future of the Israeli-Jewish settlers in the West Bank. Under the principles of border determination just discussed, it would be possible for some, perhaps many, of the settlers to stay where they are. However, it will be necessary to take into account the illegal nature of the settlement program, and the great harm it has done to the Arab population.

**5.7** There needs to be a reconciliation and reconstruction process in which settlements and their neighbors agree to live together peacefully, harm done is remedied, and serious crimes are punished. If cases where no agreement is possible, the settlers should return to Israel.

### **Palestinian refugees**

**5.8** After 70 years of denial of their right to return, the most just solution of the Palestinian refugee problem would be for them to be given huge sums of money, by Israel, to enable them to settle in any country of their choice willing to take them.

**5.9** Many will want to return to Palestine: after establishing citizenship and residence, those whose original home, or their ancestors' home, were within Israel could move there subject to the provisos of the immigration scheme outlined above (4.6,4.7). Some might want to stay in their current host states.

**5.10** Others might want to leave the Middle East and join the diaspora in Europe and the Americas. Britain and the USA in particular should be willing to take them since it was their actions that led to the present problem: Britain, through its Jewish National Home policy; the USA, through its premature recognition of the State of Israel.

## **6. Comparison with other 'Solutions'**

### **The two-state solution.**

**6.1** There is an 'international consensus' that the permanent solution will be of two sovereign states living side by side, with a border based on the Green Line. (This is an unsuitable border and would need to be renegotiated, see 5.3 above.) But partition was never the right way out of the conflict. The two peoples need to be reconciled: keeping them apart, each limited to only a part of the land they consider to be their homeland, will increase hostility, not reduce it.

**6.2** There are also practical and human factors that make the two-state solution unworkable. Palestine is a small place, with few natural resources. During the Mandatory period Palestine was developed as a single state with a single currency and an integrated infrastructure of roads, railways, water supplies, power, etc. Management of this infrastructure jointly by two sovereign governments, with a history of conflict, and with a sovereign border between them, would present many practical difficulties and inefficiencies.

**6.3** In a two-state solution Israel will have a substantial minority of Palestinian Arabs, and Palestine might well have a substantial minority of Israeli Jews. Other states, or the UN, cannot interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign states. If either State decided to discriminate against its minority community, no-one could prevent it from so doing.

**6.4** What we now call the West Bank was previously known as Central Palestine. The Central Highlands were the origin of the people known as Israelites: it was also the site of the ancient Kingdoms of Israel (in the north, capital Samaria), and Judah (in the south, capital Jerusalem) as well as the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron. Jewish Israelis, brought up under Zionism, with a strong emotional commitment to the Land of Israel, would never accept that their original homeland is permanently in another State.

**6.5** As the Holy Land of the three monotheistic faiths Palestine has made a huge contribution to civilization and is a special place to millions of the world's citizens. To permanently divide it, and in particular to divide Jerusalem, would be a tragedy.

**6.6** None of these objections apply in the One-State-Two-Nations Proposal.

## **Two States in One Space**

**6.7** This concept has been developed by IPCRI, Israel-Palestine Creative Regional Initiatives, and is published as issuu:Two States in One Space. It has some points in common with the One-State-Two Nations Proposal, though the two were developed independently.

**6.8** Israel and Palestine would be independent sovereign states, but the border between them would be an open one, and transfer of residence from one state to the other would be possible, but regulated. Jerusalem would be a shared city as the capital of both states. The two states would enter a political and economic union, (more correctly called a confederation), with common social and economic institutions, along the lines of the European Union.

**6.9** A problem with this concept, admitted by the authors, is that there is a democratic deficit: The Israeli-Jewish settlers in the West Bank will be citizens of Israel but residents of Palestine. They can vote for the Israeli government, but not for the Palestine government, under whose laws they live. Similarly Palestinian refugees who return to Israel will have votes in Palestinian elections, but not in Israeli elections.

**6.10** This problem does not arise in the One-State-Two-Nations Proposal in which citizens vote for the government of the United State, and also for the government of the nation in which they reside.

## **The One State Declaration**

**6.11** The One State Declaration of 2007 was promulgated by 15 authors, including some well-known Palestinian and Israeli intellectuals. The proposal is for a unitary state “founded on the principle of equality in civil, political, social and cultural rights for all citizens”. The state would “recognize the diverse character of the society, encompassing distinct religious, linguistic and cultural traditions, and national experiences” and “respect the separation of state from all organized religion”; the Palestinian refugees would be allowed to return; and there would be “redress for the devastating effects of decades of Zionist colonization”.

**6.12** This is the 'western' model of a secular state. It is inappropriate for the Israel-Palestine situation for two reasons:

First, it takes no account of the existence of two distinct nationalities within former Palestine, speaking only vaguely of 'national experiences'.

Second, it denies the importance of religion in the lives of the two nations.

Since people not of Jewish descent can become Jews by adopting Judaism, the religion of Judaism is an intrinsic part of Jewish identity. The Palestinian Declaration of Independence, "[palestineun.org/about-palestine](http://palestineun.org/about-palestine)" begins "In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful", and continues "The call went out from Temple, Church, and Mosque that to praise the Creator, to celebrate compassion and peace was indeed the message of Palestine."

**6.13** Under the secular state model, neither nation would be able to express its national identity either politically or religiously. There would be no place on the map called 'Israel', and no place called 'Palestine'. This would not be acceptable to either nation.

### **Other one-state solutions**

**6.14** There are other one-state 'solutions' in which Israel absorbs Palestine, for example that of the [Israel Initiative](#). Palestine would be wiped off the map, and the Palestinian people would vanish from the pages of time. In the Islamist  [Hamas Covenant of 1988](#) Palestine would absorb Israel and become an Arab majority Islamic state with Jews being a protected minority. Neither of these would be acceptable to the absorbed nation.

## **7. Conclusions**

**7.1** A United State of Israel and Palestine would achieve the goal of the Balfour Declaration of 1917: a Jewish National Home in Palestine existing without prejudice to the rights of the non-Jewish inhabitants.

**7.2** It would fulfill the vision of the Zionist Carlsbad Resolution of 1921: Palestine as the common home of two nations, Jewish and Arab, with perfect equality between them.

**7.3** It would achieve the goal of the Palestine Mandate of 1922: an independent sovereign Palestine including the Jewish National Home.

**7.4** It would reflect some of the important features of the 1947 UN Plan of Partition with Economic Union, which proposed two non-sovereign states with open borders between them, linked in a union by an Economic Board that has binding powers on the two nations, controlling the currency, infrastructure, resources, and economic development – see Understanding the Partition Plan.

**7.5** It would achieve self-rule for the Israeli-Jewish people and the Palestinian-Arab people within their joint homeland of Eretz-Israel, Palestine, The Holy Land. Jerusalem would be the undivided capital of Israel, and also of Palestine.

**7.6** It would provide a right of return for Jews and Palestinians to establish themselves anywhere within their homeland, subject only to certain provisos.

**7.7** It would produce a fully democratic State of all its citizens, while allowing Israel and Palestine to preserve their national lives and identities. Although Israel and Palestine individually would not be sovereign States, they would each have sovereignty over all the territory of former Palestine, shared with the other, as equal partners in the United State of Israel and Palestine.

## **8. A new route to peace**

**8.1** In the Oslo process Palestine was negotiating under duress, being under occupation by a highly militarized power. Palestine recognized that “the State of Israel has a right to exist in peace and security”. Israel, on the other hand, did not even accept that the State of Palestine exists, or that the Palestinian people have a right to live in peace and security. Such an unequal process was invalid and doomed to failure from the start. It should be thrown into the dustbin of history, together with Wye River, Camp David, the Road Map, the Quartet, and Tony Blair.

**8.2** To have a chance of success, any peace agreement must be freely negotiated between the two sovereign States. The beginning of the end of the conflict will be the day that Israel can bring itself to say that “The State of Palestine has a right to exist in peace and security.” The next step will be for Israel to accept that its settlement program in the West Bank and East Jerusalem is illegal in international law, and bring it to a halt. The third step will be a withdrawal of Israeli forces from the West Bank, as required by UNSCR242, their replacement by an interim joint civilian administration, and the lifting of the Gaza blockade.

**8.3** Only when Palestine has obtained its freedom can the two States begin formal negotiations about their future relationship: whether to continue as two independent States; two States in confederation; a single undivided secular State; or a union of the two States in which both nations retain their national lives and identities, as in this proposal.

**8.4** Meantime, there should be an informal dialogue between the two peoples, at the government, civil society and individual levels.