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Will the Palestinians ever Realize a Fairly reached 'Two-State Solution'?

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By

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The recent round of fighting between Israeli forces and Hamas witnessed new levels of violence bigotry and brutality. Clashes occurred in Sheikh Jarrah, a neighborhood in East Jerusalem, when the Jews from around the world started claiming the properties of Palestinians of Sheikh Jarrah as their own. Ex- Israeli PM Netanyahu warned Hamas, who fired rockets in retaliation to the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) acts of aggression and immense human rights violation, by saying,

“This is just the beginning. Terror organizations have been hit hard and will continue to be hit because of their decision to hit Israel.”¹

The ideologies of Arab nationalism and Zionism started evolving in 19th century with the aims of emancipation and self-determination and the concepts of nationhood, identity, history and culture. With the advent of 20th century, Arab nationalism experienced a steady decline, specifically after the Arab-Israel Wars but the ideology of Zionism is still prevalent and is more fortified than it ever was. The roots of this crisis between Israel and Palestine are mainly based on territoriality, ethnicity, religion, resources, identity, competing nationalism and hence, make the chasm between two multi-faceted nations. The efforts for resolution of this issue only went in vain-which defines how intractable the conflict is despite various attempts to resolve it. Tracing these backgrounds would only make one think that this is similar to that of chicken-and-egg conundrum and nothing constructive can ever be driven out of it. Instead of digging deep in these intricacies, it’s better to be acquainted with the ground realities of the overtly changing dynamics of the situation and what prospects they may hold in future.

Detente between Arab States and Israel: An Enterprise for Peace in ME?

Jewish Nationalism or Zionism was a nationalist movement - a product of Western Political thought – which made the thousands of Jews to migrate, in different frames of time, towards Palestinian territory. The number of Jewish migrants in Palestine increased from 30, 000, from 1897 to 1903, to 80,000 by 1914. The successful Zionist lobbying with USA, Britain, France and USSR resulted in the signing of Balfour Declaration and the, eventual, formation of Israel in 1948. But the only obstacle the Jewish nationalist movement had to face was Palestine’s Arab population with Arab nationalist fervor. Israeli

¹ (2021, May 12th) Hamas chief, Israel’s Netanyahu threaten to escalate violence. *Alarabiya news*.

lobbying groups like AIPEC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee) and several others spread around the world have played their cards well. The Arab states e.g. UAE, Jordan, Egypt is moving towards establishing ‘not bad’ or maybe informal relationship with Israel. . The main agenda of a meeting held between foreign ministers of KSA, UAE and of two other Arab countries with ex-Israeli PM Netanyahu in February 2019, was how to deal with the growing Iranian influence in the region and no Palestinian was part of this meeting. Trade between Israel and Gulf states has now reached \$1 billion a year.² Netanyahu has also signaled to show the readiness for an ‘**international coalition**’ of pro- Israel Arab states. The recent show of apartheid by Israel against Palestinians has tested the limit of détente and of ‘Abraham Accords’ signed between USA, Israel and UAE on August 13th, 2020 including agreements like ‘Israel-UAE Normalization Agreement’ and ‘Israel-Bahrain Normalization Agreement’.³ But the moment of truth is, despite the massive loss of human lives by Israeli brutality, the muted response of these Arab states reflects a new reality. UAE, Morocco, Sudan and Bahrain –the countries who normalized ties with Israel remained silent spectators of this apartheid. The foreign ministry of UAE made a shocking remark by simply asking Israel to ‘**prevent practices that violate sanctity of the mosque**’.⁴ KSA, Iran and Turkey strongly condemned the attacks.

Two State Solutions: a Realistic or a Utopian Outlook?

“There is no shift in my commitment to the security of Israel. Period. No shift, at all. But I’ll tell you what there a shift is in. The shift is that we still need a two-state solution. It is the only answer. The only answer.” remarked US President Joe Biden at a news conference with South Korean President Moon Jae-In⁵

The concept was first articulated by the *Peel Commission*⁶ to inquire about the unrest in Palestine in 1936. UN resolution 181 of 1947 also called for the partition of British ruled Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish state but Arab states were not happy over this division. Europe recognized the right of self-determination for Palestinians and called for two-state solution in their Venice Declaration. George Bush

² Aaron David Miller. (May 27th, 2020). How Israel and the Arab World is making Peace without a peace deal.

Carneige Endowment for International Peace.

³ (August 13th, 2020). The Abraham Accords Declaration. *US Department of State.*

⁴ Ruth Sherlock. (May 14, 2021) ‘An Embarrassing Time’: the challenges for Arab nations that made peace with Israel

⁵ Servet Gunerigok. (May 22nd, 2021). Biden says two-state solution ‘only solution’ to Israel, Palestine. *Anadolu Agency.*

⁶ formally known as the Palestine Royal Commission, was a British Royal Commission of Inquiry, appointed in 1936 to investigate the causes of unrest in [Mandatory Palestine](#).

became the first US president to adopt this idea in 2003. Chairman of PLO, Yasser Arafat in 1988 stated that PLO is changing its previous stance to establish a Palestinian state across the entire territory but rather *‘on our Palestinian territory with capital Jerusalem’*.⁷

Historical evidence of violence and unabated genocide of the Palestinians shows that there is no denial of the fact that the only solution to this conflict capable of guarantying peace, or ‘short-term’ peace, is the two state solution in which both Israelis and Palestinians will have their separate identities, and there will be no illegal settlements and continued hostility any longer. But there are some other facts as well that diminishes this idea. Firstly, the newly elected Prime Minister Naftali Bennett is a hardline religious nationalist and does not believe in ‘any solution’ of the crisis but instead on ‘managing’ the crisis by ultimately gaining a full control over Palestinians. Bennett once stated:

“There are some things that we all know will never happen. The peace agreement with the Palestinians will never happen.”⁸

Secondly, another important actor that can guarantee or facilitate the formation of two states is United Nation. It has been observed that since the recognition of Israel as a state by the UN, this international body seemed to be inactively involved in the conflict. There are several instances where the absence of UN was felt, e.g. during the Cold War era, US brokered an agreement between Egypt and Israel under Kissinger’s ‘shuttle diplomacy’ which provided an end to 1973 Arab Israel War, and Camp David Accords. The UN remained sidelined during Oslo Process and Intifadas. Third, great powers try to minimize the powers of UN through their veto power like in 1980s and 1990s when US played a major role in the Israel-Palestine diplomacy. US ambassador to UN in 1994 wrote a letter to UNGA that US wants UN to make its resolutions against Israel irrelevant as there is already a peace process going on and these resolutions may hinder the process. UN passed a resolution condemning the ***“grave and massive violations of the human rights of the Palestinian people by Israel”***, and called for an international ***“human rights inquiry commission.”***⁹ US launched an enormous lobbying campaign that resulted in a close vote, with European allies opposing the resolution and even some non-aligned countries abstaining in UNSC voting process. Arab states may play their part in the conflict as they did in the past but apparently they have other priorities and commercial interests which Israel seems to fulfill. Lastly, Palestinians themselves and the movement is itself divided into two wings of Hamas and Palestinian authority. This divide occurred when Hamas won the 2006 elections, ending Fatah’s regime which ended

⁷ (May 17th, 2021) Amid Israel-Gaza conflict, a two state solution seems utopian to some. *DW*

⁸ Oliver Holmes. (June 3rd, 2021). Naftali Bennett: Israel’s far-right prime minister in waiting. *The Guardian*

⁹Phyllis Bennis. (January 1st, 2001). WHAT HAS BEEN THE ROLE OF THE UN IN THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE STRUGGLE

up in an armed conflict. Hamas took control of Gaza and Fatah took control of West Bank. This level of disunity between the two factions and leadership crisis for Palestinians makes the two-state solution an unsustainable approach.

Analysis:

Considering the current viciousness of Israeli forces in Palestine and the role of other actors as silent spectators including the great powers, Arab States and United Nations, Palestinians are left on their own. The recent détente between Arab states and Israel is a major diplomatic win for Israel. Now Arab states are bound because of their trade and financial interests with Israel, which will ultimately mark the end of Arab-nationalism in Middle Eastern region. This economic dependency on Israel will make Arab states reach a point where they will not be able to condemn Israeli undiplomatic actions and its apartheid. KSA and UAE are making a bloc against Iran who is striving for its regional influence and the major goal of these two states is to stop Iran from doing that. Israel is at odds with Iran as they fought wars in Lebanon against Hezbollah and are fighting in other Muslim countries as well, so including Israel in their bloc would help KSA and UAE in achieving their goals. USA plays a key role in facilitating this détente. This bloc formation among Muslim countries would distract their attention from the plight of Muslims around the world, including the Palestinian suffering. Hence, Palestinians are internally divided which makes the two-state solution only a utopian dream. Considering these ground realities, no such settlement seems to be achieved in near future making the plight of the Palestinians an on-going unheard saga of political and religious victimization