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# Analysis | Israel and the U.S. Are Engaging in a Bogus Debate Over the Two-state Solution

The attention the U.S. is paying to the prospect of a Palestinian state alongside Israel is part of a ploy orchestrated by Netanyahu, who is back to his old tricks. A two-state solution cannot come now, and the Biden administration knows it



President Joe Biden walks to the podium to deliver remarks on the war between Israel and Hamas after meeting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Wednesday, October 18, 2023, in Tel Aviv. Credit: Evan Vucci /AP



Alon Pinkas

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Jan 22, 2024 7:25 pm IST

If you're new to politics in the Middle East and happen to be following the heated exchange between the U.S. and Israel, you might be grossly misled to believe that an abstract entity called "a Palestinian state" is imminent and that the two countries are locked in a

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substantive debate over the feasibility, contours and features of such a place.

Not even close. The U.S. is miscalculating by constantly bringing up the subject and the Israeli prime minister is having a field day over the issue, for his own political reasons.

The renewed reemergence and rekindling of the concept of an Israeli-Palestinian agreement resulting in the formation of a Palestinian state in most of the West Bank and Gaza is completely artificial and nothing more than grand posturing and a rhetorical hot potato untethered from political realities. A two-state solution may very well be the best possible and durable solution, certainly preferable to a one binational state or the untenable status quo, but we are far from it.

The U.S.' incessant reference to two states may reflect the best of intentions and a pronounced American policy preference, but at this point in time it is also counterproductive and ill-advised.

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**U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken meets with Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas in Ramallah in on January 10, 2024.** Credit: EVELYN HOCKSTEIN / POOL / AFP

When the Biden administration insists on the two-state solution it is exhibiting a profound [misunderstanding of the Israeli zeitgeist](#) and the current national psyche. It assumes rational political thinking where devastation, agony fears and emotions reign supreme. What the U.S. seems unable to understand is that there are two phase to the process, and the first is about revenge and anxiety. October 7 was not just a military, intelligence and conceptual debacle. It also instilled fear, uncertainty and humiliation in Israelis. When they hear "a Palestinian state," many now intuitively think about seven more October 7s at seven different points along the border between Israel and the hypothetical state. Who in their right mind would entertain such a solution?

Phase two is an inevitable, albeit incremental understanding in Israel that the status quo is unsustainable. The occupation breeds terror and insecurity and the notion that anyone could ignore the Palestinian issue is tragically flawed. This leads to an understanding that the current reality must change. But the realization of the two phases takes time. It is a gradual process that cannot be accelerated. In fact, a failure to recognize the stage of phase one delays the maturation of phase two.

All the U.S. needed to do was to qualify the term "Palestinian state" with words like "a future," "a gradual establishment," "by consent and as a result of good faith negotiations," and "demilitarized."



Israeli hostage families and supporters interrupt a Knesset Finance Committee meeting on Monday. Credit: Oren Ben Hakoon

This all served Benjamin Netanyahu perfectly. For him, the October 7 catastrophe needed to be reframed more broadly so as to allow him to escape responsibility and shrug off accountability: he began to express a parallel universe narrative in which the ongoing war is not just about Hamas, but actually a civilizational war against Iran in which the Palestinians are proxies. That led to him to push "a Palestinian state" as the bogus central narrative.

The U.S. is pressuring him to agree to the establishment of a terror-infested Palestinian state, but he resisted and will continue to deflect the pressure. Except that there was never any pressure, just the U.S. outlining what it believes would be the best solution.

The current invocation of a Palestinian state was not meant to express support for its immediate establishment. Far from it. The U.S. knows all too well the immediate and circumstantial unviability of such a proposition. It was made in the context of two factors: the U.S.' view of postwar Gaza where a "revitalized" Palestinian Authority is part of the governing structure, and the Saudi, Emirati and Qatari willingness to normalize relations with Israel provided that there is a serious Israeli-Palestinian process leading to the establishment of a Palestinian state. Netanyahu, as part of his "only I can prevent this" habit, made it an issue. The U.S., unwisely, fell into the trap.







Netanyahu speaks at a press conference, last week. Credit: Yariv Katz

Since the 1990s, American foreign policy adopted the two-state solution as the desirable settlement for the 100-year Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Israeli occupation of the Palestinians since 1967. Successive administrations, both Democratic and Republican, have invoked the model as the best option available, one that should be agreed on as a result of negotiations. That makes sense, but so does timing.

Whether a Palestinian state alongside Israel is the best solution, whether such a state is viable politically and economically, whether such a state satisfies Palestinian desire for self-determination and Israeli security and whether it will be a failed state from the outset warrants four separate articles. In fact, thousands of articles, studies and books have already been written on the topic. What is unequivocally clear now is that any American insistence on the issue and any Israeli rejection are immaterial and untimely.

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The time will never be right. End the war in Gaza. Attend to the mitigation of the human catastrophe that is happening there. That should be of immediate concern. Why does the UN not declare those Palestinians to be refugees & tend to them on an emergency basis with proper tents, & meals,

and medical care, schooling, & so on? How else will they be saved?

Report

2 **zootsuiter** 20:12

👍 7 👎 0

From this side of the Atlantic, it sure seems that the US has forever qualified the two-state solution with just the sort of adjectives Pinkas prescribes: future, to be negotiated, etc. This has allowed Israel to act committed but sabotage the process, or continually put bogus conditions ("We have no partner for peace" after dividing the Palestinians into PA and Hamas) and raise time-wasting objections while building more and more settlements.

I do understand that the public in Israel may not be ready on this day, January 22, to sign an agreement for a Palestinian state. However, surely knowing that it's piggy bank, arms supplier and single-most important foreign ally is growing restive and pushing for the only long-term solution that doesn't involve ethnic cleansing or genocide will help shape public opinion and give strength to those who favor peace over the alternatives.

Report

↳ **Sandra Chitayat** 22:35 →zootsuiter

👍 0 👎 0

And what a saboteur Netanyahu continues to be.

Reply

Report

1 **Richter** 19:47

👍 6 👎 0

And yet only hours before this article appeared, a newspaper posted an article headlined "New Poll Suggests Israelis Open to Biden Plan Linking Palestinian State to Freeing Hostages, Saudi Normalization." Mr. Pinkas may have heard of this reputable news source. I believe it's call Ha'aretz or something like that.

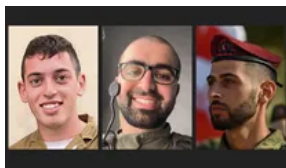
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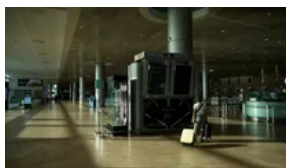
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Dahlia Scheindlin



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Dahlia Scheindlin

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