The Stalemate of "Solutions" in the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict:
Through the Perspective of Palestinian Intellectuals

Hani Abdelhadi, Keio University, Japan

Abstract
In the peace talks on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the two-state solution has been assumed as a premise. However, the Oslo Accords have, de facto, failed, and the peace talks have not progressed since the 2000s. As such, some academics are now pointing out the impossibility of the two-state solution. Meanwhile, the one-state solution has attracted attention, mainly from intellectuals in Europe and the United States. Nonetheless, there is no growing support for the one-state solution in the occupied Palestinian territories, Jordan, Lebanon, or Israel. Even now, the two-state solution remains the main premise of the discussion. Many previous studies on these suggested solutions (especially the two-state and one-state solutions) are based on a political perspective. These mainly focus on the issue's theoretical aspect and have not dealt with the social aspect: how Palestinian society reacts to the propositions. This research therefore mainly adopts a sociological approach. This paper pays particular attention to the awareness of Palestinians about these solutions. For this, qualitative interviews with several Palestinian intellectuals in Jordan were conducted.
As a consequence, this paper reveals why the two-state solution continues to be a premise in peace talks and describes the defects of each solution. In addition, this study suggests the necessity of rebuilding an idea of governance in the future by reconsidering premised values like "sovereign states" and "national self-determination."

Keywords: Palestinian-Israeli Conflict, Solution, Intellectual, Diaspora

Introduction

The suggested "solutions" (or peace plans) in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, such as the two-state solution (2SS) and the one-state solution (1SS), are mainly composed of ideas about what Israel and Palestine should be in the future. The discussion has been held for a long time as to which solution describes a more rational or ethical answer. Among the solutions that have been studied so far are 2SS and 1SS. Generally, 2SS is an idea of establishing two countries, namely Israel and Palestine, independently and in parallel. On the other hand, 1SS is the idea of merging the two entities to establish an independent single state inhabited by both Palestinians and Israelis.

Many intellectuals are now skeptical of 2SS, as it is no longer practical, and discussion about 1SS as an alternative has become active. But in a political context, 2SS continues to be mainstream. This paper will focus on this contradictory situation and will elaborate on the development of the discussion and society's acceptance of the options rather than each solution's content in itself.

Previous Studies

Previous studies on solutions take a political perspective. These have discussed the logic and content of the existing solutions in terms of the reality on the ground and the political context, exploring their rationality and feasibility. As well, there have been studies in recent years that focus on the historical process of such discussions. These have been particularly active since the beginning of the 2000s, after the de facto failure of 2SS in the form of the Oslo Accords and the Roadmap for Peace. In particular, considering the current situation, including the increase of Israeli settlements and the subsequent fragmentation of Palestinian territories, there is an argument that it is impossible to implement 2SS. At the same time, there are many discussions pointing out the rationality of 1SS as an alternative (e.g., Abunimah, 2007; Ghanem, 2007; Hilal, 2007; Karmi, 2008; Tilley, 2010; Faris, 2012; Farsakh, 2013; Habib, 2016). Yet regarding the issue of idealism, critical consideration is also given to Zionism and the concept of the "Jewish state," which is a barrier to the realization of 1SS (e.g., Judt, 2003; Warschawski, 2004).

However, there are still negative views of 1SS, and part of those support 2SS. There is little support in public opinion for 1SS, argued by some to be because the majority sees its implementation as simply unrealistic and because of fear of further collision between the two peoples (e.g. Avnery, 1999; Tamari, 2000; Unger, 2002; Arnaud, 2003; Roi, 2013; Schenker, 2014). In addition, it is thought to be difficult and unrealistic to deny Zionism, which aims to realize the Jewish state, and the dominant view that both sides have to realize self-determination through 2SS is deeply rooted. Previous studies have pointed out that 2SS was the only solution that has been on the table at peace talks (Liel, 2017). However, there is no definitive argument nowadays regarding which proposal is most appropriate.

Analysis Viewpoint and Research Method

Previous studies on solutions directly analyze the logic of each solution and mainly pay attention to their respective effectiveness and feasibility. As far as these studies have found, both 2SS and 1SS seem to be legitimate to some extent. But in the

political context, 2SS continues to be mainstream. In addition, as a poll (discussed later) shows, 2SS is supported only by half of the Palestinian population, and support of 1SS is also sluggish.

Why does 1SS not gain broad support in Israeli and Palestinian public opinion, why does 2SS continue to be a premise for peace, and why is 1SS not discussed at the level of political negotiations? In order to understand this situation, it is necessary to comprehensively clarify from a sociological perspective how each solution is accepted by people. As some of the previous studies are conducted by Palestinians or Israelis, their intentions may be partly biased. Moreover, there appear to be several tendencies for supporters of each solution. For example, much of the research favorable toward 1SS is attributed to Palestinians and Jews in the diaspora or foreigners residing outside of the Middle East.

On the other hand, the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) is different. For example, in a poll conducted in the OPT in April 2006, the support for 2SS was 51 percent with opposition at 48 percent, while support for 1SS was 29 percent with opposition at 70 percent (PCPSR, 2016). Thus, the support for 2SS is significantly greater than the support for 1SS. Even in the intellectual strata, this is the case. For example, Khalil Shikaki, based in the West Bank, and Mohammad Baraka, a Palestinian Israeli citizen and a Knesset (Israeli parliament) member, both point out 1SS's impossibility while arguing for the necessity of implementing 2SS (Shikaki, 2012; Baraka, 2005).

Despite the few exceptions, this trend suggests the impact of differences in social and political situations in each residential area. In the diaspora and the occupied land, there are major differences in terms of living conditions, freedom of speech, opportunities for exchange of views, etc.

However, in these trends, the responses of the Palestinians of the diaspora, especially the residents living in Jordan and Lebanon who have a large presence in the population, have been overlooked. In addition, in these areas, there is relatively little research on solutions and no polls treating Palestinians particularly as the subject. In order to examine the future of the solutions, it is urgent to comprehensively grasp the awareness of the Palestinian people, paying attention to each position regarding the residential area.

For example, in Jordan, about 70 percent of the population is said to be of Palestinian descent (it is the largest Palestinian community in the world). There is no hostile relationship with Israel because of the peace treaty, and the Jordanian citizens have not suffered substantive oppression by Israel. Jordan has also established commercial and trade relations with Israel. However, when we look at the fact that anti-Israeli demonstrations are regularly conducted in Jordan, it is cannot be said that Israel is favored in the national sentiment. As a result of these circumstances, it seems that they have a different view from OPT residents, diaspora Palestinians in Western countries, and refugee camps.

As such, this paper focus on Palestinian[1] intellectuals living in Jordan, since they have direct or indirect effects on the various decision-making processes concerning the conflict. In addition, the respondents dealt with in this paper are widely

recognized in Jordan as debaters on the conflict, since they have had many appearances on broadcast programs and in publications. Based on the above traits, this paper considers them central actors in the discussion of the development of solutions and considers them to have a certain representation in the Palestinian public opinion in Jordan. In addition, this research utilized a sociological method. The subjects of the survey are three distinguished intellectuals: scholars, politicians, and experts. The survey was carried out as semi-structured interviews in Arabic. From the results, this paper will analyze how each solution is viewed among Palestinian intellectuals and look at the future of such discussions.

Awareness Toward 2SS

Although many previous studies are skeptical of its realization, 2SS continues to be mainstream in the political context even after the collapse of the Oslo Accords. How do Palestinian intellectuals living in Jordan view this situation? The most important point that can be seen from the interviews is that they do not support 2SS, but, as described later, they do not support 1SS either. In reality, they do not have positive expectations for any of the existing solutions, and there is no alternative idea. First, regarding 2SS, the political science professor Dr. Ahmad Nofal[2] said the following:

> I was staying in Palestine for two months [just before the interview]. Before I went, I thought that the idea of establishing a sovereign Palestinian state with Jerusalem as the capital [2SS] would be preferable. However, when I saw the reality, I noticed that this was impossible. Because of the settlements scattered in the West Bank district, Palestine lost geographical contiguity, so it became impossible to establish it as a state.

As in the remarks above, it was hard to find a view that proactively recognized the effectiveness of 2SS. A director of a research institute, Dr. Jawad al-Hamad,[3] likewise felt the 2SS was not possible:

> First, Israel doesn't allow as its strategy the idea of the independence of a Palestinian state, even if it is disarmed. Second, as a result of the expansion of Israeli settlements, Palestine has been dismembered into cantons like South Africa. With that comprehensive interference by such settlers in the West Bank and Jerusalem, the establishment of the Palestinian state, that is 2SS, is impossible as it stands.

Two reasons were raised in common for their skeptical view of 2SS: first, the settlements, and second, the status of Jerusalem. Regarding the settlements, all the respondents mentioned that the OPT cannot become an independent state while it loses geographical contiguity due to Israeli settlements located in the West Bank. It was also pointed out that there is no solution unless Israel changes its attitude to the settlement-building. Dr. Ghazi as-Saadi,[4] who is the director and the founder of a research institute in Amman and member of the Palestinian National Council (PNC), mentioned the settlement policy while evaluating the possibility of 2SS:

> The Israeli side did not stop the requisition of the land in the West Bank and the construction of settlements. This made it impossible to build a Palestinian state and thereby 2SS. Netanyahu says that settlements are built on the land of Israel.

As a result, they ignored international legitimacy, international law, all of them. In my opinion, the policy of the Israeli government has caused the possibility of 2SS to become very small.

It was also suggested that opposition to 2SS by diaspora Palestinians and refugee camp residents would be relatively high. This is because when 2SS is realized, the possibility of returning to a hometown located in Israeli territory decreases, and also because these populations cannot psychologically accept being "Israeli citizens" as a result of 2SS. Dr. Nofal said the following:

> The establishment of the Palestinian state that sacrifices the refugee problem has been refused. I support the establishment of the Palestinian state, but I do not want refugees to be sacrificed and camps to remain in Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. The solution to the refugee problem is directly linked to the solution of the whole problem. Even if a state is established without refugees, it is only a provisional solution.

A problem related to this is that the influence of the residents of the OPT has become greater than that of the refugees or diaspora Palestinians, who are based in the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), after the Palestinian Authority (PA) was established in the OPT and its electoral system considered only the residents of the OPT to be voters. As a result, refugee problems are a lesser priority, and the establishment of the state has been prioritized (Nūfal, 2011, pp. 831-862). As the respondents are of the diaspora, they are reluctant to accept 2SS that would dismiss a response to the refugee problems.

Furthermore, it is also important that 2SS itself has "degenerated" as time passed. For example, in 1948, the conflict was composed of two issues of dispute: land takeover and the return of refugees. At this time, the disputed land was the whole of historical Palestine. However, this primary issue has gradually become smaller, with the refugee problem now almost ignored and the "land" disputed in negotiations gradually narrowing. Now, problems that did not exist before, such as occupation and settlement-building, continue to grow. Thus, the Palestinians are threatened by the humanitarian crisis before they can tackle the core issues of rights and freedom. Dr. Hamad spoke clearly on this point: "Today, the issue on the negotiation is the end of the occupation, and it is not a matter of nationalism or the need for rights, and that sort of discussion has effectively collapsed." In other words, the Palestinian cause for the Palestinians has been transformed from "struggle for rights and freedom" to "resistance to survive tomorrow."

For the above reasons, respondents were commonly skeptical about 2SS. At the same time, however, Dr. Saadi and Dr. Hamad chose the execution of UN Security Council Resolution No. 242 (2SS) when asked what a desirable solution would be. (Dr. Nofal did not choose either plan). As Dr. Hamad said, "From historical experience and a detailed examination, the last option left is 2SS." This opinion was derived from the fact that 2SS is the only solution put on the table at peace negotiations. Nevertheless, considering their skeptical view of whether that solution can be realized or not, they are not "supporting" 2SS; rather, they are very reluctantly saying that "there is nothing else to cling to."

The Reality of 1SS

Then, what about 1SS, which is currently being actively discussed as an alternative to 2SS? 1SS, at least for the Palestinian side, can be considered a reasonable solution, as pointed out in previous studies. However, the respondents mentioned that the realization of 1SS was even more unrealistic than that of 2SS. The most significant reason is the view that Israel will absolutely reject it. Dr. Nofal made the following point:

> Israel is now refusing and will continue to refuse it [1SS]. They understand the demographic situation and know that the Palestinians will be able to realize justice in the future, as happened in South Africa. Therefore, the Netanyahu regime is rejecting the Palestinian state [2SS] and the bi-national state [1SS] at the same time.

The most important reason for Israel's rejection of 1SS is attributed to the problem of the demographic situation and the "Jewishness" of the state. Today, comparing the populations of each ethnic group throughout historical Palestine, the population of Jews and Palestinians is about the same. But according to the forecast of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, the number of Palestinians, who have a high birthrate, will exceed the number of Jews by 2020 (PCBS, 2015). If 1SS is realized under these circumstances, there is a risk that Israel will be democratically overtaken by non-Jews, and Jews will become a minority. Therefore, it is argued that Israel absolutely will not accept 1SS. As Dr. Saadi says, "1SS is thought to be a threat to the Jewish nature of Israel." Thus, there is a deep-rooted belief that Israel will not accept the idea.

Furthermore, there is a view that 1SS has had no presence in peace talks, and therefore it is a utopian theory and an armchair plan. According to Dr. Hamad, "1SS is not a concrete plan but a mere idea and very elitist." Indeed, in Israeli and Palestinian parliaments, 1SS is unlikely to be discussed seriously, and public opinion also has a glacial attitude toward it. Another important point that can be seen in the discussion so far is that the respondents' views on 1SS are developed from the question of "whether Israel accepts it or not" rather than "whether it will benefit the Palestinians." Mr. Saadi also said on this point, "Why is 1SS unrealistic? Because most Israelis do not want it, since this completely contradicts the principle of Zionism."

The respondents see that it is difficult to realize 2SS, but 1SS is also unrealistic. The reason that 2SS continues to be mainstream is that it is relatively realistic and has been negotiated before. However, the respondents do not have an image of an alternative solution in the current situation. Dr. Saadi, who is a PNC member, said, "In the near future, there won't be a solution." These pessimistic perspectives can also be read from polls conducted in the Arab countries (Zogby Research Services, 2017). Indeed, in Lebanon, Jordan, and the OPT, where there is a large Palestinian population among the Arab countries, the number of respondents saying "I do not think any solution is possible" exceeds 40 percent, more than doubling in other countries. What these perspectives have in common is the belief that it is almost impossible to achieve any of the proposed solutions and the suggestion of a necessity of some sort of alternative.

Awareness about the Political Actors

A pessimistic view on solutions did not only come from the logical difficulties of the solution itself. A strong distrust of the major political actors was behind this pessimism. In the survey, the current Israeli government, the Israeli leftist blocs, the Palestinian leadership (mainly the PA and the PLO), and Islamist organizations including Hamas were all presented as subjects. When the survey was conducted, basically all actors were accepting of 2SS, but there were actors that refused negotiation itself depending on the timing.

Under these circumstances, the respondents are particularly critical of the Israeli government. According to Dr. Nofal's view, the Israeli government has no will to achieve peace. The reason is that Israel officially encourages settlement building, which contradicts peace. It is his analysis that Israel will implement this policy as a "strategy" to eventually extinguish Palestine. Dr. Saadi's remarks also strongly show such a view:

> So far, there have been several agreements between the PLO and the Israeli government. Has Israel respected them? They didn't. In other words, Israel closed the door to all solutions. Israel's position is not in accordance with international law, nor does it conform to other internationally valid resolutions. The Security Council has adopted a resolution against Israeli settlements. But did Israel listen to this? Of course not.

As Israel continues to occupy the land and abandon existing agreements, the Palestinian side grows angry and falls into a further quagmire. It is also believed that this situation is to the benefit of Israel. Dr. Hamad pointed out that "many things cannot be realized without Israel's agreement." And in Dr. Nofal's remarks, we can read a strong distrust of Israel and awareness that Israel holds the initiative. In these remarks, Dr. Nofal strongly recognizes that no solution can be expected unless the attitude of Israel changes:

> If Israel agrees, the establishment of a Palestinian state is possible, but I do not think it will. It is Israel that holds the decisive power. And I do not think that Israel will support peace in any way in the coming years. Israel has betrayed us over and over again. There is no pressure on Israel. Is Israel suddenly changing its attitude under such circumstances? They are satisfied with this situation.

Regarding Israel's leftist blocs, too, the respondents mentioned that they do not have enough influence to change this stalemate. Dr. Nofal mentioned, "There is no influence from leftist blocs; it is obvious if you look at the elections. Israeli society chooses Bennett, Lieberman, Netanyahu, etc. There's no one who wants peace."

Then what about the PA and the PLO, which cannot take effective measures against this situation? In recent years, as a result of the PA qualifying as an observer state in the United Nations, PA's presence may be seen favorably, but as can be seen in the following remarks from Dr. Nofal, the respondents' analysis is pessimistic:

> The PA is not a government. The West Bank is conveniently divided into the A, B and C area, and the Israeli army can enter whenever they want. There is no

state there. Who is the ruler? For example, what do you need when you go to Ramallah from Jerusalem? It is the permission of Israel. Even the Prime Minister of Palestine requires permission from Israel to come. What is the condition of a state? Citizenship, territory, government, and sovereignty. We have no territory, government, or sovereignty.

Even Dr. Saadi, a PNC member, showed a skeptical opinion on the abilities of the PA. According to him, as a matter of fact, the PA cannot be said to have a governmental function, and it has no power to change this situation. Indeed, the PA has limited or no military power, administrative functions, or other governmental abilities. As for the PLO, its influence has been declining after the Oslo Accords, and it has been noted that while it is significant as a framework that includes all Palestinians around the world, it is not possible to expect actual influence. Regarding Hamas and other Islamist organizations, Dr. Hamad, for instance, mentioned that they are losing power with the entire Gaza society under siege. As he points out, "Even if Hamas eventually declines, people will only create something new." The importance or specificity of being Islamist was not evaluated positively.

Meaning of "Resolution"

With no expectations for the proposed solutions or actors, the intellectuals are dominated by distrust and indignation, but it seems they are not giving up. On the other hand, what they emphasize in common is expressions regarding the "struggle for rights." Dr. Nofal put it as below:

> If you were forced to leave my country, would you live outside as a minority with limited rights or resist? Why did we have to be kicked out of the place where you lived and forced to look at it enviously from the outside as a refugee? This is not reasonable. Of course, to return is not easy. The current situation does not allow it, but my sons and grandsons will continue fighting for it. Jews were exiled two thousand years ago and came back. We are only about fifty years or seventy years. We must not forget the return. This is a matter of our existence.

As already quoted, Dr. Hamad also mentioned that they must remember "to emphasize rights of return always and stick to it." At the same time, "resistance" and "establishment of a state" are described as a means or process for achieving rights and are not the purpose in themselves. The "Palestinian cause" they see is only a matter of freedom and rights in the end. And abandoning those means that Palestinians are no longer Palestinians, and Palestine is no longer Palestine. The specific contents of the "rights" are the right of refugees to return and the right of land use. However, these essential issues have become gradually less important, as mentioned above.

The fact that there is no expectation for the resumption of peace negotiations is strongly related to the fact that the peace process in recent years does not present a final vision for such essential issues. For example, the Oslo Accords, based on 2SS, had postponed the most important issues of the refugees' right to return and the final status of Palestine. From the results, Palestine only gained limited administrative authority in a small piece of land. On the contrary, the "facts on the ground" institutionalized the occupation. Furthermore, authority of the leadership expanded with the establishment of the PA, which lead to corruption while diaspora Palestinians

and refugees lost their voices. In recent years, it has become more difficult for both sides to sit at the table in peace talks, while Israel accumulates even more by facts on the ground.

As Dr. Saadi said, "What we are seeking from a Palestinian standpoint is a complete solution, not a partial solution." Partial or stepwise negotiations have always functioned as a cover for the Israeli settlement policy. In order to overcome this situation, as Dr. Nofal pointed out in his own book, we basically have to recognize that "[t]his dispute will not end without the realization of the full rights of the Palestinians" (Nūfal, 2011, p. 834), and all parties have to prepare a comprehensive framework for peace, including the final status of Palestine. At the same time, as can be seen from the respondents' opinions, we must recognize that existing frameworks such as 2SS and 1SS already contain clear obstacles and that there is a high possibility that they will not function as they are.

Conclusion: The Future of "Solutions"

To summarize the opinions of the respondents, first, they do not expect the realization of the existing proposed solutions. Secondly, even with this skepticism toward current solutions, they have no image of a new alternative. As a result, there is no choice but to cling to 2SS, which is relatively realistic and has been on the table before. This can be interpreted as the reason why 2SS has been mainstream in the political context. Third, distrust and a lack of expectations are directed toward almost all political actors. If we look only at these points, there seems to be no hope. But these respondents have not given up, and they clearly emphasize that what they are insisting on is the recovery of their rights.

However, looking back at history, what the Palestinians aimed for in terms of restoring their rights was two points: independence as a completely sovereign state and the realization of ethnic self-determination. The respondents frequently mentioned these two points and have no doubts about their necessity. However, it is natural to locate the rights of self-determination and the sovereign state as the goal of nationalism in general and, in this case, of "Palestinian nationalism" specifically. On the other hand, the respondents do not recognize that at least they are aiming at exclusive land control and acquisition of absolutely superior status to Jews (Israelis). If it is assumed that the essence of the Palestinian cause is "restoration of deprived rights," the need is generally more universal than the aims of nationalism. From a different point of view, it can be said that the intellectuals stick to these two points and have turned these means into the purposes. As a result, they lack the flexibility to think about alternatives toward the recovery of rights. Removing this insistence and looking at another possibility is important for future governance building.

Considering the premise that the sovereignty of one ethnic group does not dominate the other and that physical division is not relevant here, there emerges the possibility of sharing sovereignty over the territory. If applied to the existing form of governance, the condominium system where two or more countries have sovereignty in the same region is similar to this. However, given the gap in current military and economic power, there is a possibility that unilateral rule will be accomplished in the name of "joint rule" if equivalent sovereignty between the two entities were realized. Therefore, restrictions or the abolishment of existing military capabilities and a joint-

sovereignty system under international control, such as monitoring by the stationing of multinational forces, could be possible.

Nonetheless, it is difficult to present a more concrete plan from only the content of this paper. In addition, of course, it is unlikely that this argument would be acceptable for all Palestinians and Israelis. Discussions are also needed regarding whether both ethnic groups can accept any specific solution. The aim of this paper, however, was simply to withdraw from the deadlocked situation regarding the discussion of solutions and to encourage reconsideration of future directions. The Palestinian intellectuals living in Jordan with which this article dealt had little expectation for either 2SS or 1SS, unlike the trends indicated by the previous studies. Their position of "neither 2SS nor 1SS" suggests that there is no way out of the question of "one or two."

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[1] This paper refers the definition of *Palestinian* set by the Palestinian National Charter (1968): "The Palestinians are those Arab nationals who, until 1947, normally resided in Palestine regardless of whether they were evicted from it or have stayed there. Anyone born, after that date, of a Palestinian father—whether inside Palestine or outside it—is also a Palestinian."

[2] With a doctorate in political science from the Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne and Cairo University, he serves as a professor of political science at Yarmouk University in Jordan. He has many publications on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and many TV appearances as a commentator on political problems.

[3] He served as Director of the Middle East Study Center (MESC) in Amman since 1994. He received a master's degree from Durham University in the United Kingdom. He has many publications about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and international relations in the Middle East region and has made many TV appearances.

[4] Founder of "Dar al-Jalil" in Amman and director until his death in 2017. The institution was founded in 1978, and since then it has conducted activities such as research and investigation into the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the publication of related books. Before his death, he was also active as a PNC member.

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Contact email: hani@sfc.keio.ac.jp