

# The Israel Embedding Problem: a Survey of Solution Proposals

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## Abstract

The two-state solution is cast as one of a plurality of solutions to the Israel embedding problem (IEP). A survey is given of conceivable solutions to the IEP, including two possibly new proposals: the tandem state solution and USPIL (United States of Palestine, Israel and Lebanon). A tandem state solution aims at giving both sides ample room for the realization of ideological objectives which deviate from the by now traditional design of most Western democracies. The USPIL proposal aims at comprehensively solving regional problems and optimizing potential for future development.

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# 1 Introduction

Many recent news items and commentaries speak of the two-state solution and the one-state solution.<sup>1</sup> These solutions are meant to solve problems involving both the State Israel and Arab Palestinian people living outside Israel. But how to describe the problem to which these proposals may serve as a solution. The question is far from self-evident. A first candidate is the problem posed by the defective status of many Palestinians around Israel who or whose parents or grandparents have been without a proper nationality since 1948. A second candidate for the problem to be solved is to focus on peace in view of the permanent tension at the borders of Israel where there is always some risk of attacks from outside to Israel. As an alternative, we propose to speak of the “Israel embedding problem” (IEP) which is – from our point of view – the most comprehensive way to describe the problem to be solved and to which all other possible problems relate. Naming the problem that way first of all takes Israel to be a fact of life, the context and modalities of which may be discussed, but the existence of which is not in any doubt. For certain Palestinian factions we expect that IEP fails to express their view of the problem just because the existence as well as the persistence of the State Israel is clearly (and intentionally) implicit in the phrasing of IEP while said factions may prefer a future without Israel. IEP as a problem statement also puts Israel at the core of the problem: a solution must be acceptable for Israel on the long run, to begin with.

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<sup>1</sup>The paper provides a substantial update as well as extension of our previous text [11]. In particular one-state solutions are discussed in more detail.

We assume that Israel is to be understood as a Jewish and democratic state, thereby acknowledging the conceptual problems coming with that specification. Thus Israel (as understood in IEP) entails more substance and focus than the mere existence of a state named Israel in the Middle-East which can be seen as a plausible descendant of today's Israel. At the same time, however, the implicit message of the problem statement IEP is that Israel has a problem. For Israel it may be essential that the solution which will be found will work for its present (and future if any) neighbors as well. In that sense IEP sees the problem not only as one of Israel's problems but as well the problem of the neighbors of Israel. We intend to avoid writing in terms of political advice to either side of the conflict. Beauchamp 2023 [13] gave such advice on how to react to 7 October 2023, stating: "... make the right choice where America made the wrong one. Israel should launch a targeted counterterrorism operation aimed at Hamas leadership and the fighters directly involved in the October 7 attack, one that focuses on minimizing both civilian casualties and the scope of ground operations in Gaza." Now over one and a half year later later said advice has not been followed and at the same time one may ask: could the advice have been workable in practice? As authors with an external and to some extent neutral perspective we are striving to investigate options rather than advice. We want to investigate whether there are options that at least in principle could serve as a solution even if they are not at reach at the moment. This investigation is motivated by doubt whether the alternatives that are now on the table may work, noticing in addition that other options seem not to be seriously considered and scrutinized.

## **1.1 IEP specified in more detail**

So, we view the naming of the problem as IEP as an option which might work for all sides. Not only is Israel's existence implicit, its rationale for dealing with the problem is implicit in the statement of IEP just as well. We need to specify IEP in more detail. Here is a decomposition of IEP into subproblems which serves as a specification of the problem in more detail.

(1) First of all, IEP is about borders; are the current borders of Israel definitive?

(2) Secondly, it is about the various groups of Palestinian refugees outside but near the borders of Israel, the fundamental legacy of the Nakba: will there be a new Palestinian state as a neighbor of Israel?

(3) Then, of core importance: how can Israel be protected in the long run against the hostile ambitions of Hamas, Hezbollah and other radical Islamic groups, including groups that may not yet have crystallized? Some parts of these groups, in particular of Hezbollah are not located as direct neighbors of Israel, but still they are enemies of the State of Israel who need to be taken into account.

(4) What is the future of the West Bank, including the many settlers who have acquired property, often in a problematic manner?

(5) How can Israel be protected in the long run against threats from Iran?

(6) How can Israel maintain within its borders a Jewish majority, an ambition which it seems to maintain? (We assume that such demands require cooperation with Israel's neighbors, if achievable at all.)

(7) Hamas and Hezbollah show a strong anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli attitude, how can Israel prevent such strong sentiments becoming widely accepted just around the corner?

(8) We view the so-called demographic time-bomb, a differential in birth rates for different nations within Israel with the potential of turning the Jewish nation within Israel into a minority, also as a part of the problem because that phenomenon, were it to materialize, is likely to render the idea of a Jewish and democratic state unfeasible in the long run.

(9) There is ample evidence of the entangled mutual hatred and distrust between Jewish Israeli and stateless Palestinians, we mention Asad 2024 [6] and Ben-Meir 2023 [7] as descriptions of the psychological deadlock and its causes. When describing solutions of the IEP we will not discuss how psychological barriers can be removed, and mainly focus on institutional matters with a geographical or legal dimension. Ben-Meir 2023 [7] claims that in advance of arriving at any solution psychological divides need to be bridged.

Speaking of IEP precludes few options, perhaps none. A solution of IEP may involve that Israel becomes part of some larger federation, or of some confederation. The range conceivable solutions includes single state solutions and two-state solutions, as well as the pseudo three-state solution (transferring the West Bank to Jordan and Gaza to Egypt). Writing a survey of options for solving IEP might be useful, if only to see if a reasonably exhaustive listing of options can be obtained. IEP is also consistent with splitting Israel up into one or more states (for instance a religious state and a secular state). Some movements in Israel advocate the idea that a significant fraction of Palestinians in Gaza and in the West Bank might find new homes in other parts of the world. Even such solutions are not excluded as options for solving the IEP though it is hard to imagine that any satisfactory progress can be achieved along such lines.

## **1.2 Matters of symmetry**

Several other names of “the problem” can and have been coined: e.g. Palestinian problem and Israel problem. As was noticed above an important consequence of framing the problem as the IEP is that the question of Israel's right to existence is not on the table anymore; each answer to the problem is supposed to accept realize this right. Our proposal may be criticized for lack of symmetry between (Jewish) Israeli and (Arab) Palestinian posi-

tions. A future with full Palestinian autonomy is not necessarily implied when speaking of solving the IEP, whereas sustained autonomy for Israel is taken as an implicit assumption. We believe that as a matter of historical fact there is no such symmetry and that imposing symmetry on the debate will render it harder to find convincing arguments. We expect that by formulating “the problem” in an adequate form there will emerge conditions for its best or workable solutions. For instance, what is often referred to as the two-state solution is not obviously a solution to the IEP, if only because of strong Israeli resistance. When speaking of the two-state solution one often ignores any mention of which problem is to be solved. We mention the well-known form of a two-state solution (combining Gaza and the West Bank into a new “Palestinian” state) which will not solve the problems of all stateless Palestinians near Israel’s borders, in particular not of Palestinians who are living in Lebanon though without Lebanese citizenship.

That problem, however, we wish to emphasize, is not the same problem as the IEP. In the paper we will provide a, probably incomplete, survey of possible solutions of the IEP.

The initiative “A Land for All” (working under the slogan OL2S, for “One land, two states”, see [2]) proposes a fully symmetric confederation of two states. We believe that although achieving symmetry between Jews and Palestinian Arabs is meaningful objective, achieving symmetry is not an absolute necessity and that, as long as the IEP remains unsettled, it is necessary to consider asymmetric solutions as well.

In the explanation of the vision of A land for All there is no focus on compensation for Palestinian Arabs who lost their property (or life) as a consequence of Israeli terrorism which flourished during the initial phase of the state of Israel.

In the description of the proposal of A land for All there is at best a marginal acknowledgment of the fact that many Palestinians have been moved out of their property by unfair legal means and that substantial compensation might be in place for these wrongs. It is also hard to see how there could be a symmetric military security system. It is not plausible that Israel would share its military secrets and access codes for weapons of mass destruction with an essentially disarmed Palestine.

### **1.3 Preliminary remarks on solutions of IEP**

In advance of surveying solutions we have some further remarks on IEP and its solution:

(i) finding a workable solution for the IEP is of importance to all sides involved, certainly also for Palestinians.

(ii) A future with full Palestinian autonomy is not necessarily implied when speaking of solving the IEP, whereas sustained autonomy for Israel is taken as an implicit assumption. This may sound strange. But we see that as the de facto rationale of the current international discourse. There are good reasons to start thinking about solutions for the

current situation by rationalizing the options that currently exist. The current situation is asymmetric in the sense that the international community accepts the existence of a state of Israel and asks for a safe legal position for the Palestinians. But it is not clear how to reach it. An exclusive focus primarily on two-state solutions (or on only one out of several proposals for two-state solutions) could mean to focus on a solution proposal about which there are reasons to assume that it will not work. Therefore, we propose to change the viewpoint by accepting that Israel exists and asking how it can be embedded. This ‘can be’ does not mean ‘should be’. Now any normative statement about the best solution has first to investigate which possible options are available and the investigation of the options has to start with a description of the problem. In that sense our investigation does not replace a debate about the ‘best solution’ but has the aim to provide additional, if only preliminary structure for this debate

(iii) When discussing solutions for IEP we consider final situations, which may however develop in a gradual manner so that one or more of the discussed solutions may serve as an intermediate stage for arriving in the end at another solution.

(iv) Given the existence and persistence of Israel, the minimal number of states involved in a solution of IEP equals one. We will first discuss one-state solutions to IEP.

## **1.4 Escaping from the mantra of one-state versus two-states**

Many texts about the problems in the Middle East focus on the dilemma presented by a choice between a one-state solution and a two-state solution. Different authors arrive at different appreciations of such proposals and formulate different preferences, often leading to the suggestion that an option may be discarded in favor of another allegedly preferable option. We believe that a different approach to the theme is possible. First of all to develop a survey of possible solutions including a workable naming scheme for these conceivable solutions, each of which merits attention. Below we will consider some 20 plus different solution proposals. We consider completeness of the survey and clarity of the description of various alternative proposals to be of more importance than working towards pairwise comparisons of pairs of options in order to discard one of both. We believe that the frequently occurring pattern of discarding a solution proposal on the basis of comparison with a single alternative is misguided because of the risk that too few factors are taken into account.

Yiftachel 1999 [38] qualifies Israel as an ethnocracy, a clearly specified notion which is at odds with the concept of democracy by disregarding the fundamental authority of the ‘demos’. Yiftachel concludes that work needs to be done to turn Israel into a democracy. Over 25 years later the qualification of Israel as an ethnocracy seems to have become more rather than less convincing.

We conclude that the ongoing development of Israel into an ethnocracy may be taken for a fact by external observers and need not be opposed on principled grounds. The tandem state proposal and the USPIL proposal both in different ways aim to make room for ethnocratic states. Discarding solution proposals on the basis of an anti-ethnocratic ideology may induce a failure to find a solution that might work in the specific circumstances of the Middle east.

## 1.5 Accusations

The paper makes some use of (and contributes to) accusation theory, for which we refer to [8, 9, 10, 12]. We hold that accusations play a key role in the appreciation of solutions of the IEP. In [10] so-called special accusation types were introduced and we will proceed along that line by suggesting two further accusation types: apartheid state accusations and colonial state accusations. Both are subtypes, i.e. refinements, of the special accusation type “problematic conditions of statehood”, which is further discussed in Section 6 below.

### 1.5.1 Apartheid state accusations

Apartheid state accusations exist in various forms and circumstances and may be either directed to states or to groups within states or to leading individuals within a state.

**Accusation 1.1** (*Apartheid state accusation, for short: apartheid accusation.*) *An apartheid state accusation is an accusation usually made in the direction of alleged privileged citizens, functionaries, or supporters of a state which is allegedly maintaining an apartheid regime, the body of the accusation consisting of the claim that these individuals are supporting apartheid.*

A recent instance of the apartheid accusation in the context of Israel can be found in Yiftachel 2025 [40]. Reingewirtz 2025 [30], however is skeptical about the validity of an apartheid accusation towards Israel, and Ellis 2019 [22] rejects the apartheid state accusation towards Israel on theoretical grounds. Speaking of apartheid in case of a state need not be an accusation. For instance when stating that South-Africa was an apartheid state, one may rather be positive and emphasize that the phase of apartheid has been overcome.

### 1.5.2 Colonial state accusations

Colonial state accusations appear in various forms, some with an exclusively historic motivation, some with a contemporary rationale, and depending on the theory of colonialism that is adopted by the accuser. We view colonial state accusation as an accusation type (in the style of [10]), rather than as a specific accusation.



**Accusation 1.2** (*Colonial state accusation.*) *A colonial state accusation accuses a state (or its functionaries, or groups of its citizens) of either (i) being in the process of building a state or enlarging a state by means of colonization, or (ii) of having recently been engaged in colonial actions to such an extent that rectification for the corresponding wrongdoings towards members of the original population is still in order .*

Further comments on colonial state accusations are made in Section 6.1 below. As an instance of a colonial state accusation we formulate the following accusation.

**Accusation 1.3** (*Great Israel colonial state accusation.*) *The great Israel colonial state accusation involves two elements: (i) that Israel has been historically founded by way of colonial mechanisms which have wronged the interests of the local indigenous population, and (ii) that (great) Israel has in part been based on recent colonialist actions which have wronged the indigenous population in the full sight of the world community without any other objective than capturing (that is stealing) their natural reserves (land, water, ports, sources energy).*

A key property of accusations is that these exist irrespective of the validity thereof. For the accusations just mentioned: Israel may need to deal with an apartheid state accusation even in case the validity of such accusations is convincingly refuted. Similarly Israel may have to deal with colonial state accusations even if there is widespread disagreement on the definition of colonialism or on the application of that notion to the history of Israel or to its contemporary actions in the Middle East. Both the presence and the detrimental effects, if any, of accusations may be much simpler to establish than the validity thereof. In fact detrimental effects of an accusation need not show any correlation with the validity of the accusation.

In Section 6.1 below we provide more detail on these accusation types.

## 1.6 Surveying conceivable solutions to the IEP

We intend our survey to be complete to such an extent that the solution which will emerge in the future is among the options listed below. There are some difficulties when designing the survey: is a federation of two states best seen as a one-state solution or as a two-state solution. We assume that in any case a confederation of two states can be classified as a two-state solution. We will classify federal state solutions as one-state solutions. In particular a proposal for a two-state federation is a proposal for a one-state solution.

## 1.7 Subjective probabilities

We see no immediate connection between the recent Israel-Hamas (Israel-Hezbollah, Israel-Iran) war(s) and the range of solution proposals for the IEP. Perhaps the following can be said, however:

(i) an extended Israel solution (see 3.1 below) has obtained more traction within Israel and within the US.

(ii) Several states have recognized a (yet non-existent) Palestinian state as a means to force Israel into adopting a two-state solution. The UN has reiterated its commitment to a two-state solution.

(iii) Israel has reiterated its principled dismissal of a two-state solution, as well as its intention to actively prevent a two-state solution coming about.

(iv) Facts on the ground in the West Bank and in Gaza have developed in such a manner as to reduce the plausibility of an independent Palestine consisting of the West Bank and Gaza.

(v) All-in we hold that since 7 October 2023 the creation of an independent Palestinian state has become less feasible and less likely for that reason.

## 2 No-(new)-state solutions

We will abbreviate two-state solution to TSS. Cordesman 2023 [21] thinks of a TSS as unachievable on the short term. Writing 11 October 2023 Cordesman accurately predicts much of what happened since then. However, it seems that Cordesman has underestimated the difficulties that Israel faces for eliminating the risk posed by Hamas. He considers the TSS to be unachievable for psychological reasons. Instead he advocates the “no-state solution”, a shorthand for the no-new state solution, and he suggests that Israel would be running an extended area on a temporary basis thereby paying due attention to the living conditions of the Palestinian part of the population. A similar view is presented one year later in N 2025 [29].

### 2.1 Perpetuating the status quo

Perpetuating the status quo, after a cease fire in Gaza, without achieving a fundamental political solution to any of the outstanding problems may be considered an interim solution to IEP. Perpetuating the status quo, and waiting for better future options for obtaining a definitive solution of the IEP, may be more attractive from an Israeli perspective than running the risk of a political process with an uncertain, and potential disappointing outcome.

## **2.2 The pseudo three-state solution**

What is sometimes referred to as a three state solution (also three state option, see Bolton 2009 [15]) is in fact an instance of a no-new-state solution. We will refer to the solution proposal as the pseudo-three-state solution.

The pseudo-three-state solution involves a transfer of the West Bank to Jordan, and of the Gaza to Egypt, thereby involving three states (Jordan, Egypt and Israel) in the process. A pseudo-three-state solution solves several of the difficulties of a TSS but it fails to offer a Palestinian national identity of any kind, unless of course one views Jordan as an already existing Palestinian state, which adopts a more significant role in a pseudo-three-state solution. Another complication with a pseudo-three-state solution is that the stability of both Egypt and Jordan might become endangered upon incorporating larger Palestinian groups each armed with their own political agendas.

## **2.3 A pseudo-two-state solution: Israel plus extended Jordan**

Instead of incorporating Gaza in Egypt one may also contemplate a solution in which Gaza becomes a part of Jordan just as the West Bank. This option has various variations:

### **2.3.1 Shared West Bank**

In an Israel/Extended Jordan solution (proposal) one can imagine that the entire West Bank is shared by Jordan and Israel while the Gaza strip is entirely incorporated in Jordan.

### **2.3.2 Split West Bank**

Half of the West Bank is incorporated in Israel while the other Half is incorporated in Jordan. This solution will require substantial modification of the pattern, size and location of settlements.

## **3 One-state solutions**

One-state solutions are based on the idea that West Bank, Israel, and Gaza will be combined into a single nation which then may have a number of districts or cantons each with their own specific composition of ethnic groups, religious factions, and political majorities and minorities, so that different communities may feel at home in the same state. Various groups within Israel advocate forms of a one-state solution. We will discuss three forms of one-state solution, while we are aware that the theme allows much further ramification.

### **3.1 (Extended) Israel: the unique Jewish and democratic state**

Israel is extended with the West Bank (which has been annexed), as well as with Gaza, and perhaps some areas from Syria and Lebanon. Israel will be a Jewish and democratic state in which Palestinians from the West bank and Gaza will have a legal position equal to the legal position of Palestinians living already in Israel. This option may be termed Extended Israel and it seems to be in the mind of influential forces in the Israeli government.

#### **3.1.1 Advantages (from an Israeli position)**

The following advantages may be noticed:

(i) Extension of surface, and thereby extension of economic potential, and a perspective of strong economic development.

(ii) Political structures have already been developed, merely additional citizens must be introduced: Israel is a Jewish and democratic state (in accordance with the 2018 Nationality Law).

(iii) The Jewish nation inside Israel (and the different factions therein) may maintain the various ideologies about the significance of the state:

- a state where Jews are welcome under all circumstances,
- the fulfillment of a biblical prediction,
- a Jewish religious state,
- a secular state which due to its history hosts many Jewish citizens,
- orthodox Jews may keep the existing prerogatives.

Israel presents a delicate and dynamic balance between the various forces within the Jewish community. This balance is baffling for external observers who tend to be selective in their appreciation for the respective world views of these factions.

#### **3.1.2 Justification from the Israeli position**

From an outsider perspective a great Israel one-state solution features a non-Palestinian bias which lacks justification. Arguments towards justification from an Israeli position may run as follows:

(i) Permanent and stable establishment of a Jewish state which allows a safe haven for all Jews from the diaspora is a fundamental necessity which, from day one of the declaration of independence of Israel, takes priority over other considerations and interests. We mention that it is hard to imagine a safe haven surrounded by enemies, and disastrous wars may have negative impact on the likelihood of achieving a safe haven.

(ii) Through a sequence of wars, mostly initiated by Arab neighbor states, and always in opposition to Palestinian movements and forces Israel has acquired a powerful position which may guarantee its existence on the long run.

(iii) In 1948 it has been underestimated by all persons involved how difficult the arrangement of a two-state structure would turn out to be. Promises to Palestinians dating back so long are outdated.

(iv) For many Palestinians the vision of an Islamic state containing a Jewish nation as a minority group with less influence has been always acceptable, if not favored. Therefore, from an ideological point of view there is no fundamental obstacle against an ethno/theocracy for Palestinian Arabs. After almost 70 years things are moving in that direction, now with the Jewish nation in the lead. The Jewish nation will need demonstrate that it can deal with the Palestinian-Arab-Islamic nation inside Israel in a satisfactory manner, and the leaders of the Jewish nation inside Israel are confident that this will be possible.

(v) All proposals that have been developed for two-state solutions come with unworkable complications, and involve artificial methods to hide the huge discrepancy between Israeli achievements and ambitions and Palestinian achievements and ambitions.

(vi) Although for external observers the creation of a sizeable Jewish and democratic state in which Jews may be a dominant minority nation seems self-contradictory, and for that reason may be deemed impossible, precisely doing so is the task ahead.

(vii) If only the Palestinian Arabs would recognize the Holocaust, they would understand why Israel cannot and will not compromise on these matters. (An observation made in Ben-Meir 2025 [7], though in a different wording.)

(viii) For the time being Israel has no better option than to proceed in such a manner that considerable time to come the apartheid accusation as formulated in thorough detail Yiftachel 2023 [39] cannot be denied, and can merely be deplored, and to hope that future generations will be able to improve the democratic quality of the state of Israel, probably in a gradual process of many decades or more, with as an outcome that such accusations are not anymore valid or problematic.

(ix) In view of the negative connotations of apartheid the model of the state would be based on so-called pillarization. Various nations among which Israeli Jews, and Israeli Palestinian Arabs, constitute pillars in that model, the may be a non-religious and/or a Christian pillar as well. Pillarization allows the coexistence of different life-styles in the same state where homogeneous groups are given the opportunity to live in relative isolation.

(x) Stating the above point differently: for those who issue the colonial state accusation towards Israel the response may be this: yes Israel as a Jewish and democratic state may be understood as a result of settler colonialism. Having acknowledged that state of affairs, and taking the settler colonial origins of Israel as historically descriptive and informative

rather than as morally prescriptive, it can be inferred, given the histories of colonial states such as the US and Australia, that it will be a long process, taking perhaps up to or over 200 years, before the position of the descendants of the formerly indigenous population has become satisfactory for all sides involved. South-Africa serves as an example for Israel of how a settler colonial state may fail to achieve original settler objectives, and for the necessity for settlers to adapt to changing realities. Requiring of Israel that these issues are solved from day one the basis of principles and laws (which merely seem to work in North-West Europe since WW II) is unrealistic. In the eyes of some Israeli's, for that very reason imposing such unrealistic requirements on the development of the state Israel might even be construed as an instance of antisemitism in the light of the IHRA definition of antisemitism.

(xi) Democracy in its various forms and modalities is not seen as the ultimate yardstick of success for Israel. Instead the development about of a future proof Jewish state in the right location takes priority. Such a state may adapt its political organization in response to various influences from inside and outside. There is no principled position that a single model is preferred over other models.

### **3.1.3 Disadvantages (from an Israeli position)**

As disadvantages of this option for Israel we see the following:

(i) The so-called time-bomb mechanism: on the long run Jews may become a minority nation among the Israeli citizens, which may ultimately destabilize the state.

(ii) Palestinians in Lebanon may still remain deprived of an acceptable citizenship.

(iii) There may be difficulties with international acceptance, but these have been overcome were the option to come true. For that reason such difficulties must not be seen as disadvantages but merely constitute hurdles for the option to be realized. Such hurdles may or may not be impossible to overcome.

(iv) The notion of a Jewish nation state is controversial among Jewish scholars. Some prefer a future for the Jewish nation without a hosting nation state. For instance see Boyarin 2023 [16].

(v) Israel will be facing for long time to come the apartheid state accusation, that is the accusation that its laws and procedures create apartheid between Jews and non-Jews including the Arab Palestinian citizens, where Jews have a prioritized position.

(vii) Israel will also be confronted with persistent colonial state accusations.

### **3.1.4 The Palestinian perspective**

At first sight the idea of living in a Jewish state is unacceptable for many still stateless Palestinians, importantly, however Palestinians with Israeli citizenship seem to prefer their

current status in Israel over a conceivable citizenship of a Palestinian state in two-state solution, and the (extended) Israel option should not be prematurely discarded for that reason.

## **3.2 Extended Palestine**

At the other end of the spectrum is a single state named Palestine, which we will refer to as extended Palestine. Israel has ceased to exist and Jews are not anymore first class citizens of a now dominantly Palestinian state. We assume that Hamas would support this option yet wishing that many Jewish Israelis would leave extended Palestine. For many Israeli citizens an extended Palestine is not the way to go. Its inclusion in a survey of options is needed for the sake of symmetry, however. It may matter to know why this option is discarded by proponents of extended Israel (as outlined above) and why such arguments would not rule out its symmetric opposite as well. What are the symmetry breaking mechanisms at work (if any)? Military power, ideological strength, external support, dedication of the people involved? Extended Palestine might on the long run include parts of Lebanon and Syria, and perhaps also of Jordan.

### **3.2.1 Israeli/Jewish perspective**

We assume that a large majority of Israeli's would not agree with the prospect of living in a state named Palestine where Palestinian Arabs have captured the dominance which they themselves enjoy these days in Israel. However, if Jews from the world-wide diaspora were free to settle in the new (extended) Palestine, not an easy matter to achieve, and if the members of the Jewish nation would be guaranteed of watertight civil rights, then the original objective of Theodore Herzl's Zionism might be in reach along these lines. To substantiate this argument this one might adopt the idea, as suggested in Boyarin 2023 [16] that "staat" in "Der Judenstaat" may be read as a safe place within a multinational state rather than as a national state in its own right.

## **3.3 Extended and secularized Israel**

Israel is extended with the West Bank and Gaza and perhaps some other areas. In (extended and secularized) Israel Jewish and Arabian citizens have precisely the same rights. Different nations are distinguished, including a Jewish nation and a Palestinian nation. Israel is not seen by the state as a fulfillment of any biblical predictions or in any specific religious right. However, unlike for Palestinians, the principle that all Jews from the world-wide diaspora are entitled to move to and immigrate in Israel is maintained.

### 3.4 Israel-Palestine (IP)

The idea of a symmetric Israeli-Palestinian state has a long history, see e.g. Aly 2019 [5] and Goldstein 2025 [24]. Instead of an extended Israel one may consider a state Israel-Palestine in which both parts of the population live in symmetric conditions. The principle that all Jews world-wide are entitled to settle in Israel is abandoned. Nevertheless, we see a variety of problems for these ideas:

1. Let the new state be named Israel-Palestine (IP for short). As long as IP has a clear Jewish majority, IP is likely to be unattractive for many Palestinians with an Islamic orientation. As soon as IP will have a Palestinian (or Islamic oriented) majority it may well become unattractive for the Jewish part of the population. For Israel to be a Jewish and democratic state (as it claims to be) preserving a Jewish majority seems to be essential, although democratic means to guarantee such preservation are rather difficult to imagine.
2. It is difficult to imagine anything else than a monumental internal power struggle between the group of citizens with Jewish orientation and those with an Islamic orientation.
3. The legality of Israeli settlements on the West Bank must be dealt with in advance of IP coming about. It is hard to see a compromise that works for both sides.
4. IP (as a one-state solution) will allow all Palestinian refugees to return to their pre-1948 locations. This Arab Palestinian demand seems to be unacceptable and unworkable for Israel. For Israel the more plausible future of most Palestinian refugees is that they will obtain the nationality corresponding with the localities where they live or will live, and that IP would not give rise to a vast resettlement of (then) Palestinian citizens within IP.
5. If a significant number of Palestinian refugees still lives in Lebanon after the constitution of IP all complications that come with the existence, presence and potential growth of Hezbollah and its armed forces will remain in place, now threatening the stability of the political consensus inside IP. See also Saber 2024 [33].

The proposal made in Alterman 2024 [4] seems to be quite close to IP as indicated above.

### 3.5 Two-state federation solutions: USPI

The option of an IEP solution by way of a two-state federation (which we regard as a one-state solution, as mentioned above) has been discussed in many circles. A two-state



federation solution (TSFS) has combined armed forces as well as a combined foreign policy. Needless to say that the gross asymmetry between Israel with a highly sophisticated and up to date standing army and the collection of Palestinian factions, some with significant military capabilities, will form a major hurdle which will have to be surpassed if a federal solution is to emerge. Other federal responsibilities may be agreed upon. A major difference with a two-state confederation solution lies in the irrevocable binding between the two states. Various groups are proposing implementations of a two-state federation solution which they see as the only plausible way forward. There are various options for a TSFS.

Naming such federations may be done as follows: USPI for United states of Palestine and Israel (or alternative USIP, if the order of mention is deemed important). We will prefer the order PI in order to acknowledge the fact that when Zionism came about there was an Arab Palestinian majority in the whole area.

### **3.5.1 Bocco Roberts USPI**

We mention Bocco & Roberts 2025 [14] as an example of a fairly detailed proposal of a federal TSS. Bocco and Roberts describe a federation with two states, but the creation of additional territories is left as an option. The technical innovation of [14] seems to be that citizen A may be a resident of the territory Israel and live in the territory Palestine and the other way around. This idea is used to solve several of the so-called Permanent Status Issues (which were already listed and named in Oslo).

In any case a two-state federation solution will avoid some of the deficiencies of a two-state solution (viewed as a solution of the IEP).

### **3.5.2 TSFS/L USPI**

We see as a major defect of a federal two-state solution that the situation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, who still lack a proper Nationality remains unresolved. A TSFS/L solution combines a TSFS solution with some potentially definitive arrangement in Lebanon (for instance adopting Lebanese citizenship by all Palestinians). An FTSS/L solution may work, though it leaves the Palestinian communities fragmented and weakened for that reason, which in the long run may lead to problems.

### **3.5.3 TSFS/J USPI**

With a 3SFS/J solution we indicate a federal three-state solution where besides Palestine and Israel also Jerusalem has the status of a state. 3SFS/J solutions may help to overcome the sensitivities which come with splitting Jerusalem or assigning Jerusalem either to Israel

or to Palestine. A 3SFS/J solution is an instance of a multi-state federation solution (MSFS for which many alternative instances can be conceived. .

### **3.6 Large federal solutions (involving Lebanese and/or Jordanian area)**

Preferably two-state federal solutions also include the element that Palestinians living in Lebanon become Lebanese citizens, and the incorporation of Hezbollah armed forces in the regular Lebanese army. However, a more far reaching involvement of Lebanon in solutions of IEP may be contemplated. Involving Jordan on parts thereof is another far reaching option. Such extended options we refer to as large federal solutions.

Federal solutions may involve more than two states, and one or more of such states may be located in today's Lebanon. We will only consider federal solutions involving parts of Lebanon, though non-federal multi-state solutions are conceivable. Such proposals may improve on any of the two-state federal solutions (as well as the various two state solutions listed below) by dealing with some of the problems in Lebanon.

#### **3.6.1 USPIL**

With USPIL (United States of Palestine, Israel and Lebanon) we will refer to a multi-state federal solution made up by, Palestine (which will include parts of today's Lebanon), Israel, and (all of the remaining parts of) Lebanon. An USPIL solution may take the form of a USPIL/J solution if Jerusalem is turned into a state by itself. USPIL/J solutions may be further refined by splitting Israel, Palestine, or Lebanon into parts which will become members of the USPIL combination, and perhaps a federation made up of 8 states is reasonable. We will speak of a 5U/MSFS/J solution if the federation has 5 member states etc. We have contemplated an 8U/MSFS/J solution in more detail. An 8U/MSF S/J solution will allow for the following:

- Decomposing Israel into 3 parts:
  - (i) a secular part with a majority of Jews,
  - (ii) a secular (though Judaic) part with a Jewish identity,
  - (iii) a (Judaic as well) part allowing for a Jewish religious state.
- Two Palestinian/Islamic parts (e.g. Shia and Sunni),
- A religious Christian part of Lebanon, as well as a secular part of Lebanon,
- A city state of Jerusalem.

The suggestion for decomposition of Israel into 3 parts follows (our reading of) the analysis in Yadgar 2020 [35] where a multiplicity of tensions within the self-image of the Israeli polity is displayed. Whereas Theodor Herzl's original idea focused on a secular state for Jews (with an implicit requirement of a majority of Jews), at the same time Asher Ginzburg (writing as Ahad Ha'am) proposed in 1902 as a priority that a (secular though evolved from a religious tradition) Jewish identity might and should be preserved and grown as a necessary preparation for a new state. This discrepancy is present without a drive towards a Jewish religious state, which is an option as well that cannot be discarded. Because these disparate objectives cannot plausibly be integrated in a single statehood, allowing each of these options to thrive in different parts of USPIL may be considered an option with attention. We refer to Yadgar 2023 [36] for more information regarding these dilemmas.

We notice that the notion of a secular state arose in a context where different Christian factions were competing for political influence and different models for the independence of state and religion came about. We are not sure that the concept of secularity carries over in a plausible manner to either a state with an (intended) majority of Jews or to a state with an intended Jewish (also referred to as Judaic, though non-religious) polity.

Perhaps a European notion of secularity fails to address the complexities of both options. Understanding Judaism as a confession made civil rights accessible for Jews in Europe, while at the same time adopting that very understanding implicitly reduced Judaism to a tradition which cannot justify the claims of the state of Israel based on a self-perception of chosen people which is hardly consistent with the notion of a confession. Yadgar 2023 [36] describes the ideas of Leon Roth (1896-1963), who as we understand would hardly accept the right of existence of a Jewish state, and who (when still alive) would be highly critical of the violent actions of Israel in Gaza after 7-10-2023. These violent actions seem to be best explained as the outcome of a strong and irresistible urge for self-defense by a nation- state under self-perceived existential threat and find no further additional justification based on considerations concerning the philosophical and ideological background of the State Israel.

### 3.6.2 USPIJL

A federal four-state solution USPIJL includes in addition Jordan as a member of the union. The advantage of USPIJL over USPIL is that a much stronger union is created which will also create better opportunities for the development of Jordan on the long run.

It is not clear to us to what extent, in a USPIJL option Jordan as a member of the federation can still be a constitutional monarchy at the same time. We assume that a federation requires a more close alignment of political structures between members states

than a confederation.

### **3.6.3 USPIJ**

Including Jordan in a 3 state federation is an option. In a federation with Palestine and Israel, Jordan may still be a constitutional monarchy (while in confederation a more autocratic form of monarchy may be accommodated).

## **4 Two-state solution (TSS), a catalogue of options**

In Wikipedia we find “The two-state solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict envisions an independent State of Palestine alongside the State of Israel, in the region west of the Jordan River”. This description clearly points at the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as the problem in need of a solution. We add to this description that the IEP is in need of a solution as well, and we will consider TSSs from the perspective of providing solutions to the IEP.

We assume that Gaza would also be included in the Palestinian state, and indeed there are different versions of the TSS, so we may think of a plurality of conceivable TSSs. Providing a survey of proposals for a TSS is not an easy task as the literature on TSS is vast. A form of TSS is often contrasted with one-state solutions. For instance Kelman 2011 [26] views a TSS as the only plausible option for a solution with as a key argument that a one-state solution cannot guarantee a Jewish majority. Classifying options (such as unitary versus binational) for a TSS and developing a ramification of options still seems to be a relevant task. We consider various options on the basis of theoretical possibility rather than on the basis of political plausibility. All TSS share certain problems which need to be solved, and which may be solved in various ways, such as have been outlined in many proposals for TSS. We mention some of these issues:

- (i) the relation between nationality, citizenship, residence and permanent residence.
- (ii) The position of settlers on the West Bank.
- (iii) Compensation to Palestinians whose interest have been hurt, from forced displacement to the killing of relatives.
- (iv) The status of Jews from the diaspora, and the status of state-less Palestinians outside the TSS area.

### **4.1 Back to 1948**

Israel and Palestine are two states together covering the current Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza strip. Israel allows resettlement of recognized Palestinian refugees. Both states

are entirely independent. Many variations on this theme are possible. The likelihood of a solution of this form coming about is minimal given that Israel will effectively resist the return of millions of Palestinian refugees.

As a second option among TSSs we consider the decoupled TSS.

## **4.2 Decoupled TSS**

Israel is left by and large unchanged, both in terms of its borders and in terms of its laws and the relative status of its Jewish and Palestinian citizens. There will be no return of (now stateless) Palestinians to Israel. This constraint comes from the consideration that arranging said return to Israel is unfeasible from an Israeli perspective. Making explicit that return is not promised will facilitate obtaining citizenship in the states where the refugees live. The citizenship question for Palestinian refugees must be solved, on way or another, however for a decoupled TSS to materialize. Gaza plus parts of the West Bank constitute a fully independent Palestinian state. A decoupled TSS will face many problems:

1. What is the future of settlers on the West Bank? Some options:
  - (i) Allowing/proposing them to stay as Palestinian citizens.
  - (ii) Allowing/proposing them to stay as Israeli citizens with permanent residence in Palestine.
  - (iii) Splitting up the West Bank, and compensating Palestine with Israeli ground elsewhere, or moving many Israeli settlers back to Israel, both options will face huge difficulties.
  - (iv) Moving settlers back to Israel.
  - (v) combinations of the above options.
2. Which role and status to assign to Jerusalem or to parts of Jerusalem? Here lies a critical parameter for a decoupled TSS.
3. The Palestinian state will be very dependent on Israel, and its split topography is impractical, a corridor between the West Bank and Gaza might be needed.
4. Israel will not be able to accommodate a large (say 1 million or more persons) influx of Palestinian refugees, the situation of stateless Palestinians in Lebanon still needs to be resolved.
5. A Palestinian state with independent armed forces may develop into a security risk for Israel. It is difficult to see how it can be prevented with certainty that a Palestinian

state will develop in that direction. Decoupled TSS may be considered unsatisfactory as a solution for the IEP just for that reason.

6. The threat for Israel coming from Hezbollah in Lebanon is not dealt with conclusively with the introduction of a TSS. The Hezbollah threat, however, is just as relevant for Israel as any threat from the side of Hamas has been.
7. If yet another war would come about between Israel and Hezbollah (or even Lebanon) Israel faces the risk that a new Palestinian state sides with Hezbollah.
8. Israel intends to be a Jewish and democratic state. That notion is far from self-evident and is far from uncontested. It is plausible that a Palestinian state would have a special relation with Islamic religions and would also look for ways to protect this special relation against the volatility of future events. A TSS needs to take into account the specific objectives of both states. In fact, both states need to support and protect the other state's political architecture in order to prevent predictable future conflicts. It is unlikely that without strong mutual ties (not given in a decoupled TSS) between both states such demands can be properly taken into account, and can be dealt with in a sustainable manner.
9. It is implausible that by combining the West Bank and Gaza a new state can be formed which is economically viable. Organizational problems as well as legal problems may be unsurmountable as well if merely West Bank and Gaza are "glued together" into Palestine.
10. Unless very significant international pressure is exercised, it is unlikely that Israel can and will withdraw many of the settlements on the West Bank. Without such withdrawal a Palestinian state including the West Bank is hardly feasible.
11. Israel will have to deal with colonial state accusations (having refused the right of return for members of the Palestinian diaspora) as well as the apartheid state accusation (unless Israel adopts far reaching reforms).
12. The TSS has been analysed and found obsolete by Ian Lustick, a fact he considers mainly due to Israeli actions and attitudes. For a brief survey of Lustick's arguments see [1].

In our view the complications mentioned above render a TSS ill-suited as a solution of the IEP. We conclude that the search space for solutions to the IEP must be extended, perhaps with options that have not been discussed in the existing literature to date. Several of the listed arguments appear in Saber 2024 [33]. We have on purpose not included

any arguments deriving from expected lack of support by the Israeli population as such arguments are not robust against political change which may take place anytime. In Yadlin and Evental 2024 [37] one finds detailed arguments on why Israel must deal with the various threats at its borders in sufficiently proactive ways.

### **4.3 Structurally constrained decoupled TSS**

A structurally constrained TSS imposes structural long term constraints on both sides, there constraints have a focus on issues which matter for external relations of both states. Examples of such constraints are these:

(i) The Palestinian state has no armed forces and Israel is responsible for its military security. Palestine will not prepare for military action by building tunnel systems.

(ii) Israel guarantees water from the river Jordan as well as free traffic between disconnected parts of Palestine

(iii) The Palestinian state recognizes that Israel refuses the right to return for Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. Israel will accept that these refugees are provided with the Palestinian nationality also when living in outside the Palestinian state.

A structurally constrained TSS provides Israel no protection against apartheid state accusations and against colonial state accusations. Given the history of Israel protection against colonial state accusations is hard to achieve and only the passage of time will slowly diminish the impact of such accusations. With apartheid state accusations the situation is different because such accusations are usually understood in present time and may be dealt with by the introduction of appropriate laws, rules, and conventions.

As a novel option to protect Israel against apartheid state accusations we propose, in Paragraph 4.5, as an additional option the tandem state model which is a special case of structurally constrained TSS.

#### **4.3.1 Palestine = Gaza plus West Bank**

Assuming shared control over Jerusalem Palestine consists of Gaza plus West Bank. Settlers will have a choice: either be citizens of Palestine, or remain Israeli citizens with permanent residence in Palestine (having voting rights in Israel while having reduced voting rights in Palestine).

#### **4.3.2 Extended Gaza with shared West Bank model**

The Weest Bank is entirely under shared control of Israel and Palestine. The “pure” Palestinian state is essentially in Gaza.

Gaza is extended to the south with some 2500 or even more square kilometers which are bought from Egypt and which are exclusively paid for by Germany. (Justified as constituting a part of the price paid by Germany for the events during WW II.)

#### **4.4 Confederal TSS (CTSS)**

Proposals for a confederal TSS are mainstream in the literature on solutions. We mention the rather detailed proposal of The Berlin Initiative in its 2025 version [32] and the proposal of the initiative A land for All [2].

According to the informative account of Bocco and Roberts 2025 [14] the distinction between a federal TSS and a confederal TSS is critical. They argue that the TSS as advocated by The Berlin initiative and by the initiative “A land for All” envisages a confederation rather than a federation, and that precisely here lies a weakness of these initiatives. The EU is mentioned as an example of a de facto, not de jure, confederation. Members of a confederation may leave the confederation, as the EU has demonstrated with Brexit.

In [14] it is argued that a confederation will not be sufficiently stable and a federation must be preferred. These considerations are taken as an incentive to look outside the box of traditional two-state solutions. The federation consists of territories (with residency linking a citizen of the state to a territory) rather than of states. There are different options of decoupled while structurally constrained TSS.

#### **4.5 Tandem-state solutions**

We propose the phrase tandem state solution for a particular form of constrained TSS. A tandem state is a pair of states (here Israel and Palestine) which are constitutionally synchronized: both states cannot modify basic principles and laws without consent of the other side. Tandem states is an extreme form of confederation. Tandem state solutions allow for complementary arrangements of fundamental principles. For instance:

(i) Israel has armed forces, Palestine has no armed forces.

(ii) In both states nationality and citizenship are distinguished, while Israel recognizes a Jewish nationality as most central to the interests of the state and Palestine recognizes an Arabic or perhaps also Islamic nationality as core. Both states host different nationalities, only one of which is leading.

(iii) Both states share the responsibility of providing for basic needs in particular water and transportation, which in practice means different tasks and obligations for either side.

Tandem solutions adopt Israel as it is now, including the 2018 Nationality Law and the ramified consequences thereof as the entity for which a proper embedding is sought. Part



of the proper embedding lies in the symmetry that both states host a hierarchy of nationalities.

For Israel this hierarchy is needed (according to the political powers in charge) in order to preserve the idea of a Jewish and democratic state, an idea which undeniably features tensions with the by now classical liberal tradition of European democracies.

Now Palestine would be required to show support for Israeli objectives by not only tolerating the phenomenon of a hierarchy of nationalities in Israel (which is disadvantageous for Arabic/Palestinian citizens in Israel), but in addition adopting a complementary hierarchy of nationalities in Palestine and the tandem mechanism would imply that Palestine is not free to disregard this hierarchy without Israeli consent.

The idea of a tandem state TSS solution is to achieve that Israel (and Palestine) will not be vulnerable for apartheid state accusations because these are to be understood in the light of the pair of tandem states as a whole where both states compensate for the alleged shortcomings in terms of equal rights for citizens of the other state.

## **5 Large confederal state solutions**

With large confederal state solutions we indicate IEP solutions which consist of a confederation of states the area of which extends significantly beyond Israel (as of 2025), West Bank and Gaza. Such proposals have been made.

### **5.1 Palestine, Israel, Jordan**

A confederation of Palestine, Israel and Jordan is mentioned in Ben-Meir 2023 [7] as the only plausible solution for (what we call) the IEP. As a disadvantage of this option we see that the status of stateless Palestinians in Lebanon remains unsolved, and that stability is not guaranteed for that reason. Moreover the stability of a confederation is not guaranteed.

### **5.2 Palestine, Israel, Lebanon**

Alternatively one may imagine a confederation involving besides Palestine and Israel also Lebanon.

### **5.3 Palestine, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon**

We mention as well the option of a confederation a confederation involving besides Palestine and Israel both Lebanon and Jordan.

## 6 The special accusation type of problematic conditions of statehood

Both apartheid state accusation and colonial state accusation are subtypes (refinements) of a special accusation type: problematic conditions of statehood accusations. Another subtype of the same special accusation type is the mafia state accusation.

### 6.1 Colonial state accusations

An ubiquitous accusation towards Israel consists of the claim that Israel is a colonial state, that is the outcome of a colonial process that comes at the cost of the original inhabitants of Gaza viz. the Palestinians. Colonialism is a phenomenon which may take different forms and which allows a plurality of interpretations for which we refer to the survey of Kohn and Reddy 2024 [27]. Whereas the West Bank features a mixture of Israeli settler colonialism and (according to some) ethnic cleansing, Gaza perhaps features Israeli imperialism rather than colonialism. Settling, though not phrased in terms of colonialism, has become an Israeli state objective with the 2018 Nationality Law (see e.g. Chowers 2024 [19]). Israel from its very origin may be understood as a settler colonial project, see for instance Lloyd 2012 [28].

Consistent with [10] we view “colonial state accusations” as an instance of (new) a special accusation type. As a special accusation type we propose: problematic conditions of statehood accusation. A problematic condition of statehood accusation in the direction of a state *S* may be used as an argument in a discussion in order to undermine arguments that are put forward by advocates of the interests of *S*. The accusee is the state as such, accusers may be historians or political theorists, or other citizens or observers. Following [8] accusations come with a scope of observers to the accusation. The scope of a colonial state accusation is in most cases public, as the accusation needs to be incorporated in public opinion in order for it to have the intended effects. We refer to [8] for a general introductory account of accusations. There is no legal framework available for the special accusation type of colonial state accusations. So-called decolonial thinking makes use of colonial state accusations as an instrument explaining current actions of a state from a colonial present and/or past.

The importance of colonial state accusations for the IEP lies in the observation that colonial state accusations in the direction of Israel are often used to undermine theoretical positions taken by pro-Israel advocates. A colonial state accusation is not an extreme accusation in the sense of [12] and it has not the effect of turning (or intending to turn) the leaders of the accused state into international pariah’s, an effect, or intended effect, which is plausible for extreme accusations. Nevertheless the intention of accusers issuing

a colonial state accusation is often to neutralize or contradict desires formulated by leaders of the accused states, thereby rendering the promotion of interests of the accused states as close to illegal or immoral.

We consider colonial state accusations towards Israel based on the history of Zionism as to be merely of historic relevance. Such accusations must not be used for discrediting or even blocking today's ambitions for the development of Israel. In as far as Israel came about as a consequence of the problematic position of Jews in central Europe we consider the colonial state accusation to constitute a confusion of conventional colonial objectives with the needs, or in any case movements, of large numbers of political refugees, which is a fair qualification for continental jews at the end of WO II. The stateless Palestinians in Lebanon are not considered colonialists for the same reason. They, or their ancestors, fled for violence of expected violence and they saw no way to return.

Whether or not the incremental land grab by Israeli colonists in the West Bank is a case of colonialism is open for debate. The self-description of settlers as invaders with a religious entitlement suggests that they consider colonialism in this case to constitute a virtue (for Israel) but in any case the situation cannot be assessed without taking the ongoing and fundamentally unsolved IEP into consideration. After a sequence of vicious wars a two state solution has become almost a psychological impossibility, and by insisting on precisely that solution the international community as embodied by the UN provides a permanent security based incentive for colonisation of the West Bank and to a lesser extent of the Gaza strip both done with the intent to frustrate the emergence of a new Palestinian state. We see the current strive of Israel for control over Gaza not as a sign of colonialism but rather as a means to achieve and guarantee a definitive victory over Hamas. The rationale for the latter objective may lie in the potential force which a residue of Hamas may still exercise towards independent Palestinian statehood, more than in military aspects of Israeli security.

## **6.2 Apartheid state accusations**

The accusation that a state is an apartheid state claims that at the time of accusing an apartheid regime is in force, either formally or in practice in spite of seemingly adequate laws and rules of behavior. The terminology is, however, very much connotated with the use of the term in South-Africa. Without downplaying the importance of this entire problem one should not underestimate the difficulty of shaping a state on the basis of equality and equal democratic participation. Many states had phases of development where a specific forms of unequal treatments of groups were applied since no immediate transition in terms of equality was possible. Calling this "apartheid" is in some sense unhistorical. The perhaps more important question would be to what extent the arrangements are designed

to stabilize the inequality or whether the design allows for a transition as soon as possible.

We mention that in Brooks & Griffiths 2024 [17] the claim is made that by issuing an apartheid accusation towards Israel, because of the South-African connotation of the term apartheid, one runs the risk of underestimating the problems facing Palestinians when dealing with Israel.

## 7 Concluding remarks

We claim that framing the context of solutions among which the one-state solution and the two-state solution are often mentioned as solution space for the Israel Embedding Problem (IEP) will be helpful in spite of its apparent lack of symmetry. Working out the details of a range of proposals in advance of making final choices may be worth the effort for these long standing open issues. Our survey may be helpful for that endeavour..

An important feature of the public discourse in the US and in the EU comes about from a steady stream of accusations concerning Israel as well as Hamas. We have studied accusations as a topic in the accusation theory as reported in Bergstra and Düwell 2021 [8]. The idea is that an accusation has an accuser, one or more accusees, a body (explaining what is asserted) and a scope. In line with accusation theory, more often than not the functionality, or even justification, of an accusation lies not so much in the validity of the body, but rather in the side effect on (perceptions and opinions) of agents in scope of the accusation. Accusations are then understood as means to an end in a battle in the world of public communication, and not so much as signposts of truths that must not be ignored. We expect that accusations involving, colonialism, apartheid, genocide, non-proportionality, violation of human rights, etc. will on the long run have only limited influence on the course of events. In connection with IEP we have proposed a special accusation type of colonial state accusations and a special accusation type of apartheid state accusations.

As a comment on the first draft of this paper we were asked how to imagine that Israel shares fundamental responsibilities with former archenemies in a federative construction like USPIL. We notice that precisely that phenomenon has occurred within the EU combining France and Germany. One might claim that France and Germany were engaged in a longstanding battle for power and supremacy on the European continent and that mutual hatred was less of a dividing force for conflicts than is now the case in the context of Israel and its enemies in Hamas and Hezbollah. Nevertheless, sooner or later some form of compromise must evolve from the current tense situation. Suggestions about future security in the context of some form of power sharing with a Palestinian entity may be found in

[Commanders for Israel's Security (CIS) 2016]. Updated plans on Gaza policy are available via the CIS website [<http://en.cis.org.il>].

We have made an attempt to survey solutions to the IEP. Our paper is not based on any idea of morality or ethics, and we do not assess potential solutions in moral terms. Neither do we offer any policy advice or do we make any predictions. Giving policy advice is not our role, while making predictions is too difficult. On the latter count we refer to recent work from August 2023, Hitman and Iskovitch 2023 [25] where after an informative and systematic analysis of a history of 16 years of conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza the concluding section states:

...Netanyahu, who was prime minister during some of the cases presented in this article, is likely to preserve the status quo. There are several reasons for our assessment. First, a more intense military campaign in the Gaza Strip will be too costly in human life, money, and military equipment. Second, a victory would force Israel to consider whether to reimpose control over Gaza and take responsibility for more than two million Palestinians. If Israel does not seek this, then there would be no return for the costs. At most, campaigns to remove threats will yield temporary strategic victories. Third, a long clash increases the odds of hurting innocent Palestinians. This would generate more pressure on Israel to stop the fighting before it can achieve its strategic goals. The potential of losing support from the United States and the West would cause strategic damage instead of decisive victory. Under these conditions, Israel will from time to time be able to gain no more than tactical and operational achievements. This assertion is based on three observations: There is not likely to be a change in Hamas's approach to Israel; relations between the Palestinians and Israelis have stagnated; and Netanyahu has no long-term vision for stabilizing Gaza.

A few months later most of these claims are outdated. We believe that our survey of conceivable IEP solutions, as well as systematic work on the merits of such potential solutions is unlikely to become critically outdated in the near future. Samaan 2023 [31] by describing facts or assessments of fact rather than predictions, is helpful for understanding Israel's military strategy, aiming for a decisive victory over Hamas, and making use of massive firepower for that reason, after 7-10-2023. We notice that the open letter on behalf of 600 members of CIS [34] indicates that opinions on the question whether or not a decisive victory has already been achieved are diverging in Israel. The report by Allison and Piliero 2024 [3] provides very clear policy advice for Israel. Currently Israel is not following no. 2 of the 5 do's and 4 don'ts stated in said report, while for the other

8 it is not obvious or even implausible that these are being followed. The report seems to underestimate Israel’s firm intention to do things differently this time, and to apply lessons learned in a less cautious manner than advocated by the authors of the report, a fact which could be inferred from the new “Decisive Victory” strategy as described in Samaan 2023 [31]. No. 5 of Allison and Piliero 2024 [3] reads “Do maintain eternal vigilance”. It seems plausible that the ability to comply with advice no. 5 will serve as a primary requirement from the Israeli side when ranking the solution proposals for IEP.

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