

Peace for Palestine

Two States; One Shared Homeland

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After four decades of negotiations, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process reached a dead-end, due primarily to clashing perceptions of Israelis and Palestinians regarding Palestine's land. Most Israeli Jews either believe or claim a Biblical right to Palestine's entire land, while all Palestinian Muslims and Christians believe that they have a historical right to Palestine's entire land because they inhabited that land from the dawn of history until the arrival of large numbers of Zionist Jews from Europe in the early 20th century. Since these issues are value-related, the conflict has been less amenable to compromise. These facts create a need for a visionary plan to reconcile the seemingly irreconcilable Israeli-Palestinian claims; a vision to transform the perceptions of both parties and create new states of mind amenable to peaceful coexistence. The plan also needs a foresighted American and European commitment to transform the entire Middle East region's political and economic landscape, putting an end to extremism and despair, and planting the seeds of peace and hope.

The shared homeland plan has three components, the full implementation of which creates two separate political entities, a collective security system, and one residential and economic space that recognizes cultural and religious diversity. They are a political component, an economic component, and a security component. In other words, the vision creates a new sociopolitical order based on separation regarding political identities, functional cooperation regarding economic interests, shared ownership regarding land and natural resources, and a joint security system. And while the Palestinian state would be demilitarized, the Israeli State would become demilitarized within a decade. These principles would guide negotiations.

1. The settlement should guarantee the security of Israel and the realization of the Palestinian national and historical rights.
2. Palestinians and Israelis should enjoy equal national rights and opportunities.
3. Putting an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land it occupied in 1967.

4. Israeli acceptance of responsibility for the suffering of the Palestinian people and the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem.
5. Using international law, relevant UN resolutions, and human rights laws as reference to devise a solution to the Palestinian refugees' problem; and
6. Developing a plan to facilitate regional development and economic cooperation.

An Overview of the Proposed Plan

According to the plan, pre-1948 Palestine would become one entity or a "shared homeland" for Israelis and Palestinians to live in and enjoy. This land would host two states and two peoples living side by side in peace. However, Israelis' expression of political rights would be exercised within their State, but expression of economic and residential choice would include the Palestinian State's territories. Likewise, Palestinians' expression of political rights would be exercised within their state of the West Bank and Gaza, But expression of economic and residential choice would include the Israeli State's territories. This means that Israelis would have the right to live and work in the Palestinian State while having no right to participate in Palestinian politics; Palestinians would have the right to live and work in Israel but have no right to participate in Israeli politics. Israelis and Palestinians would continue to be citizens of their nation-states, regardless of where they live. However, Palestinians and Israelis would be subject to the state laws in which they live.

Partitioning Palestine into two states and, at the same time, uniting its territories into one homeland is the only way to address the national rights, homeland aspirations, and historical claims. Applying the 'shared homeland' model to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would, in due time, make national borders less relevant, and gradually remove all impediments to trade and travel, making the interaction of people with the land and its history a reality. Palestinian refugees would be repatriated partially in Israel and mostly in the Palestinian State.

Jerusalem: The shared homeland plan calls for Jerusalem to remain unified and be the capital for both states, which requires the restoration of the pre-1967 borders lines to establish political jurisdictions. State sovereignty, however, would be limited because the plan calls for Jerusalem to form a representative government to manage its daily affairs. Accordingly, Palestinians living in Jerusalem would vote in Palestinian's national elections, and Israelis

living in Jerusalem would vote in Israeli's national elections, but both Palestinians and Israelis of Jerusalem would vote in the city's municipal elections. As such, Jerusalem would become a symbol of unity of purpose that makes peaceful coexistence and human and cultural interaction a living and lively experience for both peoples.

As for the Palestinian refugees, most of them are expected to demand the right to return to Palestine, but no more than a million are expected to exercise this right, provided they get fair compensation for lost property and the suffering they endured. Moreover, the Palestinian State would allow Israeli settlements to remain in the West Bank in exchange for a piece of land in Israel equal in size and quality to the Jewish settlements. Palestinians would use this land to settle some of the returning refugees who would be Palestinian nationals. The resettlement of some 6 million refugees, about half of them live in neighboring states, is not easy. However, having regained national identity and economic and political rights, most of them are likely to choose to live in the countries where they have lived for almost 73 years. Kinship and familiarity with one's socioeconomic environment would become the primary considerations influencing residency decisions. As a part of this arrangement, Arab states where Palestinian refugees live, namely Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon would be asked to give such refugees citizenship in exchange for generous financial compensation provided by the international community.

When Palestinian demands for a state are fulfilled, and the Palestinian refugees' problem is settled, Palestinian claims on Israeli territory will end. And when Israeli forces withdraw from the West Bank and recognize the Palestinian State, Israeli claims on Palestine's land will also end. Joining both states in a shared homeland should make the "right of return" to Arabs and Jews alike a feasible goal to achieve through peaceful means. In certain cases, it may even become a mutually beneficial act dictated by economic and social imperatives.

Since my motto is, "Knowledge not shared is Knowledge wasted, and the more we share, the more we gain people of knowledge" I ask all readers to recommend every article and book they like because it will help inform others. We all share the responsibility to make our world more hospitable to peace, social justice, and freedom; a lofty goal we cannot reach without spreading knowledge and awareness in every corner of our mother earth.

Prof. Rabie is a distinguished professor of International Political Economy; he attended 5 universities and taught at 10 others on four continents. He has published 53 books in addition to over 150 scholarly papers and over 2000 newspaper articles. Books are 15 in English, one in Albanian, and 37 in Arabic. English Books include four published by Palgrave Macmillan between 2013 and 2017: *Saving Capitalism and Democracy*; *Global Economic and Cultural Transformation*; *A Theory of Sustainable Sociocultural and Economic Development*; *The Global Debt Crisis and its Socioeconomic Implications*. Arabic Books include 3 poetry collections, 2 novels, and a story; the rest is mostly academic books and collections of ideas and reflections. Prof. Rabie is president of the Arab Thought Council in Washington, DC, a member of the Arab Thought Forum, and a fellow of the Alexander Von Humboldt Foundation since 1992 with the rank of Prof. Dr. Grants and scholarships financed his education from high school to receiving his Ph.D. in 1970 from the University of Houston; grants covered studies in Jordan, Egypt, Germany, and America. He is the winner of the State of Palestine Lifetime Achievement Award for scholarly publications and several other awards. His writings and positions reflect a strong commitment to peace, social justice, freedom, human development, as well as social, cultural, economic, and environmental sustainability.

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