

The 22-State Solution
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The Two-State Solution, now entrenched misnomer that replaced the old more honest slogan, Land for Peace, has helped corral our thinking about Israel and the Palestinians. Knowledge of history corrects that error.

In 1800, two large Muslim powers were the Ottoman Empire and Egypt. They included the states now named Egypt, Sudan, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, the Red Sea Coast of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Bosnia, Serbia, Albania, Greece, Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Bulgaria, and parts of Romania, Croatia, and the United Arab Emirates. Through the 19th and into the 20th centuries, especially right after World War I, European powers, primarily England and France, carved up the romantic Orient to create client states in what we now call the Middle East.

Britain, with more foresight than France, recognizing Haifa as the future terminus of an oil pipeline, gladly ceded Syria and Lebanon to France while claiming Palestine as its mandate. This was compounded in the complex crosscurrents of history by the Zionist movement and supported by one powerful branch of Christian dogma convinced that Christ would return for the Second Coming, the Final Solution for humanity, only when enough Jews had returned to the Holy Land. That helped Britain proclaim the Balfour Declaration, which dedicated a tiny piece of Arab land as a reservation for Europe's Jews to share with the existing majority Arab Muslim population. The exact borders and political meaning of the sparsely populated, largely malarial land then dubbed Palestine wobbled around, shrinking in deference to Arab clamoring.

Endemic European Christian antisemitism was the inspiration of and justification for the Zionist movement. Theodore Herzl, the founder of Zionism, first hoped to assimilate. But in 1895, the Dreyfus Affair in France plus the rise to power of the anti-Semite, Karl Lueger in Vienna convinced Herzl that there was no sense for Jews to ever try to get on the good side of Christians in Western Europe. At the same time, Eastern Europe had its pogroms against Jews in the restricted region called the Pale of Settlement, outside of which Jews were not allowed to live.

Without land and a nation of their own, it was clear that Jews would always be vulnerable. Exactly what land it was mattered less than having some land; Uganda

was an early suggestion. But Palestine was quickly agreed on because it was the Holy Land of the Jews in ancient times to which Jews have long prayed to return.

Arabs objected vehemently to the appropriation of any piece of their land but Jews, backed by Britain's power, began pouring into the Promised Land. The flow of European Jews to Palestine became a flood in the wake of World War II and the Holocaust. As Israel became a reality, the neighboring Arab and Muslim nations declared a war of extermination on it. Through a combination of fear and force, many Muslim Arabs of Palestine fled Israel, while the neighboring Arab and Muslim nations from Morocco to Iraq turned life from precarious to intolerable for its Jewish citizens, who suffered from Arab riots and bombings. All that plus Zionist propaganda depopulated the Arab and Muslim world, from the Maghreb through the Middle East to the border of India, of its ancient Jewish population. Few of the displaced people of either side were compensated for their losses. Iran, Muslim but not Arab, was a bit late to the game, losing most of its Jews following the accession of Khomeini and the rise of the so-called Islamic Republic, with all its antizionist rhetoric.

Whereas the Jews were often restricted from leaving their Arab homelands despite the confiscation of their property and welcomed in Israel once they did escape, the Arabs of Palestine were largely discouraged or prohibited from entering the vast lands of the Arab and Islamic nations. Camps were set up to house the refugees under deliberately abominable conditions, while walls or barriers were constructed to keep them from entering or passing through Egypt and Jordan. Forbidden by their Muslim brethren from starting new lives in new lands, Arab leaders kept the refugees' minds and rockets focused on the Right of Return to Israel. A disproportionate share of Arab aid to the Palestinian victims has come in the form of military equipment.

It is appropriate to sympathize with the restricted, impoverished lives of so many Palestinians, especially those crammed in the tiny corridor of Gaza. What is not appropriate is to assign more than a small fraction of the blame for these conditions to Israel, as the largely Christian liberal world, steeped in long-seated abiding prejudices against Jews and corralled by lingo to speak and think in terms of a Two-State Solution, is wont to do. What must be recognized and acknowledged is that the 20+ Muslim states that in effect expelled their Jews while shutting the gates of mercy and entry on the Palestinians in order to keep them focused on driving tiny Israel into the sea bear enormous responsibility for the problem. Their rhetoric of extermination may have softened over the decades since the establishment of Israel but their intent has never changed one iota.

Thus, a problem created and maintained by some 22 states and backed by many others, calls for at least a 22-State Solution.