

The Regional Approaches to the Solution of the Arab-Israeli Conflict

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Focused Studies



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The Abstract

The present book investigates the concept and approach of a regional solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict as one of the major current proposals. Part 1 is based on a research paper on the “Potential Repercussions of a Regional Solution to the Palestinian Cause” by Musa Breizat, a Jordanian diplomat and the current General-Delegate of Human Rights, given in an MESC political salon workshop in 2017. This chapter forms part 1 of the book. However, part 2 is an extended paper given by Dr. Nizam Barakat, professor of politics at Yarmouk University in Jordan.

The aforementioned approach presented above and laid out in the book, departs from the fundamental hypothesis set by the United States which is introducing a new initiative emanating from the failure of the Palestinian and Israeli sides to reach a solution. It therefore argues it must itself, find a regional solution through compromise and one that would be internationally supported. This would require bringing in regional participants who are able, through carrot and stick tactics to force the two parties to go into a compromise process to end the conflict and neutralize the “extremist forces” on both sides.

In the book’s introduction, the main leaks concerning the “deal of the century” has to do with confidence building measures. First, Israel must stop the confiscation of further lands for settlement activities and only build on already existent areas; it must declare a formal commitment to the two-state solution and transfer “Area C” which is now under the Israeli control to the Palestinian National Authority. Second, the Palestinians should continue to maintain overall security coordination and stop their moves to seek further “recognitions” from the international community for

statehood; The PNA should stop payment to the families of those killed and for prisoners. Third, Arab countries, especially Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates need to allow Israeli civilian flights to land in their countries, grant visa permits visa to Israeli businessmen and open telecommunication lines with Jewish state.

Part 1 of the book sheds light on the significance of the regional dimension and justifications for such a choice which includes the fact Palestinian-Israeli talks and the efforts of the Middle East Quartet have reached deadlock, with the probabilities of further resistance on the West Bank, possible collapse of the PNA, Iran's influence in the region and growth of Islamist radical groups. On the other hand, Israelis are not ready, in principle, to accept any independent, sovereign Palestinian state. However, there are some amongst them who are prepared to live with peace and argue regional powers may be able to achieve that boost the chances of success. Over the years several proposals were made for example by Israeli National Security Advisor Giora Eiland (2004), Israeli Knesset member and chairman of the Yesh Atid Party, Yair Lapid, (2015) and of the expert on intelligence and Middle East affairs at the Eisenhower Institute "Avi Melamed" (2016), plus the official summit that brought Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US President Donald Trump together in February 2017.

But the elements of the regional solution are ambiguous as the book points out. There is nothing clear for any party about the issues which were and going to be under negotiations by the Palestinians and Israelis, like borders, withdrawal, Jerusalem, refugees, security, independent and sovereign Palestinian statehood, settlements, and access to natural resources, water and arable land. Summarized also is that the solution at this stage is no more than putting forward a mechanism or methodology without definite components.

As to the forms of the proposed solutions, the books offers three: First is the two-state solution with the obstacles and consequences posed as well as the Palestinians and Israeli stands. The second is “Greater Gaza” with annexing wide parts of the Sinai Peninsula to the Gaza Strip to make way for an independent Palestinian state to host the incoming Palestinian refugees. The third is a Jordanian-Palestinian-Israeli Benelux*, an Arab-Jewish confederation or a revival of the ‘Jordanian Option’ of the ‘alternative homeland.’

Part 1 concludes by explaining the negative impacts of the regional solution on the Palestinians which means bringing back Palestinian-Israeli talks to square one while at the same time easing Israel’s into the Arab depth and normalize with Arab and Muslim countries and aborting what is left of the public and official boycott of Israel.

Part 2 provides the diagnoses of the realities of the struggle, concerned parties, scenarios, solutions and nature of the demands by each party. As well, there are also explanations of the stands of the sponsors of the peace process and their attempt to bridge the gap between the conflicting parties to reach a solution. The book also looks at the failure of the bilateral Palestinian-Israeli negotiations following the Oslo experiment and the negotiation rounds that led to a dead end due to the absence of the success conditions to bring the conflicting parties closer together.

The regional solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict follows for a comparative perspective to the relevant proposals and ideas that have been put forward including the Greater Middle East plan, Euro-Med Project and the Arab Peace Initiative. Settling the Palestinian cause through a regional

* An economic confederation similar to that of Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg during the period 1944-1960.

framework necessitates maintaining relations between Arab countries and Israel to create an appropriate environment to reduce the burden of military spending, economic development, greater Arab and Israeli economies linkages to the global economy, raising the standards of living and consolidating the culture of democracy and peace in the region. This final part of the book summarizes the paradigm of views on the future of the conflict solution in light of this regional approach, with 'commitments', and 'concessions' requested by the main parties, possible benefits and obstacles that may lie ahead.