The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a struggle between two actors that has persisted since before the 1948 War, a culmination of hostilities between Israelis and Arabs that began in Mandatory Palestine in the 1920s. There has been no indication the conflict is nearing its end, yet governments, state actors, and non-state actors seem to believe there is a solution. Of the possible solutions to this seemingly interminable dispute, there are two prevailing schools of thought. There are those who find splitting the region in dispute into two sovereign states, Israel and Palestine is the most viable solution. This has been the chosen method of world leaders and scholars over the last half century. However, despite perpetual peace talks and discussions regarding this solution, there has been an inherent lack of progress in attaining peace in the region.

Inversely, another school of thought finds the region should instead be made up of one state. Within this second school of thought, there is divisiveness. There are extremists who argue for a sole Israel or a sole Palestine, therefore ending the other state’s claim for sovereignty or any power in the region. Another possible one state solution is that the state becomes neither Palestine nor Israel, but a secular state where all citizens are free to travel, work, and vote in democratic elections. Lastly, there is a growing approval for a confederation state of Israel and Palestine, a hybrid between the one and two state solutions, where everybody becomes a citizen and is free to travel within the borders, but there is an Israeli and a Palestinian section of the confederation. This analysis seeks to prove that this method is the most viable, feasible, and has the easiest road to implementation of all the other methods by comparing it to the other methods on various issues present in the current conflict. Thus, the two-state solution, as well as the non-confederation one-state solutions are intrinsically weaker and less viable.

In order to fully assess the options available, it is imperative to first understand the origins of the conflict between the two actors. In 1947, a United Nations resolution called for the formation two states, one Israeli and one Arab. However, the Palestinians, neighboring Arab states, and the Arab League rejected this partition. Once the State of Israel was formed, seven Arab states sent armies to Palestine and fighting ensued.[[1]](#footnote-1) During the war, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fled the region because of the fighting that was occurring.[[2]](#footnote-2) Another war occurred in 1967 where Israel once again won convincingly. Following this war, Israel took control of Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, significantly increasing its size and scope of power.[[3]](#footnote-3) The U.N. declared this acquisition of land illegal, but Israel moved settlers into the regions and Israeli laws ended up governing the settlements, used to stifle the Palestinian demographic presence in the WBGS.[[4]](#footnote-4) Yet, for the Palestinians in the region, “different sets of military laws and decrees … regulated the civilian, economic, and legal affairs of the Palestinian inhabitants. These decrees strangled the Palestinian economy while fostering its dependence and integration into Israel.”[[5]](#footnote-5) While these Palestinians continued to be oppressed by the Israeli government and military, Arabs that resided in Israel were still able to work and take part in the government but were treated as second class citizens. Calls for a separate Palestinian state gained momentum. Israel eventually agreed to partition the land with Palestine and signed the Oslo Accord with the Palestine Liberation Organization. The Accord was designed to phase out Israeli control of the Occupied Territories. The agreement would give interim control to the Palestinian Authority before eventually creating a Palestinian Council where the state would then govern itself.[[6]](#footnote-6) However, the withdrawal of troops never occurred, and the Palestinian Authority only controlled 19% of the WBGS by 2000. Even then, the PA operates under the Israeli military. Israel has failed to follow through with their agreement.

As the Oslo Accord demonstrates, the two-state solution has been the attempted method of resolving this conflict despite its many shortcomings. One major flaw is that Israel and Palestine disagree on the borders that the state lines would be drawn upon. Israel has typically argued for the 1967 borders to be the guideline while Palestine pushes for the 1948 borders.[[7]](#footnote-7) Additionally, Israel has an increased interest in maintaining Jerusalem because of its Zionist mission. If there was a two-state solution, Jerusalem would most likely be split between the Israelis and the Palestinians, an unpopular solution, as only 25% of the Israelites and Palestinians want to see the city divided.[[8]](#footnote-8) Another factor that diminishes the viability of the two-state solution surrounds the discussion of refugees and settlers. By creating two states, it is improbable that refugees would not be able to return to their homes in Israel, and the mass displacement of settlers in the WBGS would occur.[[9]](#footnote-9) Both of these occurrences are ethically questionable. Yet another problem exists when considering this solution, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are not connected. Assuming the two parties somehow come to an agreement on the 1967 borders, the Palestinian state would be geographically separated. In order to ease travel and governance, “the two territories would be connected by a 40-kilometer (25-mile) corridor that would include a road, a railway and pipes carrying utilities like gas and water.”[[10]](#footnote-10) Not only is this extremely costly for a relatively poor would-be-state, but there is a potential that resources and personnel would be spread thinly. This occurrence could lead to the potential annexation of the Gaza Strip. The potential for an annexation points to yet another flaw; the two-state solution does not solve the dispute that the two parties have. There is no reason to believe hostilities would cease and that peace would be created. Palestinians have been oppressed for over half a century, retaliation from the would-be-state would hardly come as surprise. The two-state solution has been attempted time and time again, summits have been held at Camp David, compromises have been made, but there has been no progress. The status-quo has remained for the past 50 years, and public approval for the two-state solution has been in decline, as only 35% of Israelis and 42% of Palestinians back the solution.[[11]](#footnote-11) The two-state solution has run out of steam, and it has been proven that it is not the most viable option to solve the never-ending conflict effecting the region home to Israel and Palestine.

The next section of this analysis will explain why the non-confederation one-state solutions are not viable options. To start, the solution that would create a Palestinian state will be examined. It would create a state that goes against UN resolutions and anger most international powers as Israel would be denied its sovereignty. Additionally, this outcome is highly unlikely, considering the Israeli government and military are in a position of power over the Palestinians. Thus, this option is little more than a Palestine extremist platform. Another option argues to maintain the status quo through a sole Israeli state. As previously mentioned, there is mass oppression of Palestinians within Israel and the Occupied Territories. Additionally, due to the birthrates of Palestinians being higher than Israeli’s, Israelis would become a minority, effectively creating apartheid. Thus, “Israel cannot continue to deny the rights of millions of Palestinians indefinitely and expect to remain a normal member of the international community.”[[12]](#footnote-12) Clearly, a sole Israel or a sole Palestine is not a viable option. The other non-confederation one-state option is a secular, democratic state. This solution is an ideal end to a realist problem. Israel are adamant in fulfilling their Zionist mission, thus Israel cannot cease to exist.[[13]](#footnote-13) This one flaw would leave a large portion of the population displeased and therefore is not viable. There are benefits to such a system, but they are similar to the confederation model, and therefore will be explained later. While the secular, democratic state is an ideal outcome, especially from a Western perspective, it is unlikely that it becomes a reality, and the idea of a single state dominated by either Palestine or Israel is objectively a weak solution, and therefore not viable.

As previously mentioned, the one-state confederation is the best, strongest, and most viable solution to the conflict facing Israel and Palestine. The reason for this is because this solution takes the benefits of a two-state and a one-state solution and combines them into a hybridized solution. One benefit that exists from the two-state solution is that there would be an Israeli region and a Palestinian region. The Israeli region would remain Jewish, and the Zionist claim can still exist, quelling the fear Zionists had with the secular state.[[14]](#footnote-14) This would satisfy the Israeli population, thus they would be open to this solution. Additionally, the local governments would be created based on which ethnicity has a majority in the region, therefore erasing the feud over which year the borders would be drawn upon.[[15]](#footnote-15) When discussing another negative of the two-state solution, the refugee and settler problem is solved with this as well. Movement and travel would not be restricted, seeing as it is a state where people are equal and have equal opportunity.[[16]](#footnote-16) Thus, no party can restrict the movement, or force people out of where they currently reside. Yet another factor that makes this solution stronger than the two-state solution is on the issue of Jerusalem. There would be no need to split the city between the two, but instead it can become the capital of the state where everyone is allowed to visit. A model that could be looked at for inspiration is Washington D.C., as a federal district its residents can only vote at a federal level, thus maintaining its neutrality, a vital aspect for the holy city.[[17]](#footnote-17) Additionally, the confederation model would likely end any major conflict because the two ethnicities live equally under an overarching government. Essentially, in order to ensure longevity of the state, the two parties would have to settle their differences, lest their state collapse and turn to a civil war.[[18]](#footnote-18) Thus, this pressure could cause an outcome that is the most likely to peacefully end the conflict. Some other benefits of the one-state solution include an increase in security, stability and growth, as the two regions would work together instead of against each other.[[19]](#footnote-19) Finally, while approval for this solution is lower than other solutions, at 30% among Israelis and Palestinians, it is likely to grow considering no political leaders have discussed this option, and the two-state approval consistently declines.[[20]](#footnote-20) As evidenced, the one-state confederation is a viable solution that has the potential to implement peace in a tumultuous region.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has manifested itself for over half a century with no end in sight. The two parties have failed to come to an agreement and fulfill all the components to ensure the two ethnicities can coexist without the fear of all-out war. The two-state solution has failed. A new alternative must be adopted, of which, the confederation solution is the strongest. While safeguards must be put in place to ensure no abuse of power, marginalization, or violence occurs, it offers great promise. Thus, the most viable solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the one-stat confederation model.

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2. Ibid. pages 295-296 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. ‘Independence, Cantons, or Bantustans: Whither the Palestinian State?’ pages 234-235 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid. page 235 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid. page 236 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid. page 238-239 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. ‘Two State Solution’ [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. ‘An Israeli-Palestinian Confederation Can Work’ [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. ‘The Case for the One-State Solution’ [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. ‘Two States, One and Other Solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict’ [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. ‘Two State Solution’ [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. ‘There Will Be a One-State Solution’ [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
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