

The Collapse of the Two-State Solution Is a Political Decision, Not a Geographic or Economic One

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The position of the Israeli government regarding the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside it is one of absolute rejection. Senior ministers are not satisfied with principled opposition but openly call for the annexation of the West Bank to Israel. The position of the Jewish public reflects a similar trend: consistent surveys indicate a dramatic decline in support for the two-state solution, from half of the public a decade ago to only a quarter today, and concurrently a rise in support for annexation, from one-tenth of the public to one-third. The political and social feasibility of the two-state solution has been at a deep low for more than a decade, which intensified even further in the wake of the events of October 7.

However, the collapse of political feasibility does not answer the central question: has the third necessary condition, spatial feasibility, also been lost? Have the demographic and spatial trends of the past decade also rendered the practical possibility of territorial partition obsolete?

The spatial working assumption is clear: Jewish settlement up to ten kilometers from the Green Line, approximately a quarter of the width of the West Bank, does not negate the two-state solution. This is due to the principle of land swaps, which can allow the preservation of territorial and functional contiguity for both sides. In contrast, significant Jewish spatial and demographic presence in the area beyond this strip harms Palestinian contiguity and demands an impossible national price from Israel for evacuation.

In 2015 there were 68 Jewish localities in the 10-kilometer strip, and 59 beyond it. In 2025 the number of localities in the strip rose to 87, and beyond it to 80. Seemingly a dramatic change, yet within the strip are concentrated the four largest settlements: Modi'in Illit and Beitar Illit — in which alone about one-third of the Israelis in the West

Bank reside — Ma'ale Adumim and Givat Ze'ev. Also located there are the large local councils: Efrat, Karnei Shomron, Oranit and Alfei Menashe, and the medium-sized local councils Beit Aryeh and Har Adar. East of the strip there is only one large locality, the city of Ariel, and six additional local councils. In contrast, on the Palestinian side there are about 200 cities and villages in Areas A and B, including Hebron and Nablus, in which about half a million residents live, alongside ten additional cities and a number of villages and hundreds of communities in Area C. The large cities have over 40,000 residents, and there are another 140 localities with over 5,000 residents.

The growth in the number of Jewish localities translated into relatively moderate growth in Jewish built-up area. In the strip it grew from 51 square kilometers to 58, and beyond it from 31 to 39 square kilometers. In contrast, the Palestinian built-up area in Area C stands at 140 square kilometers. One must add another 715 square kilometers of Palestinian built-up area in Areas A and B. Altogether, in the West Bank the ratio is 1:8.5 in favor of the Palestinians.

The demographic picture also does not change fundamentally. In 2015, 77% of the Israeli population in the West Bank resided within the ten-kilometer strip, and so too in 2025. To these one must add about 240,000 Israelis who live in neighborhoods established in areas annexed to Jerusalem after the Six-Day War, so that the overwhelming majority of the Israeli population beyond the Green Line is concentrated in the 10-kilometer strip. Overall, Israelis constitute 56% of the population of Area C, and only 15% of the population of the West Bank.

This is the largest number of Jews living outside the borders of the State of Israel, after the United States, and the largest Jewish minority within the population of another state, which has been recognized by 80 percent of the member states of the United Nations.

Natural increase within the 10-kilometer strip contributed about 78% of the natural increase of Israelis in the West Bank in 2015, and in 2025 rose to 79%. This figure derives from the ultra-Orthodox settlements of Modi'in Illit and Beitar Illit, and from Givat Ze'ev. The proportion of ultra-Orthodox among Israelis residing in the West Bank is 3.5

times their proportion in Israel's population. Their natural increase has become the main source of annual population growth, since migration to the settlements is low and in the past two years has even been negative.

In contrast, outside the 10-kilometer strip the trend looks different. In 2025 the number of residents outside the strip increased by more than 1,000 residents, a faster growth rate than in 2015. This is the result of Israeli policy, mainly of the current government, to try to deepen Jewish presence in the depth of the West Bank by building tiny farms and outposts at the expense of the large settlement blocs. Already in 2005 Ehud Barak said of this policy: "The plan... to spread so many settlements in so many points in Judea and Samaria until a Palestinian state can never arise... was an act of folly. The isolated settlements did not strengthen the settlement blocs but weakened them... a classic case of grasping too much — grasping nothing."

Economically, the population in the 10-kilometer strip is highly polarized. Most of it, the ultra-Orthodox, is located in clusters 1–2 of the socio-economic index, and the secular population is located in clusters 7–9. East of it, the population is located in clusters 4–5. The political division is also very clear. Residents of the strip vote mostly for United Torah Judaism and Shas, and most residents east of it vote for Religious Zionism and Otzma Yehudit.

The claim that Israel will not be able to cope with the transition challenges of those who will not be annexed to its sovereignty does not withstand the test of the data. Within the framework of land swaps of about 4%, 80% of the Israelis beyond the Green Line will remain under Israeli sovereignty. If evacuation of settlements is required, this would involve tens of thousands of families, but half of the evacuees are children under the age of 18, who do not require jobs or separate housing.

With regard to employment, 62% of the Israeli workforce in the West Bank already works within Israel. After factoring in the proportion of retirees and those employed, an addition of about 20,000 new jobs over a five-year period will be required to implement

the agreement, that is, about 4,000 per year. When Israel creates about 100,000 new jobs each year, this is a marginal challenge.

In housing as well the picture is similar. Among married persons over the age of 19, about 34,000 housing units will be required, that is, about 6,800 units per year. Israel builds on average 50–55 thousand housing units per year, and therefore here too this is not a real barrier.

If the two-state solution collapses, it is not because space has been decided or because demography has closed the option. It collapses because of political decisions, an ideology of annexation, a conscious turning away from the data, and the shaping of consciousness to a fictitious reality. Geography does not bury the two states, but rather the choice to stop struggling for them, and to slide into the abyss of one state bleeding in an endless war.