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Q8. UNGA passed a resolution in favour of a ^{two} state solution. Three European states also recognized Palestine as a sovereign stat. Critically evaluate the chances of two state solution or do you think Israel would continue as apartheid state?

ANSWER # 8

INTRODUCTION:

The idea of a two-state solution was sold widely during the Oslo accords 1993. However, after the failure of Oslo Accords, the talks about Palestinian statehood have been considerably minimized. The recent war on Gaza has renewed the hopes of two-state solution in the heart of millions and in the academic circles, the conversations about the 'Two-state' solution - and whether it is a viable and achievable option or not - are in full swing. However, it is

crucial to understand the current circumstances in both Israel and Palestine in order to propose viable options for peaceful co-existence.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE TWO-STATE SOLUTION

With the advent of Israel - as a result of Balfour declaration - in 1948, there has always been a rough and patchy history, full of violence, against the Palestinians. The Palestinian Liberation Organisation in an International move signed Oslo accords in Oslo, Norway in 1993, with the Israeli authorities.

The timeline of 5-years was given to Israel in order to fully withdraw itself from the Palestinian Land - West bank and Gaza - according to 1967 borders, while sharing the capital Jerusalem. However, Israel did not comply with the Oslo accords and it was a complete failure. Since then, Gaza was run by Hamas, as a result of 2006 elections, and West bank

governed by the Palestinian authority, previously called as PLO. Though the PLO acts more as a council or local government, rather than a complete functional authority. Thus in order to discuss the possibility of a two state solution, multiple factors such as the politics on both sides, the number of people living on each side, as well as the international support to either side, has to be kept in mind.

VIABILITY OF A TWO STATE SOLUTION IN MODERN TIMES

The recent conflict that started the war on Gaza, and which the ICJ has termed as a 'Plausible' genocide, has revived the question of Palestinian statehood once again after decades. The reason thereby, the widespread voices of Gaza during the war on social media. New York Times reported in May 2024 that 70% of democrats voted in favour of a ceasefire and eventually a Palestinian state. Therefore, the

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debate to end the chaos once and for all has started to echo in different circles again, yet the Israeli genocidal onslaught has not come to a halt.

Thus, it is important to discuss certain factors that push Israel towards broadening the war as well as never considering a two-state solution.

(i) Jewish Settlements in the Palestinian Land

Historically, after the creation of Israel, a census conducted in 1949 showed that there were 68% Muslims, 22% Jews, and 10% Christians living in Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank. However, the current demographics have completely changed due to increased Jewish settlements in the West Bank. The idea of drawing a border between West Bank and Gaza Israel has become a distant reality because there are currently 700,000 Israeli settlers living in the West Bank in conditions which the Human Rights Watch as

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well as Amnesty International have described as 'Apartheid' due to increased discrimination and segregation of the Palestinians. Although the Israeli settlements in the West bank are illegal under International law, the Israeli defense forces still protect the settlers under Israeli law. The settlements are scattered throughout the West bank and Israel did not stop building settlements even during the peak of the Peace Process in the 2000s. Some analysts, including Noam Chomsky, have described Israel's intention as to ethnically cleanse Palestinians on one hand and change the Palestinian land into Jewish majority, on the other. Therefore, the illegal settlements have made the marking of borders between Palestine and Israel, much more complicated.

(ii) Rise of Far-right Politics in Israel : The rise and popularity of the far-right government in Israel says much about the mindset and perception of the Israeli population itself.

The Israeli Prime minister who signed the Oslo accords himself was assassinated by a far-right Israeli. However, the popular support for such extremists which was previously perceived as distant, has now become a reality. The settlers, who, previously, popularly called for the annexation of entire Palestine, has now become a government minister; Itmar Ben-Gavir. The Likud Party, governed by PM Benjamin Netanyahu, itself is a far-right Political Party with strong beliefs in 'greater Israel' philosophy. The Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in September 2023, ~~he~~ displayed a map in the UNGA completely erasing the existence of Gaza and West Bank and terming it as Israel. Thus, the rise of popular support for a far right political party further pushes the idea of a Palestinian statehood away.

(iii) Unwavering US support to Israel:

During the current war on Gaza, the United state has supported Israel Politically, diplomatically, and militarily

almost unquestioned. U.S. has a strong Jewish lobby which spends billions in the U.S. presidential election, the most primary organisation includes AIPAC. Thus, the support for Israel in the U.S. is likely to grow in the coming years instead of taking a backseat. Records on Al-Jazeera show that in the previous decades, U.S. pressure on Israel has often resulted in the halt of its military operations. As the infamous phone call of President Ronald Reagan to the then Israeli Prime Minister, resulted in the ceasefire of Israel's military operation in Beirut, Lebanon. However, the recent records show that debate in the United States about the Israel is not about which party will stop it, but rather the presidential debates have focused on trying to prove who supports Israel more. Thus, without international, specifically U.S., pressure, Israel is less likely to move forward with any kind of plan regarding partition.

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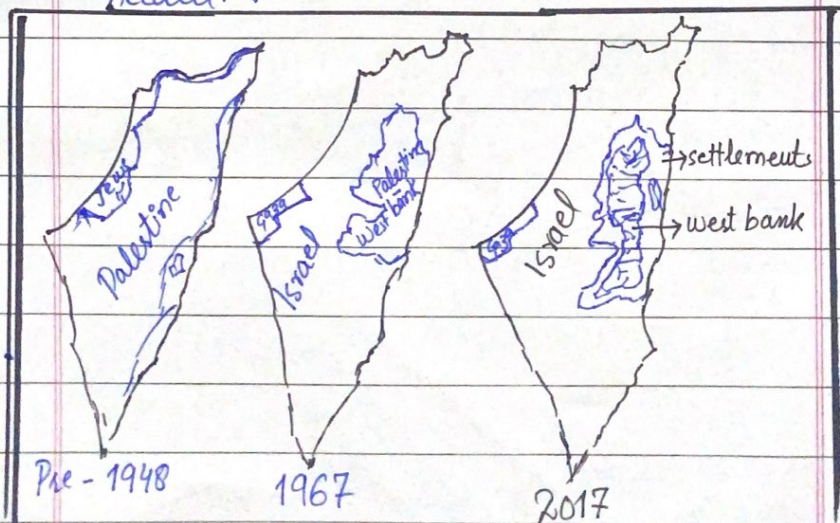
(iv) The Confusion Regarding Palestinian Leadership:

The question about who represents the Palestinians is also a debatable part, when it comes to the two-state solution.

The Palestinian authority governs the West bank and before Oct 7th, 2023, Gaza was governed by Hamas. Similarly, PA has officially stanced on two state solution in Oslo awards, but Hamas has never explicitly mentioned about accepting ~~Israel~~ the two-state solution, largely because it doesn't recognise Israel as a state. However, a document published in 2017 by Hamas demonstrated that they are willing to accept the 1967 borders, meaning they are open to diplomatic negotiations. A poll conducted by PCPSR in Dec, 2023 both in West bank and Gaza showed a popular support of 78% for Hamas, whereas, for PA it was 16%. Internationally, the Palestinian authority is the only representative of the Palestinians. Thus, the confusion about the leadership and representation of Palestinians makes it a complex matter.

Way Forward:

Some circles, including the scholars in Israel, talk about a one state solution instead of two. According to them, a state is already present and it just needs a change of system from Apartheid to a democracy. Moreover, in their opinion the idea of two-state solution is far-fetched and unachievable, whereas, one-state solution with a strong democracy is possible. However, in order to bring ~~put~~ the two-state solution into reality, a complete political change in Israel, demographic changes in West Bank, strong leadership for Palestinian, and a strong international pressure is needed.



Conclusion :

Decades of debates about the two-state solution have not yet bore any fruits. However, the recent war on Gaza has, once again, ignited the hope of a Palestinian state in the hearts of the besieged Palestinians as well as the diaspora. ~~However~~ ^{Nevertheless}, there are certain factors that have been caused over the years, such as, the Israeli expansionism and settlements in the West bank, the charged political environment of Israel, lack of strong Palestinian leadership and lack of international pressure, which have become a hurdle in the way of a peaceful resolution of a two-state solution.