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## **Why is Ankara pushing the idea of a “two-state” model on the Palestinian case?<sup>2</sup>**

The decades-old conflict between Palestine and Israel in the Middle East, at present acute situation, which continues with many casualties and destruction, compels several states to find a final solution to the problem in order to put an end to the conflict. In the light of recent events in Gaza, some countries have begun to recognize Palestinian independence.

In particular, the “two-state” model (Palestine and Israel with pre-1967 borders or the realization of the same model with post-1967 borders) has been the cornerstone of international diplomatic efforts, supported by the United Nations, the United States, the European Union and many other institutions.

The proposed “two-state” model called for the establishment of independent states of Israel and Palestine on the *de facto* territory of the present-day Israel. However, in terms of feasibility, the model has not been endorsed by either side, as its implementation would require the resolution of a few problematic issues, such as the status of Jerusalem, the return of the refugees, the definition of the borders, as well as other security-related issues. In short, the parties will have to follow the path of compromise.

In the event of such possible developments, there will undoubtedly be a political crisis in both Palestine and Israel, as political forces opposed to the proposed model will emerge. However, as the well-known Palestinian journalist Dawoud Kuttab noted: *“Originally, the term (referring to the “two-state” model – A. S.) denoted a specific idea – the formation of a sovereign, independent Palestinian state alongside Israel. For most politicians, however, this phrase has long since become an empty cliché, uttered out of habit and without much interest in putting the idea into practice”<sup>3</sup>.*

However, the “two-state” solution is now much further than it has ever been,

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<sup>2</sup> The Armenian original of the article was submitted to the Editorial office on 01.06.2024.

<sup>3</sup> Daoud Kuttab. Как реанимировать принцип «два государства для двух народов». (13.07.2022). <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/two-state-solution-steps-us-could-take-by-daoud-kuttab-2022-07/russian> (download date: 28.05.2024).

with some experts even considering it to be a “dead” idea<sup>4</sup>. There are also those who claim the opposite, which suggests that there is a lack of consensus in the expert community on the approaches to solving the problem<sup>5,6</sup>.

In addition, some political leaders and analysts in recent years have advocated alternative solutions by proposing a “one-state” or “federal” model.

Regarding Turkey's position, although it recognized Palestinian independence in 1988, the ruling AKP party uses a “two-state” model in its rhetoric on the conflict resolution. Thus, during the COP28 climate summit in Dubai in December 2023, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in an interview ruled out any solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that would not involve a two-state solution: “*The Gaza problem cannot be discussed if there is no two-state solution. If we give priority to the two-state solution, the Gaza problem and the threats will disappear*”<sup>7</sup>. Hakan Fidan is also a proponent of the same model, and it can be said that this is generally a clear position of the AKP that has been talked about recently by members of this party<sup>8</sup>.

But why does Turkey insist on the “two-state” model to solve the Palestinian problem? In our opinion, the problem is caused by the Cyprus issue. As we know, the island of Cyprus has been divided into two parts since 1974, when Turkish troops occupied the northern part of the island. As a result of this occupation, the so-called Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which is recognized only by Turkey, was established in the northern part of the island.

Negotiations for the settlement of the Cyprus problem started on May 12, 2015, and ended on July 7, 2017. During the negotiations of 2015–2017, there were more than 70 meetings between Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders, more than 150 meetings of negotiators and 360 meetings of experts. The issue of “*reunification*” under a “*federal model*” was discussed. However, the long negotiations under the auspices of the UN failed because the parties could not define the borders of the future federation.

The Greek-Cypriot government representative at the time, Nikos Christodoulides, blamed the Turks, saying that “*because of their attitude, a*

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<sup>4</sup> Ian Parmeter. Israel-Palestinian conflict: is the two-state solution now dead? (28.01.2024). <https://theconversation.com/israel-palestinian-conflict-is-the-two-state-solution-now-dead-221967> (download date: 28.05.2024).

<sup>5</sup> Benjamin Case. A two-state solution for Israelis and Palestinians might actually be closer than ever . (06.02.2024). <https://theconversation.com/a-two-state-solution-for-israelis-and-palestinians-might-actually-be-closer-than-ever-220524> (download date: 28.05.2024).

<sup>6</sup> Edward P. Djerejian. (2018). The Two -State Solution — Past or Future Tense. *Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy and Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. pp. 3-7.

<sup>7</sup> Israel-Palestine solution sans 2-state format out of question: Erdoğan. (03.12.2023). <https://www.dailysabah.com/politics/diplomacy/israel-palestine-solution-sans-2-state-format-out-of-question-erdogan> (download date: 28.05.2024).

<sup>8</sup> AK Parti'den İki devletli çözüm için çağrı: Seyretmeyin. (05.11.2023). <https://www.gundemkibris.com/gezici-anket-sonuclarini-acikladi-tatar-onde> (download date: 28.05.2024).

*promising process could not be completed*". The Turkish side, for its part, accused the Greek Cypriot side of insisting on "*maximalist positions*" on territorial and other "*hard*" issues<sup>9</sup>.

After the failure of the negotiations, the Turkish administration of the Northern Cyprus, supported by Ankara in 2020, changed its approach to a solution by promoting a "*two-state*" model. The Turkish side now wants a solution based on "*two sovereign states*" rather than a federation. Referring to the two-state solution proposed by the self-proclaimed president of Northern Cyprus, Ersin Tatar, President Erdogan said that they were in favor of an equal, sovereign two-state solution because they had failed to achieve results in previous negotiations<sup>10</sup>. Incidentally, in 2020, according to polls conducted in the self-proclaimed TRNC, 81% of the island's Turkish population favored a "two-state" model<sup>11</sup>.

Nevertheless, the UN and the EU, as in the past, remain firmly committed to a federal solution to the Cyprus problem. As for the idea of a two-state model solution, it still faces considerable resistance because, if implemented, it would recognize the TRNC as an international entity, which various countries consider to be an illegal entity formed as a result of invasion and occupation. It is difficult to say whether the parties will consider the two-state model for the start of possible new negotiations, but it seems unrealistic to expect a solution to the Cyprus problem in the short term, especially within the framework of the mentioned model.

Regarding the question of why Turkey is promoting the two-state model on the Palestinian issue on various platforms, we assume that it is pursuing far-reaching goals. In particular, if the Palestinian issue is resolved in such a format (which seems highly unlikely), it will undoubtedly be used by Ankara as a precedent in the Cyprus issue as well. Therefore, during this period, think tanks and media supporting the ruling party in Turkey are actively promoting the "two-state" model in both the Palestine and Cyprus cases.

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<sup>10</sup> Erdoğan Kuzey Kıbrıs Meclisi'nde konuştu: 'Cumhurbaşkanlığı külliyesi inşasına başlıyoruz'. (19.07.2021). <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-turkiye-57887876> (download date: 28.05.2024).

<sup>11</sup> Gezici anket sonuçlarını açıkladı! Tatar önde. (20.01.2020). <https://www.gundemkibris.com/gezici-anket-sonuclarini-acikladi-tatar-onde> (download date: 28.05.2024).

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