One-State Solution, the way forward in Palestine

What is the issue?

- For more than 50 years, attempts to bring peace to historical Palestine have adhered to the two-state solution as the only way forward.
- But here is why the whole premise of the two-state solution is wrong, providing Israel the immunity to continue its ethnic cleansing.

What was a similar offer made earlier?

- The idea of partitioning Palestine is not new.
- It was already offered by the new British occupiers of Palestine in 1937.
- The Zionist movement was hardly 50 years old then.
- The Zionist goal was to turn historical Palestine into a Jewish state.
- To this, a chunk of the Palestinian homeland was proposed as a future state.
- [Back then, this was similar to an offer as decolonising India by partitioning it between a British India and local India.]
- No country would have ever consented to such a post-colonial arrangement, and it was naturally rejected by the Palestinians.

What was the catastrophic event that followed the proposal?

- International community back in 1940s insisted that the Palestinians should give half of their homeland to the settler movement of Zionism.
- But Palestinians kept reiterating that the settler movement of Zionism would not be content with just half of the country.
- Coming true, in less than a year, under the guise of UN support, the new Jewish state took over nearly 80% of historical Palestine.
- They ethnically cleansed almost a million Palestinians (more than half of Palestine's population).
- They demolished half of Palestine's villages and most of its towns in 9 months in 1948.
- This was an event known by the Palestinians as the Nakba, the catastrophe.

What happened following Israel's occupation?

- In 1967, Israel occupied the rest of historical Palestine.
- In the process, they expelled another 300,000 Palestinians.
- It was impossible after 1948 to repeat a massive ethnic cleansing.
- So, it was substituted by incremental ethnic cleansing.
- The last stage in this process was one of the root causes that ignited the cycle of recent violence. (Click here to know more.)
- It is to do with the proposed eviction of Palestinians from Shaykh [Sheikh] Jarrah, an East Jerusalem neighbourhood.
- The eviction is part of an overall attempt to Judaise East Jerusalem.
- Imposing military rule in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip after they were occupied was another means.
- This enclaved the people there without basic human and civil rights.
- A version of an Apartheid regime was imposed on the Palestinian minority in Israel.
- Also, there was constant refusal to allow the 1948 refugees to return.
- This completed the matrix of power that allowed Israel to retain the land.

What is the tw0-state solution proposed now?

- The two-state solution proposes establishing two states for two peoples: Israel for the Jewish people and Palestine for the Palestinian people.
- The solution was offered for the first time by liberal Zionists and the United States in the 1980s.
- It was seen by some Palestinians as a way to end the occupation of the West Bank, and help the partial fulfilment of the Palestinian right for self-determination and independence.
- This was why the Palestine Liberation Organization was willing to give it a go in 1993, by signing the Oslo Accords.
- But the Palestinian position has no impact in the current balance of power.
- Israel's interpretation is what matters more now, and no global power would challenge its interpretation.

What is Israel's idea of a two-state solution?

- The two-state solution is another means of having the territories of West Bank and Gaza Strip, without incorporating most of the people living there.
- In order to ensure it, Israel partitioned the West Bank (which is 20% of historical Palestine) into a Jewish and an Arab part.
- This happened in the second phase of the Oslo Accords, known as the Oslo

II agreement of 1995.

- The Palestinians were forced to accept it under American and Egyptian pressure.
- One area, called area C (consists of 60% of the West Bank) was directly ruled from 1995 until today by Israel.
- After 2009, under Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel is in the process of officially annexing this area, while ethnically cleansing the Palestinians living in it.
- The remaining 40% of the West Bank, areas A and B under Oslo II, were put under the Palestinian Authority.
- The Authority optimistically calls itself the state of Palestine.
- But in essence, it has no power whatsoever, except that given to it, and withdrawn from it, by Israel.

What was the Bantustanisation attempt?

- [The white-dominated government of South Africa classified the country's Black Africans as Bantu.
- A Bantustan was a territory that the National Party administration of South Africa set aside for black inhabitants of South Africa and South West Africa (now Namibia), as part of its policy of apartheid.]
- Similar to creating a Bantustan, in Israel, the Gaza Strip was divided too.
- Israel hoped that another Bantustan, like the one in areas A and B, would be established there under the Palestinian Authority's rule and under the same conditions.
- But the people of Gaza opted to support a new player, Hamas, and its ally, the Islamic Jihad, which resisted this offer.
- Israel responded by imposing a callous siege and blockade on the Gaza Strip.
- To complete the partition of the West Bank, its Bantustanisation, and the siege of Gaza, Israel passed a citizenship law in 2018.
- Known as the nationality law, it made Palestinian citizens in essence to be the "Africans" of a new Israeli Jewish apartheid state.

Why is a two-state solution flawed?

- The two-state solution is essentially based on the assumption of parity, approaching the conflict as one fought between two national movements.
- But, this is not the real case.
- It is instead a settler colonial reality which began in the late 19th century and continues until today, motivated by "the elimination of the native".
- It thus essentially involves genocide, ethnic cleansing operation, etc.

- The presence of more than 600,000 Jewish settlers, with a very high rate of natural growth, means that Israel will never consider moving them out.
- And without that, even a soft version of a two-state solution is impossible.
- In all, the two-state solution is not going to stop the ethnic cleansing and instead, it provides Israel international immunity to continue it.

What is the best way forward then?

- The only alternative is to decolonise historical Palestine and build a new State - a State for all its citizens all over the country.
- This should move forward with –

i. dismantlement of colonialist institutions
ii. fair redistribution of the country's natural resources
iii. compensation of the victims of the ethnic cleansing and allowing their repatriation

- Settlers and natives should together build a new state that is democratic, part of the Arab world and not against it.

Source: The Hindu

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