An Analysis of U.S. Administrations' Approaches to the Two-State Solution through National Security Strategy Documents

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Abstract: With the year 2000, the realities on the ground in Palestine underwent significant changes, and structural events that paved the way for new discussions occurred. In this new situation, academic studies have tried to understand and explain the obstacles to a two-state solution while focusing on one-state solution proposals. Although the discussions have generally focused on the impossibility of a two-state solution, the possibility of a solution has also been mentioned. In this context, in addition to the academic community, regional and global actors, as well as heads of state, continue to emphasize a two-state solution. Despite the reality on the ground and the politics in favor of Israel, US policymakers and foreign policy circles have not abandoned the two-state solution rhetoric. Accordingly, some US governments have continued to insist on the "two-state solution" despite the disintegration of the Oslo Process. From this perspective, the study examines the US governments' approaches to the two-state solution from 2000, when the Oslo Process collapsed and the Second Intifada commenced, to the present. The data were collected from National Security Strategy (NSS) documents published by the US governments between 2000 and 2024 and subjected to thematic content analysis. The main claim of the study is that the US approach to the two-state solution is shaped by periodic and actor-centered preferences rather than a coherent strategic line. The findings suggest that the US discursive stance on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is shaped by presidents' normative priorities, ideological orientations, and leadership styles rather than structural foreign policy parameters.

Keywords: National Security Strategy, US Foreign Policy, US Governments, Two-State Solution

Öz: 2000 yılıyla birlikte Filistin özelinde sahadaki gerçeklikler değişmiş ve yeni tartışmalara zemin hazırlayacak yapısal olaylar yaşanmıştır. Ortaya çıkan bu yeni durumda akademik çalışmalar, bir taraftan tek devletli çözüm önerilerine yoğunlaşırken diğer taraftan iki devletli çözümün önündeki engelleri anlamaya ve açıklamaya çalışmıştır. Tartışmalar genel olarak iki devletli çözümün imkânsızlığına yoğunlaşmakla birlikte çözüm ihtimalinin de dile getirildiği görülmektedir. Bu kapsamda akademik camiaya ilaveten, bölgesel ve küresel aktörler ve devlet başkanları da iki devletli çözüme vurgu yapmaya devam etmektedir. Sahadaki gerçekliğe ve İsrail lehine izlediği siyasete rağmen ABD'deki politika yapıcılar ve dış politika çevreleri de iki devletli çözüm retoriğinden vazgeçmemiştir. Bu bağlamda özellikle bazı ABD hükümetleri, dağılan Oslo Süreci'ne rağmen "iki devletli çözüm" üzerinde ısrarla durmuştur. Buradan hareketle çalışma, Oslo Sürecinin dağıldığı ve II. İntifada'nın başladığı 2000'den günümüze kadar göreve gelen ABD hükümetlerinin iki devletli çözüme yaklaşımlarını analiz etmektedir. Çalışmanın verileri 2000 – 2024 arasındaki ABD hükümetlerince yayınlanan Ulusal Güvenlik Strateji belgelerinden toplanarak tematik içerik analizine tabi tutulmuştur/başvurulmuştur. Çalışmanın temel iddiası, ABD'nin iki devletli çözüm yaklaşımının tutarlı bir stratejik

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çizgiden ziyade, dönemsel ve aktör-merkezli tercihlere göre şekillendiği yönündedir. Bulgular, ABD'nin İsrail-Filistin çatışmasındaki söylemsel tutumun, yapısal dış politika parametrelerinden çok, başkanların normatif öncelikleri, ideolojik yönelimleri ve liderlik tarzları doğrultusunda biçimlendiğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ulusal Güvenlik Stratejisi, ABD Dış Politikası, ABD Hükümetleri, İki Devletli Çözüm

Introduction

Since the 2000 failure of the Camp David talks and the collapse of the Oslo Process, one-state solutions to the Israeli- Palestinian conflict—specifically a binational state or similar models—have been increasingly discussed and endorsed in academic circles (Waldman, 2013, p. 840). The year 2000 coincided not only with the unsuccessful conclusion of the Camp David talks but also with the beginning of the Second Intifada, one of the most critical events in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Thus, the peaceful atmosphere that existed between the parties in the 90s was replaced by a new climate of conflict, which has opened the door to completely different debates (Bozkurt, 2025, p.340).

This new situation has necessitated a re-evaluation of the debate. Accordingly, academic studies have begun to focus on one-state solution proposals on the one hand, and on the other hand, to understand and explain the obstacles to a two-state solution. Provided as evident in the literature section of this study, the academic literature has examined the feasibility of a two-state solution in terms of themes, chronology, and actors. Although the general tendency is more likely to argue against the possibility of a two-state solution, some studies suggest that a solution is indeed feasible. Moreover, aside from academics, regional and global actors, as well as heads of states, continue to emphasize the two-state solution.

Despite the reality on the ground and the policy favoring Israel, American policymakers and foreign policy circles in the US have not abandoned the rhetoric of the two-state solution. In this context, some US governments have continued to insist on the "two-state solution" despite the disintegration of the Oslo Process.

This study analyzes how the US governments in office from 2000, when the Oslo Process collapsed and the Second Intifada began, to the present have approached the two-state solution. The year 2000 was chosen as the starting point because it marked a pivotal period of structural events that altered the realities on the ground and paved the way for new debates. In the study, the National Security Strategy documents signed by US presidents between 2000 and 2024 are subjected to thematic content analysis, revealing the similarities and differences in the approaches of the US governments to the two-state solution. Accordingly, the main claim of the paper is that the US approach to the two-state solution is shaped according to periodic and actor-centered preferences rather than a consistent strategic line. The main findings

suggest that the parameter determining the US governments' approach to the topic does not indicate continuity in foreign policy, but rather reveals differences in normative priorities, ideological orientations, and leadership styles of the incumbent presidents during the concentrated time period.

Method of Study

The data for the study were collected from National Security Strategy documents published by the governments of George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump, and Joseph Biden between 2000 and 2024. The National Security Strategy document for the new term of the government of the re-elected President Donald Trump in 2024 could not be included, as it had not yet been published. The table 1 below demonstrates the details regarding the chosen and analyzed National Security Strategy documents.

Table 1

The Analyzed National Security Strategy Documents of United States for This Research

Period	Presidency	Document	Characteristics
2000 - 2004	George W. Bush	National Security Strategy of the United States of America (September 2002)	35 pages
2004 – 2008	George W. Bush	National Security Strategy of the United States of America (March 2006)	54 pages
2008 - 2012	Barack H. Obama	National Security Strategy of the United States of America (May 2010)	60 pages
2012 – 2016	Barack H. Obama	National Security Strategy of the United States of America (February 2015)	35 pages
2016 – 2020	Donald J. Trump	National Security Strategy of the United States of America (December 2017)	68 pages
2020 – 2024	Joseph Biden	National Security Strategy of the United States of America (October 2022)	48 pages
Total: 24 Years	6 Presidency	6 National Security Strategy documents	300 pages

National Security Strategy documents are significant documents that provide insights and represent some patterns and/or strategies regarding the incumbent presidents in the concentrated periods and their governments because of the following reasons. First, since 1986, those documents have come to be known as the basic texts of US foreign policy, and, more importantly, it has become an obligation for each US President and administration to prepare and publish those documents (Hemmer, 2015, p. 3) as well as submitting them to the US Congress (Aygün, 2023, p. 61). Second, those documents serve as a kind of declaration of the US presidents and their administrations and/or governments (Hemmer, 2015, p. 3). In this regard, they outline the methods and ways that each US administration would use to address the national security concerns of the country and achieve the country's national goals (Aygün, 2023, p. 61). Third, the primary expectation in the foreign policy community of the US, where the country's foreign policy and policy practices are discussed, is that steps the country would take or the strategies and policies it would follow in the international arena should be based on the points outlined in those documents (Hemmer, 2015, p. 4). Goldgier & Suri (2015, p. 40), one of the prominent figures in the field, point to the rapid change in international conditions and the fact that uncertainty has become a policy, and argue that there is a greater need for documents such as national security strategy. Fourth, National Security Strategy documents reflect the views and even interests of the leading institutions of acting US governments, namely the White House, the Departments of State, Defense, Homeland Security, intelligence agencies, as well as the Foreign Affairs Committee of the US Congress (Ettinger, 2018, p. 476). Thus, those documents lead the executive branch of the US, which appears to be a complex structure, to utilize the country's resources in accordance with its priorities and to a certain extent, they play a significant role to bring all institutions together around a common goal (Ettinger, 2018, p. 475). Finally, national security strategy documents do not only guide the comprehensive foreign policy bureaucracy of the US but they also help individuals and institutions having duties and responsibilities in this field to develop the ability of joint action in the case of crises or unexpected developments (Ettinger, 2018, p. 475).

In this study, the data collected from National Security Strategy documents were subjected to qualitative and thematic content analysis. In particular, an inductive thematic content analysis was applied. This type of analysis refers to a coding method in which the qualitative data are not put into any pre-determined theoretical context. Instead, the collated data lead the research and enable the reveal of fundamental themes, issues or topics related to the subject under the investigation for the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83). In this respect, thematic content analysis is an effective

data analysis method in revealing whether themes or topics in the data have any regular circulation or visibility (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017, p. 3352).

While applying the inductive thematic content analysis in the process of coding, main coding units were paragraphs. Accordingly, the main key word searched in those documents was "Two-State Solution. Then, the documents were also searched by using keywords "Palestine", "Palestinian", "Palestinians" and "Israel" to cover the same period. Accordingly, paragraphs including those key words were coded. Choosing paragraphs as a unit of coding and/or coding through paragraphs allows us to understand the frequency (Clubb & O'Connor, 2019, p.354) and details of points regarding the subject/topic under the investigation by helping to identify topics that are located in the related parts of paragraphs (Demir & Doğan, 2025, p. 4152). In this research, coding through paragraphs led us to have an in-depth analysis in terms of understanding and revealing whether each US government has favored or distanced itself from the two-state solution in American foreign policy, and reasons for supporting the two-state solution or distancing themselves from it Such a way of coding also helped to identify the types of proposals put forward by US governments for the solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during the concentrated period, which also strengthens the analysis.

Literature

In this study, a literature review has been conducted by focusing on studies related to the "two-state solution". Accordingly, it has been observed that studies on the two-state solution or non-solution in the academic literature are generally shaped around specific themes and chronological approaches. For example, there is a tendency to understand the reasons for the solution or the lack of solution through the identities of the parties. Miller (2018), who argues that the lack of resolution and the persistence of the conflict cannot be explained by various alternative conceptualizations such as colonialism, clash of civilizations, religious, class, realist and civic/ethnic, depicts the lack of resolution as an example of ethno-nationalist conflict from the perspective of "state-national identity imbalance".

Approaching the two-state solution debate from a completely different perspective, Marrar (2008) scrutinizes the relationship between lobbies and American foreign policy. He examines the influence of the Arab and Jewish lobbies on US foreign policy separately and discusses possible scenarios for a two-state solution, centering on the influence of these lobbies, often with historical events such as the Oslo Peace Accords or themes like "democracy and terrorism".

Unger (2008), prioritizing population as another related theme to the two-state solution, argues that a two-state solution will not be realized as a result of pressure from either the US or the Arab States, and that the declining Israeli population and the rapid increase in the Arab population will force two intertwined communities in a small geography to live together ""inevitably".

Within the scope of studies analyzing solution-oriented approaches through realities on the field and Israeli expansionism, Özkoç (2021) argues that the opening of new settlements in the West Bank and the annexation of the Golan Heights have made Palestine, whose borders are unclear, even more chaotic. Similarly, Mossberg (2010) argues that Israel's continued settlement construction in the West Bank has led to Israel controlling almost the entire land, leaving Palestinians with no territorial space to live. In this framework, the ambiguity of borders and the level of ontological threat perceptions of the parties towards one another stand out as the most significant obstacles to a two-state solution (Inbar, 2009, p. 272).

Within the scope of thematic and chronological studies, Ilan Pappe discusses Zionism and the two-state solution after explaining the historical background of the issue. Pappe mentions four crucial situations that will determine the process leading to the two-state solution. The first is the policy pursued by Israel, which enjoys unlimited US support. If this policy continues without encountering any challenges, the destruction of Palestine will last in the name of the "two-state solution". The second is the internationalization and acceptance of the anger against Israeli expansionism in the Islamic and Arab world, which is now fanatically manifesting itself in the face of this reality. The third is the fundamental shift in civil society and the growing anti-Zionist campaigns around the world. The fourth process is the cautious emergence of equality-based, non-discriminatory living spaces within the occupied territories, especially in areas such as the Galilee, where Palestinians and Jews live together (Pappe, 2007, pp. 45-46).

The academic literature focusing on the two-state solution includes thematic and chronological narratives as well as actor-oriented studies. In this context, studies focusing on the approaches of the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU) to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict stand out. Accordingly, one of the most basic emphases is the thesis that a solution will not be possible as long as Palestine is denied full membership in the UN. It is emphasized that peace negotiations between the parties in an environment where the asymmetrical balance of power continues and Western states block Palestine's membership do not stop the occupation, but it rather encourages the occupation of new settlements (Gordon and Cohen, 2012). Similarly, Ibrahim et al. (2014) argue that a two-state solution is possible through the implementation of UN Resolutions 181 and 242 - resolutions calling for a return to

the 1967 borders and a two-state solution, respectively. Moreover, all third parties must act as neutral mediators to achieve a meaningful solution and a lasting peace in the Middle East. However, Pressman (2021) argues that although both the UN and the EU have taken a strong stance on the realization of a two-state solution, they have failed to take an active role to ensure a solution on the ground.

In the existing literature, in addition to international institutions, there are also studies on the approaches of actors to the two-state solution such as the UK, considered as the main source of the decades-long problem, and the US, which later became a global power. Accordingly, Hollis (2016), who questions the place of the two-state solution in British foreign policy, reveals how the long-standing paradigm of British political elites towards Palestine has changed over time. Despite all this change, the produced discourse has never included the establishment of an independent state for Palestinians as a central or a stand-alone policy goal.

In one of the studies analyzing the US approach to the issue, Daud et al. (2020) analyzed the US policy towards Israel between 2009 and 2016, focusing on the years of Obama, and concluded that the strained relationship between Obama and Netanyahu was the most critical factor in the blockage of the two-state solution process. Since there could be many reasons for the tension between them, the study utilized the level of analysis approach (individual, domestic and systemic levels) to examine why the relations between two leaders became strained during the Obama period and the role of this situation in the failure of the "Two-State Solution" through different units of analysis.

In another study, Jabali et al. (2024) employ a "constructivist" theoretical approach to analyze the strategies of the Biden administration and the Arab monarchies towards the two-state solution, in the light of changing dynamics of recent times. According to them, there are several obstacles to a two-state solution as the most prominent barriers in front of the solution such as the de facto annexation of the West Bank, the blockade imposed on Gaza, and Israel's waning interest in peace negotiations.

It is worth noting that President Trump's first term stands out in other studies on US presidents and governments in the literature. In this context, Imam (2018), who argues that previous American administrations had adopted a more balanced stance in their relations with Israel and the Arab world, reveals that US foreign policy under the Trump administration escalated conflict and increased tensions in the region, unlike previous periods. Similarly, Augustine (2018) notes that hopes for a two-state solution diminished following US President Donald Trump's historic announcement on December 6, 2018, recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, based on the "principled realism" approach.

In this section, thematic, chronological, and actor-centered studies demonstrate that there are analyses of Israeli-Palestinian foreign policy within the context of certain US presidents. However, there is no study on analyzing how all US presidents and their administrations/governments have approached the two-state solution in their foreign policy. This study approaches the post-2000 US governments from a holistic perspective, conducting an inductive thematic content analysis of the National Security Strategy documents published during the relevant period. Thus, it brings a new perspective to the existing academic literature by identifying and presenting the US governments' approaches to the two-state solution holistically.

The Two-State Solution Approach and Related Topics in the National Security Strategy Documents

Between 2000 and 2024, the National Security Strategy documents published by the US governments consistently included the two-state solution in all documents, except for the one under Donald Trump. In this part of the study, the approaches outlined in the aforementioned documents regarding the two-state solution are analyzed separately.

The Two-State Solution in George W. Bush's First National Security Strategy Document

The 2002 National Security Strategy document issued by the George W. Bush administration viewed the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as a regional conflict that had seriously affected the US administration's relations with Israel and some other Arab countries (National Security Strategy, 2002, p. 9). In the document, the Bush administration's support for a two-state solution was tied to certain conditions that both Israel and Palestine had to fulfill. Those conditions included democracy or democratization, adopting the rule of law, establishing an independent judiciary, fighting corruption, assuming responsibility for the solution, and rejecting terrorism resolutely (National Security Strategy, 2002, p. 9).

The conditions that Israel must fulfill are listed as follows (National Security Strategy, 2002, p. 10). First, Israel was asked to withdraw from positions before September 28, 2000. As stated by the Mitchell Committee[1], Israel was demanded to

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1   This is a report published in May 2001 by an international committee chaired by former US Senator George Mitchell. The report addressed the escalating violence between Israelis and Palestinians during the Al-Aqsa Intifada and recommended steps to promote peace, such as an immediate ceasefire, a prolonged "cooling-off" period, and the resumption of negotiations stalled after the 1993 Oslo Peace Accords. More details can be found in Mitchell Report (2024).

stop attempts of building settlement activities in the occupied territories. Additionally, Israel was called upon to reduce its violence, provide the freedom of movement for Palestinians, and facilitate the return of the Palestinian people to their daily lives. The main reasons for this call to Israel were based on some assumptions that a democratic Palestinian state would play a role in enhancing Israel's security and that the continuation of the conflict would pose a threat to identity and democracy of Israel (National Security Strategy, 2002, p. 10).

The Two-State Solution in George W. Bush's Second National Security Strategy

It would not be wrong to say that the National Security Strategy document of George W. Bush's second term was marked by Hamas' victory at the general elections in Palestine. In the document, the Bush administration stated that the position of the US-led international community on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was to support a two-state solution. Still it emphasized that this support was contingent on Hamas recognizing Israel's right to exist, disarming, renouncing violence and terrorism, and embracing democracy (National Security Strategy, 2006, p. 5). In the document, while the Bush administration put forward some conditions for Hamas to support a two-state solution, it drew attention to the possibility of a transformation in relations with the Palestinians as a result of the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip and the northern West Bank (National Security Strategy, 2006, p. 14). The Bush administration stated the conditions that Hamas must fulfill for the US to support a two-state solution included improving relations with Israel, renouncing its terrorist roots, protecting minority rights and fundamental rights and freedoms, functioning of free and fair elections, and the adoption and defense of democratic principles of governance (National Security Strategy, 2006, p. 5).

In the 2006 National Security Strategy, the topic of democracy was taken seriously. It would not be wrong to say that the US's attempt to legitimize its intervention in Iraq through democracy was effective in the emergence of this situation. At the same time, it is an essential detail that Hamas, which won the elections in Palestine, is discussed under the title of "Promoting Effective Democracies". This situation highlights a critical approach demonstrating the importance of elections for the US but also underscoring that they are not sufficient for a functioning democracy. In other words, it shows that what the US or the Bush administration expects from democracy is not only elections or winning elections, but also the implementation of democratic principles by winning sides.

Hence, the 2006 document lists the characteristics of effective democracies. These included respect for fundamental human rights, freedom of religion, conscience, speech, assembly, association, and the press; citizen responsiveness and respect

for citizens' desire for change; order and effective sovereignty within national borders; and an independent and impartial legal and judicial system (National Security Strategy, 2006, p. 5). Additionally, according to the expectations of the Bush administration, effective democracies fight corruption, have rules to limit government, protect the family, religious communities, voluntary associations, private property, independent businesses, the market economy and civil society organizations, and create an environment where political, religious and economic freedoms can flourish and strengthen together (National Security Strategy, 2006, p. 5). Moreover, effective democracies are perceived as organizations/bodies having an effective police force, protecting individuals against the state or governments, that is, prioritizing individual freedoms; where values, rights and institutions underpin freedoms; where there is a free media with uncensored circulation of ideas; where there is free political competition in which individuals and all political parties participate in elections freely; and where free and fair elections are held (National Security Strategy, 2006, p. 5).

After listing the characteristics of effective democracies, the document evaluated the victory of Hamas in the Palestinian elections. In this context, it was stated that although Hamas is considered a terrorist organization by the European Union and the US due to its embrace of terrorism and killing of innocent civilians, it was elected as a result of votes cast by the Palestinian people in a free, fair and inclusive electoral process (National Security Strategy, 2006, p. 5). Thus, according to the perspective of the Bush administration, the Palestinian people prioritized peace and prosperity and placed responsibility on Hamas to establish a state (National Security Strategy, 2006, p. 5).

The Two-State Solution in Barack Obama's First National Security Strategy

The Obama administration's 2010 National Security Strategy addresses the Palestinian-Israeli conflict within the context of regional conflicts under the title "Security and Peace in the Middle East". The most interesting point in this period is the term of "Arab-Israeli conflict" used by the Obama administration 'instead of "Palestinian-Israeli conflict" (National Security Strategy, 2010, p. 26). This can be explained by Obama's desire to improve the US relations with the Arab and Islamic world, and to overcome the negative perception of the US in this region (The New York Times, 2009). It is because during the election campaign, Obama argued that Israelis, Palestinians and leaders of the Arab world had some expectations from the US to lead a long-lasting peace but the Bush administration prioritized the war in Iraq instead of confronting other important issues in the entire Middle East and responding to the expectations of the aforementioned actors (Obama, 2007, p.5).

Accordingly, the 2010 document of the Obama administration emphasizes that a peaceful resolution of the conflict is in the interest of the US, Israel, and Palestine, as well as the Arab states (National Security Strategy, 2010, p. 26).

Although Obama described Israel as the strongest ally of the US and the "only established democracy" in the region whose security should be prioritized during the election period (Obama, 2007, pp.5-6), in the context of the Palestinian debate, the Obama administration also supported a two-state solution. This support is expressed in the document by emphasizing that the US aims to see two states living side by side in peace and security (National Security Strategy, 2010, p. 26). The Obama administration also presents certain conditions that must be met for a two-state solution. However, these are not presented as conditions that Palestine or Hamas must fulfill, but as conditions that countries in the region must satisfy to achieve Arab-Israeli peace. Those include ending or preventing regional interference that would undermine the peace process, and ensuring constructive regional support for the process. According to the Obama administration, the goal of peace is not only about Israel and Palestine but it is also about other neighbors of Israel such as Syria and Lebanon in which multilateral cooperation and multilateral initiatives play an active role in addition to bilateral negotiations (National Security Strategy, 2010, p. 26).

Moreover, in the 2010 document, the Obama administration did not specifically impose conditions or obligations on the Palestinian side or Hamas to realize a two-state solution. Instead, it listed some conditions that Israel must fulfill. Those are also conditions that will ensure Israel's security: Israel is asked to be withdrawn from the territories it has occupied in 1967, to give the Palestinian people the opportunity for self-realization and accept coexistence with the Palestinians, negotiate and conclude issues related to borders and refugees, and clarify the status of Jerusalem, which is considered sacred by both sides (National Security Strategy, 2010, p. 26). In addition to Israel's security, the phrase "Palestinian security" was mentioned for the first time in the 2010 document published by the Obama administration (National Security Strategy, 2010, p. 26).

Above all, the Obama administration advocates for a regional solution, involving the participation of US partners in the region and all regional states (National Security Strategy, 2010, p. 26). However, the main obstacle to this for the Obama administration was Iran's behavior or the Iranian threat. The Obama administration believes that Iran is trying to influence the Palestinian-Israeli issue by terrorizing the region and undermining Palestinian-Israeli negotiations and, more importantly, peace developments (National Security Strategy, 2010, p. 26). In this regard, Iran's

influence and its position on the Palestinian-Israeli issue were mentioned for the first time in the Obama administration's National Security Strategy document published in 2010.

The Two-State Solution in Barack Obama's Second National Security Strategy

The 2015 National Security Strategy document, published in the second term of the Obama administration, emphasized the US administration's commitment to a two-state solution and stated that this policy would continue to be pursued (National Security Strategy, 2015, p. 26). However, the 2015 document did not present a detailed approach to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the two-state solution, as the 2010 document did. It only briefly addressed the issue. Unlike the 2010 document, the 2015 document replaced the phrase "Arab-Israeli conflict" with "Israeli-Palestinian conflict" (National Security Strategy, 2015, p. 26). The 2015 document focused on the Palestinian issue under the general heading of "Peace and Stability in the Middle East and North Africa", by emphasizing both Israel's security and the sustainability of Palestine (National Security Strategy, 2015, p. 26).

The Two-State Solution in Donald Trump's National Security Strategy

In the National Security Strategy documents published by US governments between 2000 and 2024, the only document that does not mention the two-state solution and does not approach the Palestinian issue from a perspective of two-state solution is the National Security Strategy document published by the Donald Trump administration in 2017. It is known that pro-Israel policies were predominant in the Donald Trump's term. Steps taken and practices implemented in foreign policy are shaped in a way to benefit Israel. As stated during the presidential election process, Donald Trump's reasons for pursuing pro-Israeli policies are his admiration for the Jewish people, his personal belief that US-Israeli relations are special, and his view of Israel as the region's only stable democracy (Trump, 2015, pp. 56-57). From this point of view, the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel (Ülgül, 2020, p. 226), the decision to move the US Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem (BBC Turkish, 2018), and taking steps to recognize Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights in violation of UN Security Council Resolution 242 (Özkoç, 2021, p. 314) were moves that had weakened the prospects for a two-state solution during the Trump administration.

In line with these developments, the 2017 National Security Strategy document includes the Palestinian topic under the heading of the Middle East. It addresses the problem as a factor hindering regional peace and prosperity in the Middle East within the framework of regional conflicts (National Security Strategy, 2017, p. 49).

The document also states that the US administration will support a peace agreement that is acceptable to both Israelis and Palestinians (National Security Strategy, 2017, p. 49). Additionally, the 2017 document pointed to jihadist organizations and Iran as the primary source of the problems in the region against the approaches that see Israel as the main responsible agent for the issues in the Middle East. In this context, the central claim was that the countries in the region had similar interests with Israel in the fight against jihadist organizations and perceiving Iran as a common threat (National Security Strategy, 2017, p. 49).

The Two-State Solution in the Joseph Biden Era National Security Strategy

The 2022 National Security Strategy document, published during the Joe Biden's term, approached the Palestinian issue within the scope of the "Integration in the Middle East". Accordingly, it was stated that both the preservation of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state and the formation of a Palestinian state would be pursued (National Security Strategy, 2022, p. 42). The Biden administration stated that it would support the two-state solution within the framework of a return to the 1967 borders and mutual exchanges between the parties (National Security Strategy, 2022, p. 42). In this context, the 2022 document clearly showed the Biden administration's approach to this issue by referring to Biden's statements during his visit to the West Bank in July 2022 that a two-state solution would be the best way to ensure security, prosperity, freedom and democracy for both Palestinians and Israelis in equal measure (National Security Strategy, 2022, p. 42). The Biden administration also supported Israel's efforts to improve its relations with some Arab states and expand the Abraham Accords in the context of Israel's security (National Security Strategy, 2022, p. 42). However, following Hamas' Operation Al-Aqsa Flood against Israel on October 7, 2023, which coincided with the final year of the Biden administration, Israel began pursuing religiously motivated policies against Hamas and Palestinians such as the policies related to the concept of chosenness that are based on "promised land" and "othering." (Bozkurt & Doğan, 2025, pp.86-87). Therefore, the Operation Al-Aqsa Flood and the Israeli policies in the aftermath of this operation not only complicated the solution for the Israeli-Palestinian issue but also detrimentally affected the efforts of the Biden administration over the two-state solution.

Conclusion

In 2000, the failure of the Camp David talks and the outbreak of the Second Intifada shook the two-state solution paradigm in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This rupture in the reality on the ground not only transformed the hopes for peace but also

affected the discourse and attitudes of international actors on this issue. In terms of US foreign policy orientation, the National Security Strategy documents are among the primary sources for tracing such a transformation. Those documents reflect the security concerns, value priorities, and diplomatic strategies of the presidents and their respective terms, and concretely reveal the grounds, which they approached the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The documents issued under George W. Bush explicitly supported the two-state solution, but they linked this support to responsibilities imposed on the parties as preconditions documents published by the Bush administration in 2002 and 2006 emphasized the democratization of Palestine and its rejection of violence as well as the cessation of settlement activities committed by Israel and its withdrawal from the occupied territories. This approach can be read as a policy of balance, whereby conflict resolution is conditional, and the parties are forced to take steps simultaneously.

The Barack Obama administration, especially in its first term, presented a vision of a solution based on multilateral diplomacy and regional cooperation. The 2010 National Security Strategy took a more holistic approach to the issue, including not only Israel and Palestine, but also Arab states and Iran in the equation as one of the most critical obstacles to a solution. While Obama's policy reflected a strong belief in the two peoples/nations living side by side in peace, it was limited in overcoming political resistance and the diplomatic realities on the ground.

In a sharp and certain departure from the previous presidents, the Donald Trump administration abandoned the two-state solution both in rhetoric and in practice. The recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, the support for the annexation of the Golan Heights, and the absence of any mention of a two-state solution in the National Security Strategy document led to Washington being perceived as a partisan actor rather than a mediator. This approach undermined international confidence in the settlement process and increased tensions on the ground.

The Joe Biden administration, on the other hand, sought to distance itself from the unilateralism of the Trump's term and returned to the traditional line. The 2022 National Security Strategy document re-emphasized the two-state solution, arguing that a peace agreement based on the 1967 borders should provide security, freedom, and prosperity for both Israelis and Palestinians. The Biden administration has sought to reinvigorate the settlement process by revitalizing diplomatic relations and enhancing humanitarian support for the Palestinian people.

In conclusion, an inductive thematic analysis of the National Security Strategy documents of four US presidents in office between 2000 and 2024 reveals that the

US approach to the two-state solution is shaped by periodic and actor-centered preferences rather than a coherent strategic line. The George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations explicitly embraced the vision of a two-state solution. But they tied it to both normative expectations and conditions for the parties. The Obama administration, in particular, emphasized multilateral diplomacy by framing the conflict within a broader regional framework. However, this approach was limited in its implementation. The Donald Trump administration, on the other hand, radically deviated from previous approaches, completely excluded the vision of a two-state solution from national security documents, and adopted unilateral policies in favor of Israel by seriously eroding the traditional US policy of relative balance. The Joseph Biden administration distanced itself from the policies and implementations of the Trump administration. It returned to the classic two-state solution discourse and adopted an approach prioritizing diplomacy, especially by stating that it supports a solution based on the 1967 borders.

Those findings suggest that the US discursive orientation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is shaped by the normative priorities, ideological orientations, and leadership styles of the presidents rather than structural foreign policy parameters. This situation increases the risk of fragility and volatility rather than continuity in US foreign policy. It reveals that a lasting and sustainable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will become more difficult in the absence of US strategic coherence. Therefore, the role of the US in the settlement process is directly related not only to its power capacity but also to how and on what political values it uses this capacity.

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