

FOREWORD

Self-determination, statehood, and partition are dominant political concepts that shaped the formation of the modern global order following World War I. The resistance of the Palestine question to any attempt at resolution guided by the logics of these concepts has generated a veritable industry of academic publications—buttressed by and even bigger industry of documentation, reports, initiatives, resolutions, and summits—on how to secure a two-state solution. Most of this scholarship, regardless of the political position of the authors, uncritically dwells within the confines of this nationalist conceptual architecture, thus reproducing the very epistemological climate that made possible the ongoing dispossession, displacement, and statelessness of the Palestinians. It is ironic, but hardly surprising, that the “peace process” launched by the 1993 Oslo Accords, based on the partition logic of “land for peace,” greatly accelerated the tempo of Israeli colonization of Palestine.

The spectacular contrast over the past three decades between state-centric discourses in the public sphere and settler-colonial practices on the ground has pushed a new generation of scholars to consider intellectual exit strategies from the identity/territory/sovereignty matrix and to experiment with alternative paradigms. *Rethinking Statehood in Palestine: Self-Determination and Decolonization beyond Partition* is an outstanding collection of essays, mostly by leading Palestinian scholars of this new generation, that forensically explain the operations of partition logic on the ground and point to different paths to decolonial futures.

Statehood was never the sole mission of decolonization movements globally, and there is a rich tradition of thinking beyond the telos of the state among anti-colonial intellectuals. The Palestinians are no exception. Indeed, an outpouring of

scholarship, activist initiatives, literary writing, and cultural projects have shifted the focus from the state to the nation. The concept of nation is more capacious engine for political struggle, as it privileges people over territory and recognizes the critical importance of the everyday lived experience.

This outpouring was especially noticeable in the period following the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, which sought to destroy the institutional infrastructure of the Palestine Liberation Organization and to make irreversible the colonization of the territories occupied in the 1967 war. Nevertheless, the hold of partition logic remains especially strong in the Palestinian case for a variety of historical reasons, not the least of which are the modalities of international interventions.

Rethinking Statehood encapsulates the mission of the New Directions in Palestinian Studies book series in that most of the authors draw on their intimate familiarity with the Palestinian condition to provide fresh perspectives, from the inside out, so to speak, on larger theoretical and global concerns. The editor, Leila Farsakh, assembled scholars from a variety of disciplines—political economy, law, international relations, history, and cultural studies—all of whom deliver crisp, concise, informative, and robustly insightful essays honed by years of research in their respective fields as well as by activist work. This makes the book an important inspiration for scholars, a go-to resource for teachers, and a stimulating read for anyone interested in understanding the deeper structures of the Palestine question and its relationship to central debates about, among other things: colonialism and self-determination, the political economy of state formation, legal constructions of nation and state, settler-colonialism and citizenship, international law, and the promise and limits of cultural decolonization practices informed by the politics of indigeneity.

Rethinking Statehood directly engages with the dominant debates on the question of Palestine and pushes against their limits. Deeply informed, theoretically engaged, and accessible, this anthology is designed as a long-term resource for all those interested in understanding the Palestinian struggle for a just and equitable future.

Beshara Doumani
Series Editor



MAP 1. Palestine under the 1947 UN Partition Plan, and with the 1949 armistice lines. Source: Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs.



MAP 2. Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip, July 1967. Source: Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs.



MAP 3. Division of the West Bank according to the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip (Oslo II), September 1995. Source: Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs.



MAP 4. Gaza Strip, 2000. Source: Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs.