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Alternatives to Partition in Palestine

Rearticulating the State-Nation Nexus

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It might sound absurd to discuss alternatives to partition in Palestine when a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza has been recognized by over 138 countries and was admitted as a nonmember state into the United Nations in 2012. Partition, defined as separating Palestinians from Israelis, has long been considered the only solution to the intractable Arab-Israeli conflict. It is enshrined in UN Resolution 181 of 1947, which called for the creation of two states in historic Palestine. Partition is also ingrained in the first peace agreement signed between the Palestinians and the Israelis, in 1993, which initiated what came to be known as the Oslo peace process. Even if it was never spelled out clearly, the aim of this process has been assumed to be the establishment of a Palestinian state living side by side with Israel in peace and security. In 2009 the Israeli government declared its acceptance of such a state in principle, so long as it met Israel's conditions.[1]

Despite all these recognitions, however, a Palestinian state is unable to materialize on the ground. Partition—in the form of over ninety-nine checkpoints separating Palestinians from Israelis, the 708-kilometer Separation Wall that Israel built to encompass its settler population in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which doubled to over 643,000 in 2018, and the siege on the Gaza Strip—makes a contiguous Palestinian state impossible, and has led many academics and activists to call for a revival of the one-state solution as a political alternative.[2]

This chapter explores some of the key political questions that need to be answered in any rejection of partition as a political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It focuses on two key historical documents that promoted one-state solutions in Palestine. These include *Palestine: A Bi-National State*, written by Martin Buber, Judas Magnus, and Moses Smilansky, published by Ihud in 1946 and "Towards a Democratic State in Palestine for Muslims, Christians and Jews," published by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1970, the latter of which formed the basis of the Palestinian National Council's call in 1971 for the

establishment of a democratic state in all of Palestine. These two documents provide insights into how to rearticulate the relation between the nation and the state in a way that allows for competing national claims to the land to be accommodated without compromising individual political rights to equal citizenship and justice. The chapter also examines the reasons offered over the past two decades for reviving the one-state idea and the challenges still facing it.

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTITION: PREMISES AND PROMISES

The one-state solution to two national groups fighting over the same land is not new. It has been proposed by Jewish Zionists as well as Palestinians. It was also considered by the international community, which has always been a central actor in this ongoing conflict. Its appeal stems from its promise to protect citizen rights over what some consider chauvinist national claims, since it guarantees equal political rights to all those wishing to live in Palestine, be they Jewish, Christian, or Muslim, immigrant or native. Its problem has lain in how it can reconcile individual rights with national rights within a single polity; in other words, with how to protect citizens' individual political rights to representation and equality as well as their collective rights to speak their own languages, protect their cultures, and define themselves as national entities with the right to self-determination, that is, to rule themselves by themselves.

Proponents of the one-state idea have attempted to tackle this problem by proposing two main political structures for it: a singular democratic state or a binational state. The former prioritizes individual over collective rights, leaving it to specific constitutional arrangements to sort out the ways in which group rights can be protected. The latter envisages a federated or confederated state along the Belgium or Swiss model, one that protects Israeli and Palestinian cultural and political institutions while giving them local autonomy within a democratic, binational state. It acknowledges the right of each national group to have their own elected local government, levy local taxes, control their domestic police, and speak their language. Both groups would form a federal representative government, one that would have control over a common foreign and defense policy.

At the heart of any one-state solution is an attempt to redefine the relationships between sovereignty, nationhood, and statehood. Examining how proponents of a unitary solution in Palestine have historically articulated the link between these concepts can shed light on the political challenges, as well as the opportunities, involved in advocating today for a one-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Historical Origins

The genesis of the one-state solution can be traced back to the British Mandate, specifically to the period between 1922 and 1928 when the colonial power treated

the newly demarcated state of Palestine as a single political and administrative unit. Britain, while incorporating the Balfour Declaration in its mandate, drafted a constitution for Palestine in 1922 that included the different communities in a single polity. It issued a single Palestinian nationality, recognized Arabic, Hebrew, and English as official languages, and provided for the creation of a legislative body that would consult with the British high commissioner, who held the executive power of this new modern state. This legislative body was to represent the whole population and be the parliament of the single state. It was to be composed of twenty-three members, twelve of whom would be elected in proportion to the population size of the respective communities (eight Muslims, two Christians, and two Jews) with the other eleven chosen by the high commissioner.[3] The Zionist leaders at the time gave this idea a lukewarm reception but, according to Ilan Pappe, they were not really interested in it, since they sought separation from, not integration with, the Arab population of Palestine.[4] The Arab leadership opposed the plan, mainly because it opposed the mandate and the Balfour Declaration, but by 1928 many leading Palestinian notables were willing to endorse it.[5] The Western Wall riots of 1929, however, made the British Mandate abandon the idea of a single polity in Palestine. The Peel Commission recommendation in 1937, and later UN Resolution 181 in 1947, enshrined partition as an imperial and, later, the internationally sanctioned solution.

A Zionist Rationale for a Binational State

Historically, among the Jewish Zionist community, the most vocal supporters of a one-state solution in Palestine have been members of Brit-Shalom, formed in 1925, and of Ihud, formed in 1942. The latter included Jewish intellectuals such as Martin Buber and Judah Magnus, the first chancellor of Hebrew University of Jerusalem, as well as business leaders such Moses Smilansky among others.[6] Together, they sought to influence the Zionist leadership with their ideas and convince Arab notables to join their plan for a binational state in Palestine.

Ihud's members tended to view Zionism as a quest for a spiritual and cultural Jewish redemption, one that required the creation of a Jewish nation but not necessarily that of a separate Jewish state. Magnus argued that the Jewish people do not "need a Jewish state to maintain its very existence" and that the Jewish nation did not need to be conceptualized or guaranteed in territorial terms.[7] Martin Buber maintained that a Jewish home in Palestine could not be successful without addressing what he defined as the "Arab question," which he defined as the legitimate presence of Arabs living in Palestine.[8]

Ihud's document, entitled *Palestine: A Bi-National State*, written by Martin Buber, Judas Magnus, and Moses Smilansky in 1946, presents the clearest Zionist position in favor of a one-state solution in Palestine, one it clearly defines as a binational state. It is Zionist insofar as its writers define themselves as people committed to the right of the Jews to return to Palestine and establish a home there, who maintain that Jews form a national, not simply religious, entity. As Martin

Buber put it, "Jewish settlement in Palestine . . . was embarked upon in order to enable the Jewish people to survive as a national entity and which in its social, economic and cultural aspects constitutes an enterprise of universal significance."[9]

The Ihud document, presented to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry in 1946 and to the visiting United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) in 1947, was committed to Jewish migration to Palestine. However, it called for " the union of Jews and Arabs in a bi-national Palestine based on parity of the two peoples; and for the union of the bi-national Palestine with neighboring countries."[10] It defines this binational country as one in which "the two nations [will] have equal freedom and independence, equal participation in government and equality of representation and one people shall not be stronger than the other . . . s. they must make the country into *a country of nationalities*. This is altogether *different from a nationalist country*."[11]

The Ihud document thus emphasizes three notions that are central to any alternative to partition in Palestine. The first is the notion of equality. This applies to equality in basic rights, such as freedom, as well as in political rights, such as representation and governance. The authors also acknowledge the "natural rights of the Arabs in Palestine," by virtue of having been the country's inhabitants and "tilled its soil," which they juxtapose with the "*historical* rights of Jews in Palestine" (emphasis added). They thus equate two kinds of entitlements, both related to the land, but one created through labor and actual presence, and the other through a historical connection, which has often been defined as mythical, albeit meaningful.[12] "We regard the historical rights of the Jews and the natural rights of the Arabs as, under all the circumstances, of equal validity, and it is the task of statesmanship to find ways of adjustment between these contending claims."[13] The equality of these claims is based on the comparability of rights rather than their sameness.

The second rationale for the binational state relates to the right to self-determination and self-government. Buber and Magnus were well aware of the Palestinian struggle for political independence, which they attributed to the rise in Palestinian "political maturity" in the wake of the anticolonial struggles worldwide at the end of WWII. However, they wanted to make the case that this right was compatible with the Jewish struggle for self-determination. They maintained that Jewish and Palestinian self-determination could be accommodated within a single political space by respecting the national claims of each party and detaching sovereignty from statehood. The authors use concepts of state and country interchangeably throughout the document, reflecting an interest in prioritizing the notion of national self-determination over notions of territorial sovereignty or statehood per se. National rights here mean collective political rights that can be fulfilled in various political configurations. Nationalism, in their view, need not be *nationalistic*, that is, chauvinistic or separatist, and can be accommodated within larger political entities—such as the European Union today. As the authors

put it: "We contend that the sovereign independence of tiny Palestine, whether it be Jewish sovereignty or Arab sovereignty, is a questionable good in this post war period when even great states must relinquish something of their sovereignty and seek union, if the world is not to perish. We contend that for this Holy Land the ideal of a bi-national Palestine is at least as inspiring as that of an Arab sovereign Palestine or Jewish sovereign Palestine."[14]

The third rationale the authors make for the binational state lies in the fact that it prevents the domination of one group over another. The authors were concerned about the tyranny of majority rule over the minority, a likely outcome in 1947, given that Jews comprised approximately one third of the population in Palestine at that time. Moreover, Ihud was opposed to the creation of a Jewish state through violence, which Magnus rejected morally and politically since it would have led to domination, if not expulsion, of one group by the other.[15] In a binational state, the Ihud document insists, Jews should have a right to immigrate until demographic parity is reached, after which a board would be formed of Jews and Arabs to decide who was entitled to enter the new binational state. Ihud members drew on the example of Switzerland, considered to be a comparison "most relevant to Palestine" despite its differences in level of economic development. They argued that a "federal multi-national state, based on the parity of nationalities is a most hopeful way of enabling [the people] to retain their national identity and yet of coalescing in a larger political framework. It results in separate nationalities yet a single citizenship."[16]

This 1946 document laid the foundation for future calls, put forward most vocally by 'Azmi Bishara in the 1990s, for Israel to become a state of its citizens.[17] Its emphasis on equality and on separating the nation from the state reflects an understanding of the state as a juridical entity responsible for protecting its citizens' rights, both individual and collective, irrespective of their national identity. Sovereignty is understood to be tied to the people, not to the land. The state is a political structure responsible for law and order that can combine within its territorial boundaries various national groups who are represented and can exercise some political autonomy within the state. Ihud members envisaged this binational state as part of the Arab world, in a regional union that acknowledged Jewish historical attachment to Palestine. They envisaged a multicultural state that was not too common in the 1940s, but one that is relevant to the twenty-first century, given the effect of globalization and international migration in constraining the scope of state political power.

The Palestinian Vision of a One-State Solution

The Palestinian vision of the one-state solution is most clearly presented in the PLO's pamphlet "Towards a Democratic State in Palestine for Moslems, Christians and Jews," published in 1970. The ideas proposed in this pamphlet, written by a Fatah member under a pseudonym, were largely adopted by the PLO in 1971.[18]

They build on ideas expressed by the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and its leader, Nawaf Hawatmeh.[19]

The pamphlet, as well as the eighth Palestinian National Council (PNC) of the PLO in 1971, calls for the creation of a democratic, nonsectarian, state in Palestine inclusive of Muslims, Christians, and Jews. The PNC then declares that "the armed struggle of the Palestinian people is not a racial or religious struggle directed against the Jews. This is why the future state that will be set up in Palestine liberated from Zionist Imperialism will be a democratic state, all those who wish will be able to live in peace there with the same rights and same duties."[20] Although the PLO called for the destruction of Israel, which it defined as a colonial entity, its one-state position in 1971 provided the first official Palestinian attempt to accept Jewish presence in Palestine. It acknowledged their individual, if not their national, political rights.

The Palestinian version of the democratic single state remained the official PLO plan for resolving the conflict up until 1988. It represented the Palestinian interpretation of its right to self-determination, at a time when Israel and the international community, with UN Resolution 242, had not acknowledged the existence of the Palestinian people. The PLO 1971 state project thus was as much about proposing a solution to that conflict that would affirm Palestinian existence as a national, not humanitarian, entity, with a right to self-determination, as it was about being inclusive of Jews in a single polity.

The revolutionary element in the Fatah 1970 proposal, as far as the author put it in his pamphlet, lies in its acceptance of the Jews, both those living in this new state and those wishing to come to it. One could argue that the Fatah and PLO proposal seeks to repair the injustice that the creation of the state of Israel generated and that Ihud had predicted. It wants to eliminate the Zionist domination Magnes and Buber warned against. The democratic state the PLO is proposing, though, is neither binational nor clearly secular in the true sense of the term.[21] The constitutional shape of the state is not discussed, nor is the relation between state and religion, though the document recommends the teaching of Hebrew and Arabic in the public schools of the future democratic state.

The 1970 text, in fact, clearly rejects binationalism because it argues that "religious and ethnic lines clearly cross in Palestine so as to make the term bi-national and the Arab-Jewish dichotomy meaningless or at best quite dubious."[22] The document does not consider that Jews form a nation, and refuses to deal with them as a unified cultural group either. It considers them rather a diverse group of people, of different nationalities, never holding "a truly monolithic Jewish opinion"; all the while, though, it acknowledges the persecution they have suffered as a people.[23] It notes that "the majority of Jews in Palestine today are Arab Jews," who are thus assumed to have Arab nationalities.[24] The author thereby highlighted the notion of the Arab Jew, a concept completely absent from the Zionist document reviewed. As Ella Shohat has already demonstrated, Zionist thinking remains Orientalist in

its mission to modernize oriental Jews and homogenize them into a newly created, Jewish-Askenazi defined Israeli identity.[25]

Central to the Palestinian vision of a one-state solution thus is the separation it clearly makes between Jews and Zionists. It is a vision that maintains that the democratic state cannot be Zionist or include Zionists, for Zionism is a settler-colonial project that seeks to eliminate the indigenous Palestinians. It does, however, include Jews, even Israelis born after 1948, so long as they give up Zionism. The document thus marks a shift in the PLO's 1964 position, which maintained that only Jews born before 1914 are entitled to be in Palestine. It states that "All Jews, Muslims and Christians living in Palestine or forcibly exiled from it will have the right to Palestinian citizenship . . . . Equally this means that all Jewish Palestinians—at the present Israelis—have the same right provided of course they *reject Zionist racist chauvinism and fully accept to live as Palestinian in the New Palestine*."[26]

The nationality of the state is thus Arab Palestinian, as it "will be part of the Arab Homeland."[27] From Fatah's point of view, the democratic state provides the basis on which reconciliation with the Jewish people is possible. As the author of the document puts it: "The call for an open new tolerant Palestine for Jews and non-Jews is a dramatic change in the Palestinian struggle, but it is hardly a new idea . . . what is new, is the fact that the non-Jewish Arab exiles who have been deprived of their homes and displaced by the Jews in Palestine can still . . . call for a new country that combines the ex-aggressor and the persecutor."[28]

In this respect, the 1970 document refuses to separate the nation from the state. It is, however, in direct Palestinian dialogue with the Jewish presence in Palestine, albeit on its own terms. While its author acknowledges Jewish suffering, denounces the injustice done to them by Arab countries in the 1940s, and invites them to create a new polity, the Palestinian version of the one-state solution does not explain how the collective rights of citizens will be protected. The emphasis is on notions of reconciliation and recognition. Jewish rights are defined as individual, political rights of citizens of a state, a state that is fundamentally Arab, not binational. Self-determination is thus recognized for the Arabs only, since, in the author's view, the Jews cannot be a national group. If they were, they would become a racist colonial state, just as Israel, the author argues, has demonstrated itself to be.

THE TWO-STATE SOLUTION: WHAT WENT WRONG?

The Palestinian state project declared in 1971, though, was soon shelved in favor of the two-state solution. The Palestinian leadership was aware by the mid-1970s that a Palestinian state could not materialize on all of historic Palestine, given Zionist rejection of it and the international community's support for the two-state solution. In 1988 the PLO issued its Declaration of Independence, officially acknowledged Israel, and accepted UN Resolution 242 as the basis for peace negotiation. This paved the way for the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 and 1995.

The Oslo agreements indirectly acknowledged the Palestinian right to self-government in the West Bank and Gaza. They allowed the formation of Palestinian elected representative institutions and the creation of a whole infrastructure of security coordination between the Israeli military and the Palestinian Authority. Although the signed agreements never promised the independence of a Palestinian state in the Occupied Territories, the Palestinian leadership and the international community saw as the aim of the peace process the eventual establishment of a Palestinian state, as acknowledged by the Quartet Road Map for Peace in 2003. A Palestinian state on 22 percent of historic Palestine was considered better than no state. It was also an act of historical reconciliation with Israel, one that acknowledged Jewish individual and collective political rights to their own state on part of Palestine.

The developments of the past thirty years, though, reveal that a Palestinian state cannot materialize. The present revival of the one-state solution today is part of an attempt by activists and intellectuals to challenge the Oslo conceptualization of the conflict and the means to resolve it, stressing the way in which the peace process deepened, rather than repealed, Israel's colonial domination. These activists argue that the conflict was never a struggle between two equal competing national groups but rather as a struggle for ending colonialism and achieving political liberation.[29]

Three reasons explain the revived interest in a one-state solution in Palestine since 2000. The first argument lies in the fact that Zionism proved determined to destroy, rather than respect, Palestinian national self-determination. The bet that many Palestinians were willing to make in September 1993, when the first Oslo Accord was signed, that the end of the occupation would create a Palestinian state on 22 percent of Palestine that would protect their fundamental rights, was lost with the Camp David negotiations in 2000 and the Israeli military response to the Second Intifada.

Moreover, facts on the ground reveal that Israel instituted by a de facto apartheid structure of domination. Israel devised a segregated system of control by which Israeli citizens are governed by democratic rules while Palestinians are deprived of political rights. The US stance in 2020, in which the Trump administration accepted Israeli claims over East Jerusalem and the annexation of Palestinian land, confirmed Israeli colonial control and trivialized the scope of the Palestinian territorial and political jurisdiction.[30]

Secondly, the Palestinian quest for statehood under the Oslo peace process has compromised Palestinian collective and individual political rights. These rights include not only the end of Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza, but also Palestinian sovereignty and access to East Jerusalem and a recognition of the right of return, which is protected by UN Resolution 194. The Oslo agreements, by prioritizing the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) over the all-encompassing PLO institutions, separated refugees from those living in the West Bank

and the Gaza Strip, who were in turn separated from Palestinians living inside Israel and the Palestinian diaspora. It fragmented the Palestinian body politic by locking Palestinian national aspiration to the West Bank and Gaza. At the same time, the Palestinian Authority has forsaken the unity of the Palestinian people for a promise of independence that provided financial gains to a small stratum of the population. It proved uninterested in protecting citizens' rights. In the West Bank, the PNA tried to buy legitimacy and divert calls for political accountability by providing unsustainable economic opportunities.[31] In Gaza, the Hamas government sought political legitimacy by asserting the right to resistance, promising security, and fighting Israel, not by protecting freedom of expression and political representation.

Thirdly, the demographic reality on the ground threatens the political sustainability of the segregated political structure Israel has created. In 2020, 6.87 million Jews were living in Israel/Palestine, which is close to the number of Palestinians living in it (5.03 million in the West Bank and Gaza and 1.96 million living inside Israel). By 2025 Palestinians will be a majority in Israel/Palestine, given their higher population growth rate (2.7 percent compared with 1.8 percent in Israel), making the question of their lack of real political rights increasingly troublesome, both to the Israelis and the present Palestinian leadership.[32] For many Palestinians, inside and outside the West Bank and Gaza, the quest for separate statehood is void, if not altogether outdated.

POLITICAL FRAMEWORK AND PRINCIPLES

Turning the one-state apartheid reality that the Oslo years have institutionalized into a one-state solution, though, is not an easy task. It requires a political will to undo the colonial structure that Israel perpetuates as well as the ability to articulate the components of a viable democratic state that is inclusive of the individual and collective rights of Palestinians and Israelis. It is thus necessary for any political alternative to partition, whether a democratic binational state or a democratic federal state, to explain how the political visions introduced in the 1940s and 1970s can be reworked in view of the developments that have taken place over the past decades. In other words, it needs to rearticulate the relation between the nation and the state as well as explain how the colonial power relations that the partition paradigm consolidated can be dismantled.

The Right to Self-Determination: Decoupling the State from the Nation

The right to self-determination, ever since it was recognized by international law, has been tied to the notion of statehood. The definition of the state, and the political expression of the right to self-determination, however, have remained contested as much as historically determined. The state has been perceived in Western thought not only as the highest form of political union between free individuals, but also

as a tool of domination, particularly in Marxist thinking. The twentieth-century Weberian definition of the state as a "human organization that has the legitimate monopoly over the use of force in a specific territory," has tied it to a Westphalian understanding of the world, that is, a world made of clearly demarcated states defined by specific borders. Although the state is never a neutral entity, as the Weberian definition leads one to believe, since it reflects, as much as articulates, different class interests within a given social formation, it has remained a core site of sovereignty and control.

Self-determination has also been more closely tied to the concept of the nation, which remains a far more nebulous term than statehood. The nation is understood today to be a "imagined community," a political entity that affirms the right of the people, however they define their collective sense of "we," to have collective, not just individual, rights, and to have the right to rule themselves by themselves.[33] People under colonial rule have used the notion of self-determination to claim their right to political independence, one that is associated with statehood. The demand for an independent state has been a central demand of most nationalist movements precisely because the state asserts sovereignty (since it has the monopoly over the use of violence) and confers international recognition of the nation's right to political agency, or self-determination.

There has always been an inherent tension, though, in the quest to exercise self-determination through the creation of an independent nation-state. This tension arises from the inherent incongruency between the state, which is a territorially bound political concept, and the nation, whose boundaries can transcend the territorial frontiers of a given state.[34] This tension also stems from the ambiguity surrounding the notion of sovereignty. Ever since the eighteenth century, sovereignty has been articulated as springing from the people, who create the polity called the state and are the source of its legitimacy. The state speaks for the people as much as represents them through its representative institutions, especially when it claims to be a democratic state. However, once established, the state becomes juridically sovereign in the sense that it has the ultimate power over the life and death of its citizens.

As Arendt has argued, a state is needed to affirm people's right to have rights, that is, to exist juridically as a political entity and have a political structure that protects its citizenship rights. However, as soon as the nation-state is established it inadvertently leads to the exclusion of others, those who do not belong to the nation, creating categories of minorities and of refugees, or stateless people deprived of their basic human rights.[35] While international law has tried resolve this tension through international human rights law, which protects individual human rights irrespective of political affiliation, it also admits that human rights are tied to citizenship rights, that is, to belonging to a state. International law ultimately leaves it to individual states to define their own juridical and constitutional structures to protect the collective and individual rights of their citizens.

Various scholars have sought to readdress the exclusionary nature of the nation-state and the problem of minorities it creates by calling on the state to be above the nation.[36] They privilege a definition of the state in civic, rather than in ethnic terms, confining it to the juridical role of executing the will of citizens living within its boundaries. The state thus becomes an instrument, or executor, of the law enacted by the people, who are sovereign. Such a definition of the state implies a commitment to a constitutional and deliberative democratic political order. While such a conceptualization of the state is liberal and does not address fundamental questions about the historical injustices and colonial foundation of the modern state, it does decouple the nation from the state while giving space for a civic engagement that alone can determine the means by which a state can be decolonized; in other words, one that is able to reconcile with its past while being inclusive of all those who live on the land as equal citizens irrespective of their ethnicity.

Reified versus Divisible Sovereignty

The political framework for any alternative to partition in Israel/Palestine must transcend people's obsession with the state as the only protector of people's rights. This is not easy given that the official political discourse of both Zionists and Palestinians remains staunchly attached to the nation-state. This discourse conceptualizes sovereignty as territorially bound, with one group of people entitled to it. The Palestinian obsession with statehood, as much as Zionism's, stems from a belief that only a state can protect national identity and existence. According to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the Jewish state is the only means to protect the Jewish people worldwide, an assertion that continues to be contested by world Jewry but is central to mainstream Zionism.[37] It is a contention that inevitably leads to racist and exclusionary politics, as Israel's nationality law of 2018 proves. This law confers the right of self-determination only to Jewish people within the historic land of Palestine, denying the equal rights of Palestinian citizens of Israel as well as those living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Palestinians, particularly those in the West Bank and Gaza, also remain keen on their own state, albeit one that would extend over just part of Palestine. In a survey conducted by the Birzeit University Center for Development Studies (CDS) in 2015 regarding Palestinian views on the present status quo and possible alternatives to it, over 80 percent of respondents supported the idea of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza.[38] They considered it a necessity, despite the fragmentation of Palestinian land and people, and the low possibility of its creation. Nearly half of respondents (47 percent) maintained that such a state is necessary because it would provide security; 22 percent who saw its role as protector of political and civil rights as the most important rationale for its existence. The majority of respondents associated state sovereignty with the ability to have a passport and to be able to move freely and be secure in their home.[39] While many

were critical of the PNA and aware that the state-building project has benefited certain economic classes while usurping power in the name of national unity, the majority viewed political independence in a two-state solution as the only politically realistic option.

Most recently, some authors have proposed a parallel-states structure that would allow Palestinians and Israelis joint sovereignty of the whole land.[40] This proposal represents a reformulation of the binational ideal by acknowledging present government structures rather than seeking to dismantle them. A parallel-states structure would accept the presence of Israelis settlements as well as the rights of Palestinian refugees to return. It takes as given the national autonomy of Palestinians and Israelis, acknowledging the existence of what it calls "territorial heartlands" for each group, while allowing both Israelis and Palestinians to have joint sovereignty over Jerusalem. Its proposal is not different from the confederated or federated structure that binationalists have envisaged, wherein the autonomy each community is recognized under the umbrella of a common defense and foreign policy.

Without dismantling the colonial foundation of Israel, however, the parallel-state proposal will simply perpetuate Israel's colonial power and Palestinian dispossession. On a most rudimentary level, it is difficult to imagine how to get two groups of people who have been separated by 708 kilometer walls, over ninety-nine checkpoints and a siege on 2 million Palestinians in Gaza to talk, let alone to want to live together. The Israel government has shown no intention of treating the Palestinians as equal, let alone of relinquishing its control of land and resources. Some among the Israeli political right, meanwhile, are willing to give Palestinians political rights but no national rights in what it defines as greater Israel.[41] The majority of Israelis have no intention of living with Palestinians together in one state, as the 2021 Israeli war on Gaza and the Palestinians revealed.

Moreover, political elites both within Israel and among the PNA consider the one-state option a capitulation of their respective national projects, rather than a fulfillment of each party's right to self-determination. Judging from the 2015 CDS survey, the average Palestinian in the West Bank and Gaza also is not keen on the one-state idea. In the survey over 66 percent of respondents rejected the idea of a democratic state guaranteeing equal political rights to Palestinians and Israelis. Only Palestinian citizens of Israel accept political representation and voting rights for Palestinians and Israelis in a single state (over 80 percent of respondents compared to under 40 percent in the West Bank and Gaza).[42] While many Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza lament the siege of Gaza, and the lack of independence of the West Bank, they demand the lift of the siege, not integration into Israel. By contrast, the advocates of a one-state solution are concentrated in the diaspora and among Palestinian citizens of Israel. Unless they form a political movement that can galvanize the population both in Israel and inside the Occupied Territories,

it is difficult to see how the one-state model can become a viable political project rather than an expression of despair or a threat

Domination versus Equality

It would difficult to move forward with any alternative to partition without proposing a political and legal strategy for dismantling Israeli colonialism. Such a dismantlement would require rebalancing the power inequalities between Israelis and Palestinians, both militarily and economically. Israel has an economy that is over 20 times the size of the Palestinian economy, with developed industrial and buoyant trade sectors that will continue to dominate Palestinian economic growth.[43] This difference in comparative advantage between Israel and the West Bank and Gaza would allow Israeli capital to dominate in Palestinian sectors while Palestinian workers continued to serve as cheap labor. While liberal economic theory argues that such a division of labor is beneficial to everyone, free market forces can also lock each party into its own sphere of comparative advantage. Although in the long run consumers and producers will benefit from a more efficient allocation of resources across the Green Line, various vested interests will be harmed in any one-state configuration, especially in the short run, among them small Palestinian businesses and unionized Israeli labor.

A constitutional arrangement that guarantees the equality of all citizens before the law, dismantles Jewish privileges, and sets up compensation mechanisms to address the present economic and political inequalities, could help alleviate these worries. International law can also offer insight for moving forward. It has already offered various models for a federal state in Palestine, such as the minority report proposed by the UNSCOP in 1947, which proposed an economic union between Israelis and Palestinians. Creating appropriate institutional support systems (such as affirmative action) that can redress the present economic inequality and offer increased investment and openness could also help, as already seen in other cases where economies of different sizes integrate (European Union, South Africa, etc.).

Recognition and Reconciliation: The Rights of the "Other"

For any political alternative to partition to work, it will inevitably need to address the issues of historical reconciliation and recognition. The two-state model sought a historical reconciliation through territorial separation. It was premised on the merit of acknowledging the collective rights of Israelis and Palestinians in two separate political entities. It thus avoided addressing the fundamental injustices created in 1948 by focusing on the post-1967 reality. The very fact that Israel refused to abide even to this paradigm, by continuing building settlements and insisting on the Jewishness of the state, has shown that reconciliation cannot be achieved without addressing the core issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These include not simply right to the land, but also freedom of movement, return,

and equality before the law for all.[44] Insofar as Israel is concerned, the challenge is how to acknowledge the collective rights of the Palestinians in a polity that does not ensure Jewish supremacy. Insofar as the Palestinians are concerned, they need to confront the reality of Jewish attachment to Palestine, as much as grapple with the question of what rights of Jews in Palestine are entitled to as a political community rather than as a religious group or as individuals.[45] This is a thorny question that requires addressing the right of the indigenous as much as the right of migrants, the refugee as much as the exiled.

No alternative to partition can materialize before each side recognize the rights of the "other" in Palestine. In this regard, the Palestinian national movement needs to address what can be defined as the Jewish question, namely Jews' attachment to Palestine and the Jewish claim to a home in Palestine. This does not mean that Palestinians should accept Zionism or give up on dismantling Israel's colonial structure. They need, though, to explain how to decolonize Israel without negating the Jewish Israeli culture it has created over the past seventy years: to accommodate the political rights of the Jews to live and prosper in Palestine, to continue to speak Hebrew, and to have political autonomy. The challenge for the Palestinians remains how to create a new polity that includes the Jews rather than seeks to reconvert them into Arabs. The PLO's 1971 appeal for of a single democratic state needs thus to be reworked to take into consideration the reality on the ground today. It needs to explain how the Jewish Israeli can be part of that state without necessarily becoming a rehabilitated Arab citizen or alternative, only a resident not entitled to full equal citizenship.

Israelis, for their part, need to address what Martin Buber has already called the "Arab question." They need to give up their privileges and acknowledge Palestinian collective and individual rights in all the land under Israel's control. This is not an easy matter for Israelis to face, for it would force them to admit the colonial dimension of their emancipatory project of nation-building, as well as give up their privileges. Just as challenging, facing the Arab question implies that Israelis have to confront the fact that they live in an Arab world, that over 50 percent of their Jewish population is of Arab descent, and that the future state will also be part of the Arab world, not Europe. At a fundamental level, it implies that Jews in Israel need to confront the Arab dimension of their Jewishness. Zionism cannot deal with such a reality, since it is fundamentally a Western civilizing enterprise that seeks to universalize Jews, including Arab Jews, and turn them into an enlightened, that is, Western Ashkenazi Jews who have their own home as all civilized nations do. Negation of the Arab Jew, already noted by Ella Shohat among others, is still profound in Israeli society.[46] Yet reviving as much as reconstructing the Arab Jew would be central to this new state: the Arab Jew partakes as much part in Jewish identity as in the Arab world. At present both are negated and in need of rehabilitation within their historical context. They also need to be rearticulated in today's reality as part of an attempt to create a new collective "we" for a post-partition,

single democratic state (whether its constitutional shape were binational, federal, unitary, etc.; see chapter 9 in this book).

CONCLUSION

Partition as a solution to Palestine has failed, but the one-state solution as a clear and acceptable political project is still not born. Its birth will require a political movement that has been growing but still has work to do to reach mainstream discourse. Success will depend on the ability of its advocates to formulate a clear political agenda that protects the individual and collective rights of citizens irrespective of their ethnicity. The Palestinian citizens of Israel are the best placed to lead the movement, for they know well both sides of the conflict and can act as a bridge between both national movements. The historical juncture that the conflict is in puts them in the best place to push the one-state solution forward. Whether they can take on this role is still to be seen. What is clear is that they will work with the various Palestinian constituencies. They need to be reincorporated in the Palestinian national movement, the PLO, which today needs to be redefined and reinvigorated. International pressure on Israel will also be key in any attempt to force it to give up its privileges, uphold its international obligations, and renounce the ethno-racist definition of identity that Israel's 2018 nationality law enshrined.

NOTES

Parts of this chapter are drawn from Leila Farsakh, "Common State in Israel-Palestine: Historical Origins and Lingering Challenges," *Ethnopolitics* 15:, no. 4 (2016): 380–92.

1. Isabel Kershner, "Netanyahu Backs Palestinian State, with Caveats," *New York Times*, June 19, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/15/world/middleeast/15mideast.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

2. See, among others, Hani Faris, ed., *The Failure of the Two-State Solution: The Prospects of One State in the Israel-Palestine Conflict* (London: IB Tauris, 2013); Virginia Tilley, *The One-State Solution: A Breakthrough for Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Deadlock* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005); Ali Abunimeh, *One Country: A Bold Proposal to End the Israeli-Palestinian Impasse* (New York: Henry Holt, 2006). For checkpoints, see "List of Military Checkpoints in the West Bank and Gaza Strip," B'Tselem, last updated September 25, 2019, http://www.btselem.org/freedom_of_movement/checkpoints_and_forbidden_roads; for settlements, see "Statistics on Settlements and Settler Population," B'Tselem, last updated January 16, 2019, https://www.btselem.org/settlements/statistics.

3. Charles Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010), 110.

4. Ilan Pappe, "The Birth, Demise and Future Prospective of One Palestine Complete," *Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies* 8 (Spring 2008): 151–64.

5. The Nashashibi faction privately favored the plan and by 1928 the Arab Executive, under Kazem al Husseini, was also willing to endorse it. Both Palestinian factions began talks with the High Commissioner over the proposed legislative council in January 1929. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 110–12.

6. Although mainstream Zionist parties such as Labor Zionists and Revisionists opposed the binational idea, Mapai and Hashomer Hatzair were inclined towards it. Susan Hitti, *The Bi-National Idea* (Jerusalem: Shikmona, 1979).

7. Judas Magnus, *Like All Nations* (Jerusalem: Weiss Press, 1930), 15.

8. Buber defined this problem as consisting "in the relation between Jewish settlement in Palestine and Arab life, or as it may be termed, the intra-national basis of Jewish settlement . . . one which starts out from the concrete relationships between neighboring and inter-dependent nations, when considering the given economic and political facts." Martin Buber, "The Bi-National Approach to Zionism," in *Towards a Union in Palestine*, edited by Martin Buber, Judas Magnus and Akibah Simon, 7–13 (Ihud: Jerusalem, 1947), 7.

9. Buber, "The Bi-National Approach," 7.

10. Martin Buber, Judas Magnus, and Moses Smilansky, *Palestine: A Bi-National State* (Jerusalem: Ihud, 1946), 7.

11. Buber, Magnus, and Smilansky, *Palestine*, 8–9. Emphasis added.

12. Chaim Ganz, *Just Zionism: On the Morality of the Jewish State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 7

13. Buber, Magnus, and Smilansky, *Palestine*, 11.

14. Buber, Magnus, and Smilansky, *Palestine*, 19.

15. Judas Magnus, "A Solution Through Force?" in *Towards a Union in Palestine*, edited by Martin Buber, Judas Magnus and Akibah Simon, 14–21 (Ihud: Jerusalem, 1947), 15–17.

16. Buber, Magnus, and Smilansky, *Palestine*, 20–21.

17. ʿAzmi Bishara, *On the Democratic Option: Four Critical Studies* (Beirut: Center for Arab Unity Studies, 1993), in Arabic; ʿAzmi Bishara, *Min yahudiyat al-dawla hata Sharon* [From the Jewishness of the state to Sharon] (Ramallah: Muwatin, 2005).

18. Mohammad Rasheed, *Towards a Democratic State in Palestine for Moslems, Christians and Jews* (Beirut: PLO Research Center, 1970), 38.

19. Alain Gresh, *The PLO: The Struggle Within* (London: Zed Books, 1988).

20. Quoted in Gresh, *PLO*, 48.

21. The word *secular* never appears in the document, unless we take the term "nonsectarian" to mean secular.

22. Rasheed, *Towards a Democratic State in Palestine*, 38.

23. Rasheed, *Towards a Democratic State in Palestine*, 29, 16, 29–31.

24. Rasheed, *Towards a Democratic State in Palestine*, 38.

25. Ella Shohat, "Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of its Jewish Victims," *Social Text* 19/20 (Autumn 1988): 1–35.

26. Rasheed, *Towards a Democratic State in Palestine*," 35. Emphasis added.

27. Rasheed, *Towards a Democratic State in Palestine*, 34.

28. Rasheed, *Towards a Democratic State in Palestine*, 12–13.

29. See, among others, Faris, *Failure of the Two-State Solution*; Ali Abunimeh, *The Battle for Justice in Palestine* (New York: Haymarket, 2014); and Ghada Karmi, *Married to Another Man* (London: Pluto Press, 2007).

30. Leila Farsakh, "The Political Economy of Israeli Occupation: What Is Colonial about It?" *Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies* (Spring 2008): 41–58.

31. Raja Khalidi and Sobhi Samour, "Neoliberalism as Liberation: The Statehood Program and the Remaking of the Palestinian National Movement," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 158, no. 2 (2011): 6–25.

32. Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of Israel* (Jerusalem: Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, 2020), available at https://www.cbs.gov.il/en/mediarelease/Pages/2019/Population-of-Israel-on-the-Eve-of-2020.aspx; and Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, "On the Occasion of the International Population Day 11/07/2020," July 9, 2020, available at http://pcbs.gov.ps/site/512/default.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=3774.

33. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

34. Ernst Gellner, *Nation and Nationalism* (London: Blackwell Publishing, 1983).

35. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanich, 1968).

36. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*; and Seyla Benhabib, *The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents and Citizens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

37. Laurence Silberstein, ed., *Post Zionism: A Reader* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008). Lahav Harkov, "Netanyahu Announces Support for Jewish State Bill," *Jerusalem Post*, November 16, 2014, http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/Netanyahu-announces-support-for-Jewish-State-Bill-381926.

38. The survey included a sample of 1,060 respondents distributed between the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Palestinian citizens of Israel. For more details, see Leila Farsakh, "The Legal and Political Limitation of the Oslo Agreements," policy paper, Center for Development Studies, Birzeit University, June 2016.

39. Farsakh, "Legal and Political Limitation of the Oslo Agreements," tables 1 and 2.

40. Mark LeVine and Mathias Mossberg, *One Land, Two States: Israel and Palestine as Parallel States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

41. Leila Farsakh, "The One-State Solution and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: Palestinian Challenges and Prospects," *Middle East Journal* 64, no. 1 (2011): 20–45.

42. Farsakh, "Legal and Political Limitation of the Oslo Agreements," table 2.

43. Israeli GDP in 2019 was 394 billion dollars, compared with 16 billion dollars in the West Bank and Gaza. Per capita income in Israel in 2013 was $43,588 compared with $3,562- in the West Bank and Gaza. "GDP per capita (Current US$): Israel," World Bank, https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD?locations=IL&name_desc=true.

44. In this regard, see Bashir Bashir and Azar Dakwar, *Rethinking the Politics of Israel/Palestine: Partition and its Alternatives* (Vienna: Kreisky Forum, 2015).

45. Yehouda Shenhav, *Beyond the Two-State Solution: A Jewish Political Essay* (London: Polity Press, 2012).

46. See Ella Shohat, *On the Arab-Jew, Palestine and Other Displacements: Selected Writings* (London: Pluto 2017); and Yehouda Shenhav, *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006).

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